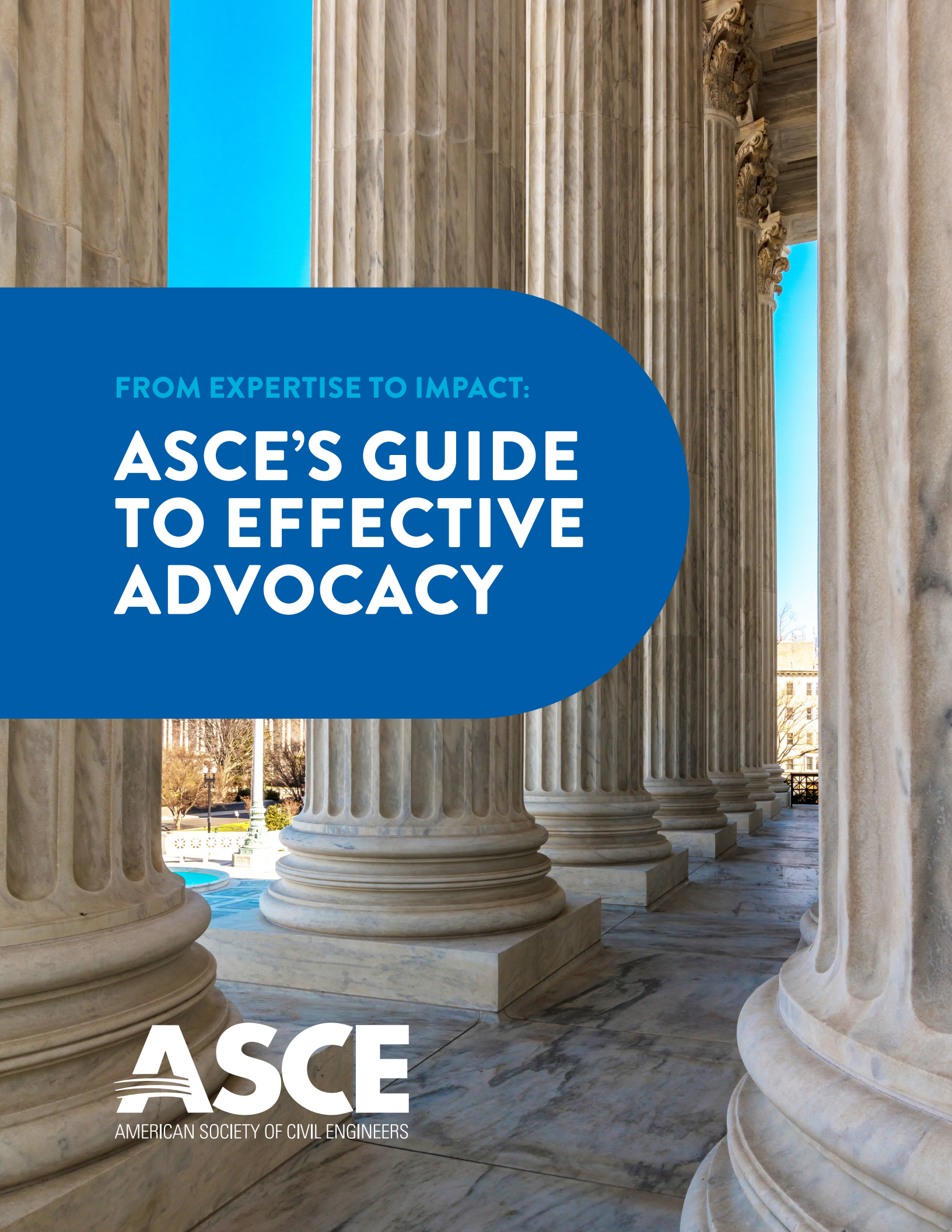




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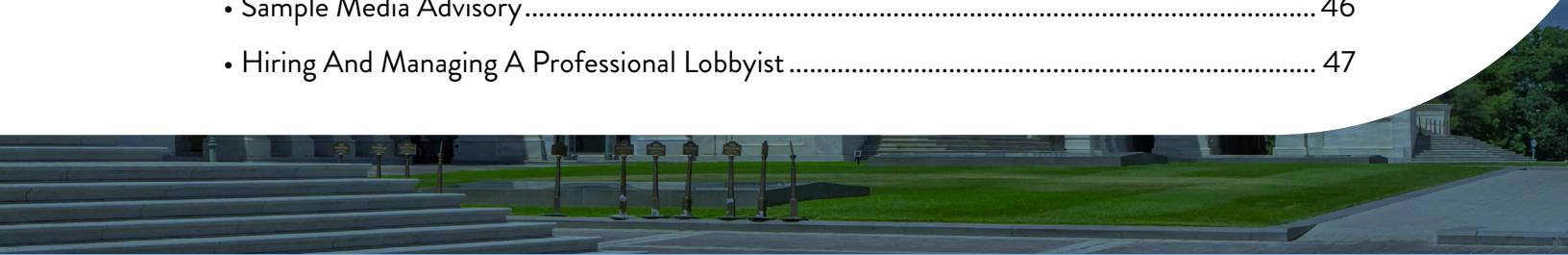
ASCE'S GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

ASCE
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

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ABOUT ASCE

The American Society of Civil Engineers, founded in 1852, is the country's oldest national civil engineering organization. It represents more than 160,000 civil engineers in private practice, government, industry, and academia who are dedicated to advancing the science and the profession of civil engineering, and protecting public health, safety, and welfare.

INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to help ASCE leaders across the United States establish and strengthen their advocacy efforts with their elected officials in Washington, D.C., state capitols, and local city halls. It's time to elevate the voice of civil engineers in the public policy process which affects vital infrastructure systems.

Civil engineers play a critical role in shaping the future of our communities. From roads, bridges, airports, and tunnels to buildings, water systems, and waste management facilities, our profession delivers solutions that enhance public safety, economic prosperity, and quality of life. Because government policies significantly influence how infrastructure is planned, funded, and maintained, civil engineers have an opportunity and responsibility to contribute their expertise to the policymaking process.

ASCE members are uniquely positioned to provide the knowledge and perspective needed to develop effective public policies. Even when policymakers do not specifically seek input, they benefit from hearing directly from engineering professionals who understand the challenges and opportunities facing their communities.

To fulfill our commitment to protecting public health, safety, and welfare, engineers must engage at all levels of government. By sharing technical knowledge and real-world experience, civil engineers can help policymakers make informed decisions that benefit communities for generations.

For many professionals, navigating public policy and advocacy may seem unfamiliar or difficult. Yet elected officials and their staffs value credible, practical perspectives from constituents and subject matter experts. While policymakers face a wide range of competing priorities, they are often eager to hear from engineers who can provide insight on infrastructure challenges and solutions.

You're not alone. ASCE Government Relations and Infrastructure Initiatives (GRII) is here every step of the way with you in your advocacy work. You can engage with whatever level of advocacy you can feel comfortable with — ranging from attending specialized trainings and briefings, emailing your elected officials on infrastructure issues through ASCE's Key Alerts, collaborating with ASCE Media Relations for news interviews and articles, to strategizing talking points for meeting with your elected officials, and more.

Before diving in, make sure to check out ASCE GRII's outreach protocols in this guide's appendix. ASCE wants to ensure that all communications with policymakers and the media are coordinated with ASCE staff. Examples include:

- ▶ **Flag any received calls, emails, letters, and memos from federal, state, or local policymakers to GRII staff**
- ▶ **Loop in GRII to all testimony, comments on federal, state, or local regulations, letters to federal, state, or local policymakers and other communications on policy-related matters.**
- ▶ **Contact Media Relations staff if a newspaper, radio station, TV station, magazine, online publications media website, internet blogger, podcast, and/or trade publication reaches out for an interview.**
- ▶ **Coordinate news releases, press statements, advisories, letters and op-eds, guest blog posts or columns, pitch calls with the Media Relations team.**
- ▶ **When in doubt, reach out to govwash@asce.org and mediarelations@asce.org!**

ASCE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVES: YOUR ADVOCACY RESOURCE AND PARTNER

ASCE GRII serves as a valuable resource for Sections, Branches, and individual members seeking to advance civil engineering priorities through effective advocacy. Whether you are just beginning to engage in public policy or have an established advocacy program, ASCE provides the expertise, tools, and support needed to amplify your voice and influence decision-makers.

One of ASCE's most valuable contributions is the development of critical, data-driven reports and resources that help members communicate the importance of infrastructure investment and sound public policy. These include the *Report Card for America's Infrastructure*, which assesses the condition and performance of the nation's infrastructure systems; the *Pathways to Resilient Communities* toolkit, which helps communities improve resilience and preparedness; the *Bridging the Gap* study, which highlights infrastructure funding and investment needs; and state-specific Infrastructure Report Cards that provide localized data and recommendations. These resources offer credible, nonpartisan information that can strengthen conversations with policymakers, stakeholders, and the public.



In addition to information and analysis, ASCE provides hands-on advocacy support. GRII staff can assist Sections and Branches with drafting legislative testimony, preparing comments on proposed regulations and policies, and developing advocacy strategies. The team also offers training programs that help members understand the policymaking process, communicate effectively with elected officials, and become confident advocates for the profession.

To support outreach efforts, ASCE can help create customized advocacy materials, including concise one-page issue briefs, fact sheets, talking points, and other resources that clearly communicate key messages to decision-makers. These materials help ensure that civil engineers present a consistent, credible, and impactful voice on important public policy issues.

Most importantly, ASCE GRII is available as a partner throughout the advocacy process. Whether you have a question about legislation, need assistance preparing for a meeting with a policymaker, or are looking for guidance on a specific issue, the message is simple: **When in doubt, reach out.** ASCE GRII is ready to support ASCE members nationwide in advancing the engineering perspective and making a positive impact on public policy.

UNDERSTANDING THE ADVOCACY SPECTRUM

What exactly is advocacy? **Advocacy is any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others.** Advocacy is critical to make sure your voice is heard on issues that are important to you, protect and promote your rights, and have your views and wishes genuinely considered by your elected officials when decisions are being made about your lives.

ADVOCACY AS A SPECTRUM



Think of advocacy as a spectrum. Often, advocacy is mistakenly assumed to be just lobbying. Advocacy includes traditional activities such as litigation, lobbying, and public education. It can also include capacity building, relationship building, forming networks, and leadership development.

Case Study: Ohio Leader's Engagement Spans the Advocacy Spectrum

Ohio Congressman Bob Latta (R-OH5) stopped by the Lucas County Engineer's office to learn more about ditch projects that are helping to improve water quality and help mitigate flooding in its local communities. ASCE leader Mike Pniewski, P.E., P.S. led a presentation on two-stage ditches and gave Congressman Latta a tour of a completed project at Smith Ditch in Sylvania Township. Previously, Pniewski submitted a letter to the editor for the *Toledo Blade* calling for Ohio's federal delegation to support the National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy Act, which led to the congressman reaching out and scheduling a visit. To this day, Rep. Latta's office reaches out to Pniewski for insight on infrastructure policy.



Your expertise matters. Your perspective is valuable. And your engagement can make a lasting difference. By participating in public policy and advocacy efforts, civil engineers can help ensure that sound engineering principles guide the decisions that shape our infrastructure, our communities, and our future. Let's get started.

LOBBYING IS NOT A DIRTY WORD

The American general public holds a negative perception about lobbyists and lobbying. Pew Research Center polling shows that 84% of Americans say that “special interest groups and lobbyists have too much say in what happens in politics”. However, what exactly is lobbying?

Webster’s dictionary defines lobbying as “the process of attempting to influence or sway (a public official) toward a desired action.” The average legislator does not always have the expertise to make informed decisions on complex scientific, engineering, or technical issues so your role as credible source of information and advocate on issues affecting civil engineers and Infrastructure is encouraged and needed.

It is important to remind your fellow engineers and colleagues that it is appropriate and necessary to attempt to influence public policy. The First Amendment of the United States Constitution affirms “the right of the people ... to petition the government for redress of grievances.” Americans today continue to exercise this right, lobbying for causes in which they believe.

RULES OF THE ROAD

ASCE operates as a 501c3 tax-exempt organization. This tax-exempt status is governed by federal law as well as the rules and regulations issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Among other things, these rules, which are often complicated and nuanced, control what political activities ASCE can engage in. The following section is not intended to be an exhaustive guide to what is permissible under IRS regulations. It is meant to be a primer to help you avoid common pitfalls and challenges that may arise in your advocacy on behalf of ASCE.

NONPROFIT STATUS

In return for its tax-exempt status, the federal government bars a 501c3 organization from engaging in political campaigns. The provision, sometimes called the Johnson Amendment, explicitly states that charitable nonprofits may “not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.” The contribution of funding or assets by a 501c3 to a candidate for public office is also strictly prohibited.

If a 501c3 is determined to have engaged in partisan campaign activities, IRS regulations stipulate that the organization lose its tax-exempt status.

