

Florida Breast Cancer Coalition Research Foundation

# **ADVOCACY HANDBOOK**

## **Tips For Influencing Public Policy**

### **Our Mission Statement**

FBCCRF is dedicated to the eradication of breast cancer through advocacy, education and research.

Florida Breast Cancer Coalition Research Foundation  
1835 E Hallandale Beach Blvd, #191  
Hallandale, FL 33009  
954-454-4156

## **Advocacy Handbook**

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## **Introduction**

The Florida Breast Cancer Coalition Research Foundation is dedicated to the eradication of breast cancer disease. One of the most effective tools we have is public policy advocacy. This means we work to change public policy and laws to accomplish our mission.

Our work in public policy moves our concern for persons with breast cancer and their families out of our homes and into the offices of every Florida US Representative and our two US Senators as well as State of Florida representatives

and senators. The payoff has been phenomenal to date: [\(list funding\)](#)

This handbook is designed to make public policy advocacy more accessible to you so you can be a part of our successful efforts. In the pages that follow you will find easy to use tips on such things as calling, visiting, or writing a public official, how to reach the Florida state capitol and your legislators; even a glossary of legislative terms.

You'll see that most of the ideas in this handbook are simple, common sense suggestions. Advocacy is not complicated or technical. The most important ingredient is you – your personal experiences, your commitment to help make a difference, and your willingness to communicate with our elected representatives.

The payoff is tremendous, both for what you can achieve and for the self-gratification you will receive for making a difference in the lives of those affected by breast cancer. Welcome to the Florida Breast Cancer Coalition's Public Policy Advocacy program!

## **WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE**

### **WHY**

- 1 To increase funding to find the causes of breast cancer and treatment for breast cancer
- 2 To assure adequate, appropriate, and affordable health care for all dealing with breast cancer

### **AND OUR ADVOCACY WORKS**

Through our growing advocacy efforts we have already achieved breakthroughs by:

- 1 increasing federal funds for research into breast cancer by
- 2 securing breast and cervical cancer.....
- 3 Raising the awareness of policy makers and the general public about the real

health care crisis – and the need to find a way to ensure quality health care for all

## **OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM NEEDS CITIZEN PARTICIPATION TO WORK!**

The strength of our advocacy effort is rooted in the thousands of individuals and families who can be active in public policy activities.

*The key to the FBCCRF's effectiveness is our grassroots volunteer advocates. Our organization has a standing public policy committee and many opportunities to be an active volunteer in public policy. Get involved!*

## **VOLUNTEERING WITH FBCCRF**

- 1 Join the public policy committee!**
- 2 Speakers Bureau:** volunteer to help motivate and educate others about public policy. Training will be provided by FBCCRF
- 3 Fact Gathering:** Do phone, library and legwork to assist the public policy committee in developing positions or legislation.
- 4 Issue Coordinating:** Under the direction of the Committee Chair, research and analyze possible strategies and tactics to move a particular legislative proposal or issue.
- 5 Writing:** Write articles on public policy for the FBCCRF newsletter.
- 6 Phone Banking:** Volunteer to call support group leaders and members to remind them to participate in upcoming events or respond to issues.
- 7 Attending NBCC's National Advocacy Conference and Lobby Day in Washington DC**
- 8 Participating in a coalition:** Represent FBCCRF in a coalition, a diverse group of organizations working together on an issue (such as quality health

care for all)

9 **Agree to testify** at hearings and forums.

10 **Create your own job:** Make a suggestion to the public policy chair about what you want to do or can do best.

