



Washington State Catholic Conference

The Public Policy Voice of the Bishops of Washington State

Catholic Legislative Advocacy Tool Kit

Welcome from the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC)

On behalf of the Catholic bishops of WA state, the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) offers this Catholic Advocacy Tool Kit as a guide to the process of advocating for the common good. It is not necessary for you to be an expert. This Tool Kit will assist you and your parish/group/deanery in planning for, organizing and participating in activities throughout the year that will have the greatest impact on pending legislation, including how to conduct virtual and/or in-person meetings with your legislators.

Who is the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC)?

The Washington State Catholic Conference is the public policy voice of the bishops of WA. We follow the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) in our efforts to support policies that promote the common good. Our mission is rooted in the Catholic community's belief in the dignity of the human person, our tradition of service to the most vulnerable of society, and our firm commitment to a just and peaceful world.

Our Objectives:

- To create strategic plans for effective Catholic advocacy with and on behalf of the most vulnerable in our society.
- To engage with public authorities, legislative bodies and other civic organizations to support or oppose legislation in accordance with the Legislative Priorities of the bishops of WA state.
- To develop partners among parishes, ministries, organizations, and communities and to work collaboratively on areas of shared concern.
- To provide training to educate advocates on Catholic Social Teaching and Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship.
- To provide informational resources and support on legislative advocacy to parishes, individuals and groups throughout our state.
- To support and grow participation in year-round Catholic advocacy at the parish level.
- To support parishes/groups/deaneries in organizing in-district meetings with legislators.
- To increase online advocacy via our weekly/monthly Washington State Catholic Conference Catholic Advocacy Bulletin and Action Alerts.

"We need to participate for the common good. Sometimes we hear: a good Catholic is not interested in politics. This is not true: good Catholics immerse themselves in politics by offering the best of themselves so that the leader can govern."

- Pope Francis, 9/16/13

The Importance of Catholic Advocacy*

What does the Church teach about issues affecting public policy?

The Church's obligation to participate in shaping the moral character of society is a requirement of our faith. Catholic teaching challenges voters and candidates, citizens and elected officials, to consider the moral and ethical dimensions of public policy issues.

What is unique about Catholic Advocacy?

Catholic Advocacy is a different way of acting in the public arena and in our faith communities. It lifts up our dual heritage as both faithful Catholics and US citizens. The Catholic call to faithful citizenship affirms the importance of political participation, but the Church calls for a different kind of political engagement: one shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences and focused on the dignity of every human being and the pursuit of the common good.

The themes from Catholic Social Teaching provide a moral framework that does not easily fit ideologies of "right" or "left," "liberal" or "conservative," or the platform of any political party. Catholic values are not partisan or sectarian, but reflect fundamental ethical principles that are common to all people. Catholic principles call us to be:

- Focused more on moral principles than on the latest polls;
- Focused more on the needs of the weak and vulnerable than on the benefits to the strong;
- Focused more on the pursuit of the common good than on the demands of narrow interests.

As part of a Catholic parish, group or organization, you see and hear every day how public policies are affecting the needs of people in your own community. Your knowledge of these concrete needs can be of great assistance to political decision makers at the local, state and national levels. Our Catholic voices joined together in Catholic advocacy can create a powerful force to influence our elected officials to make policies and decisions that reflect our Catholic values.

* Excerpted from *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility* from the Catholic Bishops of the United States, USCCB 2007. You can obtain a copy of the full document online at usccb.org.

Myths about Advocacy

1. **As Catholics, I/we shouldn't get involved in politics.** The bishops' teachings tell us, *"In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation."* (Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship – U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)). Catholic advocacy gives us an opportunity to join our voices with those in need without partisanship. Writing a letter, sending an email, leaving a brief phone message—these are all ways to educate elected officials about the life and justice issues most important to Catholics. By completing one of these easy activities, you can advocate for the unborn, for those who live in poverty, or for policies that care for God's creation, etc. Tell your elected officials your story and tell them what you want them to do to support or oppose the issues about which you are most concerned.