LOBBYING AS A 501C3

Under federal law, 501c3s are permitted to engage in advocacy. Lobbying and legislative activities, a small subset of advocacy, are not the same as political campaign activity. Lobbying specifically refers to activities that communicate with decision makers about existing legislation and urging a vote for or against. 501c3s are allowed to lobby as long as the organization does not expend more than an “insubstantial” amount of its energy, finances, or other resources towards lobbying. 501c3s engaging in “substantial” amounts of lobbying may be exposed to IRS penalties.

Certain activities or expenditures may not be prohibited depending on the facts and circumstances. For example, certain voter education activities (including presenting public forums and publishing voter education guides) conducted in a non-partisan manner do not constitute prohibited political campaign activity. In addition, other activities intended to encourage people to participate in the electoral process, such as voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives, would not be prohibited political campaign activity if conducted in a non-partisan manner.

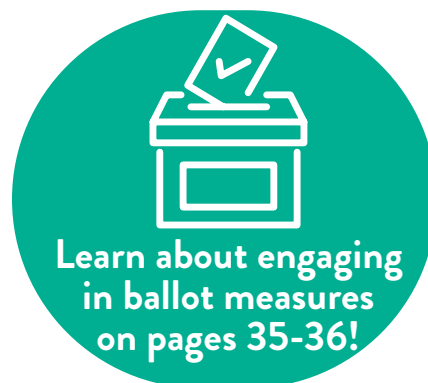
On the other hand, voter education or registration activities with evidence of bias that (a) would favor one candidate over another; (b) oppose a candidate in some manner; or (c) have the effect of favoring a candidate or group of candidates, will constitute prohibited participation or intervention.

If you are interested in learning more what political and campaign activities are allowed for 501c3s, the IRS publishes a free resources help you navigate this and other issues common to 501c3s.

- ▶ [Political Campaigns and Charities: The Ban on Political Campaign Intervention](#)
- ▶ [The Restriction of Political Campaign Intervention by Section 501\(c\)\(3\) Tax-Exempt Organizations, Internal Revenue Service](#)
- ▶ [How to lose your 501\(c\)\(3\) tax-exempt status \(without really trying\), Internal Revenue Service](#)

VOTER AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

501c3s are permitted to engage in nonpartisan voter registration and voter and civic engagement activities, which are not considered partisan campaign activities or lobbying. ASCE and other 501c3s play an important role in helping to educate the public about issues that affect the community and those served, such as through voter education activities and candidate forums.



GET INVOLVED IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

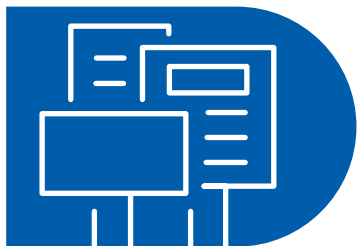
Campaigning is an integral part of life for elected officials, who are essentially running for re-election almost from the day after they are elected. Elected officials and candidates for elective office are constantly looking for volunteer assistance with their campaigns. This assistance can range from mundane but necessary tasks like stuffing envelopes and putting up yard signs to writing policy papers on specific issues. When ASCE members find candidates and elected officials who share common beliefs, they should consider helping with their campaigns.

Remember, ASCE is a 501c3 tax-exempt organization, and by law is not allowed to support or oppose candidates for election. **Campaign activities may only be undertaken by ASCE members acting in their individual capacities, not in their capacities as ASCE members or officers.** No ASCE resources (including those of Sections and Branches) may be used to support any candidate's campaign for office. Failure to abide by these rules can have extremely serious consequences for ASCE, including the Society losing its tax-exempt status. If you have any questions regarding these rules, what is and is not permissible, please contact the ASCE Government Relations Department.

Despite laws governing ASCE's involvement in campaigns, nothing prohibits individual ASCE members from supporting the candidate of their choice with their own time and money. In fact, all citizens should exercise their rights and participate in election campaigns. Running for and winning elected office is a difficult job, and candidates rely on the support of like-minded individuals to win. If engineers want to keep supporters of the profession in elected office, they need to support their campaigns.



Here are some of the ways to get involved in a campaign as an individual outside of ASCE:



Volunteer in a General Capacity.

It may not be as exciting or glamorous as many other kinds of work, but the nuts-and-bolts essentials of a campaign have to get done for the candidate to be elected. Candidates rely on volunteers for everything from answering phones and stuffing envelopes to putting up yard signs and handing out literature door-to-door. If approached correctly, it can also be a lot of fun. Think of this as an opportunity to educate people about important issues and do your part to improve the community.



Volunteer in a Policy Capacity.

Candidates typically have policy positions on a wide range of issues. To refine and publicize these issues, they often produce position papers, fact sheets, and press releases on issues about which you have expertise. After getting to know a candidate, perhaps by working with the campaign in a more general way, you may earn the opportunity to assist the candidate in developing or refining positions on issues such as transportation, water quality, waste disposal, and other civil engineering related issues. Often, candidates need assistance in areas with which they are not completely familiar.



Get Friends and Section Members to Volunteer.

The more, the merrier. Either on an ongoing basis, or as a day-long event, this can be a way for your Section to get together while working for a worthwhile goal. Remember: While this cannot be an official ASCE event, there is nothing wrong with friends getting together for a common goal.



Make a Financial Contribution.

There's no way around it - running for office is expensive. Most candidates can't afford to finance their campaigns by themselves, and they rely on supporters for campaign contributions. Whatever you desire to give to a candidate as an individual, any personal donation will be appreciated by that candidate.

If you have questions about whether a certain activity constitutes lobbying or could be a violation of the Society's standing as a 501c3 organization, please contact ASCE GR11 or Legal Departments for clarification.

KEY CONTACTS

Key Contacts is ASCE's premier grassroots advocacy program that empowers civil engineers in the United States to engage effectively in the legislative process. Free for all ASCE members, Key Contacts receive timely messages called Key Alerts on legislation or regulations affecting infrastructure policy nationwide and can easily communicate with elected officials through pre-drafted messages. Key Contacts also gain access to exclusive webinars and resources, like ASCE's state and local ballot measure tracker monitoring how voters directly decide on any proposed transportation, infrastructure, or public works project, policy, or funding issue.

The program also offers advocacy training, resources for building relationships with lawmakers, leadership opportunities at the state and federal levels, and participation in ASCE's annual Legislative Fly-In in Washington, D.C. Beyond influencing public policy, Key Contacts develop valuable leadership and communication skills through networking, coalition building, public engagement, and advocacy activities, while helping foster a strong culture of advocacy within the profession.

KEY ALERTS

ASCE Government Relations also helps members stay informed about legislative and regulatory developments through custom Key Contact Alerts and updates tailored to state and local issues. These alerts provide timely information on emerging policy matters and identify opportunities for members to take action when their expertise is needed. Each Key Alert includes a pre-written, customizable email or phone script that you can send directly to your local lawmakers or staff with just a few clicks. Key Alert topics often cover policy priorities like infrastructure funding, professional licensure, building codes and standards, and more.

Sections and Branches can send their own custom state and local Key Alerts by collaborating with ASCE GRII. When you send a Key Alert, make sure you include four things:

1. Information about the issue
2. Why it is important to ASCE
3. The status of the legislation
4. Who to contact and how to contact them

ADVOCACY CAPTAINS

ASCE Advocacy Captains are Key Contacts who serve a formal volunteer role with the ASCE GRII team. Advocacy Captains create a tight information loop between the Captains and ASCE's lobbying, infrastructure initiatives, and grassroots efforts. Captains serve to strengthen the state and federal government relations program by working with staff to support new and existing Section and Branch efforts at the state capital and forge relationships with Members of Congress and their staff.

However, this program does not supplant the government relations or legislative affairs structure of a Region, Section or Branch. Captains exist to enhance the current program by creating a consistent point of contact with ASCE's Washington, D.C. office and a point person to rally members at the grassroots level to aid in the advocacy efforts of Regions, Sections, or Branches.

LEGISLATIVE FLY-IN

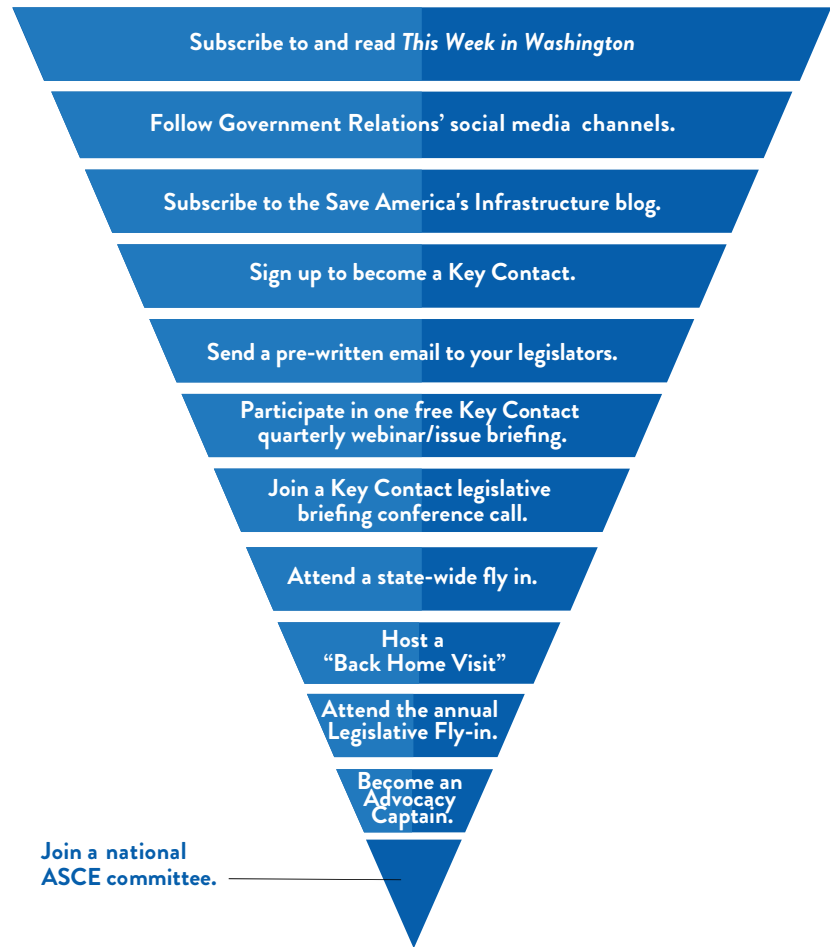
ASCE's annual fly-in in Washington, D.C. provides an opportunity for our members to network with fellow civil engineers as well as industry and thought leaders, meet with Members of Congress, and make a real difference on the issues that matter most to the profession. Timed purposefully each Spring, Members of Congress are having committee hearings, sometimes even votes, on key pieces of legislation affecting the civil engineer profession as well as working through the annual budget process.

The Fly-in offers Key Contacts two days of intense legislative engagement training. The content covered over the course of the two days includes reinforcing the skills needed to meet with Members of Congress, keynote addresses by policymakers, and presentations by public policy experts on the topics that attendees will carry to Capitol Hill. The program concludes with an afternoon of Congressional Meetings, which are scheduled by our vendor Advocacy Associates.

GETTING STARTED AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Rome was not built in a day, and neither should your advocacy work. Ease yourself by embedding advocacy in your day-to-day life. By following ASCE's engagement pyramid, you will find the process more organic.

1. Keep up to date on current federal and state legislative action and other GRII resources and events with *This Week in Washington*. This quick-to-read newsletter is published every Friday. Subscribe in your membership communication preferences.
2. Follow ASCE GRII to stay on top of featured media stories on X (@ASCEGovRel), Instagram (@asce_govrel), and Facebook (@ASCEGovRel).
3. Subscribe to ASCE's Infrastructure Report Card blog for quick and easy-to-read breakdowns on trending policy and infrastructure solutions.
4. Sign up as a Key Contact and receive direct Key Alerts on any legislative and regulatory action in your state, register for Key Contact webinars, and be eligible to join ASCE GRII and fellow Key Contacts nationwide in Washington, D.C. at ASCE's annual Legislative Fly-In.
5. While any Key Alerts affecting your community will be sent directly to you, visit ASCE's Action Center, a one-stop grassroots shop curated by ASCE, to contact your elected officials on key issues affecting the civil engineering profession.
6. Register for Key Contact webinars, an exclusive benefit, that are deep dives on ASCE federal and state priorities, as well as advocacy best practices, case studies, and post-election digests.
7. Coordinate with your ASCE Region and Section to participate in a "drive-in" to the state capital to establish a strong network of elected officials and fellow ASCE members who can act as advocates.
8. Meet with a Member of Congress or state legislator in their home district – one of the best and the most direct ways of conveying your support for a particular issue. Let ASCE GRII know your interest in support and resources setting up your meeting.
9. Apply to attend ASCE's annual Legislative Fly-In to meet with their Members of Congress or their senior legislative staff in Washington, D.C. and advance the Society's collective policy priorities while learning beneficial leadership skills they can bring back to the workplace.



GETTING STARTED AS A SECTION AND BRANCH

ASCE Sections and Branches can play a meaningful role in shaping public policy, elevating the civil engineering profession, and strengthening your impact within the community by establishing a state government relations program. While every successful program evolves over time, the key is to begin with a clear vision, enthusiastic leadership, and a commitment to building relationships. The following steps will help you create a strong foundation for long-term success.

