



STATE ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Be the voice and the reason for change.

What's included in this toolkit?

How To Become an Advocate

Being an Informed Advocate

Getting Connected

Amplifying Your Voice

Uniting with Others



state advocacy toolkit

Be an empowered Family Building Advocate in YOUR state.

Thank you. Thank you on behalf of the 1 in 8 who struggle to build a family and those who will struggle tomorrow and need access to care. Thank you for helping RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association fight to increase family building options for all who want nothing more than to become a parent. Thank you for joining the RESOLVE Advocacy Network (RAN).

This State Advocacy toolkit will be your own self-paced guide that will provide you with the necessary tools and resources to become an empowered advocate in your own state. Let us help you amplify your voice because your voice is the key to effecting change.



Why Advocacy Matters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E54eNxptRG0>

RESOLVE has been on the frontlines in tracking legislation that impacts the family building community. Some of these bills are anti-family and some of the bills would greatly help people facing barriers in building their family. Since the first state insurance law was passed in Maryland in 1985, RESOLVE has led the charge of change and has helped advocates, like you, gain IVF insurance and fertility preservation coverage in their state, pass favorable surrogacy laws, fight anti-family Personhood bills and ballot initiatives, and defeat other anti-family bills that would impact access to options such as surrogacy, donor egg and adoption.

The Impact of Your Advocacy

1. When you choose to speak up, your lawmakers will listen to your needs. They don't know until you tell them.
2. You have the ability to help stop bad legislation from becoming state law and empower your legislators to support pro-family bills with the power of your personal story.



Be Informed (Pages 4-6)

Learn about the issues that are impacting your state and how you can start the process of change.



Get Connected (Pages 7-13)

Schedule meetings with your lawmakers, make them count, and create champions for our issues.



Amplify Your Voice (Pages 14-17)

Discover how to engage with your local media outlets and the power of digital activism.



Unite with Others (Pages 18-21)

Find simple, actionable ways to flex your civic muscle and turn it into a movement.



Be Informed

“Alter your relationship to infertility. Whatever infertility was to you, or did to you, get involved with advocacy! It becomes the source of strength.”

lee collins, ma

Advocacy begins with being passionate about issues that impact you and your desire for change. Being dissatisfied with the status quo is a great motivator for advocacy work. We’ve outlined the steps to make you an informed – and successful – advocate.

Step 1.

[Find Current Legislation in your State.](#)

Are there pro-family bills you want to support or anti-family bills that need defeating? Or is there positive legislation you want introduced? Whatever the scenario in your state, you need to know *how* your state legislature works and *who* your state legislators are by doing your advocacy homework. With just a minimal amount of sleuthing, you can easily determine your state’s legislative process, as the process varies by state. For example, in some states the legislature meets every year for a one-year session; other states have a two-year session. And a few states have legislatures that meet every other year. You need to find out what happens in your state by visiting the website for your state’s legislative branch of government: <https://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures.aspx>

Step 2.

Identify your Elected Officials.

Find out who your state Senator and House members are by simply entering your address at: http://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/. Please note that we will refer to your two state lawmakers

as state Senator and Representative and the two legislative chambers as Senate and House, but your Representative may be called an Assembly member or Delegate, and the House may be called the Assembly.

Step 3.

Get Background on Your Elected Officials.

Find out what committees your state Senator and Representative are on. Is your Senator or Representative on the health, insurance or judicial committees? Note if your legislators hold any leadership positions within your state legislature, their political party, or on other committees (e.g., a chair, vice-chair, speaker, minority leader, etc.) Carefully read the bios on your state Senator and Representative and look at the legislation he or she has sponsored or co-sponsored to learn what their priorities are and how our interests may overlap.

Step 4.

Research Key Committees.

Identify the chair and vice-chair of the health, insurance and judicial committees in your state's House and Senate (a possible total of 12 names). Each state calls these committees different names so look for the committees in each chamber that cover health issues (in the House and Senate), insurance issues (in the House and Senate) and judicial issues (in the House and Senate). In some states the health committee may cover health insurance issues. Ask us questions! Every state is different; legislatures can be complicated. We are here to help.

Step 5.

Consider reaching out to the fertility practice(s) closest to your lawmaker's district.

Briefly explain that you are a volunteer advocate with RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association and that you are interested in advocating on behalf of the family building community. Ask them to identify a contact in their practice that you can keep informed and engage with on advocacy issues. An initial task is to request the specific number of patients from clinics in or near your lawmaker's district. This is a number they can easily capture by conducting a zip code search of all their past and present patients in that corresponding district. A recent success story from an empowered clinic and RESOLVE advocacy partner in New York State revealed 12,000 patients from one state Senator's district. This became a very powerful stat that grabbed the lawmaker's attention.