## WRITING TO A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

**Why?** *State and federal legislators pay close attention to their mail. Letters are one important way for them to know whether an issue matters to the people they represent. The volume of letters a public official receives on an issue can affect the way he/she votes. One letter can make the difference!*

### TIPS

- 1 Write a personal letter. It is much more effective than a form letter. Tell your own story about how the issue affects you, your family or your community. (See model letter on page 7)
- 2 Identify yourself as a constituent and/or a member of the Florida Breast Cancer Coalition Research Foundation.
- 3 Identify the bill number or issue on which you want action in the first paragraph of your letter, and state what action you want.
- 4 Try to say it in one page (two pages at most) and be sure your return address is legible.
- 5 Ask a question in your letter. By doing so, you show that you expect to continue the dialogue with the elected official.
- 6 Be polite and persuasive (never rude or argumentative).
- 7 Send a copy of your letter to the FBCCRF so we can keep track of the legislator's responsiveness.
- 8 Visit [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) – House of Representatives web site where constituents can search for who their representative is and how to contact them. Visit [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) –Senate web site where constituents can search for who their Senators are and how to contact them. Visit [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov) – congressional web site where advocates can search bills by name, number, sponsor as well as status and history.

## 9 To write to a Member of Congress:

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Martinez,

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Wasserman Schultz,

### 1 To write to a Governor or state legislator:

The Honorable  
State House, Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Tallahassee, FL

Dear Representative/Senator/Governor Bush,

**MODEL LETTER**

Date

The Honorable Martinez  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Martinez,

(use your personal or business stationery)

(to your US Representative/Senator)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
US House of Representatives/US Senate  
Washington, DC 20515/Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative/Senator:

As one of your constituents, I am writing to urge your support for (bill number and what it is designed to do).

(The body of the letter should state clearly and briefly why you think the bill is important and why you support it.)

Please let me know your position on this legislation. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(signature)  
(print or type your name and address)

Note: Be reasonable. Do not try to intimidate your representative by implying you will withdraw your support from him or her if he or she does not vote your way. This approach may very well be counter productive.

## **E-ALERTS**

### **WHAT?**

FBCCRF operates an electronic action alert system designed to bring our grassroots advocacy network to life.

### **WHY?**

FBCCRF uses E ALERTS to generate constituent phone calls, letters and emails to a federal or state elected official when he or she is about to make a decision on one of our key policy issues.

## **TIPS**

- 2 Act immediately. E ALERTS require a quick and timely response.
- 3 Messaged based on E ALERTS can be sent by letter, phone call or email.
- 4 Say exactly what you want (e.g. Support quality health care for all regardless of ability to pay, House Bill....). Ask for a commitment.
- 5 Be personal. Explain what the bill or proposal will mean to you and your family and others like you in our community.
- 6 Ask your family, friends, co workers, fellow congregants, and support group members to send a message, too.

## **VISITING A PUBLIC OFFICIAL**

**WHY?** *Person to person visits are the most effective way of letting a public official know about you, your issues, and the FBCCRF.*

## **TIPS**

- 1 Do your homework on the issues, and if possible, on the person with whom you will meet (such as the person's committee assignment). Know ahead of time what you want to say and stick to the point.
- 2 Lead with your own story. Let the official know what breast cancer has meant to you.
- 3 Go with a group, with a plan for a spokesperson and an order of speaking. Practice through a role play first.
- 4 If you meet with an aide and not a legislator, don't worry. Legislative aides are the eyes and ears of their bosses. They will communicate your message.
- 5 Visit state and federal legislators in their district offices, whenever possible. They are often more relaxed and receptive when they are away from the capitol.

- 6 Keep it simple, direct, upbeat, and brief!
- 7 Have a condensed version of your key points (2 minutes) ready for a wrap up or in case your meeting time gets cut.
- 8 Policy makers expect to be asked for assistance. Make a specific request for support.
- 9 Bring a fact sheet (to leave behind) outlining your basic message, with details on how to reach you. Include information about FBCCRF.
- 10 Write a thank you note, sending requested information, or otherwise following up on any interest or commitments expressed by the official in your meeting.

## CALLING AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

Why? Elected officials and other governmental decision makers pay attention when citizens take the time to call and express their views on an issue. It may be quicker and easier than writing. If an issue is moving fast, it may be the only way to get your message through in time to make an impact.

