



Families in Action

# ADVOCACY GUIDEBOOK



*Nationally, Quality Assured by Child Care Aware of America®*

This is a non-partisan guidebook.  
Regardless of your political affiliation,  
we can all come together and speak up about  
issues close to our hearts: our children.

Linda Granger  
The Children's  
Cabinet January  
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The Children's Cabinet  
Child Care Resource & Referral  
Department 1090 South Rock  
Boulevard  
Reno, NV 89502  
800-753-5500 | 775-856-6200  
[www.childrenscabinet.org](http://www.childrenscabinet.org)  
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# Introduction

Congratulations! By reading this guide, you are taking an important first step towards advocacy. The following guidebook will help give you the knowledge and encouragement necessary to speak up concerning issues that are important to you. It will enable you to become involved at your own comfort level, so you can speak up to local, state and federal policy makers, or to step outside of your comfort zone and become more engaged in changing policies. The skills you learn in this guidebook will give you the tools to take any issue you choose to the legislators.

Advocacy is a term that usually makes people a little nervous. Advocacy is about speaking up representing your family, or particular groups, on specific issues. We already do that everyday when we voice our opinion with co-workers, or write a letter to the editor. The next step is getting the facts and presenting those to the policy makers. By joining efforts with others, it sends a strong message to the policy makers.

There are a number of reasons why parents do not contact public officials concerning what is important to them:

- They have never spoken publicly about issues.
- They do not know how to get started.
- They aren't sure how their problems relate to other families.
- They do not think their stories are important.

Telling your own story by relating how the issue personally affects you, can be compelling to legislators. Delivering your story to the right influential people can make a difference. In this guidebook, we will show you step-by-step how to navigate what might seem like a maze: politics.



Tip Sheets will be available at ([www.childrencabinet.org](http://www.childrencabinet.org)) to keep you informed of current child and family issues where your voice is needed. In addition to our website, there are additional websites under Resources on page 10 that contain further information on pending legislation as well as discussions surrounding various child and family related issues.

# The Nevada Legislature

The regular sessions of the Legislature begin the first Monday in February of odd numbered years. Nevada is one of only six states that have true biennial sessions.

The Interim Finance Committee, composed of the members of the Senate Committee on Finance and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means from the preceding session, makes fiscal decisions for the Legislature during the period between regular sessions. The Interim Finance Committee endeavors to maintain an adequate fund balance to meet unforeseen financial emergencies.

In addition to their ongoing representational duties, members of the Legislature are also involved in committee work between sessions. These committees hold public hearings and research proposed legislation for the next session of the Legislature. You can find out current information on pending and existing legislation for the state by visiting: [www.leg.state.nv.us](http://www.leg.state.nv.us).

Source: Nevada Legislature. (2009a, September, 24). Facts about the Nevada Legislature. Retrieved May 24, 2010 from the Nevada Legislature website: [http://www.leg.state.nv.us/General/General\\_short.cfm](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/General/General_short.cfm).

## How a Nevada Bill is Passed

The author of a bill has an idea. The author can be an elected official, business, lobbyist or citizen. A request for a bill draft is made by legislators, legislative committees, the Governor, state agencies and local governments. A staff attorney for the legislature prepares a formal draft of a bill.

A bill is submitted by a Senate or Assembly member, numbered and read for the first time, assigned to committee, and printed. A bill or resolution may be introduced in either the senate or the Assembly and co-sponsors in the other house may be listed on the front of the measure.

### The House of Origin

If a bill is introduced by an Assembly member, then the bill's house of origin is the Assembly. If the bill was introduced in the Senate, the house of origin is the Senate.

## Committee Work in the House of Origin

In either house, bills are first assigned to the committee that oversees the subject matter. The Committee will:

- Hold a public hearing to take testimony and gather information,
- Make a recommendation to the originating house to pass as is, pass with amendments, or not pass, and then
- Vote to “indefinitely postpone” a bill, kill it, or take no action at all.

A bill that is recommended to pass is read a second time in the house of origin and placed on General File for debate and vote. A third reading and debate of the bill takes place in the full house. A roll-call vote follows. Passage of most bills and joint resolutions require 11 votes in the Senate and 22 in the Assembly. Bills that increase a tax or fee require 14 votes in the Senate and 28 votes in the Assembly. If a measure is defeated, any member can serve notice of reconsideration to request a second vote. If passed or passed with amendments, the measure is sent to the Second House.

## Action in the Second House

The bill is read for the first time and referred to committee, where the committee procedures are identical to those in the first house. After committee:

- The bill is read before the full house and debated and voted on as before.
- The procedures are the same and floor debate and vote by the full house is completed. If the second house passes the bill without amendment, it is sent to the Governor. Resolutions that are passed are sent to the Secretary of State.
- If amended it is returned to the house of origin for consideration of the amendments.