Need some extra help? Contact us at: advocacy@resolve.org



RESOURCES

[Find the current legislation in your State](#)

[Who is your state's Senator/House member?](#)

[RESOLVE's Issues](#)

[RESOLVE's Position Statements on Key Issues](#)

[Recent Legislative Victories and Achievements](#)



Get Connected

"You are your biggest advocate. Don't be discouraged if a meeting doesn't go well or you don't get the results you want. You never know who will relate to your cause. Keep focusing on your goal and meeting with as many people as you can."

Beth Marshall, AZ

Now that you are an informed advocate, it's time to reach out to your lawmaker. The role of your lawmaker is to represent their constituents, meaning YOU. They were elected into that position to be listeners and representatives of the greater public interest. There are many ways you can connect with your legislators, which we will walk you through in this section of the toolkit.

We'll start with 5 simple ways to make the connection:

5 simple ways to connect with your legislator.

1. **Send an email or letter.** [You can use this template!](#)
2. **Call them.** A simple phone call can help start the conversation. Don't quite know what to say? [See this sample script.](#)
3. **Connect with your lawmaker on social media.** Follow your representative's social media pages where you can find out about events and town halls and sign up for emails—because we all love more email! Most of your individual lawmakers' contact information can be found on their website.
4. **Attend a town hall meeting.** Typically, they'll post this information on their social media pages. Come prepared with your own questions and elevator pitch. See these tips on how to prepare for a [town hall meeting here.](#)
5. **Arrange a face-to-face meeting with your legislator.** We will go into greater detail about meeting with your lawmaker further in this section. The most effective grassroots advocacy starts with meeting face to face with your lawmaker.



How to solidify the connection

Preparation is vital. Now what? You just scored your first meeting, congrats! Now it's time to prepare for your meeting. First, remember to be informed before your meeting. Learn everything about your state legislator that will be vital in your conversation and legislative ask. Come prepared with your story. Think about how you can briefly share your connection to infertility and family building and specifically talk through how your lawmaker can be pro-family and help change the lives of others in their district who are also struggling to build their family.

Bring materials and factsheets. These will help you strengthen your point and provide your lawmaker with the stats and facts they'll need to decide whether to give their support. Note that your lawmaker may not be aware of how many people, in their state or in their specific district, will be impacted by the piece of legislation you are discussing. This is an important bit of information to come prepared to share with them!

Give them the facts. Below are a few examples of visual resources and fact sheets that other RESOLVE state advocates have provided to their lawmakers. If none apply to your specific legislative topic, RESOLVE can assist you if you need additional resources.

[Fertility Scorecard](#)

This is an important resource because it provides a grade for how fertility friendly your state is, and the number of state constituents impacted by infertility. The scorecard provides a talking point on how your legislator can improve their state's score.

[IVF Fact Sheet](#)

This is a great resource for sharing with your lawmakers to rally their support for statewide insurance coverage and educate them on the financial impact of infertility treatment on their constituents.

[Fertility Preservation Fact Sheet](#)

This depicts the medical necessity for fertility preservation for cancer patients and others whose medical treatment can impact their future family building.

[Gestational Surrogacy Infographic](#)

This helps explain the process of surrogacy which can be useful in states that have legislation related to surrogacy.



Your Meeting.

Ideally, make an appointment to visit with your legislators and with the chairs of the health, insurance and/or judicial committees. (Alternatively, write, call, or email them.) Make sure you call and schedule your meeting in advance. Showing up unexpectedly is typically not the best practice. For your individual lawmakers, make sure they know you are their constituent. Also, let them know you are a volunteer advocate with RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association, but first and foremost you are someone who has struggled to build your family and who will be impacted by the legislation or issue you will be discussing.

Meeting your state lawmakers doesn't mean you have to travel to your state capital. You can schedule the meeting while the lawmaker is home in your district. For those who don't have a district office, don't be alarmed if they suggest meeting at a residence or a local coffee shop. If you do live near the state capital, then meeting at their office in the capital works too.

Check out [this video](#) to get an idea of what you can expect while meeting with your lawmaker.

Another biggie: don't feel slighted if you are meeting with a staff member and not your actual lawmaker. Really, these are the people who are doing most of the legwork on behalf of your lawmaker. They are the influencers and their buy-in and support are vital to your issue.

