To welcome you to the world of lobbying, this chapter will explain why people (in particular, people who work for social service agencies as well as other types of nonprofit organizations) don’t do it, tell you about some amazing things that have happened in this country as a result of genuine grassroots activism, and, finally, introduce you to basic terms related to lobbying and advocacy.

Most of us who work for love or money (or both), on behalf of a cause, are believers. We believe we can make a difference. Whether we’re working on behalf of animals, the environment, people in need, art, science, education, or what have you, we’re committed—perhaps compelled by our ideals—to doing things that are larger than ourselves, things that make the world a better place.

Why, then, don’t we lobby? What stops us from seizing the reins of government to work with officials at the local, state, or federal level to create laws that benefit the good of society? After all, if we step into the policy arena, don’t we have a shot at creating change on a much greater scale?

People are often intimidated by the idea of lobbying. Some find it outright scary. Then there’s all we don’t know or forgot (let’s face it—many of us snoozed through high school civics). We understand the basics of how government works, but the details are foggy at best. We don’t have a grasp of what we’re supposed to do (which we’re embarrassed to admit). We don’t want to look stupid. It seems so complicated. Sometimes, it even seems sleazy.

Second, we’re afraid of getting into trouble. What if we violate some rule we don’t know about or innocently misinterpret the law and the IRS takes away the tax-exempt status of the nonprofit with which we’re
affiliated?! What if our major funder finds out what we’re doing and pulls
the plug?! How can we find a minute in our crazy-busy lives to under-
stand the regulations and explain them to our board members? What if
they object? Aren’t we already doing more than our fair share without
having to rock the boat?

If you have these thoughts and feelings, you’ve got plenty of company.
Study after study has shown that people who work for nonprofit organiza-
tions say that lobbying is important; however, they don’t do it (or do much
of it) for a variety of reasons.

In Seen but Not Heard, Bass, Arons, Guinane, and Carter (2007) report
on the findings of the Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy Project (SNAP)—
a multiyear research project that was designed to discover how, and to what
extent, nonprofits lobby. Their findings, based on a large-scale survey, tele-
phone interviews, and focus groups with nonprofit staff, revealed a stunning
contradiction: While nonprofits said that “public policy is essential to . . . their
mission,” most reported lobbying “at the lowest level” measured by the study
(Bass et al., 2007, p. 17). For instance, an astounding 63% of the more than
1,700 nonprofits surveyed confessed that they either “never” or “infre-
quently” “encouraged others to write, call, fax, or email policymakers.”

A second survey of more than 850 nonprofits conducted by the Johns Hopkins
Nonprofit Listening Post Project developed in collaboration with the Center
for Lobbying in the Public Interest (itself a nonprofit) echoed those findings.
Those researchers, Salamon, Geller, and Lorentz (2009), reported that most
nonprofits involved in advocacy “rely on the least demanding forms of
engagement (e.g., signing a correspondence to a government official endors-
ing or opposing a particular piece of legislation or budget proposal)” (p. i).

As to why nonprofits lobby so sparingly, survey research directed by
Jeffrey M. Berry of Tufts University revealed important clues. Berry and his
colleagues quizzed randomly selected nonprofit leaders throughout the coun-
try about their organization’s basic lobbying rights using eight simple yes/no
questions. According to Berry, most “flunked the test.”

In addition to being afraid, not fully understanding their lobbying rights,
and not knowing how to lobby effectively, there are other theories about why