2. **My elected officials just don't seem to care about my issues, so why bother?** It can seem like elected officials do not care or that they only want to focus on one or two "pet" issues. Sometimes legislators are truly unaware of the specifics of a particular problem in their own communities. Hearing from you and other constituents in their districts makes legislators aware of the concerns in their districts and can influence them to think about and act differently on specific issues.

3. **I am too busy to get involved in advocacy.** There are many ways advocacy can be done in less than ten minutes. Signing in pro/con from your computer regarding a particular bill can take two minutes. A phone call or email to a legislator can take three minutes. A conversation with a friend can last 10 minutes. Reading an email to educate yourself about an issue can take a minute. Those seconds and minutes can make a world of change. There is power in numbers, and even though making one phone call may not seem to make a difference to you, elected officials will take notice and appreciate your efforts to participate in the democratic process from your faith perspective.

4. **I'm shy.** Remember, you are not alone. You can do this together as a parish or group, and there will be others there to speak and provide support. Much of the advocacy work can also be done from your home computer or phone. We will give you everything you need to email, write or call your elected officials. You can attend a face-to-face meeting with your legislator or speak at a town hall meeting, if you choose to and when you are ready. Communicating with your elected officials by email, letter, or phone, or meeting with your elected officials in a group is a great way to generate support for policy priorities.

5. **I am not an expert in government—I am just a regular person.** Though it can seem frightening to correspond with or talk to your legislators, they expect you to contact them about your concerns. Your representatives work for you—it is their job to listen to your stories and respond to your requests. The fact that you are just a "regular citizen" is your best asset when communicating with your elected officials. In fact, elected officials are more likely to listen to you, a constituent, than a hired lobbyist because you live (and vote!) in their district. You can speak firsthand about how your particular issue is impacting your life and community.

6. **I have heard that elected officials delete constituent emails, ignore phone calls and/or send generic responses to letters. It doesn't make a difference.** It may seem that way sometimes, but communications from constituents truly do have an impact on elected officials. Legislative and congressional offices count all pro/con sign-ins for a particular bill, calls, emails, and letters they receive from constituents. It may take only seconds to sign and mail a form letter, or respond to an electronic alert, but your personalized message will be noticed. Many elected officials have shared stories with us about the difference our visits and input have made on the way they voted!

7. **I'm a Republican and my elected official is a Democrat / I'm a Democrat and my elected official is a Republican.** The issues outlined in Catholic Social Teaching (CST) affect people regardless of their political affiliation, and the spectrum of life and justice issues is not a partisan endeavor. When you contact your elected officials, just identify yourself as a constituent living in his/her district, and a member of your parish and/or community. It doesn't matter what your political affiliation is. The most important thing is to speak and act from your Catholic values and to respectfully share this perspective with your representatives.

State Level Advocacy - Annual Washington State Advocacy Calendar

Washington State Legislature: Regular Session – January through March/April

The Washington State Legislature is made up of two houses, or chambers: the [Senate](#) and the [House of Representatives](#). Washington has 49 [legislative districts](#), each of which elects a Senator and two Representatives. Senators serve four-year terms and Representatives serve two-year terms. The Senate and House of Representatives meet in session each year to create new laws, change existing laws, and enact budgets for the State. You can identify your district and state legislators [here](#).

The legislative cycle is two years long and is called a biennium. [Legislature](#) The Washington state legislature meets annually in a regular session, which begins on the second Monday each January in Olympia. Odd years (for example, 2023) consist of a long session of 105 days with a focus on writing the state budget for the biennium (January through April). Even years (for example, 2024) consist of a short session of 60 days with a focus on policy (January through March).

Washington State Legislature: Interim – May through December

- The Interim is the period of time during the year when the legislature is not meeting in Olympia. State legislators are back in their home districts.

Year-Round State Advocacy Activities

Below is a variety of advocacy activities you can engage in.