## The Role of the Governor

- The Governor must act on a bill within 5 days after received if the Legislature is still in session or 10 days if the session has ended.
- The bill can be signed into law, allowed to become law without signature, or vetoed.
- A vetoed bill returns to the house of origin for a possible vote to override the veto.
- An override requires a two-thirds majority of both Houses.
- If the Governor vetoes a bill after session ends, it returns to the next legislative session.

# Federal Legislature Overview

How a Bill Becomes Law	How You Can Influence the Process
<p><b>The Bill is Written</b>-Legislators create a working draft of the bill.</p> <p><b>The Bill is Introduced</b>-After a bill has been written, it is introduced into the House or Senate. The member that introduces the bill is its sponsor.</p>	<p>Affecting a bill at this stage requires a developed, close relationship with a legislator.</p> <p>Make a note of who sponsors each bill, because this can give you clues about the bill's content and who will support it.</p>
<p><b>The Bill is Recorded</b>-The bill is recorded and available to the public in the Congressional Record and on Congress' site on the internet.</p>	<p>Many organizations will independently review the bill and offer their opinions on the bill to the public.</p>
<p><b>The Bill is Assigned a Number</b>-Bills introduced in the House and Senate are given numbers that are preceded by the initials H.R. and S, depending on where they are first submitted.</p>	<p>You can track any bill's status on Congress' internet site if you have its corresponding number. If you do not know the number, you can find it using key words.</p>
<p><b>The Bill is Sent to Committee</b>- Both houses of Congress have committees with different areas of expertise, such as Finance or Education. Bills are sent to committees with related expertise, which may also send the bills to sub-committees that have more focused expertise.</p>	<p>Bills are the most flexible and open to advocacy efforts at this time. You can affect a bill by testifying at hearings, or by finding out which legislators are on each committee through the House (<a href="http://www.house.gov">www.house.gov</a>) and Senate (<a href="http://www.senate.gov">www.senate.gov</a>) websites. You can contact committee members and express your thoughts and opinions. Committees can hold public hearings, where anyone concerned may testify about the bills.</p>
<p><b>The Committee Reports to the House</b>-After the committee process, bills are reported to the House of Representatives or Senate with any amendments that may have been added.</p>	<p>The media is likely to start coverage of bills at this point. This may be a good time to influence media coverage by writing letters to the editor and contacting media representatives with your thoughts and opinions.</p>
<p><b>The Whole House Considers the Bill</b>-At this point the House may do several things: send bills back to committee; amend bills and send them to the Senate; or send them to the Senate without amendment.</p> <p><b>The Senate Considers the Bill</b>-After bills move to the Senate, the Senate may do one of two things: pass the bills as they are or amend them and send them back to the House. Joint committees are formed to resolve any differences that occur when two versions of bills have been passed.</p>	<p>You can direct efforts to advocate for any of these actions.</p> <p>At this point, you can advocate for either action by the Senate by contacting your Senator via email or phone. (see page 7).</p>
<p><b>The Bill is Sent to the President</b>-After the House and the Senate accepts identical bills, the President has 10 days to do one of two things: veto the bill or sign it into law. If the President does neither within 10 days, the bill becomes law without his or her signature (however, only if Congress is still in session at the end of those 10 days).</p>	<p>Contact the President to try to influence his or her decision by calling 202-456-1111 or emailing <a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov">www.whitehouse.gov</a></p> <p>(Adapted from How a bill becomes law (2000, Spring). American's Family Support Magazine, 19 (1) 35-36.)</p>

# Share Your Concerns

## Step 3

Contact your elected officials on issues that matter to you!

It is easy to contact your local, state and national legislators. Our elected officials work for us and it is important that we let them know what we think about issues affecting our children and families. You can contact legislators in person, by phone or in writing.

**In Person.** Make an appointment to see your legislator or a member of their staff. If you go in a group, determine who will do the speaking ahead of time. It is important to:

- Stay focused. Do not get angry or go off on tangents but show your passion and concern.
- Be prepared with talking points that address how your concerns affect families, money, and jobs, and the benefits to the state or nation.
- Be prepared to answer questions.
- Be specific about what you are asking them to do (e.g., support legislation, increase funding, co-sponsor or sponsor a bill).
- Follow-up after the appointment.

**By Phone.** Write down what you want to say ahead of time. Telephone your legislator and speak to him/her or a member of his/her staff. Just like the face-to-face meeting stick to facts and how this issue affects your and your family. Remember to be specific about what you are asking them to do. Keep the phone call short, but see where they stand on the issue. Again, follow-up after the phone call.

### A sample phone call

*Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live in Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_'s district and I would like to speak with the Senator/Representative.*

*I am calling to talk with you about the following issues that affect my family and children.*

*I am very concerned about \_\_\_\_\_. High quality, affordable childcare is an important part of my everyday life and without adequate support and funding, paying the high cost of childcare is almost impossible. If I cannot afford childcare, I cannot work. I urge you to support the \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Can you tell me where you stand on this issue? Thank you very much for your time.*

**In Writing.** Write a letter to your legislator, or use email. Email is the preferred written way to communicate, but letters work too. Personal stories mean a lot and can make a huge difference, but keep it short and to the point. Use the same talking points in person or face to face. You want to tell them the problem, how it affects your family, and what you would like to see happen (e.g., a vote, a bill, more funding). Be sure to thank them for their time, attention or support.

