

North Carolina Women United

# ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

2021



# A NOTE

Since 1988 NCWU has existed to provide North Carolina Women with an opportunity to express their views, prioritize their issues, and in the end, have their voices heard through advocacy in the General Assembly. This is an exciting contribution to the democratic process, and we welcome you to it and thank you for your participation. Your engagement will undoubtedly provide greater empowerment of the women in your community and across the state of North Carolina!

Although we could not hold an in-person Women's Advocacy Day, it remains our goal to provide you with the resources needed to have very effective and informed conversations. One of the most significant hindrances to improving women's conditions is public awareness about what goes on in the legislature. For the average citizen, there is not enough time to understand the mechanics of "long session", "short session", or "special session", and that limits civic engagement in a meaningful way. Conversely, legislative leaders too rarely hear from women as a constituency and the issues that should be prioritized by representative government.

This toolkit was designed with that challenge in mind. to be a guidance document for you - a supplement to your work with elected officials. Whether you are an experienced advocate or just getting started with your advocacy, this toolkit will help you to become strategic in your advocacy to achieve the full political, social, and economic equality of all women across North Carolina.

If you have any concerns, questions, or suggestions, please reach out to President Charnessa Ridley at [President@ncwu.org](mailto:President@ncwu.org) or Policy Director Lyric Thompson at [lyrict@gmail.com](mailto:lyrict@gmail.com).



**North Carolina Women United**

# What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is defined as any activity that attempts to educate and influence others about an issue.

You are an advocate if you have worked to secure improved work conditions or health care options for women; spoken out against the unfair treatment of marginalized individuals; participated in a public meeting about an issue you care about; or called or emailed an elected official. If you work with women and children, help families in your community, march for an inclusive and equitable democracy, or speak out against gender-based violence, you are already an advocate!

There are many tactics within advocacy, such as grassroots mobilization (calling on groups of individuals to take actions like a march or calling their member of Congress); legal advocacy (filing amicus briefs or suing the government), and lobbying. North Carolina statute defines lobbying as “A) “Influencing or attempting to influence legislative or executive action, or both, through direct communication or activities with a designated individual or that person's immediate family” and/or b) “Developing goodwill through communications or activities, including the building of relationships, with a designated individual or that person's immediate family with the intention of influencing current or future legislative or executive action, or both.” N.C.G.S. § 120C-100(a)(9); N.C.G.S. § 163A-250(a)(17).”

**For more information on nonprofits and lobbying please review this resource from Alliance For Justice**

# OUR PRIORITY ISSUES

This advocacy toolkit is designed to support advocates and allies in participating in the public policy-making process.

NCWU focuses on policy areas that reflect many and intersecting streams of marginalization that can manifest in society, be that by gender identity or sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity, class, age, immigration status, geographic location, or ability. Our mission is to achieve full political, social, and economic equality for all women across North Carolina.

- Economic Stability
- Access to Healthcare
- Inclusive and Equitable Democracy
- Gender-Based Violence and Safety
- Climate and Environmental Justice
- COVID-19 Response

NC Women United recognizes the importance of supporting all of these issues on a statewide level and our capacity to effectively advocate throughout the session for these issues. However, in working with local elected officials, having a prioritized agenda allows communities to focus advocacy efforts on what is the most important to that particular community. It also provides a guide/checklist for your elected officials to utilize when making decisions.

We offer our [2019-2020 Legislative Agenda](#) and Legislative Report Card as a reference guide to the issues that NC Women have identified as issues of priority

# How to Begin

## 11 STEPS TO GETTING INVOLVED

- Organize groups to visit your local legislators or attend town halls when they are in their home districts;
- Coordinate op-ed or letter-to-the-editor campaigns;
- Request virtual appointments to meet with your representative;
- Collaborate on an op-ed piece for the local paper;
- Organize social media campaigns and tweet storms to promote your message;
- Organize an event with a speaker on one of your policy issues, or a speaker's series;
- Gather volunteers to assist a local agency with a special event;
- Write a letter after the election to newly elected members of your delegation:
  - Representatives,
  - Senators; and

### **Don't forget to:**

- Complete our [stakeholder survey](#) and give us feedback on the issues you would recommend NCWU advocate for our leaders to address to improve women's lives in the state.
- Sign up for the NCWU email lists and continue to receive information from our member organizations
- Review the NCWU membership and allied partners list in this toolkit to find the organizations that align with your interest
- Use hashtags on all social media posts. It is also helpful to include the handles of individuals, organizations, and media in your post to help more people see and interact with the posts

The image features a vertical watercolor background with a color gradient from light pink at the top to dark purple at the bottom. A central white, irregularly shaped area contains the word "Representation" in a dark teal, monospaced font. A thin black vertical line runs through the center of the image, passing through the white shape.