- Sign up to join the [WSCC's Catholic Advocacy Network](#) and to receive the [WSCC's Catholic Advocacy Bulletin](#), weekly during the regular legislative session (January to March/April). You will learn about proposed legislation important to Catholics across our state, as well as a step-by-step process for how to implement the best action plan for making your voice heard in Olympia (sign-in pro and con on bills, submit written testimony to committees, provide possible Zoom or in-person testimony during public hearings). During the interim, the Catholic Advocacy Bulletin is sent to subscribers during the first week of each month, and will keep you informed on what is happening on the state and federal levels during the rest of the year.
- Respond to Action Alerts from the WSCC on specific issues, and forward them to others in your parish/group and community. Action Alerts usually are comprised of timely, prewritten letters that you can send electronically to your legislators with a click of a button. You are more likely to receive Action Alerts from the WSCC during the legislative session (January to March/April).

- Join the WSCC on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube via your parish social media, and encourage other individuals to do so, too.
- Watch the short informational and how-to videos on Catholic advocacy created by the WSCC, posted to our [YouTube channel](#).
- View the resources provided by the WSCC's website for [Year-Round Catholic Advocacy in WA State](#)
- Contact the WSCC to schedule Catholic Social Teaching Training and/or Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship training for your parish or group. Advocacy@WACatholics.org
- Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece to educate the public about priority issues important to Catholics in your parish and community, and the need for protecting programs in the state and federal budgets. The WSCC is available for general guidance or to review your writing.
- Speak on issues of concern at legislator townhalls and other community events.
- Contact your legislator's Legislative Assistant to schedule an in-person meeting with your legislator in Olympia, or a virtual meeting via Zoom, Teams, or other video conferencing service.
- Organize an In-District meeting with your legislator on parish premises, with the permission of your pastor.
- See [Tips for Parish Leads – Year-Round Advocacy Phase I](#) for those who are new to starting an advocacy effort in their parishes.

State Level Advocacy: In-Session (January to March/April) vs. Interim Advocacy Activities (April/May to December)

- Meeting with legislators – If there is a specific bill you would like to discuss with a legislator, it is best to meet during the state legislative session (January – March/April). These meetings are usually brief, often 15- 30 minutes. When the legislature is not in session (April/May to December), legislators will be working in their home districts and will often be able to meet for longer lengths of time to talk about general legislative issues. The interim period is an optimal time to have town hall meetings or invite your legislators to your parish for more in-depth policy conversations.

- WSCC training and informational sessions – When the state legislature is not in session, this can also be a key time to educate parishioners about advocacy in general. The WSCC can provide training on Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship and Catholic Social Teaching.

Federal Level Advocacy

While the majority of the WSCC's focus is on state legislative issues, we also encourage and engage in federal level advocacy.

US Congressional Calendar

At the federal level, US Congress is comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate. There are two US Senators in each state, and each legislative district has one US Representative. US Senators serve six-year terms, and US Representatives are elected for two-year terms. You can identify your US Congress members and your state legislators [here](#).

A new Congress begins at noon on January 3 of each odd-numbered year. A Congress lasts for two years, with each year constituting a separate session. For example, the 117th Congress has two sessions: one session runs January 3 through December 2021, and the other session runs January 3 through December 2022. Of note, while the legislative process is year-round, the beginning of the federal fiscal year is October 1. Also, during the month of August there is usually a 30-day recess, or break, during which Congress is not in session. Members of Congress are more likely to be in their home states during this time, and this could be an opportune time to meet with them.

Federal Level Advocacy Activities

Many of the state level advocacy activities listed previously can also be conducted with respect to national level policy issues. Additionally, you can also:

- [Sign up](#) for action alerts with the [US Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) (USCCB). The USCCB addresses national and international public policy issues of importance to Catholics. You can contact the USCCB Office of Government Relations through their website at <https://www.usccb.org/offices/government-relations>.
- Obtain contact information for and identify your US Congress members and state legislators [here](#).
- Join or start a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Chapter. Learn more: <https://www.crs.org/get-involved/chapters-clubs>. Contact: Jesus Huerta jesus.huerta@crs.org or Annie Bailey annie.bailey@crs.org.

