

PTAS AND SCHOOLS

Advocacy and political action are integral parts of PTA's activities, since without these actions, democratic laws would not exist. Adherence to the nonpartisan policy does not require that PTA refrain from or ignore political action, nor does it prevent PTA from carrying on efforts concerned with legislative issues or official actions that affect the well being of children and youth.

- School districts abide by their own guidelines regarding use of facilities and certain activities related to advocacy.
- Check with your administrators and/or principals before planning certain activities.
- You are representing PTA; be courteous and respectful at all times.
- You are the role model for our children
- When in doubt, please call so we may answer your questions!

ADVOCACY PROJECT:

The purpose of an advocacy project is to:

- Promote an understanding of legislation
- Familiarize PTA members with the procedure of passing a bill
- Work on a PTA position or resolution requiring support in your school or community
- Inspire members to write letters, send emails, become educated about the issue
- Take action when action is needed

PTA DO'S AND DON'Ts

- **Do** conduct voter registration
- **Do** provide voter education
- **Do** encourage voter participation
- **Do** schedule advocacy activities
- **Do** obtain formal approval from PTA membership before representing them on an advocacy project or issue
- **Do** contact Texas or National PTA for advice, questions or concerns
- **Do** seek legal advice if you have any questions or concerns
- **Do not** endorse (or favor) a particular candidate or political party
- **Do not** oppose (or slight) a candidate or political party
- **Do not** use nonprofit resources, contact lists, coordination of activities, etc., for or against any candidate or political party
- **Do not** distribute communications explicitly designed to endorse or oppose a candidate or political party
- **Do not** begin lobbying without knowing your state lobbying rules

Be Aware ...

If an issue is potentially divisive to your membership, inform and educate, rather than support or oppose.



A Quick Guide to Advocacy Action in Your School and Community



PTAs are chartered or organized as 501(c)(3) organizations, and as such are held to the legal guidelines put in place by the IRS for nonprofit, educational organizations.

Therefore:

Texas PTA is a noncommercial, nonsectarian, nonpartisan association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. Texas PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party.

Texas PTA
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NONPARTISAN

A person or group that does not support or help a particular political party.

ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

While Texas PTA does not provide legal advice, this brochure provides information to assist PTAs in understanding and monitoring their activities.

Lobbying usually involves attempting to influence legislation. Advocacy covers a much broader range of activities that might or might not include lobbying. One way to differentiate between the two terms is to understand that lobbying always involves advocacy, but advocacy does not always involve lobbying.

Grassroots Lobbying: PTA's legislative activities are primarily considered grassroots lobbying because the members' efforts are to inform and educate the general public and elected officials on legislative matters; this is considered advocacy. Grassroots lobbying is considered advocacy.

Direct Lobbying: This type of lobbying occurs when a nonprofit encourages its members to contact government officials on specific legislation in order to influence the passage or defeat of legislation by a legislative body or the adoption or rejection of any rule or standard by a regulatory agency.

A nonprofit cannot devote a substantial part of its activities to lobbying. Texas PTA monitors direct lobbying activity and encourages PTAs to participate in grassroots lobbying when possible.

LOBBYING EXEMPTIONS

Nonprofits must follow both federal and state guidelines concerning direct lobbying, and many more exemptions than restrictions exist with grassroots lobbying. Read more about federal exceptions at the IRS website at <http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=96099,00.html>. Or, Texas state exemptions may be found on the Texas Ethics Commission website at <http://www.ethics.state.tx.us>.

TALKING WITH THE MEDIA

- The PTA president is automatically the designated media spokesperson unless otherwise designated by the board or the membership.
- The president may choose to delegate this responsibility to a more knowledgeable or more qualified member, when appropriate.
- Only one person should speak with the media on a topic or situation, in order to prevent information contradiction.
- Be certain to follow any school district procedures before speaking with the media.
- Always keep the campus principal informed.

SPEAKING ON PTA ISSUES / USING A PTA TITLE

A PTA member:

- Can only speak for or against issues that have been decided by a vote of the PTA membership or if the issue is covered by a Texas or National PTA priority, position or resolution.
- Cannot express his/her personal opinion on an issue when using a PTA title (past or present title) or a PTA platform (newsletter, website, etc.)
- Cannot not use a PTA title when sending an email that is partisan in nature.
- Cannot use a title when supporting or opposing candidates.
- Must use special care in the decision whether or not to provide endorsement if that PTA leader is closely linked or associated to a candidate or political party.
- Is not prohibited or prevented from running for or holding a public office. However, the PTA member must, when campaigning for office or serving in the office, separate and distinguish his/her identity with PTA as it relates to that public office.

Be professional and respectful when using your PTA title.

Texas
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