Representation



# NORTH CAROLINA

Congressional  
Delegation


Each photo links to their website



# NORTH CAROLINA

Senators



The background is a soft, textured watercolor wash in shades of pink, purple, and magenta. A white, scalloped-edged circle is centered on the page, containing the text. A thin black vertical line passes through the center of the circle.

North  
Carolina  
General  
Assembly

HOUSE

# Leadership



(L-R): Speaker Tim Moore, Speaker Pro Tempore Sarah Stevens, Majority Leader John Bell

**Find your  
House  
member**

CLICK THE LINK ABOVE

SENATE

# Leadership



President Pro  
Tempore  
Phil Berger



Deputy President  
Pro Tempore  
Ralph Hise

**Find your**  
**Senator**

CLICK THE LINK ABOVE

# Meeting Request Template

Note: Email or call the legislator's office to request a meeting, either live or via zoom/phone. Their legislative assistant will help you set that up. Be persistent, and patient.! Lawmakers, especially if they live far from Raleigh, have to juggle many meetings, erratic schedules for votes, and their own family and work lives so that calendars quickly fill up. It sometimes can take a while to finally get a meeting arranged, and sometimes at the last minute, the meeting will need to be with the legislator's staff. That is still a useful meeting, and a good relationship to build.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some lawmakers have conducted zoom meetings with their constituents. We presume that option will continue post-COVID, as it is more accessible, especially for constituents who cannot come into Raleigh easily. However, there are lawmakers who even during the pandemic preferred to set up meetings in person. It depends on the legislator, but as a constituent, you should also share your preference.



## **Sample email/call script:**

Good morning, Representative (or Senator)XXX

(Reference any time you may have met, if applicable. "It was great to see you.....")  
As a constituent who cares deeply about (issue), I would love the opportunity to set up a meeting in the next few weeks to chat with you a little about some priorities I have for my community, particularly around (bill number, issue area, etc.) I would be interested to hear what you know about this issue, and where it might fit in your legislative priorities for this session.

I know we both have busy schedules, but if you have just 10-15 minutes sometime (propose a date/time or a few times), I would love the opportunity to meet with you. We could conduct the meeting via phone, zoom, or in-person {Note if you have a preference}

I look forward to hearing from and talking with you soon. Thank you

# Press Release

Press releases are written as articles and are generally one page to two pages in length. The first sentence needs to attract the reader's attention. Press releases are often used in their entirety or as parts of articles. Be sure your release contains a contact to call for further information, a headline, a quote from a spokesperson, and additional background information. A news release can be distributed before, at the time of, or after an event, either through emailing, faxing, or handing it out. Follow-up calls are essential to ensure that your release was received as well as an opportunity to pitch your story. If you are unsure how to contact the media in your area, send an email to [info@ncwu.org](mailto:info@ncwu.org), and NCWU will help you find contacts. Finally, don't forget to share a copy of your press release with the NCWU listserve by sending it to [members@ncwu.org](mailto:members@ncwu.org).



## Press Release Tips

- Determine if the media outlet prefers email or fax of press release and if it should be to a specific person
- Print press release on your organization's letterhead
- Send in memo style rather than as a letter
- Use wide margins (1 to 1.5 inches on both sides) for media readers to edit.
- Create a brief newspaper-style title (e.g., Women's Agenda Assembly)
- Try to keep text to one page; if longer than one page, put "-MORE-" at the bottom of the first page
- Keep language brief and simple. Press releases answer the questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Present the information in descending order of importance.
- Provide a contact name and telephone number or email for questions
- Follow-up calls are essential to ensure that your release was received as well as an opportunity to pitch your story

# Your Meeting is Scheduled, Now What?

Go to their campaign website OR to their NCLEG page and look through their bills. Find 1-2 things you AGREE on. You can find your representative in the first link below and senators in the second link below:

- <https://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/members/memberList.pl?sChamber=House>
- <https://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/members/memberList.pl?sChamber=senate>

Once you find your members, you can then see their introduced bills, and those bills that are highlighted are those that the member was a main sponsor of (i.e, cares about the issue).

