



MARCH 2, 2016 ★ NASHVILLE

ADVOCACY
TOOLKIT

ADVOCATING FOR THE ARTS TO YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Remember that your senators and representatives are there to represent and serve you. Expressing your opinions as a constituent is a key function of the democratic process. Your elected officials are accustomed to hearing about and welcome the views and concerns of their constituents. Let your voice be heard in advocating for the arts in the halls of government.

“DO’S” TO BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE

1. Learn who your legislators are, their committee assignments, their positions in the legislative leadership, and their records on arts issues.

- On the Web: www.state.tn.us – click on the Government tab and then the elected officials link– offers detailed information on state and federal elected officials representing the state of Tennessee including their contact information, biographical information and committee assignments.
- Information on your legislators can also be found on the TFTA Web site www.tn4arts.org. Click on the Advocacy tab. Information on the members of the Tennessee Arts Caucus also can be found here.

2. Build a relationship with your legislators and their staff. Visit legislators in their offices in the capital or when they are at home.

Meeting face-to-face with your legislators is the most effective approach to public policy advocacy. You have the opportunity to present your case, raise questions, and provide the answers and information your legislator needs to do the best job in representing your interests.

- **Make an appointment:** Schedule your meeting in advance. Explain the purpose of the meeting and who will attend.
- **Be brief and concise:** You will probably have 10 to 20 minutes to meet with your legislator. If you need more time, request a breakfast or a luncheon meeting.
- **Establish a relationship:** Lobbying is a person-to-person activity. If you have friends in common or if you have met before, mention that connection during the beginning of your visit.
- **State your purpose:** Within the first few minutes, make clear who you are and why you have asked for a meeting. Be straightforward.
- **Appeal to reason:** An emotional appeal is not enough. Back your arguments with facts and substance. Show how proposed legislation would affect the arts.
- **Ask for the business:** Tell what action you would like your legislator to take in support of your request. Don't hold back!
- **Make your politics local:** As a constituent, you are in the best position to explain what your legislator needs to know– what your request will mean to your community. Explain what you do and how the issue at hand will affect you.
- **Don't bluff it:** If you don't know the answer to a question, say “I don't know, but I can get that information for you.” Then follow up later.
- **Seek guidance:** Ask your legislator's advice on how you might proceed with your issue. Elected officials, like anyone else, like to talk as well as listen. They can offer useful information on how to pursue your interests elsewhere.
- **Leave evidence:** Bring with you material about your program and brief written information about the issue you have discussed. It provides a reminder of your visit and a refresher on the points you have presented.
- **Appreciate staff:** You may be asked to meet with a staff member instead of with your legislator. Don't be put off. This person should have a good understanding of your issues and will relay your concerns to your legislator.
- **Remember to thank:** Send a note thanking your legislator for the meeting. You can use this opportunity to mention any points you may have forgotten or to send information you promised to provide. Inform your colleagues. Share information about your advocacy contacts with other arts advocates. Communicating your legislators' feelings on arts issues helps make your united advocacy efforts more effective.

In addition to face-to-face office meetings, also invite legislators and/or their spouses to arts events in your community.

Be knowledgeable about rules pertaining to gifts (i.e.: tickets or things with commercial value) given to elected officials.

3. Keep informed about issues affecting the arts and let your legislators know your position on these

issues. Information on arts policy issues can be found on the TFTA Web site.

4. **Become involved with your elected officials. Reinforce the support you receive from your legislators with letters of thanks, awards and campaign support, especially if they are members of the Arts Caucus.**
5. **Understand the legislative process, including the strategic importance of compromise.**
 - Information about the legislative process is available from the Tennessee Blue Book on the Web at: www.state.tn.us/sos/bluebook
6. **Alert other advocates to take action on arts-related legislation.**
 - Share what you know about arts-related legislation and your legislators with other members of TFTA via the Web site, and make TFTA staff aware of any follow-up actions that may need to be taken.
7. **Coordinate advocacy with other groups. Build a coalition of arts advocates.**
8. **Participate in local political events to give visibility to the arts on the public policy agenda.**
9. **Understand the impact of public arts funding in the community.**
 - Key to arts funding in the state of Tennessee is the specialty license plate initiative, which provides funding for arts programs across the state. Purchase a specialty license plate and encourage friends and family members to do so too. This grassroots effort can be a positive first step and a vital tool in supporting the arts.
 - A fact sheet detailing the history and specifics of the specialty license plate legislation benefiting the arts is included in this toolkit.
10. **Provide policy makers with the information they need to make the case. Know the facts, and present the information clearly and succinctly.**

**Portions of the above information on “Do’s to Becoming an Effective Advocate” were taken from a compilation of best practices included in the National Assembly of State Art Agencies (NASAA) Arts Advocacy Toolkit.

THE TENNESSEE SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATE PROGRAM



- In Tennessee, a portion of funds from the purchase of certain Specialty License Plates supports the arts.
- The Tennessee Specialty License Plate Program was created in the 1980s to provide a dedicated revenue source for arts and cultural activities in the state.
- It is vital that the arts continue to support and promote the Specialty License Plate Program in order to maintain our grant funding.
- Specialty License Plate funding is distributed through the Tennessee Arts Commission, your state arts agency, to provide local arts programming for schools and communities.
- In 2015, 949 grants were made to 759 organizations and schools totaling \$5.1 million, of which \$4.5 million was funded by the Specialty License Plate Program
- The Commission invests in arts and cultural activities for schools, nonprofit and public organizations across all



95 counties.

- Arts and culture benefits Tennessee communities through quality of life, economic development, tourism and provides a more balanced education for our children.
- Tennessee Specialty License Plates are available at your local county clerk's office. They can be purchased anytime and yearly tag fees will be prorated.

How to Promote the Specialty License Plate Program

- Go to tnspecialtyplates.org. This website has information about the program, how to buy Specialty License Plates or personalize a plate, and how to give the gift of a Specialty License Plate.
- Click on the partner page and use the password: [tnspecialtyplates](http://tnspecialtyplates.org).
- Click on the arts plate and select the toolkit you want to use to download logos, flyers, print ads and web ads.
- Check back often for new campaigns and tools.

- Other promotional ideas include:
 - Preferred parking at your events for those with arts plates
 - Offer discounts on tickets and events with proof of an arts plate
 - Recognize arts plate holders in your audience
 - Challenge your board and employees for 100% arts plate participation

THE GIFT-A-TAG PROGRAM

- The **GIFT-A-TAG** program was passed in 2015 as an additional way to support the Tennessee Specialty License Plate Program.
- **GIFT-A-TAG** is a great way to give the gift of a new or renewal of a Specialty License Plate or the personalization of any Tennessee license plate.
- **GIFT-A-TAG** vouchers are \$35 and can be purchased online at tngiftcenter.com/giftatag.



How to Promote Gift-A-Tag

- Go to tnspecialtyplates.org.
- Click on the partner page and use the password: [tnspecialtyplates](http://tnspecialtyplates.org).
- Click on the arts plate and select the **GIFT-A-TAG** toolkit to download logos, flyers, print ads and web ads.
- Check back often for new campaigns and tools.

- Other promotional ideas include:
 - Give **GIFT-A-TAGS** as door prizes
 - Give discounted tickets with **GIFT-A-TAGS** purchase
 - Give **GIFT-A-TAGS** to thank your volunteers, board members and customers
 - Challenge your board and staff to sell **GIFT-A-TAGS**

GIFT-A-TAGS make great gifts for those who are planning to renew their current Specialty License Plate. Recipients of your gift can enter the code when renewing their plate online or by mail. Your gift lets them know how much you value their support of the arts.