IDENTIFY A GOVERNMENT RELATIONS CHAMPION

Look for someone who enjoys collaborating with others, has an interest in public affairs, and is eager to learn about the legislative process. The ideal candidate is a relationship-builder who understands the value of teamwork, partnership, and consensus. This person will help connect engineers with elected officials, attend policy discussions and legislative hearings, and inspire fellow ASCE members to become involved in advocacy activities.

Most importantly, seek someone who is passionate about advancing the civil engineering profession and making a positive difference in public policy. Every Section and Branch has talented members with the potential to become outstanding advocates. Often, they are simply waiting for the opportunity to step forward and lead.

Remember, your champion will not be working alone. Resources from ASCE staff are available to help Sections and Branches sustain an effective advocacy program. In many Sections and Branches, there is already a core group of members ready to contribute once a leader brings everyone together.

One of the most important steps is selecting a leader to guide your government relations efforts. While your committee may begin with a single volunteer, that individual can serve as a powerful catalyst for engagement and growth.

COLLABORATE WITH ASCE ADVOCACY CAPTAINS

In most states, ASCE already has identified leaders for you, ASCE Advocacy Captains. For example, you may decide as a Section or a Branch to conquer and divide advocacy responsibilities, with the ASCE Advocacy Captain handling federal advocacy and policy tracking and coordination and other champions to run point on state and local issues and coordinate with the Section and Branch boards.

BUILD A GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Successful advocacy is always a team effort. Once you have identified a leader, consider forming a Government Relations Committee to support the Section and Branch's goals and expand its reach.

Recruit volunteers through newsletters, meetings, and personal outreach. Even a small committee can significantly enhance your Section and Branch's effectiveness by sharing responsibilities and bringing diverse perspectives on policy discussions.

Whenever possible, strive for representation from across the profession, including members from private practice, public agencies, academia, and a variety of technical disciplines such as transportation, structural engineering, water resources, environmental engineering, and sustainable infrastructure.

A diverse committee provides valuable expertise and ensures that your Section and Branch is prepared to address a wide range of emerging issues. It also creates opportunities for members to learn from one another and develop their leadership skills.

CREATE A GOVERNMENT RELATIONS MISSION STATEMENT

A clear mission statement helps focus your efforts and keeps the committee aligned on priorities. Consider asking members what issues matter most to them and where they would like to see the Section make an impact. A concise mission statement of just a few sentences can serve as a guiding framework for all future advocacy activities.

Potential activities may include:

- ▶ Monitoring legislation and policy developments that affect civil engineers.
- ▶ Keeping members informed about regulatory and legislative changes.
- ▶ Building relationships between engineers and elected officials.
- ▶ Providing technical expertise on proposed legislation and regulations.
- ▶ Participating in coalitions and partnerships that support shared goals.
- ▶ Encouraging the appointment of qualified engineers to public boards, commissions, and advisory positions.

FOCUS ON PRIORITY ISSUES

One of the best ways to achieve meaningful results is to focus on a manageable number of priorities. Each year, ASCE identifies key public policy issues that affect the profession and the communities that civil engineers serve and produces policy statements on ASCE's stance. However, with over 175 policy statements and fast-moving legislative and regulatory environments, ASCE GRII looks to ASCE Membership in helping to set its U.S. advocacy issues to inform ASCE GRII lobbying efforts. Each summer a survey is sent to all U.S.-based ASCE members requesting their input. Traditionally, responses are then ranked with the top 5-8 issues becoming the "ASCE U.S. advocacy priorities". The priorities are approved by the Public Policy and Practice Committee and ultimately the Board of Direction.

While rankings may vary by year, the ASCE U.S. Advocacy Priorities (in alphabetical order) are:

1. Climate and hazards mitigation (codes and standards, adaptation, pre-disaster mitigation, etc.)
2. Cybersecurity (keeping critical infrastructure systems secure)
3. Energy grid (generation, distribution, and transmission, etc.)
4. Environmental stewardship (solid waste, hazardous waste)
5. Professional practice (artificial intelligence, qualifications-based selection, licensure, construction, procurement, taxation of services, etc.)
6. Transportation (aviation, bridges, ports, rail, roads, and transit)
7. Water infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater)
8. Water resources (dams, inland waterways, and levees)

These priorities provide an excellent starting point for Sections developing their advocacy programs. ASCE GRII recognizes every state faces unique challenges and opportunities. Your Section and Branch should identify issues that are especially relevant to your members and local communities. Whether the focus is infrastructure investment, resilience, transportation, water resources, workforce development, or sustainable growth, engineers have valuable expertise to contribute.

As a committee, answer the following questions:

- ▶ What is an issue affecting our state and/or community that we are uniquely qualified to move the needle on?
- ▶ Why is the issue urgent?
- ▶ Who is most affected by this issue?
- ▶ Who are the decisionmakers involved in this issue?
- ▶ Who are the groups already involved in this issue?
- ▶ What are the solutions?
- ▶ What resources do we have available to tackle this issue?

For a new program, concentrating on one or two key issues is often the most effective approach. A focused effort allows volunteers to build expertise, develop relationships, and achieve early successes. As the committee gains experience and momentum, it can gradually expand its involvement into additional policy areas.

Remember, effective advocacy is not about addressing every issue at once. It is about making a meaningful impact where your knowledge and expertise can provide the greatest value. By starting small, staying focused, and building on successes, your Section and Branch can establish a respected and influential voice in state and local government affairs.

STRATEGICALLY IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE ADVOCACY TARGETS

Successful advocacy begins with identifying the individuals who can influence the outcome of your issue and understanding what motivates them. Taking time to research your target helps tailor your message, build meaningful relationships, and maximize your effectiveness.

- ▶ **Learn About Your Target's Background.** Understanding a decision-maker's professional, educational, and community background can provide valuable insight into the issues they may prioritize. Identifying common interests or connections can help establish credibility and create opportunities for productive conversations. Consider questions such as:
 - What profession or career did they have before entering public service?
 - Do they have experience related to infrastructure, transportation, public works, business, environmental issues, or education?
 - What communities or constituencies do they represent?
 - What issues have they championed throughout their career?
- ▶ **Review Their Record on Civil Engineering and Infrastructure Issues.** A target's past actions often provide the best indication of future priorities. Understanding whether a policymaker is supportive, undecided, or opposed allows you to adjust your advocacy strategy accordingly. Research:
 - Voting records on infrastructure, transportation, water resources, resiliency, sustainability, and workforce development initiatives.
 - Sponsorship or support of legislation affecting the engineering profession.
 - Public statements, newsletters, press releases, and social media posts related to infrastructure and community development.
 - Participation in projects or initiatives that align with ASCE priorities.

- ▶ **Assess Their Leadership and Influence.** Not all decision-makers have equal influence over an issue. A legislator who serves on a transportation, appropriations, environmental, or public works committee may be especially important for civil engineering advocacy efforts.

Pay particular attention to:

- Committee chairs and vice chairs.
- Leadership positions within legislative bodies.
- Membership on committees with jurisdiction over your issue.
- Roles within local government, regulatory agencies, or professional commissions.
- Informal influence among colleagues and stakeholders.

- ▶ **Identify Trusted Organizations and Influencers.** Understanding who influences your target can help strengthen your message. These relationships often reveal shared priorities and can identify potential advocacy partners or coalition opportunities.

Consider:

- Professional associations and industry groups that have recognized the individual.
- Community organizations, chambers of commerce, and civic groups with which they are affiliated.
- Awards, endorsements, or public recognition they have received.
- Coalitions and stakeholder groups they regularly engage with.

- ▶ **Turning Research into Action.** After gathering this information, categorize your targets based on their level of influence and support:

- **Champions:** Allies who already support your position and can help advance your issue.
- **“Persuade-ables”:** Individuals who may be receptive to facts, technical expertise, and constituent input.
- **Decision-Makers:** Key leaders whose actions will directly affect the outcome.
- **Influencers:** Staff, coalition partners, and community leaders who can shape the decision-maker’s perspective.

By understanding who your targets are, what they value, and how they make decisions, civil engineers can deliver more relevant, effective advocacy messages and become trusted technical resources for policymakers.

DETERMINE YOUR SECTION AND BRANCH'S ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Once you've established your committee leaders, policy priorities and asks, and your intended targets, now it's time to set your course of action. A straightforward way to frame which advocacy options you want to pursue by revisiting ASCE's advocacy spectrum.

ADVOCACY OPTIONS



EDUCATION

- If invited or requested by a state legislative committee, present on the report card findings to provide expert testimony or technical assistance.
- Explain the executive summary or a specific chapter finding and its recommendations to a community leader, e.g. local chamber of commerce; industry group like county highway association or water utility association; or Local League of Women Voters.
- Submit public comments to proposed regulation that impacts report card findings and recommendations.



MEDIA OUTREACH & P.R.

- Submit local opinion editorials to at least two local media outlets. Submit letters to the editor on at least two local stories related to infrastructure covered by local media.
- Reach out to your local public radio station and pitch a story on the state report card findings.
- Reach out to your local news station and pitch a story on the state report card findings.



All correspondence or any other written or verbal contact with the media initiated by the member should be coordinated first with ASCE Media Relations.



RESEARCH

Collect state and local infrastructure stories by congressional district that help illustrate your state report card findings. Reach out to state and local agencies on how to be a partner in making more publicly available data.



ORGANIZING

- Promote an infrastructure ballot measure to address a state report card recommendation.
- Introduce a ballot measure to address a state report card recommendation.
- Host a candidate forum – making sure to invite all actively running candidates – for a discussion around infrastructure issues.



COALITION & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

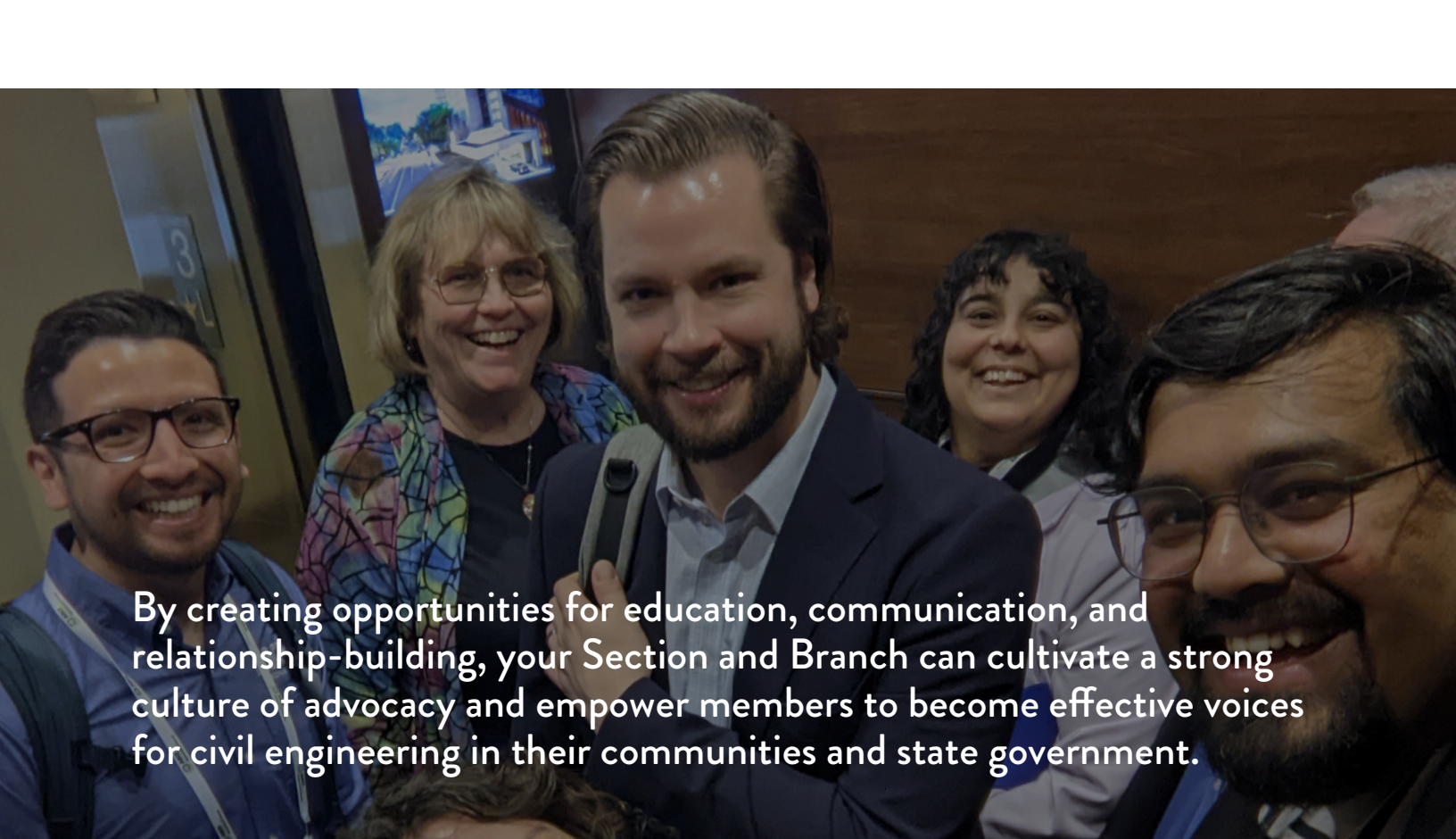
- Invite two or more state and/or local partners, e.g. your state's American Council of Engineering Companies Member Organization or your state's American Public Works Association chapter, to an ASCE Section meeting to discuss the report card recommendations and brainstorm ways to implement them.
- Host a community forum with partners, decision makers, and community members on the state report card findings and related community issues.



