

Policy advocacy for organizations and volunteers

with guest Amy Gallant, VP of Public Policy and Research for Good Shepherd Food Bank:

Major Takeaways included:

- 501c3 organizations CAN engage in advocacy/lobbying, as long as it is issues-based and not partisan.
 - “Lobbying” is defined by Maine statute as, “communicating directly with an official in the Legislature for the purpose of influencing legislative action.” A person has to register as a lobbyist if they spend 8+ hours/month lobbying and if they are compensated for their efforts.
- 501c3 organizations CAN register voters, but cannot ask who they are planning to vote for or specifically target groups of voters in an attempt to affect election outcomes.
- 501c3 organizations CAN NOT:
 - engage in partisan politics, including working for a party or candidate, or establishing a PAC.
 - support or criticize candidates or elected officials
 - Endorse candidates
- Effective messaging clearly addresses these key questions:
 - Who does the issue/policy affect?
 - How will it affect them?
 - What do you want legislators to do regarding the issue/policy at hand?
 - Why does this issue matter to you and your organization?
- Effective advocacy involves those people who are directly affected by the policies/issues at hand. To involve those folks well:
 - Be willing to help people who don’t have experience by:
 - Helping them prep their message and practice delivering it
 - Helping them with the logistics- where do they go? Where do they park? What do they bring? Ect.
 - Help folks to feel empowered to tell their stories. Sometimes pointing out how powerful personal stories are in affecting legislation helps with this.

Helpful Resources:

- [Policy White Pages;](https://www.nonprofitmaine.org/answer/raise-your-voice-advocacy-and-lobbying-tool-kit/)
<https://www.nonprofitmaine.org/answer/raise-your-voice-advocacy-and-lobbying-tool-kit/>
- [Good Laws Good Food](#). from Harvard Law School Food and Policy Clinic
- [Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices](#)