### TIPS

- 1 Prepare your remarks before you call.
- 2 Don't be surprised if you don't speak to the official directly. Staff who answer or respond to the majority of constituent calls have the official's "ear" and will see that your comments are recorded and passed on.
- 3 Identify yourself as a constituent.
- 4 Say exactly what you are calling about (bill number, issue, etc)
- 5 Say what you want the official to do, such as vote against a budget cut.
- 6 Leave your name, address and phone number.
- 7 Be positive and avoid debating at length.
- 8 Calling local offices of federal or state officials is fine, but calling their capitol office carries more weight. To call a member of the US Senate or House, call (202) 224-3121 and ask for him/her by name. For a state official, call the central switchboard in Tallahassee at \_\_\_\_\_ to be connected.
- 9 Call the Governor and "weigh in" on an issue or a particular vote. The number is 904/488-2272.

### HOTLINE

- 1 Call the White House and register your opinion with the President by calling (202) 456-

1111 any day between 9:00am and 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time.

## **PARTICIPATING IN A PUBLIC HEARING OR REFORM**

**WHY?** *Hearings, town meetings, and forums can give us the chance to put our issues before policy makers and the general public and to show your support. They are also a way to learn more about how the policy making process works, and to monitor the work of public agencies and bodies.*

### **TIPS**

- 2 Arrive early to receive handouts and reports, and to adjust to changes in meeting room or schedule.
- 3 Be sure to sign in so your presence is recorded.
- 4 Sit in front, where you can be seen.
- 5 Bring handouts or position papers for distribution.
- 6 If there is an opportunity for questions, ask one about Breast Cancer (think about it ahead of time so that you can be precise).
- 7 Use the meeting as an opportunity to approach a hard-to-reach legislator or other official if you can do it without being rude.
- 8 Take photos for the FBCCRF newsletter.
- 9 At the end of the meeting (when they are less likely to be distracted by meeting details) introduce yourself to the staff that is handling the meeting.
- 10 Bring along a friend.
- 11 Write a follow up letter to officials who express an interest in or support for our issues.

# TESTIFYING BEFORE A PUBLIC BODY

**WHY?** *Public officials want comments and suggestions about a particular bill or issue. In any situations, public hearings are required by law before a regulation or statute can be approved, amended, or implemented. While many of these take place in the capitol, many public bodies hold “field hearings”. Before testifying please be in touch with FBCCRF. It is important that we present a consistent message to our public officials.*

## TIPS

- 1 Think of testifying as telling your story; an interesting beginning that draws people in, an exciting middle; and a clear conclusion.
- 2 Develop an easily understood 5-10 minute statement, including your strongest facts, arguments for changes you would like to see made, and real examples of the ways people are affected by the matter under consideration. If you can, offer rebuttal of the opposition’s main points.
- 3 Practice your testimony.
- 4 Prepare a two minute version of your statement in case you get cut short, as well as a complete written statement to submit for the record.
- 5 If possible, go to another meeting of the committee or public body and observe how the testimony of others is received.

# INFLUENCING THE MEDIA

**WHY?** *Visibility for issues influences public opinion and the actions of the public officials. Making the case for a position on a bill or issue in any of the various media adds pressure upon public officials to act on issues. Above all, there are several ways that individual advocates can get their point of view into the media.*

## **TIPS**

- 1 One way to get a point of view across is to write a letter to the editor of your local paper. These are often some of the most watched parts of local media by legislators and other elected officials.
- 2 If you write a letter to the editor, be concise, be timely, and above all, don't assume that readers know jargon, buzz words, and the issues.
- 3 Carefully follow instructions for submitting letters to the editor described on the editorial page.
- 4 Call in to a local radio talk show. If an issue like health care reform is being discussed, explain how breast cancer fits into that broader context.
- 5 Make yourself available for speaking to the media about your personal experience with the disease through the FBCCRF's speaker's bureau.
- 6 Work with FBCCRF's public relations and marketing committee to help build and maintain the FBCCRF press list and do press calls to follow up on press releases on public policy issues.