---

1 Here are Jeffrey Berry’s Lobby and Charities Quiz Questions (reprinted with
permission). Can a nonprofit organization
1. support or oppose federal legislation under current IRS regulations?
2. take a policy position without reference to a specific bill under current
regulations?
3. support or oppose federal regulations?
4. lobby if part of its budget comes from federal funds?
5. use government funds to lobby Congress?
6. endorse a candidate for elected office?
7. talk to elected public officials about public policy matters?
8. sponsor a forum or candidate debate for elected office?
(The answers to all are yes with the exceptions of Questions 5 and 6.)
nonprofits have disengaged from the political process. Zeke Hasenfeld and Eve Garrow are among several academics who contend that many nonprofits—both in the United States and abroad—have become too closely aligned with government and, therefore, are less likely to challenge government. They and others believe that as government increases its reliance on nonprofits to deliver services—particularly human services and health care—and those nonprofits rely increasingly on government for income, they are less likely to lobby for important changes that impact the people they serve. The Urban Institute tells us, for example, that in 2009, more than a quarter of the income received by human service nonprofits came directly from government. That cozy relationship means that nonprofits may be reluctant to speak up for fear of “biting the hand that feeds them.” They may also be so involved in delivering services in a certain way (a way determined by the design of a government program) that they become blind to the bigger issues facing their clients or reluctant to advocate for innovative ways of providing services that may be more effective. In the act of taking government funds to operate programs, some human service nonprofits may morph into organizations that put a priority on protecting their own interests rather than advocating for the real needs of the individuals they serve. One can argue, as Hasenfeld and Garrow do, that this behavior is a consequence of “New Public Management” with its emphasis on corporate-like management practices and accountability of results. Others might claim “mission drift.” Regardless of the reason, there is clear evidence that nonprofits across the sector are advocating at very low levels.

The deafening silence of nonprofit professionals and volunteers in political advocacy is resulting in the passage of new laws that undermine the personal and professional missions of those who work in the sector. For example, in October 2010, after a historic delay in passing the California budget (it was approved more than three months after the start of the state’s fiscal year), legislators arrived at an agreement to close a nearly $19 billion budget gap (equal to more than 20% of the state’s $87.5 billion budget) by cutting $4 billion from schools and health and human service programs. The state’s public assistance program was a major target despite record unemployment levels that forced an increasing number of Californians onto welfare. Sadly, once the news was released, there was no public outcry on the part of organizations and people affected by the cuts. It was as if there was a collective shoulder shrug. This scenario wasn’t unique to California; it was seen time and again in states across the country.

It can be argued that some nonprofit professionals, such as social workers, have a moral obligation to lobby. According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, social workers have “ethical responsibilities to the broader society.” Specifically, the code states,

Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs.
and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of
the political arena on practice and should *advocate for changes in pol-
icy and legislation* [emphasis added] to improve social conditions in
order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.\textsuperscript{iix}

The truth is that nonprofit leaders of all stripes *need* to be involved in the
legislative process because otherwise the debate happens without them.

It’s not just a matter of nonprofit professionals taking a backseat to advoca-
cy when it comes to lobbying on behalf of the people they serve; nonprofits
have also been noticeably absent in policy debates that have an impact on
their own operations. A startling example of this was the lack of advocacy
from nonprofits in the national health care debate. Nonprofits whose mis-
ions were focused on health care were, of course, fully engaged advocates;
however, *all* nonprofits nationwide would inevitably find themselves affected
by the outcome in important ways, yet few voiced their concerns.

Significantly, the health care law will directly impact thousands of non-
profits throughout the country. Those organizations that employ fewer than
25 full-time people where the average annual salary is less than $50,000 are
eligible for a special payroll tax credit for health insurance. A whopping 65%
of all nonprofits in America fall into that category.\textsuperscript{x} That means that many
small organizations that were struggling to provide decent benefits will now
be covered by a law that they had no hand in shaping. What’s more, those
additional benefits might make a difference in the staffing patterns of
smaller nonprofits: If more staff at those organizations have access to health
insurance, a greater percentage may be able to stay employed there rather
than leave for jobs at organizations that provide health benefits. While in
this case it worked out just fine—those organizations that didn’t participate
in the health care debate ended up benefitting just the same—it’s also pos-
sible that the outcome could have been even more beneficial if those organi-
zations that had something to gain weighed in.

It hasn’t always been this way. Advocacy by nonprofit leaders has had a
major impact on our lives. If we take a quick walk through modern American
history, we’ll find some very important rights that wouldn’t exist today with-
out citizen activism that was led by community leaders. Many of these leaders
harnessed the energy of other citizen activists by establishing nonprofit orga-
nizations to advance their cause. Let’s take a look at what they accomplished
by peering through the lens of the world that existed prior to these laws being
established.

First, imagine living in a place where Black and White children were
blocked from attending the same public schools or universities (despite a
Supreme Court ruling to the contrary); where the country was so divided, the
governor of a state (Arkansas) called for the National Guard to protect a
public high school from integration by nine Black students; where parents of
White students—not just in Little Rock, Arkansas, but in Boston, Massachusetts,
and other places across the country—threw rocks at yellow school buses and
screamed obscenities at elementary school children of color simply because they were going to their assigned public school; where the president of the United States had to send federal troops to protect a Black student who was attending a university in Mississippi where he had been accepted for admission; where drinking fountains were segregated by the skin color of the person who wanted to take a drink; where many restaurants refused to serve food to people who were not White, and could do so legally; and where people of color were required to sit in the back of a bus that also carried White passengers.

