

★ NASW/AR ★ ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

YOUR



VOICE



VOTE



POWER

Advocacy is part of the Social Work Code of Ethics. As social workers, we have an obligation to champion policies that improve the lives of our clients. With that in mind, NASW-Arkansas put together this guide to getting involved!

LET'S START HERE...

Find out who represents you



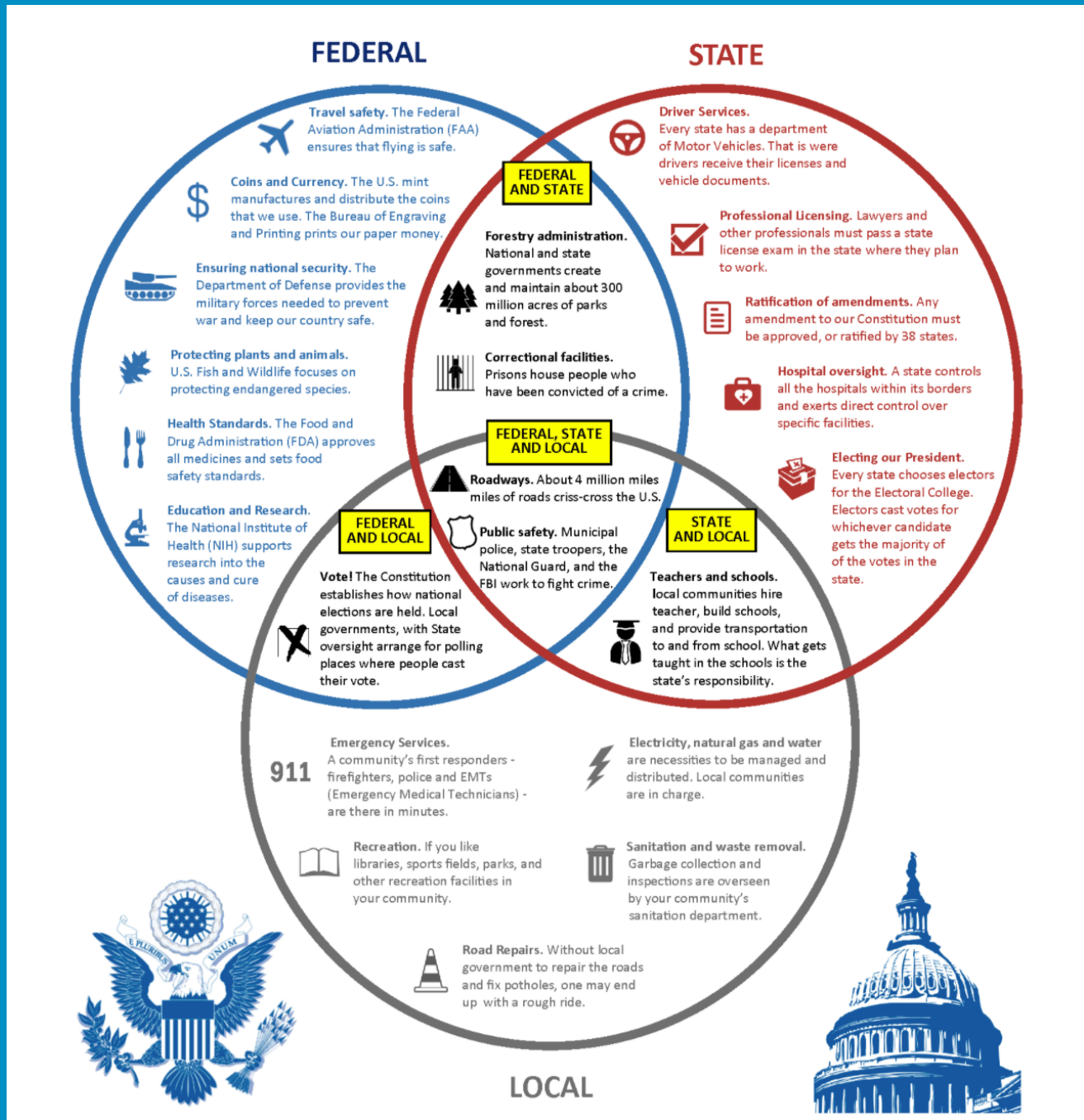
When is the next local, state or federal election?



Stay informed!



FEDERAL, STATE, & LOCAL



LOCAL LEVEL GOVERNMENT

There are two major kinds of local governments:

MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY.