LOBBYING

- Meet with a state legislator's office in-person or virtually and share the report card findings with them.
- Voluntarily present on the report card findings to a state legislative committee.
- Host a state legislative day at your state capital.
- In partnership with a state legislator, draft and introduce bill to address a report card recommendation.

Think of your advocacy activities as a marathon relay and not a sprint. Make sure to select the activity that makes the most sense with your energy, capacity, and resources as a team.



By creating opportunities for education, communication, and relationship-building, your Section and Branch can cultivate a strong culture of advocacy and empower members to become effective voices for civil engineering in their communities and state government.

ENGAGE AND INSPIRE YOUR MEMBERSHIP

A successful state government relations program thrives when members feel informed, empowered, and connected to the advocacy process. Section and Branch leaders play an important role in fostering that engagement by communicating the value of advocacy and creating opportunities for members to participate in meaningful ways.

Regular communication is key. Use your Section or Branch newsletter, website, social media platforms, and email updates to highlight committee accomplishments, share important legislative developments, and showcase opportunities for member involvement. Consistent updates help members understand how public policy impacts the civil engineering profession and demonstrate the positive difference advocacy can make.

One of the most effective ways to spark interest is to invite legislators, policymakers, or government officials to speak at Section and Branch meetings and events. These conversations provide members with valuable insights into the policymaking process while helping build relationships with decision-makers. Hearing directly from elected officials about how engineers can effectively engage in advocacy often helps members feel more comfortable and confident about participating in public policy efforts.

To further build advocacy skills and enthusiasm, consider hosting a Government Relations University (GRU) program. These complimentary workshops provide a practical and engaging introduction to government relations and public policy advocacy. Designed specifically for ASCE Sections and Branches, GRUs offer participants hands-on guidance for interacting with policymakers, communicating technical expertise, and becoming effective advocates for the profession. ASCE GRU staff can either travel to the host location to facilitate the training or conduct the training virtually, making it an excellent opportunity to strengthen your Section and Branch's advocacy capacity and develop future leaders.

By creating opportunities for education, communication, and relationship-building, your Section and Branch can cultivate a strong culture of advocacy and empower members to become effective voices for civil engineering in their communities and state government.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Whichever advocacy activities you decide to pursue, relationship building is one of the most important factors in successful advocacy and government relations work. The connections you establish today can create opportunities for meaningful dialogue and influence well into the future. While meeting with elected officials may seem intimidating at first, it is important to remember that legislators and local leaders want to hear from the people they represent. They rely on constituents to help them understand the issues affecting their communities and to provide real-world perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing their districts.

Volunteer members have a unique role to play in this process. Policymakers frequently need credible, unbiased information, particularly on complex technical issues such as infrastructure investment, resilience, public safety, and economic development. As engineers and industry professionals, ASCE members serve as trusted resources by sharing data, expertise, and tools such as the National Report Card for America's Infrastructure and state or local infrastructure report cards. This information helps policymakers make informed decisions and better understand the long-term impact of infrastructure policies.

Strong relationships are built over time, not just when an issue arises. By proactively engaging with elected officials and offering to be a reliable source of information, volunteers can position their Section as a valued partner in the policymaking process. When lawmakers know they can turn to ASCE members for objective expertise, those relationships become invaluable. Don't wait for an elected official to reach out for advice. Take the initiative to build connections now, establish yourself as a trusted resource, and help shape decisions that strengthen your communities.

Which elected officials should you focus on building relationships with?

The best place to start is with the elected officials who represent you and your community. As a constituent, your voice carries weight because lawmakers are elected to serve the people in their districts and are naturally interested in hearing about local priorities and concerns. Building a relationship with your own representatives provides an excellent foundation for effective advocacy and creates opportunities for ongoing dialogue about issues that matter to the engineering profession and the communities you serve.

Beyond your own legislators, it is valuable to connect with policymakers who play key roles in shaping infrastructure and public policy. Committee chairs and members responsible for transportation, infrastructure, appropriations, finance, judiciary, land use, public works, resilience, procurement, and professional licensure often have significant influence over legislation affecting the engineering community. Because committee structures vary by state and locality, reviewing your legislature's committee assignments and jurisdictions can help you identify the officials most involved in issues aligned with ASCE priorities.

Another important group to engage is engineers who serve in elected office. These individuals often bring a unique understanding of technical, infrastructure, and public policy challenges and can be strong champions for evidence-based decision-making. Their professional experiences frequently provide common ground on issues such as infrastructure investment, licensure, procurement, resilience, and public safety, making them natural partners in advancing engineering solutions.

Finally, take advantage of opportunities to connect with lawmakers when they are in their home districts or during legislative recesses. These periods often provide more time for meaningful conversations and relationship building. By reaching out proactively, offering your expertise, and serving as a trusted resource, you can establish valuable connections that strengthen both your Section's advocacy efforts and the policymaking process. Successful advocacy is built on consistent engagement, and every relationship you develop today can help advance the profession and improve communities tomorrow.

MAPPING YOUR SECTION'S RELATIONSHIPS

One way to assess relationships across your Section is to develop a visual assessment or heat map to display the strength, depth, and strategic value of your Section's relationships with key policymakers. Using a simple color-coded system, the heat map will allow your team to quickly identify where relationships are strong, where they need further development, and where critical gaps might exist. By engaging in a heat mapping exercise, resources can be prioritized, reliance on any single relationship owner can be minimized, and future relationship building efforts can be aligned with your Section's top policy objectives.



HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR HEAT MAP

1. **Define your universe of stakeholders.** This can range from policymakers (governor, state legislators, Members of Congress, mayors, county executives), legislative staff, executive branch officials and staff, and external partners.
2. **Establish Evaluation Criteria.** Criteria can include the strength of relationships, access to the intended person, the influence that person has over policy matters, and their alignment on ASCE issues.
3. **Identify Internal Relationship Owners.** For each relationship, list primary and secondary owners, as well as any other connections across your Section.
4. **Create the Heat Map.** Use color coding to more readily identify which relationships are strongest and where more work is needed.
5. **Analyze the Gaps.** Focus on the relationships that have high influence, but a weak relationship first, but do not forget to deepen those relationships that have high influence and a strong relationship.
6. **Develop Relationship Goals.** Goals should include steps and a timeline to take to achieve them, such as establishing quarterly meetings or setting up a facility visit within the next 12 months.
7. **Create your Action Plan and Set Up a Timeframe to Revisit the Plan.**

The ASCE GRII team is available to assist throughout the development and implementation of a relationship-building heat map. The team can help identify priority stakeholders, establish consistent scoring criteria, facilitate assessment discussions, and interpret results to identify relationship gaps and opportunities. In addition, the ASCE team can provide guidance on engagement strategies, best practices for relationship cultivation, and approaches for aligning outreach efforts with the Society's legislative priorities.

DEVELOP AND USE KEY CONTACTS

Most legislators will be neither strong allies nor strong opponents of ASCE's issues. Instead, most legislators will fall somewhere in the middle and support or oppose ASCE on an issue-by-issue basis. As a result, it is important to contact them whenever an issue of importance to ASCE comes up for debate. As mentioned before, ASCE's Key Contacts is not just a program to engage individuals in advocacy but can provide a readymade contact base of interested advocates for Sections and Branches, who are ready to plug into framework for building relationships between your fellow ASCE members and mapping them to influential their elected officials in your advocacy efforts.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Meeting with elected officials is one of the most valuable and rewarding advocacy activities ASCE volunteers can undertake and once your Section determines which lawmakers to build relationships with, setting up meetings is relatively straightforward. However, there are a few important things to remember when starting to meet with elected officials.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Successful advocates recognize that legislators, governors' offices, and regulators each have different responsibilities and priorities.

Audience	Primary Focus	Effective Message
 Legislators	Passing laws and approving budgets	Constituent impacts, policy solutions, and legislative requests
 Governor's Office	Statewide policy direction and administration priorities	Strategic infrastructure needs, statewide outcomes, and economic benefits
 Regulators and Agencies	Implementing laws and administering programs	Technical expertise, practical solutions, and implementation considerations

Tailoring your message to the audience increases your credibility and improves the likelihood of a productive discussion.

The most successful ASCE advocates are not necessarily the most experienced. They are the volunteers who consistently engage, provide credible information, and establish themselves as trusted resources for policymakers over time.

MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS

Understanding the Legislative Calendar

Timing is often the key to a successful meeting. State legislatures vary significantly in how often they meet and how long their sessions last. Some are in session for only a few months each year, while others meet nearly year-round. Understanding the legislative calendar helps you engage officials when they have the time and ability to act on your concerns.

Before planning outreach, determine:

- ▶ When the legislative session begins and ends.
- ▶ Key bill introduction and committee deadlines.
- ▶ Budget development and approval timelines.
- ▶ Whether it is an election year.
- ▶ When lawmakers are likely to be in their districts or local offices.

If your goal is to encourage a legislator to introduce or sponsor legislation, begin discussions well before the legislative session starts. Once a session is underway, lawmakers are often focused on existing bills and committee work. The months between sessions provide excellent opportunities to build relationships, educate policymakers, and discuss emerging issues before legislative priorities are finalized.

Remember that advocacy is a year-round effort. The strongest relationships are often developed when there is no immediate legislative request on the table.

Before the Meeting

Preparation is one of the most important factors to a successful meeting.

Schedule the Meeting

- ▶ Contact the legislator's office to request a meeting. Some offices prefer phone calls, while others may prefer email or online scheduling forms.
- ▶ When possible, submit your request in writing and clearly explain who you are, your affiliation with ASCE, and the topic you would like to discuss.
- ▶ Once the meeting is confirmed, send a brief follow-up email summarizing the details.



TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME ADVOCATES

Remember that elected officials work for and represent their constituents.

You do not need to be a policy expert to be an effective advocate.

Speak from your professional experience and personal perspective.

Focus on education, not lobbying alone.

Share real-world examples whenever possible.

Be confident in the value of your expertise.

View every meeting as the beginning of a long-term relationship.

Research the Legislator

Before the meeting, learn about the legislator's:

- ▶ Committee assignments.
- ▶ District priorities and major projects.
- ▶ Professional background.
- ▶ Recent legislation and policy interests.
- ▶ Previous positions on infrastructure-related issues.

Understanding their interests will help you tailor your message and identify common ground.

Prepare Your Materials

Bring a concise one-page fact sheet or briefing document that summarizes:

- ▶ The issue.
- ▶ Why it matters.
- ▶ Relevant data or local impacts.
- ▶ ASCE's position or recommendation.
- ▶ Your contact information.

Work with ASCE's Government Relations team to develop your materials and whenever possible, use local examples and data to make the issue more relevant.

Assemble Your Team

A small delegation is often most effective.

- ▶ Limit the group to approximately three or four members.
- ▶ Include participants with different perspectives or areas of expertise.
- ▶ Designate a meeting lead and determine who will cover each topic beforehand.

Practice Your Message

Before the meeting:

- ▶ Agree on your key talking points.
- ▶ Anticipate questions.
- ▶ Prepare concise answers.
- ▶ Decide on a specific "ask" if you are seeking support for a policy or initiative.
- ▶ If you do not know the answer to a question, it is perfectly acceptable to say, "I don't have that information today, but I will follow up."

During the Meeting

The goal of the meeting is to begin or strengthen a relationship while conveying a clear message.

Start with Introductions

- ▶ Introduce yourself as both a constituent (if applicable) and an ASCE member.
- ▶ Briefly explain your professional background and expertise.
- ▶ Thank the legislator or staff member for their time.

Position Yourself as a Resource

One of the most valuable messages you can deliver is that ASCE members are available as objective technical resources.

Consider saying:

“Our goal is to provide technical expertise and information whenever it may be helpful to you or your staff.”

This approach builds trust and demonstrates that the relationship extends beyond any single issue.

Keep the Discussion Focused

Legislators have demanding schedules, and meetings may last only 15 to 20 minutes.

- ▶ Focus on your key message.
- ▶ Share relevant local examples.
- ▶ Explain impacts on constituents and communities.
- ▶ Avoid overwhelming the official with excessive information.



Make a Clear Request

If you are seeking action, ask for it directly.

Examples include:

- ▶ Supporting or opposing legislation.
- ▶ Sponsoring a bill.
- ▶ Attending an ASCE event.
- ▶ Meeting with infrastructure stakeholders.
- ▶ Learning more about an issue.