How to Determine the Life and Justice Issues Most Important to Your Parish or Group

Before meeting with your legislator(s), it will be important that you identify the issue(s) that you and your group would most like to present and discuss during the limited time available. Your parish, group or deanery may already be organized around one issue or a set of issues, but if not, there are tools available to help you to get started. The Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) can provide you with its pre-developed [Survey of Your Top Three Personal Catholic Advocacy Priorities](#). Please reach out to the [WSCC](#) if your group would like to utilize the survey, which includes both life and justice issues, to determine the greatest Catholic advocacy priorities for your community. The WSCC can provide you with the results at the conclusion of the survey. Another method for determining the advocacy issues most important to or that have the greatest direct impact on your community is by following the [Pastoral Circle](#) model, which utilizes a - See (listening), Judge (discernment), Act (advocacy) method.

Planning an In-District Legislator Meeting

Many people are intimidated by the idea of talking about policy with their representatives or legislative staff, but the truth is that you have information and personal stories about issues in your community of which your legislators may not be aware.

One big advantage to meeting with your legislators in your home district when the legislature is not in session is that **you will have much more time to engage your legislators in two-way conversation!**

You don't have to be a great speaker and you don't have to bring a big group, but you are most effective when you are prepared. Just follow the 6 simple steps on the next few pages and you will be meeting with your legislator before you know it!

Step 1: Decide with your parish/group/deanery to host or co-host a meeting with legislator(s) in your district and advise the staff at the WA State Catholic Conference (WSCC) at Advocacy@WACatholics.org prior to inviting your legislator(s). Brainstorm and select a location for the meeting:

- Consider holding this meeting on your parish premises. *Be sure to obtain approval from your pastor first and make the necessary arrangements with your parish facilities staff.* A parish outreach ministry site, a St. Vincent de Paul store, or a CCS or CHS service site in your area is also an excellent location for this meeting, as your legislators will experience and learn first-hand about the services provided by the Catholic Church in your community.
- Call, email or meet with the location contact person to see if that organization would welcome and be able to host such a meeting.

Step 2: Get others involved!

- Ask others in your parish/group/deanery network to join you:
 - Invite parishioners/members, staff, volunteers, clients, friends and family to participate.
 - Promote/advertise through social media and all available communications channels.
 - Refer to the “Myths About Advocacy” on page 6 of the Tool Kit so you are prepared to respond to the concerns of those you invite.
- Invite neighboring parishes and other Catholic organizations such as health care and social service providers, universities, and schools to participate.

Step 3: Make an appointment.

- Call or email the Legislative Assistant (LA) or scheduler to request an appointment:
 - Check out your representative’s website first to see if you can determine how they prefer to be contacted.
 - You can find the name of your legislators’ aides online at: <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/Rosters/Members>
 - Provide the dates that you are available, the number of people who will be attending, and the issue(s) you wish to discuss.
 - You can provide information about the suggested meeting site selected in step 1.
- A day or two before the appointment call to confirm the meeting time and location. NOTE: Legislators’ schedules are busy and can change at very short notice. Don’t be surprised if sometimes rescheduling may be necessary.
- Email the **Washington State Catholic Conference** staff at Advocacy@WACatholics.org to confirm the date and time of your legislator meeting, or let us know of any changes.

Step 4: Prepare for the meeting.

- Review your legislator’s website to learn his/her position on your parish’s priority issues. Use the WSCC Legislative Priorities as a guide for which issues to talk about (e.g., Economic Justice, Health Care, Abortion, Housing, Immigration, Care for God’s Creation, Assisted Suicide, etc.). It is helpful to know which legislative committees your legislators are on. You may find this information on your legislator’s website or at: [apps.leg.wa.gov/Rosters/ Members](https://apps.leg.wa.gov/Rosters/Members)

- With 4 weeks' advanced notice, the WSCC can provide your group with issue papers/policy briefs on your specific issues, at least a week prior to your meeting with your legislator(s).
- Make a plan for the meeting:
 - Choose a moderator among the members of your group who will begin the conversation with a welcome and ensure that the meeting stays cordial and on topic.
 - Keep personal introductions short. Let the legislator know your name, that you live in their district, and briefly describe any connection you have to the issues of most concern in the district (e.g., "I volunteer at my parish's overnight shelter for people experiencing homelessness," or "I'm with our parish's Environmental Justice Committee.")
 - Decide who will say what and also be sure to tell the legislator that you would like him/her to support the priority issues being discussed.
 - Role play the visit ahead of time, if possible.
 - Print out materials to provide to the legislator. These can include: Washington State Catholic Conference issue papers/policy briefs, facts and statistics about your issue, program brochures, etc.