On June 11, 1963, Alabama Governor George Wallace said the following as he literally stood in a doorway to block two Black students from attending the University of Alabama: “The unwelcomed, unwanted, unwarranted and force-induced intrusion upon the campus of the University of Alabama today of the might of the Central Government offers frightful example of the oppression of the rights, privileges and sovereignty of this State by officers of the Federal Government.”  His opposition to federally mandated school integration was no surprise: During his inaugural address that previous January Wallace had proclaimed, “In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny . . . and I say . . . segregation today . . . segregation tomorrow . . . segregation forever.”  In fact, the people of Alabama voted in Wallace for governor because of his stand against integration (views that he confessed to regretting quite deeply many years later).

As difficult as these facts are to believe, this was America prior to the Civil Rights Movement. It was an America in which many were frightened by the thought of people of different races “mixing” together. It was America until community leaders including Martin Luther King Jr., Medgar Evers, James Farmer, and Ralph Abernathy—the list is far too lengthy to name them all—and members of nonprofit organizations they represented such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Congress of Racial Equality, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee organized to mobilize, protest, educate, and work with their elected officials to create the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The act outlawed segregation in schools and public places and prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, sex, or national origin, and its advocates went on to help create other important laws such as the Voting Rights Act, which followed in 1965. That act protects Americans against literacy tests, poll taxes (a fee one had to pay in order to vote), and other measures that existed previously in many places throughout the country that made it difficult for low-income people and people of color to participate in the electoral process.  The nation is a vastly different place because of the work of these individuals and organizations.

Ten years later, a community activist named Gale Cincotta, a feisty middle-aged widow with a high school education, drew attention to banks taking deposits from low-income communities in which they did not reinvest.
Cincotta and her colleagues gathered evidence of a pattern of discrimination where residents of low-income communities across the country (particularly residents living in predominantly minority communities) with steady jobs and good credit history were being turned down for home loans while their White counterparts with similar financial circumstances who lived in other neighborhoods were approved for loans. They dubbed this phenomenon “redlining,” suspecting that banks were literally drawing red lines around the borders of poor neighborhoods they deemed too high-risk for making loans.

Banks were not skirting the law—this was then legal practice. However, people living in those communities felt that their neighborhoods—neighborhoods where they grew up, went to church, and played as kids; where their own kids played; where they gossiped about neighbors; and that they loved and wanted to own houses in—would never improve without loans for homes and businesses. They demanded that banks located in those neighborhoods—their neighborhoods—that took their deposit money had an obligation to lend there as well. Can you imagine having saved enough money to buy a home in the neighborhood you loved, yet a bank wouldn’t give you a loan because it determined the neighborhood itself wasn’t a good investment?

Cincotta and her neighbors were instrumental in establishing the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act of 1975, which not only proved their theory of unequal lending by requiring banks to disclose where and to whom they made loans but also set the stage for the establishment of the Community Reinvestment Act two years later. The Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 (commonly known as the CRA) was spearheaded largely by two nonprofit organizations founded by Cincotta: National People’s Action (NPA) and the National Training and Information Center. Today the CRA plays a major role in ensuring that banks invest in communities where they take deposits. According to NPA, “Both of these laws are often referred to as the most important economic justice public policy for neighborhoods as they resulted in $4.7 trillion dollars being invested in low and moderate income communities across the United States.”

Then there’s the simple matter of the air we breathe. Long before anyone heard the term global warming, Americans used to go about their daily lives seeing plumes of black smoke billowing out of factory smokestacks. It was a common sight. Buildings would be covered in soot from those emissions and from car exhaust. The gasoline that fueled cars contained dangerous levels of lead. In many places, it wasn’t easy to take a deep breath—asthma and other respiratory illnesses were even more prevalent than they are today. The task of monitoring air quality was left to each state to decide. However, there was an unfortunate problem with that plan since air pollution travels across state borders.