If you are meeting with a legislator or their staff member who supports a piece of anti-family legislation, the chances are they may say something you will disagree with. This is where practicing good listening can work to your advantage. You will be able to find out exactly why they disagree and then respectfully offer facts that will strengthen the reason for meeting. Always keep the conversation civil and positive. After the meeting you will have an opportunity to follow up with your lawmaker and answer any follow-up questions and reiterate the impact of the bill they currently support. And don't assume that because your lawmaker voted a certain way on a prior piece of legislation that means they will automatically vote the same way in the future. For example, RESOLVE has found lawmakers *opposed* [Personhood](#) legislation once they were educated by RESOLVE advocates, even if they voted favorably for similar bills, such as anti-abortion bills, in the past.

Most important to your meeting, legislators are swayed by personal stories. Putting a face on infertility/adoption/family-building raises awareness and lets lawmakers know that our community exists. It is especially powerful to build these relationships when there isn't an important bill at stake because then you will have those relationships to draw upon in the future. Being an awesome advocate isn't about memorizing bill numbers and key committees; it is about making the connection and nurturing the relationship.

[Here are a few tips on how you can inspire your lawmaker to help!](#)



Meeting Do's and Don'ts

If this is your first-time meeting with your state lawmaker, it is common to have a little anxiety of the unknown and what to expect during your meeting. Keep in mind these are **elected** officials and at the end of the day, they work for **you**, their constituent. It is their job to listen and represent the people of their district. Once you schedule your meeting, take a few moments to read over some Do's and Don'ts of a successful meeting with your lawmaker. For example:

Do:

- ✓ Bring a list of talking points to help keep you focused on the legislative topic.
- ✓ Come prepared with handouts for your meetings. Most important, stay positive and refrain from defensive responses.
- ✓ Be on time for your meeting. Lawmakers hold many appointments throughout the day. If you think you will be late, give their office a quick call to give them a heads up.
- ✓ Ask them for their business card or the relevant staff member's business card. This will help you in your follow-up efforts after the meeting.

Don't:

- ✓ Don't have an active device during your meeting and be sure not to text during your meeting.
- ✓ Don't go off topic, stick to the issues or legislation you are presenting and asking them to support or oppose. Stay the course.
- ✓ If they ask a question that you do not know the answer to, be sure to simply write it down and follow back up with them. Don't try to answer it if you are not 100% sure. You can email RESOLVE at advocacy@resolve.org immediately after your meeting and we will do our best to provide you with a response.
- ✓ Don't forget to jot down any highlights from your meeting. This will be helpful when you follow up with your lawmaker or their staff member.



Follow up, and then follow up again.

Your meeting started the conversation. Your follow-up is what will ultimately put your ask into action. If you are not a constant presence, then your issue could be easily forgotten. Persistence is the secret sauce in successful advocacy efforts. It also helps you build the bridge of rapport with your lawmaker, which will be integral in creating a solid champion for family building issues.

3 easy ways to follow up with your lawmaker

1. **Email them.** Follow up with an email within 24 hours of your meeting. Thank them for meeting with you and follow up on any questions or requests for information that may have come up during the meeting. It helps to continue the conversation by asking if they have any additional questions since you met with their office and how you can support them in the next steps. If there were unanswered questions, follow up with RESOLVE immediately and try and get back to your legislator within 1 week with the answers to their questions.
2. Here is a [“thank you” script](#) to use as a loose guide.
3. **Solidify the “thank you” with social media.** Trust us, they pay close attention to social media. A positive tweet or constructive message goes a long way!

Example: Thank you @BLANK for talking to me today about pro-family legislation! I hope to continue the conversation and have your support to help people who struggle to build their family.

4. **Do it immediately and often.** Lastly, keep in touch and do it often. Again, the goal is to build a longstanding relationship and create a champion for our issues.



RESOURCES

[What to say when you call your lawmaker](#)

[What to expect during a meeting with your lawmaker](#)

[Do's and Don'ts for Meetings](#)

[Thank you letter to your lawmaker](#)



Amplify Your Voice

“As a physician I think our training and culture tends to discourage the use of social media, instead of using the tremendous potential of social media to educate our lawmakers and raise awareness about the issues that impact people facing infertility. In the office, I can impact one life at a time. Using media, the potential impact can be much more powerful and wide-reaching.”

-dr. serena chen, nj

You have a story to tell, but how do you find the right ears to listen? Amplify your advocacy efforts through the power of media! You are an informed and connected advocate, now it's time to combine the two and magnify your efforts with media and digital advocacy!

