

**Everett PTSA
Council
7.3**



Advocacy: What is it and why do we need it in our PTA?

Everett PTSA Council encourages you to add to or foster your PTA's advocacy efforts because advocacy is the foundation of PTA.

Advocacy means to speak up, plead a cause, or to make a case for another. It does not have to be complicated or scary.

The **Advocacy Chair** is the link between identifying a concern and seeing change enacted. He or she works to inform members about legislative issues; helps members determine our statewide platform; and helps members speak up when it matters most.

Does your PTA have an Advocacy Chair? If not, consider adding this position!

You and our PTA members advocate when:

- You *speak up* for your child to his/her teacher
- You *speak up* for changes in the curriculum at your school
- You *speak up* for a cross walk to make it safer for children to cross the street
- You *speak up* to reform the children's welfare system
- You *speak up* for any cause or change that will improve the lives of children

Key Advocacy/Legislative dates:

- **October 20 & 21, 2017- Legislative Assembly, Tacoma, WA.** PTA leaders and Advocacy chairs from across WA will come together to vote on new Resolutions, By-Law amendments, and additional supporting issues for the next year. The Advocacy chair is responsible for distributing the survey of legislative issues to members ahead of the meeting and reporting back to members following the meeting. The top 5 platform issues are the issues that the WSPTA spends time and money helping to move thru the legislative process to become laws or policies at the State level.
- **Date TBD- Focus Day, Olympia, WA.** PTA leaders and Advocacy chairs will meet to learn more about specific legislative issues impacting children in the State of WA.

Important information regarding PTA promoting candidates or school bond/levies is on page 2.

Check out our website at: <http://www.everettptsacouncil.org> and look for us on Facebook- Everett PTSA Council 7.3

Questions? Contact Kim Kuhne, Everett Council Advocacy Chair, at kimkuhne@hotmail.com
Interested in having a 10-minute Advocacy presentation at your local PTA meeting? Please contact Kim Kuhne at kimkuhne@hotmail.com to coordinate a time.

Important information about PTA Bylaws regarding promoting candidates and/or supporting bonds and levies:

PROMOTING CANDIDATES:

Federal law prohibits a 501(c)(3) organization from engaging in any activities in support of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. This prohibition is reflected in Article III of the WSPTA Uniform Bylaws, which states in Article 2: "The organization or members in their official capacities shall not- directly or indirectly – participate or intervene (in any way, including the publishing or distributing of statements) in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office."

This means that there can be no connection between your PTA and any political party or candidate for public office, including candidates for school board positions. You may sponsor a candidate forum to which all candidates have been invited and are given equal "air time" and which an impartial moderator runs. Examples of Prohibited Activities:

- You may not make contributions to candidates for public office (including "in kind" donations such as staff or volunteer time or use of facilities).
- You may not publish or distribute statements in a political campaign.
- You may not endorse a candidate.
- You may not use school facilities to produce materials that support or oppose a ballot measure, unless the district offers printing services on an equal access, nondiscriminatory basis to others.
- You may not print or distribute materials promoting a ballot measure in the school newsletter.
- You may not use a school or district sponsored event to promote or oppose a candidate or a ballot measure.

SUPPORTING BALLOT MEASURES SUCH AS BONDS AND LEVIES:

A PTA may take a stand on a ballot measure (such as school levy or bond), a legislative bill, initiative, or a referendum. The following information is provided to assist in this process.

- A formal position regarding a ballot measure can be taken by the general membership of the PTA
- It is best practice to have important ballot measure decisions made by the general membership
- The issue can be included on the agenda as an "action item" at a regularly scheduled meeting or a special meeting. To fulfill legal requirements of notice, ten days notice of the meeting must be given to all members/board members.
- Best practices would be to present both the "pro" and "con" positions of any issue to the body making the decision to support/oppose.
- Any communication which is persuasive in nature cannot be sent through school district property. This includes "kid mail" (flyers sent home with students), electronic methods which use district email/websites, or flyers posted/circulated on school property. A PTA newsletter may contain a meeting summary which includes the position taken, if a meeting summary is customarily included in newsletters throughout the year. PTAs may send persuasive information to members regarding the position taken, and supporting materials via U.S. postal mail.

Does a local unit need to take the same position as the Washington State PTA? No, as individual 501c-3 or c-4 organizations, each PTA has the ability to take their own position on this or any other public policy issue of importance. Each local unit PTA may be impacted differently by the issue, and therefore can make a determination based on what is best for their community.

Do the members need to vote on an issue? While the board of directors can take a stand on an issue, they are accountable to the membership; therefore, it is recommended that issues go to the members for a vote whenever possible. This can occur at a regular general meeting or a specially called general meeting.

What position can a local unit take? A local unit or council may support, oppose, or choose to take no position.

Can a PTA contribute funds to a bond/levy or initiative/referendum campaign? If the members wish to do so, a local unit or council may contribute monetarily to a campaign within the following guidelines.

- The funds may not constitute a substantial portion of the PTA budget- the general rule is that total yearly funds spent on lobbying activities may not exceed 3-5% of the total yearly PTA expenditures.
- There is a line item in the budget for such activities.
- If the line item exists, the board of directors and/or membership may vote to allocate funds from the budget.

For more information, visit http://www.wastatepta.org/advocacy/leg_basics/PTAsTakingPositions05.pdf