In 1970, a U.S. senator from Wisconsin, Gaylord Nelson, hatched the idea of Earth Day. His idea was to work in collaboration with environmental organizations to organize events across the country that would raise the
public’s consciousness about the earth’s precious and finite natural resources. As a result, that year, 20 million Americans participated in Earth Day events across the country. Those events are credited with paving the way for the passage of a broadly expanded Clean Air Act later that year. The act gave the federal government the authority to set and regulate clean air safety standards for pollution from factories and automobiles. Over the years, the act has been further amended—each time strengthening the ability of the federal government to protect our air quality. In addition to the Clean Air Act, Earth Day led to the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the passage of both the Clean Water and Endangered Species acts.

We all can breathe easier because of the work of many nonprofit environmental organizations that not only pushed for the establishment of the Clean Air Act but work to ensure it remains strong. The Environmental Defense Fund, the Sierra Club, and other organizations have been actively promoting and protecting the act. Unfortunately, it’s a continuing battle: Since its inception, the Clean Air Act has been aggressively challenged as being expensive and unnecessary by some members of the business community. As recently as September 2010, there were battles in Congress to weaken the EPA’s ability to regulate carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases.

These stories are simple reminders of how great it is to take a deep breath of clean air and to have the opportunity to study with different types of students. They’re about things you might have taken for granted or not given much thought to like being able to buy a house anywhere you want (assuming you have sufficient funds and good credit). Here’s something else to add to that list: Every time you or someone you know roams around campus in a wheelchair, you can thank Justin Dart and the American Association of People with Disabilities—the organization he founded. Dart and his colleagues were the driving force behind the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

Similar to and modeled on the Civil Rights Act, the ADA provides broad protections and prohibits many types of discrimination against people with disabilities with regard to “employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications.” For example, prior to the act being signed into law, it was impossible for people in wheelchairs to do things that many others take for granted like go to college, get to the bank, ride a bus, go to a movie, walk into a town hall, or even cross a street because ramps, lifts, and handicapped bathrooms weren’t part of the landscape. The ADA changed thousands of lives across the country—liberating people who otherwise wouldn’t have access to education, jobs, and basic services. Before the law was passed, the main argument against it was that it was impractical because it would be too costly to implement.

All of these things are so vitally important to having a civil society that it’s easy to forget that these laws didn’t always exist in our country. You may be thinking, “That’s cool, but it’s more like ancient history than modern history”
since all of those things happened way before the iPhone was invented. Let’s look at some more current examples.

One of the most well-known modern-day grassroots advocacy efforts is the work of MADD—Mothers Against Drunk Driving—an organization that was founded in 1980 by Candy Lightner, a mother who was heartbroken and angry about her teen daughter’s untimely death by a drunk driver. Not only was the man who killed her daughter drunk; he had repeatedly been arrested for drunk driving. In fact, he had been released from jail on another hit-and-run drunk driving charge just days before his car hit her daughter. Enraged by these facts, Lightner resolved to do something to prevent tragedies like this from happening to other families. She was joined early on in her crusade by Cindy Lamb, a mother whose infant daughter became a quadriplegic after being hit by a drunk driver. The car crash that injured her baby was that driver’s fifth drunk driving offense.

MADD first coined and popularized the notion of a “designated driver,” developed a slew of public awareness and education programs, and in 2000 managed to get the federal government to adopt a blood alcohol level of 0.08 as the federal standard for drunk driving. That federal standard was then tied to the distribution of national highway funds to states. As a result, by 2004 all 50 states and the District of Columbia had passed 0.08 as the legal drunk driving limit. Not too shabby. Lobbying isn’t the only thing that MADD does to save lives—and it has truly saved tens of thousands of lives through its education work both in this country and in Canada. Lobbying is, however, a major thrust of MADD’s work as a 501(c)(3) corporation. We’re not saying that you have to aspire to become like MADD in terms of your own advocacy efforts, but it does give you a good sense of what can be accomplished (and—let’s face it—it’s awesome).

