

8 Ways To Be An Effective Local History Advocate

- 1) Understand that most legislative advocacy is considered educational in nature. Unless you routinely spend time advocating for specific bills or government funding, you need not worry about registering as a lobbyist or doing some occasional lobbying activity. *Advocacy can be as simple as having a conversation.*
- 2) Start small, start local. Be active in your community with organizations like the Rotary or Kiwanis clubs. Your local elected leaders want to engage with other local leaders. Seek out leadership roles or find ways to engage in your local community groups.

- 3) Establish yourself and/or your organization as a trusted, credible source for community information. When people ask them community and/or local history questions, ensure that your elected leaders are thinking of you as the best source for information. Build the trust and earn it.



- 4) Invite your local elected leaders and their staff members to your events, especially tours. Make sure they and their staff are knowledgeable about your local history organization and the relevant information that helps them do their jobs more effectively. They value that local history information!
- 5) Get to know your local elected leaders well and don't ask them for anything in a first meeting. Even if they are not aligned with you politically, know what their priorities are, where they went to school, if they have school-aged kids or serve on state/local committees or nonprofit boards.
- 6) Try to think like a local elected leader. They are juggling a lot of responsibilities and need you to be concise. Instead of handing them a binder or sending them a lengthy e-mail, give them a one-pager or brochure. If they want more information, they will ask you for it.
- 7) Offer yourself to help them do their jobs more effectively. Can you supply useful information or help them solve a community problem? Can you testify in support of something they are working on? Establish that both you and your organization have relevant expertise –*be a trusted source.*
- 8) Take action. Attend the annual Statehood Day advocacy event at the Ohio Statehouse (usually around March 1). Find an experienced partner to help you feel more comfortable. Check ahead of time to schedule a visit. Build a relationship with staff members. Also, become knowledgeable about relevant local/state funding sources like the local bed tax, state capital budget, etc. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Sample letter to local elected official

Dear Commissioner/State Representative _____:

Congratulations on taking office recently as the new _____. I am writing today to introduce myself and the work of my local history-related organization.

The (organization) was established in (year) and has been serving our community ever since, ensuring that our local history and its many stories are preserved and made accessible forever for visitors and our local community.

You likely already know a great deal about our organization. We have many exciting plans underway for the future. I am interested in sharing this with you and giving you a behind-the-scenes tour of our building, too.

I look forward to working with you as a community leader moving forward. I will call your office in the next week or two to try to schedule a time for you to visit us. In the meantime, you can always feel free to contact me at (phone) or (email address).

Congratulations again. I look forward to some great conversations with you about (community name).

Sincerely,