## **COMMON ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AAA</b>	Area Agency on Aging
<b>ACS</b>	American Cancer Society
<b>AoA</b>	Administration on Aging
<b>DOD</b>	Department of Defense
<b>FBCCRF</b>	Florida Breast Cancer Coalition Research Foundation
<b>HCFA</b>	Health Care Financing Administration

<b>NBCC</b>	National Breast Cancer Coalition
<b>NIA</b>	National Institute on Aging
<b>NIH</b>	National Institutes of Health
<b>OBRA</b>	Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (annual federal budget)
<b>OMB</b>	Office of Management and the Budget (for the President)

## **GLOSSARY OF LEGISLATIVE TERMS**

<b>Act</b>	Legislation that has been passed by a legislative body and signed into law by the executive.
<b>Advocate</b>	Literally, “one who is a voice on behalf of another”; public policy volunteer.
<b>Aide</b>	An assistant to a public official. (Also “staff”, “staffer”)
<b>Amendment</b>	The proposal by a member of a legislature to alter the wording of a bill under consideration.
<b>Appropriation</b>	Legislation that directs the spending of public funds for a specific program, agency or other purpose authorized by law.
<b>Authorization</b>	An act that creates or extends a program.
<b>Bicameral</b>	A legislature consisting of two houses.
<b>Bill</b>	A proposed law that is introduced to a legislative body.

<b>Calendar</b>	A listing of items for action by a committee or house of a legislative body; public document.
<b>Caucus</b>	An informal meeting of a group of members of a legislative body; sometimes convened based on interest or party affiliation (as in Elder Caucus)
<b>Committee</b>	A sub-group of a legislative body permanently established by rules to consider and report legislation and to monitor the implementation of programs enacted; organized by subject area, as in Health and Welfare Committee.
<b>Conference Committee</b>	A meeting between members of the House and Senate to iron out a compromise between different versions of a bill. Once a compromise is worked out, the conference report is voted upon and sent on to the Executive for approval.
<b>Convene</b>	To assemble, call together a meeting.
<b>Ex Officio</b>	The holding of one office by virtue of holding another; for example, the Lieutenant Governor of California is ex officio a member of the Board of Regents.
<b>Fiscal Impact</b>	The effect of a proposal upon a budget.
<b>Floor</b>	A colloquialism describing the interior meeting room of a legislative body; matters before the body are referred to as “on the floor” or “going to the floor”
<b>Hearing</b>	A committee meeting where testimony is taken from witnesses about an issue or specific bill.
<b>Initiative</b>	A proposal put directly before voters, by passing the legislative

process.

<b>Joint Resolution</b>	A measure offered in one house and agreed to by the other.
<b>Journal</b>	The official chronological record of proceedings. (Also “Digest”, “Record”)
<b>Lobbyist</b>	A person paid to represent the interests of a group to a governmental body.
<b>Mark-Up</b>	The process by which a subcommittee revises legislation. Once completed, the measure is ready for debate. (Also “Draft”)
<b>Officers</b>	That portion of the legislature elected by its members to serve in positions of authority, such as Speaker of the House. (Also “Leadership”)
<b>Passage</b>	Favorable action on a measure.
<b>Quorum</b>	The number of members required to be present before business can be transacted.
<b>Reading</b>	The presentation of a bill before either house by reading the title thereof; a stage in the enactment of a bill.
<b>Referendum</b>	The method by which a measure adopted by a legislature may be submitted to popular vote.
<b>Rules</b>	The methods of procedure adopted by a body for its own governance.
<b>Session</b>	The period during which a legislature meets, set by each state’s constitution.
<b>Skeleton Bill</b>	In some states, a measure introduced in outline form, substance to be added at a later date.

<b>Table</b>	A motion to delay matters indefinitely. (Also “postpone”)
<b>Unicameral</b>	A legislature consisting of one house, such as in Nebraska or a city or county council.
<b>Veto</b>	The Executive’s formal disapproval of legislation. A bill can become law if an override vote is successful in each house of the legislature. In Congress, this requires a two-thirds majority.