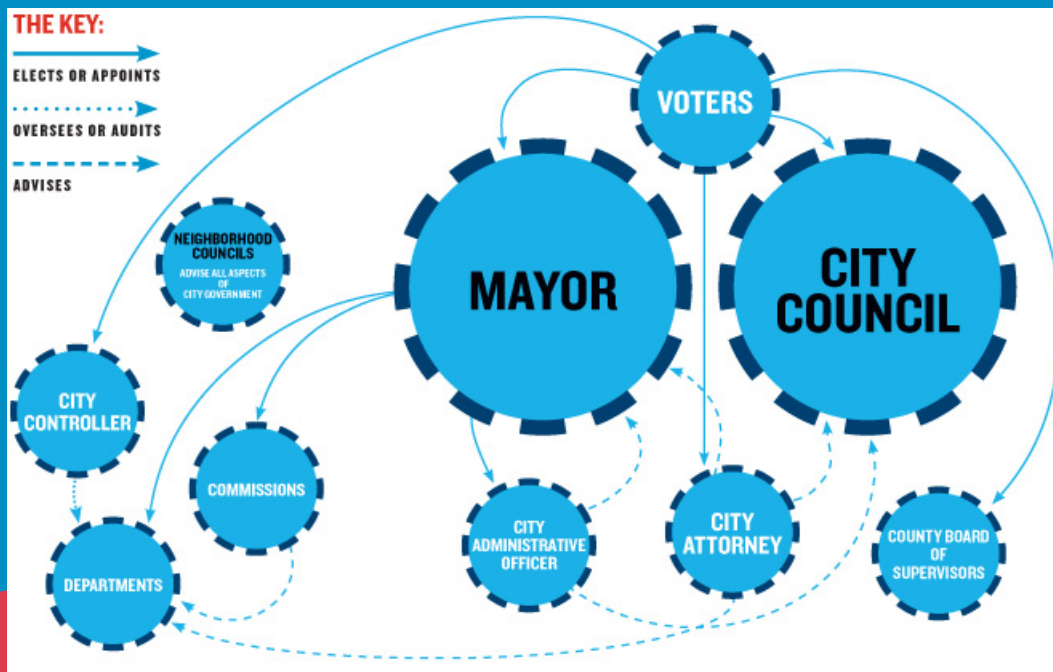
In general, mayors, city councils, and other governing bodies are directly elected

BY THE PEOPLE



Municipalities/ Cities govern things such as:

parks, recreation services, police, fire departments, housing services, emergency medical services, municipal courts transportation services, & public work.



THE MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES OF ARKANSAS COUNTY GOVERNMENT



Providing **public safety and justice**

Holding **elections** at every level of government

Maintaining Arkansas' most **important records**



Building and **maintaining roads, bridges** and in some cases, **county airports**



Providing **emergency management services**

Providing **health and safety services**



Collecting **property taxes** for the county and sometimes for other taxing entities



Issuing **vehicle registration** and transfers
& **Registering voters**



Most Populated Arkansas County Governments:

Pulaski County Government

Benton County Government

Washington County Government

Sebastian County Government

Faulkner County Government

Saline County Government



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National Association of Social Workers

LOCAL LEVEL ADVOCACY: GETTING STARTED



Don't know where to start?

1. Look at the official county or city websites, find who your officials are: Mayor, City Council, etc.
2. Look for upcoming opportunities to engage with them: town halls, meetings, virtual events, etc.
3. Search for existing groups and coalitions, get creative! They may be on Facebook or part of existing social clubs or political groups.
4. Do some research! What Issues mean the most to you & what organizations or elected officials are working to solve these Issues?
5. You know your community, so share your thoughts with your elected officials! Start building a relationship before you have an "ask".
6. Ask to set up a call or meeting to introduce yourself and share your interests.



STATE LEVEL GOVERNMENT

Arkansas Legislature Fast Facts

The Governor is chosen by popular vote by the Arkansas public.

The Arkansas Legislature is divided by two chambers: Senate and House

**100 Representatives
(2-year term)**

The Arkansas House of Representatives is run by the Speaker of the House, who is chosen by House members.



**35 Senators
(4-year term)**

The presiding officer of the Senate is the Lieutenant Governor, who is chosen by popular vote by the Arkansas public.

The off time from a legislative session is called "the interim".

An average of 1,000 bills are filed with only 60% passing.
Bills can be vetoed by the Governor even if passed by the
Legislature.

Arkansas meets for the Legislative Session every other year on odd numbered years for 140 days. Only the Governor may call a Special Session to bring the legislature back into session once session has ended.

**Legislators have Capitol offices and District offices, so you
can advocate from any area of the state!**

State Level Advocacy: Meeting with a Legislator

- 1** Find your legislators and their contact information by searching "govtrack.us"



- 2** Learn about your legislators

Know basic information about the Representative or Senator:

Where are they from? What committees are they on?

Have they worked on any legislation related to the topic you are interested in?

ARKANSAS STATE LEGISLATURE

- 3** Call and ask to schedule a meeting

Hi, my name is _____ and I am a constituent in your district, as well as a *social work student/social work professional*. Can I please set up a brief visit with the legislator or their staff to discuss policy issues important to social workers?" Please note* Not all offices have a staffer. When you call the legislator or representative you are trying to contact could be the one answering!!

