Child Advocacy

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The most important advocacy we do is education.

We are the experts- not the politician. The policy makers need our expertise and our voice to educate them in the areas in which they are not experts.

Overview of Federal lawmaking

* Senate: 100 Senators, two from each state
* House of Representatives: 435 Representatives according to population (Alabama has seven)
* Know Your Representative and Senator! Senators Doug Jones and Richard Shelby and Representatives Mo Brooks and Robert Aderholt represent North Alabama.
* How a Bill Becomes a Law <<flow chart slide that should be inserted here>>

Each stop on the flow chart represents an occasion where we can speak up and contact our representative.

Can I lobby as part of a 501(c)3? **YES!**

There are some restrictions: no substantial part (generally accepted as less than 5%) of your organization’s activities can consist of lobbying. There is a form that could be filed to increase that limit to 15-20%, however, it is unlikely that calls or meetings a few times each year will exceed this 5%.

Legislative Priorities

* After school programs
* School meal programs
* Summer feeding programs
* Farm Bill (voted on every 5 years and includes SNAP, TEFAP, CSFP. Our advocacy should encourage its continuation and strengthening its derivatives.)
  + SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
  + TEFAP: The Emergency Food Assistance Program
  + CSFP: Commodity Supplemental Food Program or Senior Food Boxes. This is a federal program, and money is allocated by the federal government and administered through the State Department of Education. Currently CSFP is in 49 states and some territories but not in Alabama. We are working with the State Department of Education to start this program in January 2019.

Alabama state legislature meets a total of 30 days during the months of January to March. In 2017, 1,673 bills were filed so it is unlikely they have opportunity to discuss, debate, *and* vote on every bill filed each year.

Making A Difference

* You don’t have to be a legislative expert to affect change! You are an expert in your own field. Contact your representative’s office with your own expertise and experience
* Decision makers who need to hear from you: Your own representative. Contacting the representative or senator who represents the district you live in will be more meaningful to the policy-maker.
* HOW? Call. Email. Write. Meet. Any form of contact is good contact. In person is best but is often not feasible. Making an effort to call can be impactful.

Before you make a call:

* Plan what you are going to say. (Food Bank has a script you can use if you do not feel comfortable writing your own)
* Be succinct.
* Say why you care and why you need their support.
* It’s likely you will be speaking to a message-taker or voicemail so have your script

on hand and don’t worry!

Before you meet:

* Be polite and prepared.
* Allow time for questions.
* Send thank you note/follow up note.

Remember:

* You only need to be an expert in your story.
* Follow up and repeated contact makes a difference.
* Food Bank has action alerts if you are interested to sign up \*LINK. If you make a call on a bill Food Bank has alerts on try to let Food Bank know how it went.