



WASHINGTON LOW INCOME
Housing Alliance

Alliance for Justice: Bolder Advocacy
bolderadvocacy.org

BoardSource: Stand for Your Mission
standforyourmission.org

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is often used as an umbrella term for many different types of policy and political engagement. That can make things a little confusing. So here's a quick cheat sheet about the types of advocacy that are a part of the Stand for Your Mission campaign.

Broad Advocacy

All types of nonprofits are allowed to educate policymakers, the media, and the public about issues that are important to their mission, as long as it doesn't include information about specific candidates or pieces of legislation,

It's this type of advocacy that is the primary focus of the Stand for Your Mission Campaign.

Legislative Lobbying

Lobbying means working for or against a specific piece of legislation or ballot measure. Most nonprofits are allowed to engage in a limited amount of legislative lobbying, which can be a very important way to advance – or protect – your organization's mission and impact.

When there's a big decision being made that will affect your mission, you have a right and responsibility to weigh in. Don't waste it!

Election-Related Activities

Nonprofit organizations may engage in nonpartisan voter registration, education and turnout activities.

However, supporting or opposing a specific candidate (or set of candidates or a political party) is never allowed for 501(c)(3) organizations,* and is **not what we're describing as advocacy in the Stand for Your Mission campaign.**

* 501(c)(4), (c)(5) or (c)(6) organizations are allowed to participate in electioneering activities, but only as a secondary activity.

How can I make sure we're following the rules?

There is a lot of confusion about the rules and regulations around nonprofit advocacy, in part because the legal guidelines are different for different types of organizations.

	501(c)(3) Public Charities <i>(most nonprofits)</i>	501(c)(3) Private Foundations	501(c)(4) 501(c)(5) 501(c)(6)
Electioneering <i>Working for or against candidates or a political party.</i>	Prohibited	Prohibited	Allowed as a secondary activity. Must follow federal and state election law.
Legislative Lobbying <i>Working for or against specific pieces of legislation or ballot measures.</i>	Must be reported and within legal limits Use IRS Form 501(h) to simplify reporting.	Prohibited, except with specific exceptions	Unlimited
Broader Advocacy <i>Most things related to public education, research, and educating policymakers</i>	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited

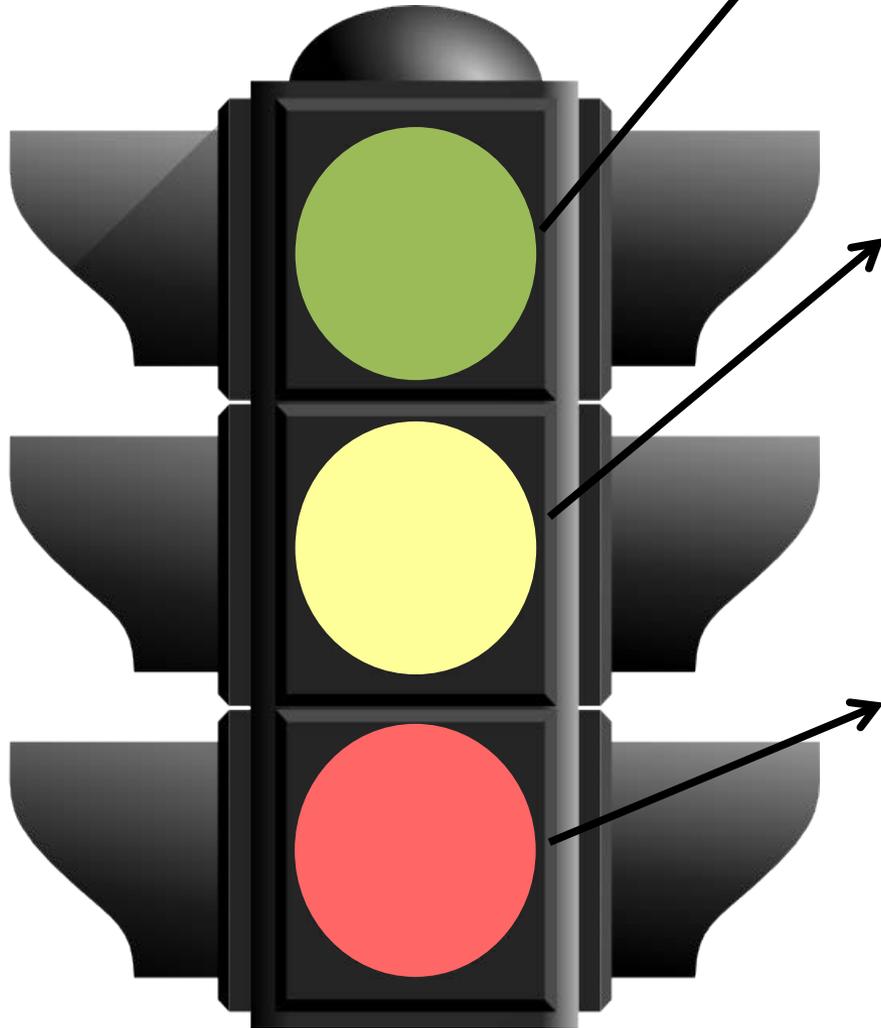
Lobbying limit using 501(h) election

Organization's Annual Expenditures	Overall Lobbying Limit
\$500,000 or less	20%
\$500,000 to \$1 million	\$100,000 + 15% of excess over \$500,000
\$1 million to \$1.5 million	\$175,000 + 10% of excess over \$1 million
\$1.5 million to \$17 million	\$225,000 + 5% of excess over \$1.5 million
Over \$17 million	\$1,000,000

*can spend up to 25% on grassroots lobbying

More Guidance for 501(c)(3) Charities

(not private foundations)



Definitely OK

- Educating the public and decision-makers about your work in a nonpartisan way
- Sharing information about how public dollars positively impact your work and your community
- Communicating how broader issues impact your mission and the people that you serve

OK, But Check the Fine Print*

- Voter education, registration and candidate forums
- Naming legislators who support (or oppose) a specific piece of legislation
- Limited lobbying on behalf of the organization
- Lobbying and campaigning as private citizens

Definitely Not OK

- Organizational support or opposition of a candidate or set of candidates
- Spending federal grant funds on lobbying

*Or just call the [Alliance for Justice!](#)