How to find the right ears to listen.

Your local media outlets can play an essential role in helping you spread the word on the current issue you have brought to the attention of your lawmaker. Here are just a few ways to connect and ensure your legislative efforts stay front and center.

How to connect with your local media contacts

1. **Create a pitch.** It starts with crafting a pitch to help briefly explain why your local media outlets should be interested in what you have to tell them. Your pitch should begin with a personal and captivating lead. A pitch should also be brief and to the point. Most media contacts are bombarded with pitches daily, so keep it short and interesting to improve its chance of being viewed. Once you have crafted your pitch, email or submit it to your local media contact. Many newspapers and news contacts have direct contact information on their website. Double up by sending them a direct message through social media.

Check out more tips on writing a perfect pitch [here](#).

2. **Create an Op-Ed or a Letter to the Editor.** Most local newspapers have an option to submit an Op-Ed/Editorial if it is of public interest. With a few search clicks on your local paper's website, you can find the guidelines and submission requirements to submit your Op-Ed. Let us help! Send us your draft and we'll provide feedback that helps connect your personal story and the legislation or issue you are advocating for or against. Most important, once your Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor has been published, send it to your state legislators!

Need a few examples? Here's how RESOLVE state advocates have used Op-Eds to support family building legislation:

Op-Ed: Gestational Surrogacy Minnesota

<http://www.startribune.com/how-a-gestational-surrogate-allowed-us-to-have-a-family/412345153/>

Letter to the Editor: IVF Coverage

<https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/washingtonians-deserve-equitable-access-to-infertility-care/>

3. **Never underestimate the impact of digital advocacy.** The increased usage of social media channels and smart phones have significantly changed how empowered advocates connect and become more involved in legislative advocacy efforts. Our lawmakers are using social media to connect and communicate with their constituents, and constituents need to seize this opportunity to express their civic concerns through technology. In short, your lawmakers are listening to these electronic conversations. Let's talk through many different ways you can flex your civic muscle through digital advocacy.



5 simple ways to amplify your voice through social media

1. **Follow your local lawmakers on social media.** If you want to influence your lawmaker, it is a good idea to follow them on their various social media channels. In most cases, their public social platforms are linked to their website. This will also help you be in the know about upcoming public events and town hall meetings and allow you new opportunities to engage with your lawmaker outside of scheduled meetings.
2. **Check-in!** When you meet with your lawmaker be sure to use the check-in feature on social media. This is also a great opportunity to share what you are doing and why you are meeting with your lawmaker to inspire others to do the same. If you do decide to share, be sure to tag your lawmaker in the post!
3. **Pictures tell a story.** If you schedule a meeting with your lawmaker, after the meeting ask them if they would take a picture with you! A picture will not only tell the story of why you are there, but it also gives you an opportunity to tag them in the picture or post.
4. **A public thank you goes a long way.** Consider tagging your lawmaker in a social media post thanking them for meeting with you. Double thank them if they commit to supporting pro-family legislation.

Example: Thank you @BLANK rep for talking to me today about pro-family legislation! I hope to continue the conversation and have your support to help people who struggle to build their family.

Keep the post positive and tactful even if they are working against our pro-family efforts. Words matter and tagging your lawmaker in a well-crafted post could potentially be what opens the door to new conversations.

Example: Thank you @BLANK rep for talking to me today about infertility and family building! I hope that you re-consider your support of BLANK bill because it will have a negative impact on families in our community.

- 5. Hashtags help.** By using the right targeted hashtags, you can help lead others with a shared interest to find and join the conversation. Avoid creating your own hashtags, and instead use the hashtags connected with RESOLVE’s advocacy efforts.

Some common hashtags that RESOLVE uses for state advocacy are: #IFAdvocacy #AccesstoCare #IVF #Infertility

Feel free to reach out to advocacy@resolve.org to see if there are other key hashtags related to your specific issue.



RESOURCES

[Search and find your state lawmaker’s website to connect on social media](#)

[How to Write a Media Pitch](#)



Unite with Others

“It starts with having the same unified message across the board. Lay out your points to them; 1, 2, and 3, and tie it into your personal message. By being clear and concise about how the issue will impact you and others who face infertility in their district, they will have a better understanding on how they can help you make a change.”

brooke kingston, az

You are an informed advocate. You have made all the right connections and you know how to amplify your advocacy efforts. Now let’s multiply your power and turn this into a movement! This is the part where you begin to see your efforts manifest into real change. Let’s talk through a few ways you can grow the movement.