A clear ask increases the likelihood of meaningful follow-up.

Leave Time for Questions

Two-way conversations are often more productive than presentations.

Listen carefully to concerns and questions. Understanding a policymaker's perspective can help strengthen future advocacy efforts.

Value Legislative Staff

Never underestimate the importance of legislative staff.

Staff members often:

- ▶ Research policy issues.
- ▶ Brief legislators before meetings.
- ▶ Develop recommendations.
- ▶ Coordinate legislative activities

Building strong relationships with staff can be just as valuable as building relationships with elected officials themselves.

Professional Conduct Matters

- ▶ Be respectful, even when you disagree.
- ▶ Focus on facts and solutions.
- ▶ Avoid partisan discussions whenever possible.
- ▶ Never threaten, criticize, or embarrass a legislator.

Your professionalism reflects not only on you, but also on your Section and ASCE as a whole.

After the Meeting:

The follow-up is where long-term relationships are often strengthened.

Send a Thank-You Message

Within a few days:

- ▶ Thank the legislator and staff for their time.
- ▶ Reinforce key discussion points.
- ▶ Provide any information requested during the meeting.
- ▶ Reiterate your availability as a resource.

Follow Through

If you committed to providing additional information:

- ▶ Deliver it promptly.
- ▶ Ensure it is accurate and concise.
- ▶ Include your contact information for future questions.

Continue the Relationship

Advocacy does not end when the meeting concludes.

Consider:

- ▶ Inviting officials to ASCE events.
- ▶ Sharing infrastructure report cards.
- ▶ Providing updates on local projects and issues.
- ▶ Congratulating officials on achievements.
- ▶ Maintaining periodic communication throughout the year.

Be Gracious

Not every meeting will result in immediate support. Whether a legislator agrees with your position or not, maintain a positive and professional relationship. Today's opponent may become tomorrow's ally, and every interaction helps strengthen ASCE's reputation as a trusted source of expertise.

LEGISLATIVE DRIVE-IN

Legislative Drive-Ins provide civil engineers with a unique opportunity to bring technical expertise directly to state elected officials and policymakers. By meeting face-to-face with legislators, engineers can explain how public policy decisions affect infrastructure, public safety, economic development, resilience, and quality of life in their communities. These conversations help policymakers better understand the real-world implications of legislation and highlight the critical role civil engineers play in designing, maintaining, and improving the infrastructure systems that people depend on every day.

Drive-Ins are also an effective way to build long-term relationships with decision-makers. When legislators view civil engineers as trusted, nonpartisan technical resources, they are more likely to seek their input on complex infrastructure and public works issues.

Legislative Drive-Ins demonstrate the collective strength of the engineering community. When engineers from across a state come together to advocate for shared priorities, they amplify their voice and increase their impact. These events provide an opportunity to educate policymakers, advance ASCE priorities, and help shape policies that support safe, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure for future generations.

Check out ASCE Government Relations' step-by-step toolkit in running a State Legislative Drive-In [here](#).

MEETINGS WITH THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

The Governor's Office can be one of the most influential stakeholders in shaping infrastructure policy, funding priorities, regulatory initiatives, and capital investment programs. While access to the governor may be limited, meetings with policy advisors, legislative affairs staff, infrastructure coordinators, transportation advisors, budget staff, and agency liaisons can be highly valuable. These individuals play a significant role in developing policy recommendations and advising the governor on infrastructure-related decisions.

Unlike legislative meetings, discussions with the Governor's Office should focus on broader policy objectives, statewide priorities, and implementation challenges. ASCE volunteers can provide valuable insight regarding infrastructure needs, resilience, transportation planning, water resources, public safety, and economic development needs throughout the state.

Tips for Meeting with the Governor's Office

- ▶ Understand the governor's current priorities, budget initiatives, and policy agenda before the meeting.
- ▶ Emphasize how infrastructure investments support economic growth, public safety, quality of life, and community resilience.
- ▶ Bring statewide data and examples rather than focusing exclusively on local concerns.
- ▶ Reference ASCE's Infrastructure Report Card findings and recommendations when applicable.
- ▶ Be prepared to discuss funding, implementation, workforce development, and long-term infrastructure needs.
- ▶ Position ASCE as a trusted technical resource that can provide objective, nonpartisan expertise.
- ▶ Develop relationships not only with the governor's staff but also with legislative affairs personnel and policy advisors who work directly on infrastructure issues.

Governor's staff often remain involved throughout the policymaking process and can help connect Sections with appropriate agencies and decision-makers. Maintaining these relationships can significantly enhance ASCE's effectiveness in advancing infrastructure priorities.

MEETINGS WITH STATE REGULATORY AGENCIES

While legislators create laws, state agencies and regulatory boards are often responsible for implementing them. As a result, building relationships with regulators can be as important as meeting with elected officials. State departments of transportation, environmental agencies, water resource authorities, engineering licensing boards, procurement offices, emergency management agencies, and public utility commissions frequently make decisions that directly affect the civil engineering profession and infrastructure development.

Agency officials are often highly receptive to technical expertise and practical recommendations from engineering professionals. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss emerging challenges, identify unintended consequences of regulations, and offer solutions based on engineering best practices.

Tips for Meeting with Regulators

- ▶ Familiarize yourself with the agency's mission, authority, and current priorities.
- ▶ Review proposed regulations, guidance documents, and rulemaking notices before the meeting.
- ▶ Focus discussions on technical solutions and practical implementation concerns.
- ▶ Provide objective recommendations supported by data and engineering principles.
- ▶ Share industry perspectives on how regulations affect project delivery, public safety, infrastructure resilience, procurement, and professional practice.
- ▶ Offer ASCE's expertise to assist with stakeholder engagement, technical reviews, and educational programs.

Many state agencies rely on technical advisory groups and stakeholder input when developing regulations. Establishing your Section as a reliable source of expertise can create opportunities for ongoing engagement and meaningful influence on regulatory decisions.

Let's now dive into other advocacy activities beyond meeting with decision makers.

PRODUCE A STATE INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT CARD

A fantastic opportunity to blend your work as a civil engineer, research and analyze your community's infrastructure assets, and investigate how public policy can improve your state's infrastructure systems holistically is joining your state's infrastructure report card effort.

ASCE's *Report Card for America's Infrastructure* is one of the most recognized and influential infrastructure advocacy tools in the nation. It has helped elevate infrastructure issues in conversations among lawmakers, the media, and the public, driving action on critical investments in transportation, water systems, dams, and other essential infrastructure.



The 2026 Minnesota Report Card committee celebrates its report release.

The Report Card has played an important role in supporting major federal legislative efforts and continues to spark meaningful discussions about infrastructure needs and funding across the country. At the state level, 45 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have developed their own Infrastructure Report Cards, using data-driven assessments to spotlight challenges, celebrate successes, and advocate for solutions.

Why Volunteer?

As a State Infrastructure Report Card author, you have a unique opportunity to use your engineering expertise to influence public policy and improve your community. You will help tell the story of your state's infrastructure: where investments are needed, what risks exist, and how smart decisions today can strengthen the future.

Beyond contributing to a high-profile ASCE initiative, you'll gain valuable professional experience by:

- ▶ Developing and leading a major statewide project
- ▶ Collaborating with engineering professionals across disciplines
- ▶ Engaging with policymakers and stakeholders
- ▶ Learning how technical information informs public policy
- ▶ Enhancing communication, leadership, and advocacy skills
- ▶ Serving as a trusted voice on infrastructure issues

Whether you are passionate about transportation, water resources, dams, bridges, or resilience, your expertise can help shape decisions that affect millions of people.

What Does the Role Involve?

State Report Cards are led by volunteer chairs who assemble teams of engineers to research and develop chapter content. Every report card includes, at a minimum:



Bridges



Dams



Drinking Water



Roads



Wastewater

Additional infrastructure categories may be included based on state priorities. As a chapter author, you will research infrastructure conditions, analyze data, and help assign grades using ASCE's established evaluation criteria. The estimated time commitment is approximately 20-30 hours over the course of a year.

Turn Engineering Expertise into Advocacy Impact

State Report Cards are more than technical documents. They are powerful advocacy tools that help lawmakers and the public understand infrastructure needs and investment priorities. As an author, you'll translate complex engineering information into compelling messages that inspire action. Authors interested in public outreach may also have opportunities to engage with the media following publication, helping communicate key findings and recommendations to broader audiences.

Help Tell Your State's Infrastructure Story

Strong data is the foundation of every successful Report Card. Authors evaluate infrastructure through eight key criteria:

- ▶ **Capacity** – the infrastructure's capacity to meet current and future demands.
- ▶ **Condition** – the infrastructure's existing or near future physical condition.
- ▶ **Funding** – the current level of funding (from all levels of government) for the infrastructure category and compare it to the estimated funding need.
- ▶ **Future Need** – the cost to improve the infrastructure and determine if future funding prospects will be able to meet the need.
- ▶ **Operation and Maintenance** – the owners' ability to operate and maintain the infrastructure properly and determine that the infrastructure is in compliance with government regulations.
- ▶ **Public Safety** – to what extent the public's safety is jeopardized by the condition of the infrastructure and what the consequences of failure may be.
- ▶ **Resilience** – the infrastructure system's capability to prevent or protect against significant multi-hazard threats and incidents and the ability to expeditiously recover and reconstitute critical services with minimum damage to public safety and health, the economy, and national security.
- ▶ **Innovation** – the implementation and strategic use of innovative techniques and delivery methods.

By combining rigorous analysis with compelling storytelling, you can help spotlight infrastructure challenges, showcase progress, and advocate for solutions that improve public safety, economic growth, and quality of life.

ASCE provides training, resources, and staff support throughout the process, making it easy for volunteers to contribute and succeed. If you're passionate about infrastructure and want to make a difference beyond the job site, volunteering for your State Infrastructure Report Card is an opportunity to become a stronger advocate for your profession, your community, and the future of America's infrastructure. For more information, contact reportcard@asce.org.

TIMES SQUARE



DALLAS FORT WORTH INT'L AIRPORT



**CBS
MORNINGS**

U.S. INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT CARD

AVIATION SYSTEM RECEIVES "D+" GRADE, UNCHANGED FROM FOUR YEARS AGO

THE MEDIA

To advance infrastructure investment and public policy priorities, civil engineers must effectively communicate with policymakers, stakeholders, opinion leaders, and the public. Media relations remain one of the most powerful tools available to ASCE Sections and Regions because they help elevate infrastructure issues, establish engineers as trusted experts, and build public support for policy solutions.

Today's media landscape is significantly broader than traditional newspapers, radio stations, and television outlets. In addition to earned coverage through traditional news organizations, ASCE and its Sections can reach audiences through digital news outlets, podcasts, online publications, newsletters, social media platforms, video channels, and influencer networks. Successful advocacy communications often combine multiple channels to reach policymakers and the public where they consume information.

ASCE has demonstrated the effectiveness of strategic media engagement through its nationally recognized *Infrastructure Report Card* program, which is now the most frequently cited infrastructure publication in the nation. National, state, and local report cards generate more than 40,000 news stories across print, broadcast, digital, and social media platforms each year, ranging from the largest media outlets in the world to smaller local outlets and trade publications. These campaigns help make infrastructure a mainstream public policy issue and position civil engineers as leading voices on infrastructure challenges and solutions.

Sections are encouraged to work closely with ASCE. Sections are encouraged to work with ASCE GRII staff and to follow established media protocols when conducting media outreach. Coordinated communications help ensure message consistency, maximize media opportunities, and strengthen ASCE's reputation as a trusted source of infrastructure expertise.

TYPES OF MEDIA RECOGNITION

There are three primary categories of media exposure:

- ▶ **Earned Media:** earned media consists of coverage generated by journalists, news organizations, content creators, or other third parties because they find a story newsworthy. Earned media often carries the greatest credibility because it comes from an independent source rather than a paid advertisement.
- ▶ **Shared Media:** shared media includes content distributed through social media and digital platforms, such as LinkedIn, X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Threads, and emerging platforms. Shared media allows Sections to communicate directly with stakeholders, amplify earned media coverage, and engage audiences through videos, graphics, livestreams, and interactive content.
- ▶ **Paid Media:** paid media includes advertisements, sponsored content, promoted social media posts, search engine marketing, streaming ads, and other forms of purchased placement used to target specific audiences.

EARNED MEDIA

Earned media opportunities generally fall into three categories: news coverage, opinion content, and expert commentary.

News coverage is typically based on issues, events, announcements, or developments considered relevant to the public. For ASCE, newsworthy activities can include:

- ▶ Release of a state or local Infrastructure Report Card
- ▶ Comments on infrastructure legislation or funding proposals
- ▶ Engineering responses to natural disasters or emergency events
- ▶ Public safety concerns related to infrastructure
- ▶ Major infrastructure project announcements
- ▶ Research findings or technical reports
- ▶ Engineer of the Year recognitions and community initiatives
- ▶ Policy briefings and advocacy events

There are several ways to engage reporters, editors, producers, and digital content creators.