Many other great nonprofit organizations have racked up impressive legislative accomplishments as well. The Sierra Club in collaboration with other environmental organizations succeeded in getting legislation passed in 2001 that required the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reduce the amount of allowable levels of arsenic in drinking water. What’s so bad about arsenic? According to the EPA, “Arsenic is a semi-metal element in the periodic table. It is odorless and tasteless. It enters drinking water supplies from natural deposits in the earth or from agricultural and industrial practices. Non-cancer effects can include thickening and discoloration of the skin, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting; diarrhea; numbness in hands and feet; partial paralysis; and blindness. Arsenic has been linked to cancer of the bladder, lungs, skin, kidney, nasal passages, liver, and prostate.” Seems like a good thing to monitor, don’t you think?

The American Cancer Society also does a great job lobbying. In 2009 it was responsible for spearheading and getting passed sweeping legislation that gave power to the federal Food and Drug Administration to regulate how tobacco is marketed to adults and minors with new warning label requirements and packaging constraints. The law includes a whole slew of important
provisions including some things that may seem simple such as banning candy and fruit-flavored cigarettes that were designed principally to attract young people to smoking (and get them addicted to tobacco). It also includes the following:

- A ban on the use of misleading descriptions such as “light,” “mild,” and “low-tar” in the marketing and packaging of cigarettes
- Larger, stronger warning labels on smokeless tobacco products
- A first-ever federal prohibition on cigarette and smokeless tobacco sales to minors
- A ban on all tobacco-brand sponsorships of sports and cultural events
- A ban on virtually all free tobacco samples and giveaways of non-tobacco items, such as hats and T-shirts, with the purchase of tobacco
- A prohibition on the sale of cigarettes in packs of fewer than 20—so-called “kiddie packs” that make cigarettes more affordable and appealing to kids.

The American Cancer Society has also been responsible for leading several successful state campaigns to increase the tax on tobacco products in order to pay for public health programs.

If you stop to think about the major advocacy efforts that are going on in your state and local community, you’ll realize that many of them are being led by nonprofit organizations. It isn’t that nonprofits aren’t out there lobbying to great success; it’s that there aren’t enough nonprofits engaged in the lobbying process. To borrow a line from Charles Dickens, it’s really a tale of two types of nonprofits—those whose work focuses on advocacy and those who do all types of other things and lobby very little or not at all. It’s the second group that needs to read this book and get going!

At this point you may be feeling inspired, overwhelmed, or maybe even intimidated by these massive accomplishments. Just remember that all of these leaders had to start at the beginning. Nobody was born knowing how to be a lobbyist or an advocate—these activists learned how over time. What they all had in common was a heartfelt commitment to addressing an injustice. If you have that type of commitment, you’ll be likely to succeed as well. This book is going to show you how to make change on the state and local level by explaining the legal dos and don’ts of lobbying, demystifying the challenges and realities of government budgeting, walking you through the legislative process, introducing you to a step-by-step framework that you can use to launch a legislative campaign, demonstrating how three separate groups of students have used that framework to successfully lobby, describing effective Internet lobbying strategies, and, finally, telling you what to do once your legislation passes. In the end, it won’t seem all that difficult or mysterious. The focus of this book is on lobbying at the local level as that’s a good place for you to develop advocacy skills. Later on you can apply what you’ve learned to lobbying at the federal level to make even greater change.
Let’s get going by becoming familiar with some of the terms that are used to describe and define the work of lobbying and advocacy.

First, what do we mean by the term advocacy? Advocacy can be defined in two distinct ways. Social workers often use the term to refer to case management work that is done to represent and advance the interests and needs of an individual client or multiple clients within a particular system or a variety of systems that are reluctant (or resistant) to provide needed services. For example, a client who is homeless may need a social worker to help her find a placement in an emergency shelter, a drug rehabilitation or detox program, or a job training program; child care; or all of the above. The social worker helps the client connect to and navigate through those systems.

Public advocacy, the second term to keep in mind and the one that pertains to the type of work that is discussed in this book, means influencing both public opinion and public policy. For example, when MADD promoted the concept of a “designated driver” (remember—it was a completely new idea to the general public at the time), the organization did a terrific job influencing public opinion about driving drunk. The mere act of making people aware that they should appoint someone in their group to be a designated driver raised the public’s consciousness about the dangers of drinking and driving. When Gaylord Nelson launched Earth Day, he did so to raise awareness of the fragility of the environment. The “I Have a Dream” speech delivered so eloquently by Martin Luther King Jr. inspired millions of Americans to think about their personal relationship to the struggle for civil rights. In all of these cases, making the public aware of these issues and the need to act led eventually to important changes in the laws of this country. However, lobbying was required to make those changes occur.