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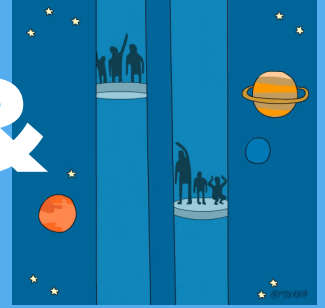
Prepare for your meeting

- i. Have your "Ask" - Determine 1-2 issues that you are especially passionate about (i.e. school social work, health coverage, or immigration)
- ii. Know your "Why" - Review the one-pagers to learn more about your chosen issues. Reflect on how the issue relates to social work and why you care about the issue. If time allows, use the meeting to share those thoughts with the legislator or their staff.
- iii. Based on your "Ask" and your "Why", have your "Elevator Speech" ready.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

1. **Bring your social work skills to the conversation: advocate for yourself and your cause. Authenticity is KEY!**
2. **Legislative staff need your perspective and expertise more than you think. Bring that expertise to the meeting!**
3. **Admit if you don't know the answer to a question a legislator or staff ask.**
4. **Even if you don't agree with the legislator on all issues, find one item that you can thank them for during the meeting.**
5. **Send a follow up thank you email letting the staffer or legislator know you appreciate their time and want to be a resource for them in the future.**

What's an Elevator Speech & when do I use it?



An Elevator Speech is a quick, clear, and concise summary of the issue you are hoping to address and how you would like to address it. It is an effective advocacy tool during calls, meetings, and testimony.

Example Elevator Speech on Ethics/Healthcare in Social Work:

Intro: I am a constituent in your district, as well as a social student/licensed social worker. I would like to talk to you about the importance of ethics and healthcare provisions in social work.

The Ask: I am asking you to oppose Senate Bill 289 "Medical Ethics and Diversity Act"

The Why: Social workers are already able to decline to provide services based on their competencies and training, but they cannot discriminate based on selective personal values. No patient should ever be obstructed from receiving legal healthcare based solely on a providers' personal values. Conscience bills such as SB 289 lead to dysfunctional healthcare delivery and compromise the quality of care by creating barriers to meet patients' needs.

Conclusion: I'm happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time.

*Challenge: Create an Elevator Speech for a policy topic.
Practice with a friend or colleague!*

Advocacy Action Steps



Sending an Email or Letter

Look up your elected official's contact information using "govtrack.us".



Create a letter or email. Here is an example template to get started:

Hi, my name is ___, and I'm a constituent. As a social worker, I am very supportive of your efforts related to veterans' mental health programs because it impacts my clients by _____. I have seen firsthand how this would impact our community by _____. I am asking Rep/Senator ___ to _____.

If you use an email or letter template someone else created, it's important to add a few unique sentences you write yourself. The more personalized, the better. Emails or letters that look like they came from a constituent get more attention and have a greater impact than something that's a cookie-cutter form letter.

Advocacy Action Steps



Setting up a Meeting

Look up your elected official's information using "govtrack.us".



Call their office and ask to speak to the staff who works on the issue you would like a meeting on (ex: mental health, Medicaid, veterans, immigration, homelessness, etc)

Use the script below and ask to schedule a meeting:

*"Hi, my name is _____ and I am a constituent in your district, as well as a *social work student/social work professional*. Can I please set up a brief visit with the legislator or their staff to discuss policy issues important to social workers?"*

Advocacy Action Steps



After the Meeting

Write a thank you email or letter thanking the legislator or staffer for their time. Including your contact information and other materials that relate to your meeting.

Continue building a relationship with the office by offering to be a resource on a policy issue. This may be related to your job or a topic that you are passionate about advocating for.

If you took a picture with the legislator and their staff, be sure to ask them if it is okay to share on social media. Posting a photo on social media and tagging the legislative office is a good way to build a relationship.

Continue engaging with the office to build the relationship!

Advocacy Action Steps



Advocacy Phone Calls

If you have an advocacy ask for your legislator or elected official it can be effective to call their office to tell a staffer about your ask.

Once you have the office information, call and ask for the staffer that is working on the issue area you are concerned about.

Using an Elevator Speech, share your ask clearly. Be ready to answer any questions they may have. Ask if you can email them any materials you have, including your contact info.

Example script:

"Hi, my name is ___, and I'm a constituent. As a social worker, I am very concerned about Senate Bill 289 because it would negatively impact people in my community by..._. I am asking Rep/Senator ??_ to vote against Senate Bill 289."

Advocacy Action Steps



Social Media

Social media is a great tool to raise awareness for an Issue, gain the attention from elected officials and advocate for human rights.

Here are some tips to get started:

- Promote what advocacy organizations are already sharing
- Create graphics and flyers to promote your message
- Use existing hashtags like #? or #? to garner attention
- Tag your elected officials or other stakeholders of interest:
#arleg, #arpx, #SocialWorkersStandUp, #HB##, #SB##

Follow us on social media to keep up with NASW/AR advocacy!



**CLICK
HERE**



BECOME A MEMBER



**Thank you for being an
NASW/AR member!**

**If you are not a member
we would love to have
you join us so that our
advocacy can go
farther!**



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CONTACT US