News Releases and Media Advisories

A media advisory provides concise information about an upcoming event, including who, what, when, where, and why. Advisories are typically used to invite reporters and content creators to press conferences, report card events, project tours, legislative briefings, or other newsworthy activities.

A news release provides detailed information about an announcement, policy position, report, study, event, or milestone. Effective news releases explain why a topic matters to the public and clearly communicate ASCE's key messages.

Today, media materials are often distributed digitally through email, online press rooms, social media channels, and stakeholder networks. Photos, graphics, video clips, fact sheets, and links to additional resources can significantly increase media interest and coverage.

Press Conferences and Media Events

Press conferences remain effective when announcing major news, such as the release of a state Infrastructure Report Card, the introduction of significant infrastructure legislation, or the response to major infrastructure failures or emergencies. Successful media events typically feature:

- ▶ Clear and timely news value
- ▶ Concise messaging
- ▶ A limited number of speakers
- ▶ Strong visuals and graphics
- ▶ Opportunities for interviews
- ▶ Supporting digital assets for online use

Increasingly, media events are conducted in hybrid formats that include both in-person attendance and virtual participation. Livestreaming through platforms such as YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, or other digital channels can dramatically expand audience reach beyond traditional media attendees.

Media Interviews and Expert Commentary

One of ASCE's greatest strengths is the credibility of its subject matter experts. Sections should proactively identify knowledgeable spokespersons who can provide timely commentary on infrastructure issues, engineering topics, public safety concerns, transportation challenges, resilience, sustainability, and related subjects.

Reporters are often working under tight deadlines and may need expert analysis quickly. Developing relationships with local journalists and making experts available for interviews can establish ASCE members as trusted and recurring sources.

When interacting with reporters, members must adhere to ASCE media protocols and coordinate with ASCE Public Relations staff.

Opinion Content: Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor

Opinion pieces remain an important method for shaping public discussion.

Opinion editorials, or op-eds, allow ASCE leaders and members to explain infrastructure challenges, highlight engineering solutions, and advocate for policy action.

Letters to the editor provide shorter opportunities to respond to current events, news stories, editorials, or public debates.

In addition to traditional newspapers, many digital news sites, online publications, and industry media outlets accept guest commentaries and opinion articles. Well-written opinion content can often be shared across social media channels to extend its reach.

PODCASTS, NEWSLETTERS, AND DIGITAL PUBLICATIONS

Many audiences now consume information through podcasts, social media influencers, and specialized newsletters, in addition to traditional online publications and professional media outlets.

Sections should consider opportunities for members to appear on podcasts, contribute articles to digital publications, participate in webinars, and engage with newsletter publishers whose audiences include business leaders, policymakers, civic organizations, and the public.

SHARED MEDIA AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Social media platforms provide opportunities to reach audiences directly while supporting advocacy and media relations goals. Sections should use social media strategically to:

- ▶ Share infrastructure news and engineering insights
- ▶ Promote Infrastructure Report Cards and advocacy initiatives
- ▶ Highlight member expertise
- ▶ Amplify earned media coverage
- ▶ Engage legislators, stakeholders, and community leaders
- ▶ Promote events and public meetings
- ▶ Respond quickly to developing infrastructure issues

Engagement strategies may vary by platform:

- ▶ LinkedIn is particularly effective for reaching policymakers, industry leaders, and professional audiences.
- ▶ X can be useful for engaging journalists, policymakers, and government stakeholders, particularly with timely news.
- ▶ Facebook and Instagram support community engagement and visual storytelling.
- ▶ YouTube is ideal for hosting interviews, event recordings, educational videos, and Report Card content.
- ▶ TikTok and short-form video platforms can help explain infrastructure topics to broader audiences through concise and engaging videos.

Sections should coordinate social media outreach with ASCE media relations and communications staff when possible, especially during major advocacy campaigns, report card releases, crisis situations, or legislative initiatives.

PAID MEDIA

Paid media can complement earned and shared media efforts when strategic audience targeting is needed. Examples include:

- ▶ Digital display advertising
- ▶ Sponsored social media content
- ▶ Search engine advertising
- ▶ Streaming audio and video advertisements
- ▶ Sponsored newsletters
- ▶ Print advertising
- ▶ Radio and television advertising

Digital advertising often offers cost-effective targeting based on geography, demographics, professional interests, and public policy audiences. When considering paid media, Sections should establish clear objectives, identify target audiences, develop measurable outcomes, and coordinate messaging with overall advocacy and communications strategies.

MEDIA COORDINATION WITH ASCE NATIONAL

ASCE Sections and Regions must coordinate media outreach with ASCE's Public Relations and Government Relations teams when speaking on behalf of ASCE. National staff can provide strategic guidance, message development, media relations support, spokesperson preparation, digital communications assistance, and resources related to Infrastructure Report Cards and advocacy campaigns.

For media relations assistance, communications planning, or training opportunities, contact mediarelations@asce.org.

Case Study: Texas

ASCE's Texas Section aggressively engaged with local and regional members of the media in anticipation of, and following, the release of the *2025 Report Card for Texas Infrastructure*. Section leaders worked with ASCE media relations staff to arrange an embargoed media pre-briefing, going through the report findings on a Zoom call the day before the launch event at the Texas State Capitol. The pre-briefing allowed reporters from across the vast state, many of whom would be unable to attend an event in Austin, to dive into the findings and ask questions. The embargo prevented them from reporting the findings before the launch event, yet they had strong, flushed out stories ready to go when the embargo lifted because of the advanced notice and insights.

After holding a media-focused reveal of the grades and ASCE's media relations team issuing a press release to newsrooms, the launch resulted in more than 70 original stories across Texas and throughout the region. The response signaled the widespread interest in civil engineering issues and the effectiveness of engaging with members of the media through appropriate tools. Several committee members conducted interviews with local stations to dive deeper into the findings and share their perspectives, including Austin Messerli, P.E., co-chair of the report (pictured with Spectrum News below). The Texas team contacted and worked with ASCE media relations staff to coordinate interview opportunities and develop talking points specific to each inquiry so that members were prepared to give the best possible answers.



DELIVER TESTIMONY

Civil engineers should consider providing testimony at legislative hearings because they offer objective, fact-based expertise on the infrastructure systems that communities rely upon every day. Whether the topic is transportation, water resources, public safety, resilience, or infrastructure investment, engineers can help policymakers understand the practical implications, costs, benefits, and long-term impacts of proposed legislation. By translating complex technical issues into clear and understandable information, engineers help elected officials make informed decisions that serve the public interest.

Testifying at hearings also strengthens the voice and visibility of the engineering profession. It allows civil engineers to build relationships with legislators and government staff while demonstrating their commitment to protecting public health, safety, and welfare. Over time, engineers who provide credible, nonpartisan expertise can become trusted resources for policymakers, helping ensure that sound engineering principles are incorporated into public policy and infrastructure decisions.



Case Study: Tennessee state report card leaders testify

Tennessee Section 2022 Report Card Committee leaders Monica Sartain, P.E. and Lukas Salyer presented during a Tennessee Senate Transportation Committee meeting. Their presentation focused on the 2022 *Tennessee Report Card* findings, with an emphasis on the chapter findings for ‘Aviation’, ‘Bridges’, ‘Roads’, and ‘Transit’. They also presented to the Tennessee Senate House Transportation Committee the following month.

IDENTIFY AND JOIN COALITIONS

When a group wants to increase its legislative strength, it often forms coalitions with other groups that share similar interests. A coalition is a loose collection of organizations that cooperate to accomplish a common – and often limited – objective. Coalitions are an excellent way to grab the attention of legislators.

The idea of a coalition is to get together a group of like-minded organizations that agree around one central issue. Unanimous agreement is not needed, and in fact, is not likely to be found, except on the specific issue being addressed by the coalition. Remember, most legislators are neither strong allies nor strong opponents of ASCE’s public policy interests. They pay attention to what their constituents say about a given issue. The more of their constituents that speak out on a given issue, the more likely they are to pay attention.

To find more people to support you on a given issue, it makes sense to work with other organizations and utilize their members in support of common objectives. Working together in a coalition also makes more sense from a financial perspective; by pooling your resources, everyone gets better results. Whether you want to host a conference, hire a lobbyist, or undertake a media campaign, having more resources, funding and volunteers makes success more likely.

Coalitions can be either short-term or long-term in nature. Short-term coalitions are most often designed around a particular public policy goal, such as the passage or defeat of a specific piece of legislation. They often bring together organizations that do not have very much in common except for the immediate goal at hand and may even disagree on other issues.

Case Study: Alliance for Responsible Professional Licensing

ASCE is a founding member of the Alliance for Responsible Professional Licensing (ARPL), a national coalition established in 2019 to advocate for rigorous, competency-based professional licensing standards in highly technical professions. ASCE joined with organizations like the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES), the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) to launch the coalition in response to growing state-level efforts to reduce or eliminate occupational licensing requirements without distinguishing between routine occupations and professions that directly affect public health, safety, and welfare.

Long-term or permanent coalitions, on the other hand, can be an extremely useful tool for the Section with limited resources. The groups involved in them usually have several issues in common to be successful. Because of this, your most likely long-term coalition partners are other design and construction groups. State affiliates of the American Council of Engineering Companies, the American Public Works Association, the Associated General Contractors, the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, the National Society of Professional Engineers and the American Institute of Architects are, for example, natural allies.

When a Section is working with other like-minded groups in a coalition, it is possible to establish a long-term working relationship that can cross over to other legislative issues and lead to other relationships. This allows you to do longer-range planning and develop a more comprehensive plan of how to work together to achieve your common goals.

Whenever your Section/Branch forms or agrees to participate in a coalition, there are certain rules to keep in mind. It is important to form a core group, or executive committee, made up of a representative of each group that is a member of the coalition, which can review documents developed by coalition members before they are disseminated. The formation of a core group in the coalition can help legitimize its overall efforts to other members and can help attract others to the coalition while making sure that each group is involved in the decision-making process. Most important, the formation of an executive committee helps avoid criticism that the group is run by one or two people, or groups.

The Challenge

Beginning in the late 2010s, many state legislatures considered broad occupational licensing reforms aimed at reducing barriers to employment. While these proposals were often intended for lower-risk occupations, engineering and other highly technical professions were frequently included in the discussions.

ASCE and its partners recognized that weakening professional licensure standards for engineers and other professionals could create significant public safety risks. To ensure policymakers understood the distinctions between licensed professions and occupations, ASCE helped create ARPL as a unified voice for professions whose work has direct impacts on public health, safety, and welfare.

ARPL's Goals

ARPL works to educate policymakers, regulators, and the public about the value of professional licensing and the importance of maintaining rigorous standards for highly technical professions. The coalition advocates for licensing systems that:

- Protect public health, safety, and welfare.
- Maintain rigorous requirements for education, examinations, and professional experience.
- Support professional accountability and ethical practice.
- Preserve mobility and reciprocity while maintaining competency standards.
- Ensure that licensing boards remain effective and capable of protecting the public.

Case Study: Alliance for Responsible Professional Licensing (continued)

What the Coalition Has Achieved

1. Established a Strong, Multi-Profession Advocacy Coalition
2. Elevated Awareness Among Policymakers
3. Produced Research and Materials Supporting Professional Licensure
4. Defended Effective Licensing Boards
5. Expanded the Conversation to Emerging Issues

ASCE's Role and Impact

As a founding member, ASCE has played an important role in shaping ARPL's mission and messaging. By participating in ARPL, ASCE has helped:

- ▶ Advocate for maintaining professional engineering licensure standards.
- ▶ Provide a unified engineering voice in state and licensing debates.
- ▶ Build partnerships with other professions facing similar regulatory challenges.
- ▶ Promote public understanding of how licensure protects communities and infrastructure users.

RECOGNIZE LEGISLATORS WHO SUPPORT YOUR POSITIONS

Recognizing and celebrating legislative champions is an important component of a successful government relations program. However, because ASCE is a 501c3 organization, ASCE cannot endorse or otherwise support a candidate for office (e.g. give political contributions). Still, there are other ways for ASCE to recognize elected officials who are champions for ASCE's priority issues.

First, invite the Legislator to speak at a Section or Branch meeting. This can be helpful to both your Section and the Legislator, by informing members about key legislative issues, and by exposing the legislator to a group that supports his or her legislative efforts. If possible, identify how many of your local members are constituents of the Legislator. This information can help enhance the Legislator's understanding of the importance of an issue and their support of your positions.

Next consider, establishing an annual award in your Section for a "Legislator of the Year" as recognition of their support of Civil Engineering issues. An award program can be an effective way to strengthen relationships with elected officials and highlight support for infrastructure and the engineering profession. The award can be presented to a state or local policymaker who has demonstrated exceptional leadership on issues such as infrastructure investment, resilience, public safety, STEM education, or other policies that advance the profession. An award program can also create an opportunity to educate other policymakers and increase your section's visibility.

Finally, the ASCE Honorary Fellow program provides a unique opportunity to recognize distinguished policymakers who have made significant contributions to the profession and infrastructure development through their public service. The Honorary Fellow program is administered through ASCE National and is historically reserved for policymakers who have made significant contributions on a national scale.