Step 5: During the meeting.

- Formal attire is not required, but do dress neatly and appropriately and be on time!
- Be clear and concise; state your position and present the information and experiences that inform your position.
- Be polite and firm.
- Stay on topic and gently bring the conversation back on topic should the legislator or any of the participants digress from the topic at hand.
- Be specific in asking your legislator what you want him/her to do.
- It is okay if you don't know the answer to a question the legislator asks. Simply write the question down and let the legislator know you will respond as soon as you can (and then be sure to follow up!)
- Thank the legislator for spending time with you; thank the legislator's scheduler for his/her help in setting up the meeting.

Step 6: After the meeting.

- Write a personal “thank you” note and mail or email it to the legislator’s office.
- If there were questions from the legislator, you should include the answers in your “thank you” letter.
- Follow up with your legislator if he/she said they would provide some information to you.
- Email the WSCC at Advocacy@WACatholics.org to let us know the outcome of your legislator meeting, and if there are questions we might help you to answer.
- With your group, evaluate the meeting:
 - Was your welcome hospitable?
 - Did you make your intended points clearly and concisely?
 - Did you stick to your agenda?
 - Did you include the voices and/or stories of people who are affected by the issue(s) in your district?
 - Did you allow time for the legislator to respond?
 - Are there follow-up steps needed?
 - What did you learn from the experience?
 - What will you do differently next time?

Sample Organizing Outline for a Legislative Meeting

Sample Tasks/Assignments:

- Setup/take down—hosting parish will handle with committee support
- Hospitality—cookies/nuts/coffee/tea/water and associated supplies
- If morning event, breakfast items/bagels etc.
- Welcoming—name tags/sign-in sheets
- Sound system & A/V equipment—hosting parish to coordinate
- Master of Ceremonies/Facilitator for event

Sample Event Materials:

- For tables—3 x 5 index cards/paper/pencils/pens
- Agenda with website listed for accessing Washington state legislators
- WA State Catholic Conference (WSCC) issue papers/policy briefs
- Power Point or video presentations

Sample Schedule

2:05pm – 2:20pm:	Welcome & Opening Prayer Table Conversation #1: Introduce yourself/why you're here, expectations, hopes
2:20pm – 2:30 pm	Opening Presentation: How does the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching call us to be advocates? (8 minutes, followed by 1-2 minutes of silence to reflect on what was heard.)
2:30pm – 3:00pm	Keynote presentation (based on your selected legislative/CST topic)
3:05pm – 3:25pm	Table Conversation #2: What do I feel most strongly about with regard to this topic and why? What options for supporting this topic can I personally get excited about and support? Is there something new I learned?
3:25pm – 3:35pm	Individuals invited to write down specific questions they want to ask their legislators (these are collected and MC will review and then give to legislators)
3:35pm – 3:55pm	State Legislators respond—Q & A
3:55pm- 4:05pm	Next steps: WSCC Catholic Advocacy Bulletin and Advocacy Alerts, Letter-Writing, voting, etc.
	Acknowledgements/Thank You
	Missioning/Closing Prayer

Legislative Information

The Washington State Legislature website is a great resource for all kinds of information:

<https://leg.wa.gov/>

The website includes information and directions on:

- * Finding Your Legislator
- * Visiting the Legislature
- * Agendas, Schedules and Calendars
- * Bill Information * Laws and Agency Rules
- * Legislative Committees
- * Legislative Agencies
- * Legislative Information Center
- * E-mail Notifications
- * Civic Education
- * History of the State Legislature

Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000
(TTY for Hearing Impaired 1-800-635-9993)

Additional Information of Interest

[WSCC Legislative Priorities 2022](#)

[Catholic Social Teaching \(CST\)](#)

[Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#)

[Guidelines for Parishes and Agencies on Political Activity](#)

[Civilize It](#)

[Sample Issue Paper #1 – Life](#)

[Sample Issue Paper #2 – Care for God’s Creation](#)