Use the [2019-2020 NCWU Report Card Addendum](#) with Bill References to find bill numbers. You can then use that information to see how your representative voted.



North Carolina Women United

# Letting Your Voice be Heard: Lobbying Do's and Don'ts

## Do:

- Be Prepared
- Introduce yourself and let them know what qualifies you as a constituent
- Share personal stories that connect with the issue you are discussing
- Leave them with resources containing facts about the impact or importance of the issue you are there to discuss
- Be TRUTHFUL. You want to gain respect from the legislator.
- Relate the issue to the specific district of the legislator.
- Show knowledge of both sides of the issue.
- Admit if you don't know the answer. Respond that you will get back to the legislator with accurate information
- Show interest in getting to know the legislator's staff.
- Follow up the visit with a thank you note, email, or call.
- Request a small group meeting. Having 3-4 others present gives the opportunity to deliver a succinct message to the legislator that includes a case statement, a personal story, a closing with a direct ask, and a thank you.

## Don't:

- Be afraid to ask specific questions
- Forget to leave time and space for your legislator to be engaged in the conversation and provide feedback
- Get discouraged if your meeting time changes or you end up meeting with legislative staff instead. You should still deliver your message to the individual representing the legislator you were scheduled to meet.
- Overload the legislator with too much information. The general rule of thumb- one visit, one issue.
- Let the conversation get sidetracked from the point. Keep everyone on topic.
- Assume they know the issue you are talking about. Give them ALL the information, even if it seems redundant.
- Leave without learning where the legislator stands on your issue

# Finding Issues to Support

NCWU has a [Legislative Report Card](#) that should serve as a great reference to identifying the issues you want to discuss with a representative. Another way to identify issues is by following the work of other organizations. The organizations below work hard to advance their priority areas. Many of them hold their own advocacy days or have other events that you can support by attending. Your participation supports their works, helps to carry their mission, and allows you to be better informed on the issues. To learn more about each of these organizations visit their websites linked below.

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- [ACLU of North Carolina\\*](#)
  - [ActionNC](#)
  - [AAUW of North Carolina\\*](#)
  - [Buncombe County Women's Commission](#)
  - [Carolina Abortion Fund](#)
  - [Democracy North Carolina](#)
  - [Equality North Carolina\\*](#)
  - [ERA-NC Alliance\\*](#)
  - [General Federation of Women's Clubs of NC\\*](#)
  - [Greensboro Commission on the Status of Women\\*](#)
  - [Ipas\\*](#)
  - [League of Women Voters of North Carolina\\*](#)
  - [Mecklenburg County Community Support Services, Women's Commission Division](#)
  - [NARAL Pro-Choice NC\\*](#)
  - [National Association of Social Workers- NC Chapter](#)
  - [NC Association of Women Attorneys\\*](#)
  - [NC Business and Professional Women\\*](#)
  - [NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence\\*](#)
  - [NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault\\*](#)
  - [NC Justice Center](#)
  - [NC MomsRising](#)
  - [NC National Organization for Women\\*](#)
  - [Onslow County Council for Women\\*](#)
  - [Planned Parenthood South Atlantic\\*](#)
  - [Politica NC\\*](#)
  - [Progress NC](#)
  - [RATIFY ERA-NC\\*](#)
  - [SHIFT NC](#)
  - [Women for Women – A Giving Circle](#)
  - [Women's Forum of North Carolina\\*](#)
  - [WomenNC: NC Committee for CEDAW/CSW](#)
  - [Women's Resource Center of Alamance County\\*](#)
  - [YWCA of Asheville and Western NC](#)

**\*NCWU Supporting Member Organization**