HIRING A PROFESSIONAL LOBBYIST

Often it takes more than a grassroots strategy to influence legislation. If that is the case, a Section/Branch may want to consider hiring a professional lobbyist who can provide a level of political expertise that may not otherwise be available. Depending on your organization's needs and budget, determine whether the lobbyist is being hired to lobby a specific issue for a specific outcome, or simply to monitor developments and report back to the group.

Evaluate if other groups, that share your views and have mutual goals, already have a lobbyist and then consider sharing this resource.

Think of hiring a lobbyist as like hiring a lawyer or other type of consultant: They are people with a particular expertise, and they are often consulted to help resolve a particular problem or issue. However, if the Section needs their services often enough, it may make sense to have them on a retainer to provide certain amounts and kinds of work for you.

While a Section still needs a government relations committee, a lobbyist can be a significant asset to the program. The lobbyist can be a part-time government relations staffer for the Section and can pick up some of the slack for busy volunteers. Lobbyists can perform functions for the Section such as arranging meetings with key legislators, monitoring legislation and hearings as well as votes on key legislation of concern. This information is valuable during the legislative session and can help if your Section just started out in public policy get a better understanding of the process.

Lobbyists are also hired because they have access and influence. The lobbyist may be an expert on an issue, the process (i.e., in dealing with a particular state legislature), or have special contacts. The best lobbyists are the ones who are well respected and know all the key players. Some lobbyists may serve as analysts who can provide regular written reports on legislative and/or regulatory developments. This becomes much more important if your Section wants to utilize a lobbyist to push for or defeat a particular piece of legislation, rather than provide general support for your government relations efforts such as legislative monitoring.

Whatever your needs and expectations are from a lobbyist, there should be a written contract between the two parties, just as there would be between the Section/Branch and other service providers. It should specify exactly what services the lobbyist will perform, how long they will be provided (all year, only during legislative session, etc.), and what his or her fee will be. Contracts for lobbyist services should be reviewed by the ASCE Legal Department.

Hired lobbyists should not replace a Section's public policy strategy or the work of the government relations committee and the other Section members. They should be hired to complement a well-planned lobbying strategy. A lobbyist can play a vital role at critical times for an organization; but a carefully planned strategy should always precede the decision to hire one.

ENGAGING IN BALLOT INITIATIVES

Each Election Day, voters across the United States cast their ballots and consider initiatives that can directly shape how their state or community invests in their transportation systems, water infrastructure, or energy grid. While ballot initiatives that fund infrastructure projects tend to pass with resounding support, it is the role of engineers to educate the public on the benefits these investments will have on the community, so the public understands what is at stake on Election Day.

With this in mind, engineers play a critical role in informing public decisions on local ballot measures that affect infrastructure, public safety, transportation, water resources, and community development. Whether supporting or opposing a measure, engineers can provide valuable technical expertise and help ensure voters and decision-makers understand the potential impacts of proposed initiatives. Members should work closely with ASCE staff before engaging on ballot measures to ensure any advocacy efforts are consistent with established ASCE policy positions and strategic priorities. Importantly, engagement in ballot initiatives is permissible within the legal parameters governing a 501c3 organization when conducted appropriately, making ballot measure advocacy a valuable tool for advancing sound infrastructure policy. To support these efforts, ASCE maintains a ballot measure tracker that helps members identify relevant initiatives, monitor developments, and coordinate engagement in a manner that aligns with Society positions and simplifies participation in the process.

Case Study: Texas voters pass water infrastructure funding

In 2025, the ASCE Texas Section demonstrated the powerful impact civil engineers can have on public policy by actively advocating for long-term investments in water infrastructure. In April, Texas Section Government Affairs Committee Chair Adam Eaton, P.E., testified before the Texas House Committee on Natural Resources in support of House Bill 16, which would expand the Texas Water Development Board's ability to fund critical water supply projects, improve system assessments, and increase transparency through infrastructure tracking tools. Drawing on findings from the *2025 Texas Infrastructure Report Card*, Eaton highlighted the state's low grades for drinking water, wastewater, dams, and levees, emphasizing the urgent need for dedicated infrastructure funding to ensure reliable water service and improve resilience against extreme weather events.



The Texas Section continued its advocacy efforts in May when Executive Director Jenni Peters testified before the Texas Senate Committee on Finance in support of a proposed constitutional amendment to provide \$1 billion annually for water infrastructure investments over a 20-year period. ASCE Texas emphasized the importance of dedicated and flexible funding to address a wide range of water infrastructure needs across the state.

These advocacy efforts contributed to a successful legislative outcome when Governor Greg Abbott signed Senate Bill 7 and House Joint Resolution 7 into law in June, by allowing Texas voters to weigh in on the constitutional amendment. In 2025, Texas voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 4. Funding from the initiative will be divided into two categories: financing for new projects to expand the water supply available in Texas and funding for existing water programs such as those involving flood control and agricultural water conservation.



MODEL LEGISLATION

Across the country, state and local legislatures are becoming dramatically more active in shaping policies that can quickly be adopted by other statehouses or city councils. Issues that once moved primarily at the federal level are now being decided in state capitals, city councils, and county commissions. This shift has accelerated in recent years, driven by a growing willingness of state and local governments to act independently when federal action slows.

With thousands upon thousands of bills emerging each session that impact ASCE's priority issues—often drafted quickly or inconsistently—there is a real possibility that wellintentioned legislation could create compliance challenges, unintended consequences, or fragmented policy landscapes across jurisdictions.

Therefore, to deepen ASCE's state and local advocacy, the GR11 team has developed a portal for model resolutions and legislation. State legislators often have limited resources and staff, meaning they are often seeking like-minded stakeholders to provide them with model legislation that can be easily customize and introduce on the issues they care about.

The impact of model legislation is significant. From 2011 to 2019 a study found that at least 10,000 bills almost entirely copied from model legislation were introduced nationwide, and more than 2,100 of those bills were signed into law. And this trend has only grown since.

ASCE's model resolution, proclamation, and legislation hub is intended to provide volunteers the ability to work with state legislators and their governor's office on a set of items that will not only recognize ASCE, but the work of civil engineers, including pro-infrastructure and pro-engineering initiatives and solutions in their state.

While resolutions and proclamations do not have the force of law, they are an excellent way for advocates to strengthen relationships with local policymakers and highlight the work that ASCE is doing to improve public health welfare and safety.

Additionally, these tools allow us to:

- ▶ **Ensure consistency across states and municipalities**, reducing the patchwork effect that complicates implementation.
- ▶ **Respond rapidly to legislative momentum**, offering constructive solutions before problematic language gains traction.
- ▶ **Demonstrate leadership** by guiding policy discussions rather than reacting to them.

By working with state legislators on model resolutions and laws, ASCE volunteers not only support policymakers but also protect the profession, advance ASCE priorities, and ensure that legislation is grounded in expertise rather than drafted in haste. This is a strategic investment that positions the organization to navigate a rapidly evolving state and local landscape with clarity and influence.



ASCE Florida Section Members with Miami Mayor Eileen Higgins after the Mayor issued a proclamation honoring the 2026 Infrastructure Week

The model resolution and proclamation hub will be consistently evolving, with the site first populated with model resolutions and proclamations before eventually moving toward model legislation as well. Existing templates include:

- ▶ Recognizing Engineers Week
- ▶ Celebrating ASCE's 175th Anniversary
- ▶ Implementing the Envision rating system, which is part of our longer-term advocacy work with ISI
- ▶ Celebrating Infrastructure Week; and
- ▶ Recognizing the release of a state report card



ASCE Metropolitan (Met) Section and the Met Section Geo-Institute Member after New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani issued a proclamation declaring May 20th "Geotechnical Engineering Day"

Volunteers also have access to a guide for how to submit resolutions and proclamations, understanding that the process is different in each state. With the tip sheet and templates, it is intended to be easy for local sections and branches to pick up these resolutions and get them introduced.

If your section or branch is interested in introducing model resolutions or proclamations or has a request from a legislator for model legislation, please let the ASCE Government Relations team know. Additionally, please share any documents and photos from resolution signings so that ASCE can develop a full repository of existing resolutions, proclamations, and introduced legislation.

ENGINEERS IN PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

One of the most effective ways to ensure that public policy benefits from strong technical expertise is to have engineers actively involved in the policymaking process. Civil engineers bring a unique perspective to discussions about infrastructure, public safety, resilience, and community development. By serving in government leadership and advisory roles, engineers can help shape policies from the beginning, ensuring that decisions are informed by practical experience, sound science, and long-term planning.

Many ASCE members already contribute to government through technical and operational positions, where their expertise is essential to implementing public policies and delivering critical infrastructure projects. However, civil engineers also have valuable skills that can strengthen policy development itself. ASCE leaders should pursue opportunities where their technical knowledge and problem-solving abilities can contribute to creating effective, forward-looking policies that serve the public interest.

A great starting point for public service is participation on government commissions, boards, task forces, and advisory committees. These positions often provide meaningful opportunities to contribute expertise, collaborate with community leaders, and influence important public decisions. In addition to making a positive impact, service in these roles allows engineers to gain valuable experience, expand professional networks, and build a foundation for future leadership opportunities within government.

Sections and Branches can play an important role in supporting members who are interested in public service. When qualified civil engineers seek appointments to boards, commissions, or advisory bodies, endorsements and recommendations from respected professional organizations such as ASCE can help highlight their expertise and commitment to serving the public. By encouraging and supporting these candidates, Sections can help ensure that engineering perspectives are represented where important decisions are being made.

Engineers interested in expanding their policy influence can also benefit from developing a deeper understanding of the public policy process. Community involvement, civic engagement, and participation in public affairs activities provide valuable insights into how decisions are made and how stakeholders work together to address challenges. These experiences complement technical expertise and prepare engineers to become even more effective leaders, advocates, and trusted resources for policymakers.

By increasing engineering representation in public policy and civic leadership roles, the profession can help advance solutions that are practical, sustainable, resilient, and beneficial to the communities engineers serve every day.

RUNNING FOR OFFICE

Sure, it's a big step, but it is one of the most effective ways to promote your views on political issues, including those of civil engineers. If you feel that critical issues in your community are not being addressed, such as the lack of needed infrastructure investment or severe permitting restrictions and delays that are causing harm, running for office may be the best way to draw attention to and address them. If you win, you may be in a position to do something to improve the situation. In fact, if you do run and win, you will not be the first ASCE member or engineer to do so. Civil engineers currently serve in elected offices all over the country in a variety of capacities.

That said, running for office can be a time consuming and expensive endeavor. Seeking any elected office requires balancing professional and personal commitments, but the larger the constituency or profile of the desired office, the more significant the demands on candidate's time and resources.

Before you decide to run for office there are questions you should probably look to answer before you jump in.

Are you sure you want to be an elected official?

Public service is not for everyone. Try having conversations with people who have held elected office about their experience running for and holding office. Ask them about what campaigning for office requires and what they enjoyed and disliked about being an elected official.

Have you spoken about running to the people closest to you?

Having a support network can help make the process more manageable. Your friends and family will likely be one of your best sources for volunteers and fundraising. If you struggle to win their support, you'll probably find it hard to convince the public to do the same.

Do you know the political landscape?

Speak to the local leaders and activists in your community. Find out what the biggest issues are for the people in the community or constituency you are looking to represent. Figure out how many votes previous successful candidates for the chosen office needed to win and how much money competitive candidates raised to run for the seat. Find out who else is on the ballot, if there is a special election, or if there is another race on the ballot that can drive high turn out.

Do you have the time and ability to run?

Running for office will require you to raise money and talk to voters for hours every day. Going to events, knocking doors, and making fundraising appeals can be physically and mentally demanding and overwhelm your schedule. Having a busy schedule or health challenges may make it difficult to give a campaign the attention and investment it requires.

Are you financially secure?

There are costs associated with running for public office, and once in office you may not make as much money as you did previously. Even if you're running for local office in a small town, you may need to take time off from your job occasionally if you win. You will also need to have a plan to take time off to campaign as Election Day approaches.

Do you have path to victory?

Running for office can be hard on you and those you care about it. If you have zero chance of winning in your chosen race, consider another opportunity or seeking office at another time. Try to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses objectively, as well as those of any opponents. Thoughtful planning before you enter a race can help set you up for success and avoid costly mistakes down the road.

Case Study: Carol Martsof, P.E.'s Journey to Elected Office

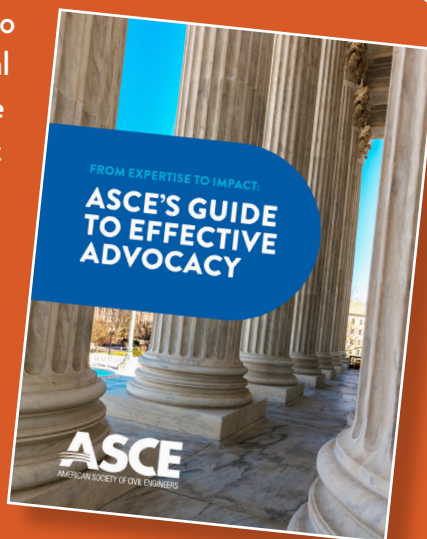
Carol Martsof's path to public service began through years of community involvement in Lansdowne Borough, Pennsylvania. Before joining the borough council in January 2022, she served as chair of Lansdowne's Environmental Advisory Council, became chair of the Delaware County Sustainability Commission, and volunteered with local parks and recreation initiatives. A vice president at Urban Engineers, Martsof was motivated to run for office by her commitment to advancing infrastructure and protecting the environment. After consulting mentors, seeking family and employer support, collecting resident signatures, and building a campaign centered on sustainability, she successfully earned a seat on the council. Reflecting on her campaign, she described seeing her name on residents' lawn signs as a humbling and rewarding experience.