[Sample Issue Paper #3 - Housing](#)

More about the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC)

1. Since 1976, the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) has been the public policy voice of the Catholic Bishops of Washington on matters related to state and federal legislation.
2. The WSCC works annually with the Bishops of Washington and Catholics around the state to establish a list of state [Legislative Priorities](#) for the current legislative year.
3. The WSCC has advocated on numerous legislative issues, both state and federal. This includes collaborating with legislative advocates from around the state to help promote and sponsor Catholic Advocacy Days attended by thousands of Catholics through the decades. During these, advocates have rallied in Olympia to pray and then meet with legislators to advocate around life and justice issues of import to Catholics and the Bishops of Washington.
4. The WSCC has sought to protect human life by opposing the expansion of abortion, legalization and expansion of assisted suicide and the ongoing use of the death penalty.
5. The WSCC has also been involved in upholding the sanctity and dignity of human life at every stage by supporting efforts to reduce poverty, establish the Volunteer Chore Program, secure funding for the General Assistance Unemployable program, the Basic Health Program, the state Housing Trust Fund and the Washington Workers Fund.
6. The WSCC continues to work for the common good and to create a society that recognizes the dignity of every human person by advocating for human life, Catholic education, social justice, and religious freedom in accord with the Gospel mandates and the teachings of the Catholic Church.
7. To meet its advocacy goals, the WSCC publishes its Catholic Advocacy Bulletin weekly during the legislative session and monthly during the interim. The WSCC sends out Legislative Alerts as needed on matters of public policy that Catholics in Washington care about. This includes providing online tools whereby advocates can learn about pending legislation, contact their legislators to weigh in on matters of concern, and understand how these actions are supported by Catholic Social Teaching and the bishops' current Legislative Priorities.
8. The WSCC distributes a Catholic Schools quarterly newsletter with similar advocacy tools as its monthly Catholic Advocacy Bulletin. These are sent to Catholic school pastors, principals, teachers, staff and parents around the state.

9. Upon request, the WSCC provides training to parishes and dioceses on how to effectively advocate on matters of policy and legislation. Using *The Seven Elements of Catholic Social Teaching and Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the WSCC provides training to advocacy groups around the state.
10. In 2014, 2017, 2019 and 2021, the Washington State Catholic Conference sponsored the Cornerstone Catholic Conference. The purpose of Cornerstone is to bring together Catholics from the region to focus on matters of life and justice, and to receive teaching that can be an inspiration to our Catholic faith.
11. Over the years, Cornerstone events have featured nationally known speakers such as Bishop Robert Barron, Helen Alvaré, Father Robert Spitzer, S.J., Sr. Miriam James Heidland, Sr. Norma Pimentel, as well as the bishops of Washington including Archbishop Paul Etienne, Bishop Thomas Daly, Bishop Joseph Tyson, and Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo.
12. The WSCC currently seeks to grow a statewide advocacy network focused on year-round efforts to advocate for policies and legislation supported by Catholic Social Teaching. This includes helping grow local capacity to receive faith formation in advocating for the common good and supporting efforts to advocate on locally identified legislative priorities. These activities include hosting meetings with legislators.
13. Year-round advocacy resources and information including advocacy models and important Catholic teaching documents that support advocating for the common good on matters of policy and legislation can be found [here](#).
14. Periodically, the WSCC is directed by the Catholic Bishops of Washington to publish statements and letters to the Catholic faithful on matters related to public policy. These have included addressing the need for COVID-19 Vaccinations, the Ethical Development of Vaccines and Pharmaceuticals, and a statement on Just Taxation Policies, among others.
15. From time to time the WSCC has conducted special projects on behalf of the bishops. Recently these have included assisting with the development and implementation of a state COVID Reopening Plan, the PREPARES Children and Family Annual Appeal and coordinating a Native American Research project related to Native American Boarding Schools and Cemeteries in Washington state.
16. With particular emphasis, the WSCC seeks to support state Catholic Charities, Schools, Dioceses and Catholic hospitals in its policy and legislation efforts.
17. The WSCC seeks to partner with Catholic and non-Catholic advocacy stakeholders in support of its policy and legislation mission.