

## Legislative Education vs. Lobbying

It is important to know the differences between legislative education (Advocacy) and lobbying. While anyone can advocate for an issue broadly, lobbying involves trying to influence a legislator to vote a certain way on an upcoming bill, and there are a few more rules to follow.

### What is Legislative Education?

Legislative Education is a form of advocacy, but it broadly encompasses efforts to gather interest and support for an individual, group, organization or cause. Advocacy in the form of legislative education can be aimed towards lawmakers or the general public, whoever you are trying to educate. Some examples of this type of advocacy may include:

- Campaigning through social media to spread awareness about an issue.
- Organizing an event to raise money for an organization or cause.
- Contacting your legislator to provide education about issues that are important to you.

### What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is a form of advocacy that is focused on influencing specific legislation. Lobbying can also be directed at lawmakers or the general public. Some examples of lobbying include:

- Contacting a legislator asking them to vote a certain way on legislation.
- Encouraging people to ask legislators to vote a certain way on legislation.
- Attempting to persuade people to vote a certain way on a ballot or referendum.

### Why is this important?

More and more nonprofits are researching what is allowable when it comes to advocacy and lobbying, and it is important to know the rules and parameters for doing that work. The IRS says it is legal for 501(c)(3) nonprofits to lobby, but places some limits on non-taxable expenditures. Failure to comply with federal lobbying laws could cause your organization to lose their tax-exempt status. The resources below are very helpful in understanding more details about nonprofit advocacy through lobbying and legislative education.

Here is the [IRS guide](#) on how to disclose lobbying activities and expenditures via a 990 form.

The National Council for Nonprofits states that [“Federal law protects nonprofit advocacy and Lobbying”](#)

Additionally, you can find a guide for Nonprofit Lobbying in Virginia [here](#).

Sources:

- [Federal Law Protects Nonprofit Advocacy & Lobbying | National Council of Nonprofits](#)
- [Practical Guidance: What Nonprofits Need to Know About Lobbying in Virginia - Alliance for Justice](#)
- [ADVOCACY-CHEAT-SHEET-FOR-NONPROFITS-1.pdf](#)