As a councilmember, Martsof believes civil engineers bring valuable problem-solving skills and a strong sense of public service to elected office. She emphasizes the importance of communicating technical issues in ways that residents can easily understand, noting that people are eager to learn about engineering when it is explained clearly and without jargon. She also prioritizes listening to community members, ensuring residents have opportunities to share their perspectives before decisions are made. For Martsof, public service has been deeply meaningful, calling her role on the council "the honor of a lifetime" and reinforcing her belief that engineers have a great deal to contribute to their communities.



Thank you for taking the time to explore ASCE's Guide to Effective Advocacy. Your voice and expertise are essential to shaping the policies that impact our profession and the communities we serve. We're grateful for your commitment to advocacy and for helping elevate the role of civil engineers in the public policy process. Now, take the next step: put what you've learned into action by building relationships with elected officials, responding to Key Alerts, and making your voice heard on the issues that matter most. Together, we can advance the profession and help build a stronger, more resilient future.

In the appendices of this guide, discover helpful tips and resource templates to aid your advocacy work. ASCE GR11 is always here for you as a partner and collaborator. **Contact us today at govwash@asce.org.**



APPENDICES



TIPS FOR WRITING TO A STATE LEGISLATOR

Despite advances in technology, writing continues to be the preferred method of communication for both members of legislatures and staff. The letter or email should be brief and to the point and should always include a request for action. Be sure to include your full postal address and contact information (including email address and preferred phone number) so that the legislator's office will know where to send a response and, most importantly, identify you as a constituent.

When writing to your legislators, you should include the following elements:

1. Identify yourself as a constituent. Where appropriate, include a brief description of your organization or company. While this may seem obvious, it is surprising how many people forget to include critical information like name, address and/or telephone numbers. If your business is located in the member's district, be sure to make this clear. A little personal information is both necessary and welcome.
2. Identify the issue and the bill number (if applicable) that you are addressing.
3. Support your argument/position by including examples whenever possible. Describe the impact, both economic and emotional, of passage or defeat of legislation on you, your organization, and your community.
4. Personalize your letter as much as possible. Whenever possible avoid using form letters.
5. Be brief. One of the criteria used in deciding whether your letter is even seen by your legislator is its length. The best format is a regular business letter not exceeding two pages in length. Address a singular issue and be specific.
6. Ask for support or action from the member. People often forget to ask the member to do something or fail to describe what action should be taken (e.g. vote for/against a bill). Remember: If you don't ask for anything, then you won't get anything.

1. **IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS A CONSTITUENT.**
2. **IDENTIFY THE ISSUE AND THE BILL NUMBER (IF APPLICABLE) THAT YOU ARE ADDRESSING.**
3. **SUPPORT YOUR ARGUMENT/ POSITION BY INCLUDING EXAMPLES WHENEVER POSSIBLE.**
4. **PERSONALIZE YOUR LETTER AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.**
5. **BE BRIEF.**
6. **ASK FOR SUPPORT OR ACTION FROM THE MEMBER**



TIPS FOR CALLING A STATE LEGISLATOR

If the issue is quickly coming up for a vote, you may not always have the time to write to or meet in person with your legislator. In this case, use the telephone. It is a perfectly acceptable and often welcome way to get your views across. While the same general rules apply as when you're in a meeting, there are a few more to consider:

- ▶ Use the telephone for less complicated subjects. Make your message much simpler than if you were sending a letter or meeting with the legislator. The person taking your call will understand your message more clearly.
- ▶ Be prepared to talk to legislative staff. Legislators tend to be less accessible by phone simply because of their hectic schedules and workloads.
- ▶ Before calling, prepare talking points. Briefly outline what you would like to say for example:

My name is Mary Smith and I'm a civil engineer from West Hartford, Connecticut. I'm calling to urge Representative Larson to vote yes on H.B. 1000, the Mass Transit Improvement Act. Our roads are badly congested, and this costs the residents of West Hartford in terms of lost money and time spent in traffic. Improving our infrastructure benefits everyone in West Hartford. Additionally, capital improvements to our state's transit programs are essential to my business as a civil engineer.



Always Follow Up

Whether you arranged a meeting, met a legislator at an event, or simply passed each other on the street, take every opportunity to follow up with them. It has been said that showing up is half the job; the same applies to legislative involvement. We want legislators to remember ASCE and its issues, and repetition is a key to remembering.

Following up lets legislators know that ASCE is interested. Simply dropping a legislator or staffer a note or email after a meeting can make a big difference in building a relationship. Finally, always remember to say thank you!



Measuring Success

Many factors contribute to the success of a government relations program. Keeping score of enacted legislation is only the beginning. Any effective government relations program takes time to build. The ultimate goal is to have your Section recognized and sought out by decision makers to help shape policy at all levels of government. Be patient, learn from your mistakes and move forward. Apathy is the true indicator of failure.

- ▶ Has your Section developed a strategic plan for government relations?
- ▶ Is your program supported by the Section leaders?
- ▶ Does the Section newsletter promote the Section's government relations activities?
- ▶ Has your Section reached out to state and local lawmakers?
- ▶ Do the volunteers understand the importance of government relations?
- ▶ Are volunteers participating in the program?
- ▶ Is the Section reaching out to other organizations to build coalitions?

If your Section can answer "Yes" to most of these questions then your program is on the right track.

A Section's or State Council's state government relations program needs to identify and pull together a variety of resources, including ASCE staff, volunteers, and outside professional services. A program's success depends on prioritizing and keeping pace with issues and knowing when staff and volunteers can handle an issue themselves or when outside professionals are needed. Taken together and effectively managed, these elements will help a Section operate an effective state government relations program.



SAMPLE LETTER TO A STATE LEGISLATOR

John Smith
10 Main Street
Anytown, New Jersey 07649

February 1, 2026

The Honorable Robert Jones
New Jersey Assembly
Trenton, NJ 08626

Dear Assemblyman Jones:

As a resident of Anytown, New Jersey and a civil engineer, I am writing to urge you to cosponsor A.B. 1, “The Improved State Infrastructure Financing Act.” As you know, this bill would provide \$500 million more in desperately needed funding for our state’s infrastructure. Projects that will be funded by this bill include local needs, such as the widening of Route 2 and improvements to Anytown’s bus system and wastewater plant.

Investing in infrastructure translates not only into safer travel and less congestion, but increased productivity and greater economic growth. New Jersey has the highest number of vehicle miles driven for each mile of roadway in the country. I am sure you have experienced the effects of this level of density and congestion on a regular basis. This congestion is negatively impacting the efficient operation of business in our state. Congestion also impedes the movement of goods and services. In 1999, exports by New Jersey businesses totaled \$8.4 billion and impacted 242,000 jobs. Other states face these same issues.

We must invest in our transportation network in order to remain competitive. Businesses depend on an efficient transportation system to deliver goods and services. A.B. 1 provides a means to invest by utilizing dollars already obtained and earmarked for this use.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support A.B. 1 so that we can begin to address America’s growing infra-structure needs.

Very truly yours,

John Smith

John Smith, P.E.



YOURSECTION/BRANCH

Letterhead/Logo

News Release

MONTH DAY, YEAR

Contact: Name /Phone / Email

Headline – short, attention grabbing

City, State – Paragraph 1: Clear, concise facts of news being shared:

who, what where, when (i.e. today or yesterday).

“Quote from ASCE President or Other spokesperson on why this matters. This is the place to assert opinion,” said XXX, president, ASCE section.

“Quote 2 from outside source further validating point (optional)”

said XXX Other relevant facts that did not fit in first paragraph.

Insert Section/Branch name here is a local unit of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Founded in 1852, ASCE represents more than 160,000 civil engineers worldwide and is America’s oldest national engineering society.

Note to Section/Branch Leaders: You may also wish to include any additional contact information that is not available on your letterhead here. For example, “For more information, visit. www.YOURSECTIONWEBSITE.org and follow us on @TWITTERNAME or friend us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/YOURPAGEURL.”



SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

YOUR SECTION/BRANCH

Letterhead/Logo

Media Advisory

MONTH DAY, YEAR

Contact: Name / Phone / Email

Headline – short, attention-grabbing explanation

City, State — Brief overview of event that will take place

WHAT: Title of event

WHO: Speakers, including anyone that media would be interested in hearing speak/interviewing

WHEN: DATE, TIME

WHERE: XXX Location, including any special directions on finding it [If the event is virtual and/or via teleconference, list the Web address and/or phone number.]

WHY: Share the significance of the event without giving away the news that will be unveiled

For example:

Traffic congestion and our children's overcrowded schools are daily reminders that the state of our region's infrastructure directly affects our economy and quality of life. With each passing day, City/Region/State's aging infrastructure is struggling to meet the needs of our growing population, and the overburdened, and in many cases obsolete, condition makes our infrastructure far more susceptible to the ravages of natural and man-made disasters. Can we make the grade?

Insert Section/Branch name here is a local unit of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Founded in 1852, ASCE represents more than 160,000 civil engineers worldwide and is America's oldest national engineering society.

Note to Editors: Local civil engineers are available for interviews. Press kits are available upon request. For more information, visit [INSERT APPROPRIATE URL HERE](#).

HIRING AND MANAGING A PROFESSIONAL LOBBYIST



FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Task: What is the nature of the task at hand for your lobbyist?

- ▶ Is this an ongoing, permanent assignment?
- ▶ Is it a finite task with a discrete goal?

What is the successful outcome of your advocacy campaign?

- ▶ Apply this to the motivation factor for your lobbyist.

How do you incentivize your lobbyist?

- ▶ Is there a success fee?
- ▶ Does your lobbyist work as a retainer?
- ▶ If so, how do you keep your lobbyist on your issue?

Expertise:

What technical knowledge will your lobbyist need to accomplish the goal?

Does this campaign call for more of an articulate public presence or technical knowledge of state legislative procedures?

What are you looking for most in your lobbyist?

- ▶ A lobbyist with a link to a particular member?
 - The head of a committee.
 - A previous champion of your issue.
- ▶ A lobbyist with a lot of technical expertise?
- ▶ A lobbyist who is really well “connected” within the legislature?

**Time:**

Does your prospective lobbyist have the amount of time needed to focus on your issue? What is the cost of the time needed?

Will you be dealing with the principal of the firm or with an associate?

- ▶ Ask to meet the entire lobbying team.
- Evaluate your primary contact.

What kind of relationship do you want with your lobbyist?

- ▶ “Turnkey” relationship.
 - Someone who will just DO and report back with little or no involvement from client.
- ▶ Close knit working relationship.

Lobbyist reports to client:

- ▶ Frequency of reporting?
- ▶ Type of reports?
 - Non-structured oral “This is what is going on....”
 - Formal, written reports outlining progress, etc.

Personal Chemistry:

Look at hiring a lobbyist as you are hiring an employee.

- ▶ Will you get along with them? Do you “click”?
- ▶ What personal qualities are you looking for in your lobbyist?
 - Energy?
 - Intelligence?
 - Political savvy?

Sample Interview Questions



- ▶ How long have you been lobbying?
- ▶ What is the current legislative climate for this type of legislation?
- ▶ What kind of a track record do you have when it comes to our issues?
- ▶ Describe your style. Do you talk with every member of the committee before every vote? Do you utilize written as well as verbal communication?
- ▶ Describe potential strategies for passage of this type of legislation.
- ▶ How long do you think it will take to get the bill passed?
- ▶ How much do you charge and what service does that include?
- ▶ What are your expectations of us? Will we testify at all hearings, or will you sometimes handle it? Who will prepare the letters, testimony, and fact sheets?
- ▶ Will we be able to reach you by phone or e-mail at all times? How promptly can we expect a response?
- ▶ How will you keep us informed of hearings, problems, proposed amendments? Are you available to speak to our Board (or annual meeting)?
- ▶ Will you provide regular, written reports of the progress of our bill?
- ▶ Do you also handle media?
- ▶ Who are your other clients? (You may not want to be associated with someone who represents a client with whom you would not naturally align)
- ▶ (If an lobbyist represents a large clientele) How are you staffed and who will personally represent us?
- ▶ (If it is a small operation) How will you cover schedule conflicts (bills being heard in different committees at the same time, for example)? Which client takes precedence?
- ▶ Do you have relationships or conflicts with the lobbyists for our opposition?
- ▶ Are your fees payable only during the legislative session? What if a special session is called that does not include our type of legislation?



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