Public advocacy is a broad umbrella encompassing many different types of activities that promote public awareness and policy change. It includes a wide range of actions such as organizing rallies, educating people about a particular issue, litigating for change, and submitting comments that influence the shape of government rules and regulation. It also includes informal “getting to know you” meetings with public officials to introduce them to the organization you represent and to the issues that are important to people in your community.

What do we mean by lobbying? According to the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (fondly known as CLPI), lobbying is “a specific, legally defined activity that involves stating your position on specific legislation to legislators and/or asking them to support your position.” It is the act of directly expressing your views to elected officials (or their proxy—for instance, someone who works in the office of that official) in order to influence the action of that person or persons with the goal of affecting the law. Lobbying can also mean rallying others to carry a specific message to elected officials for the purpose of affecting the law. This is referred to as grassroots lobbying and will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. It does not matter if you or your allies are advocating in favor of or against a particular piece of legislation; you are lobbying when you make a direct appeal to an elected
official to do something specific about a law or a proposed law. When the American Cancer Society lobbied to pass the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act in 2009, it lobbied members of Congress with a very specific package of proposals for new laws.

What is legislation? Legislation is a proposed law that is under consideration by a governing body that is capable of making laws. According to the IRS, it also includes “action . . . with respect to acts, bills, resolutions, or similar items (such as legislative confirmation of appointive office).” That governing body might be the Congress of the United States, a state legislature, a county government, or a city council. Occasionally, the general public performs the function of a legislature when it determines law as part of a ballot question such as an initiative petition, a referendum, or a proposed constitutional amendment. Legislation starts with a certain set of ideas and changes as it goes through the policy-making process where other legislators and the public have an opportunity to express their views on what is being proposed. Once legislation becomes law, it is called an “act” or a “statute.” Many people are surprised to learn that school boards and zoning boards aren’t legislative bodies. Therefore, when nonprofits approach those groups to express their views, they are not engaging in the lobbying process. Similarly, contact with the executive branch, independent administrative agencies, or the judicial branch is not considered lobbying.

What is public policy? Similar to how advocacy is broader than lobbying, public policy is broader than legislation. While legislation has to do with making laws, public policy is defined by CLPI as “decision-making that affects the public realm—laws, regulations, executive orders, judicial rulings, rules issued by elected and other government officials.” For example, a city council may have a policy on which types of items residents can put in their curbside recycle bins; however, that policy isn’t a law.

Finally, you may have heard the term social welfare policy. Social welfare policy refers to those government programs that are part of our social safety net, which is also known more broadly as the social welfare state. These programs might include, for example, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, housing subsidies, food stamps, and so on and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Having a basic understanding of these definitions is a good start. That said, if you read through them carefully, you’ll notice that many of the definitions are intertwined—one thing leads to another and back again. What you really need to know is twofold:

1. **The rules concerning what is legal and illegal for nonprofits to do.** We’ll discuss those in detail in the next chapter. The real surprise here is how much you can do (in a nutshell, pretty much everything except endorse a candidate for office. Still, don’t skip that chapter).

2. **The facts about the issue you care about.** That’s right. When you are lobbying at the city, county, state, or federal level, no one is going to give you a pop quiz about whether or not you know what the next
steps are in the process. More often, the policy makers with whom you’ll work, and their aides (especially those aides—bless them!), will help you navigate your way through the process. What they will insist you know is everything possible about the idea or cause you are championing. That is the single most important thing you need to do in order to be an effective lobbyist. Know your stuff, and know how to present it effectively.

Chapter Questions

1. Have you ever been involved in a lobbying campaign led by a nonprofit organization? If so, what was your involvement?

2. Have you ever been in a situation where you thought a nonprofit organization should get involved with a public policy issue but it didn’t?

3. Do you believe that human service nonprofits are hesitant to lobby because they are overly dependent on government grants?

4. Do you know anyone who was involved in any of the lobbying campaigns mentioned in this chapter (Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, ADA, etc.)?

5. The Voting Rights Act was challenged in 2010. Why? What were the arguments put forth?

6. Name two nonprofit organizations in your state that are active advocates for legislative change. What kinds of campaigns are those organizations working on right now?

Endnotes


ii Ibid.


Chapter 1  Lobbying and Advocacy