5 ways you can act now

1. Respond to Action Alerts. Every day RESOLVE is closely monitoring the legislative landscape for pro-family and anti-family bills that impact the family building community. Be sure to respond to these important alerts and share them with your personal networks. And if you learn about new legislation that may impact the infertility community in your state, please notify RESOLVE at advocacy@resolve.org. [Find the current action alerts here.](#)

2. Collaborate with other pro-family organizations. “Together we are stronger” is definitely true in advocacy. There are many others in your local community who care about the same issues as you do and may be willing to partner together in a broader effort. It begins with thinking about other organizations that could be affected by your state’s proposed legislation or family building issues in general. Start a list! There could be local professionals that indirectly (or directly) serve people with infertility, support groups, college students, advocacy groups, law firms, and so on. Begin to network and rally support on a larger scale to help get your lawmakers’ attention.

3. Organize a letter writing event. Write a letter to your lawmaker and rally others to do as well! Think about the people in your local community you can ask to get together to support pro-family initiatives by writing letters to their lawmakers. You can ask friends and family, RESOLVE support group members, family building professionals, and fellow RAN members. Consider writing a letter each month as part of your action list. Remember, personal stories are the key to successful grassroots advocacy.

4. Issue a state awareness proclamation. [For National Infertility Awareness Week](#) spread awareness by issuing a proclamation in your state. What is a proclamation? It is an official designation of an event. Proclamations are a great way to educate the public about a specific issue and bring attention to a cause.

- a. **Step One:** Contact your state or local government office. Federal elected officials, governors, county executives, mayors, state legislators, municipalities, counties, cities or towns can issue proclamations.
- b. **Step Two:** Draft your proclamation. [View an example of a proclamation.](#)
- c. **Step Three:** Follow the guidelines for submitting a proclamation request. Each city, county, and state will have their own guidelines and procedures for signing proclamations. The easiest way to research your city, county or state’s guidelines is to look on its website and search for the term “proclamation.”
- d. **Step Four:** Allow enough time. Be sure to begin the proclamation request process at least two to three months in advance of your event date or as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to follow up to check on the status of your proclamation and offer to provide any additional information the official may need.

5. Set up your own State Advocacy Day. If you know others who are passionate about family building and access to care and who are interested in meeting with their lawmakers, you can schedule your own State Advocacy Day! Start by reaching out to your fellow RAN members and contact RESOLVE at advocacy@resolve.org for resources used at other state advocacy days. Even if you have 5-10 people show up, it will make a difference!

We have broken it down into these easy steps:

Step 1

Pick a date, making sure it is a day when legislators are at the state capital and no other major activities are taking place.

Step 2

Ask your own state legislator(s) for help securing a meeting room for a few hours (the cafeteria is also an option).

Step 3

Post on social media to promote the event and ask RESOLVE to help promote it.

Step 4

Give people easy instructions on how to contact their state legislator to set up an appointment on that date.

Step 5

Have your handouts and materials reviewed by RESOLVE ahead of time.

Step 6

Get everyone to gather in the same meeting room to start the day. Make sure everyone has a way to give feedback and updates to you and RESOLVE.

Step 7

Execute and have an inspiring Advocacy Day!



What else can I do?

- 1. Report your actions.** Did you call your elected official? Write a letter to the editor? Or connect with your elected official on social media? Let us know! Share what advocacy actions you have been taking [here and fill out a quick advocacy form](#).
- 2. Get Creative!** Although this toolkit contains many different ways to advocate for family building legislation in your state, there are many other ways to be an empowered advocate. If you have an idea, let us know! Email us at advocacy@resolve.org.
- 3. Speak at a local group.** Find community events, clubs, alumni groups, and organizations that would be supportive of pro-family initiatives. Offer to be a guest speaker and talk through how state legislation can impact people who want to build a family in their state. If you do decide to speak at a local group, let us know!

We are working on a slide deck you can use. Email advocacy@resolve.org if interested.

- 4. Donate to RESOLVE or host a RESOLVE Advocacy Fundraiser.** RESOLVE is a non-profit organization. We are who we are because of our volunteers, advocates and donors. By hosting fundraisers, or directly donating to RESOLVE, you ensure we have the resources to make a difference. Here are some ways you can help us continue our advocacy mission: <https://resolve.org/take-action/donate/ways-to-give/>

Thank you again for requesting this toolkit and joining the RESOLVE Advocacy Network (RAN). We look forward to keeping in touch!