# Community Influences

You are only one of many voices your legislator hears, so keep trying. Below are some of those other voices that try to influence legislators. When possible, you want to build a unified message between as many of these individuals and groups as you can. The more people and groups that say the same thing about the issue at hand, the louder the message will be to the legislator.



# Contact Information

## Nevada's Federal Representatives

Representative Dina Titus  
(Democrat)  
1st Congressional District  
<http://titus.house.gov>  
(202) 225-5965

Representative Mark Amodei  
(Republican) 2nd Congressional  
District <http://amodei.house.gov>  
(202) 225-6155

Representative Jacky Rosen  
(Democrat) 3rd Congressional  
District <http://rosen.house.gov>  
(202) 225-3252

Representative Ruben Kihuen  
(Democrat) 4th Congressional  
District <http://kihuen.house.gov>  
(202) 225-9894

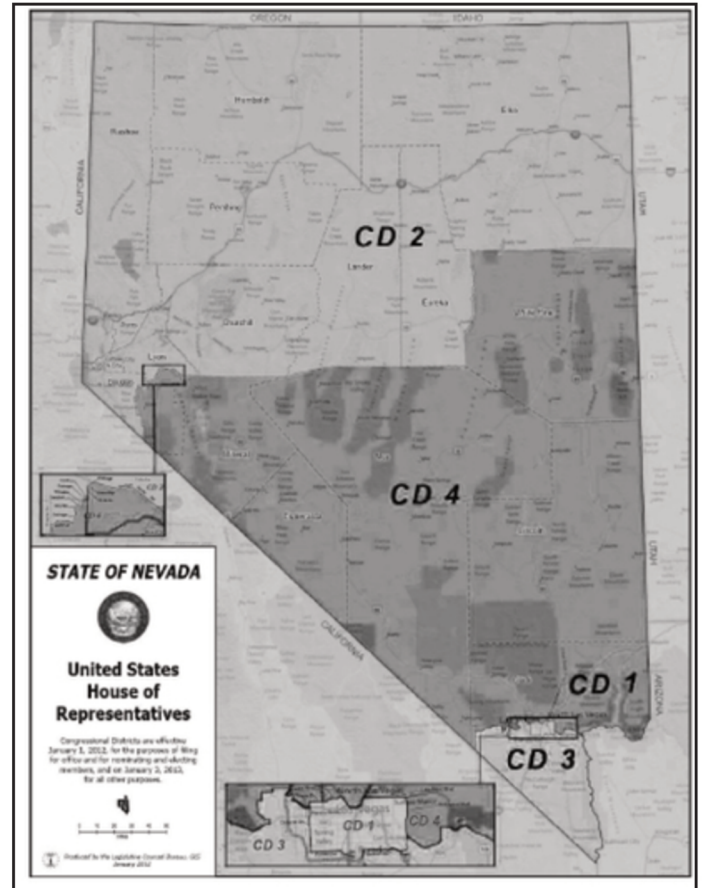
## Nevada's Federal Senators

Senator Dean Heller (Republican)  
<http://www.heller.senate.gov>  
(202) 224-6244

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto  
(Democrat)  
<http://www.cortezmastose.senate.gov>  
(202) 224-3542

## Nevada's State Senate and Assembly

Go to the Nevada Legislature website to  
view the entire list of representatives of  
the Senate and Assembly by districts:  
[www.leg.state.nv.us](http://www.leg.state.nv.us)



## How to Find Local Officials

To find local officials look in the phone book under the county in which you live. You can go online to a directory of official state and county, and city websites and type in the state and county and follow the prompt. You can go directly to [www.statelocalgov.net](http://www.statelocalgov.net) for county commissioners with dates and times of meetings. To find the school board members visit the Nevada Department of Education website at [www.doe.nv.gov](http://www.doe.nv.gov).

# Barriers to Advocacy

If you think, you are out of your element and still find it overwhelming; step four is how to overcome the barriers that are holding you back.

Potential Barrier	Possible Solution
Fear of public speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start with parent involvement at your child’s school or Child Care Center/ Day Care home. Find opportunities to voice your opinion in a comfortable environment.</li> <li>• Form your opinion based on facts, then put it into your own words. It will be easier to express yourself if it feels natural.</li> <li>• Go with someone else and let him or her be the spokesperson until you feel comfortable to speak out.</li> </ul>
The idea of meeting with a public official or their staff is too intimidating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start smaller by going to City Council meetings.</li> <li>• Join online advocacy groups, where you can sign petitions.</li> <li>• Write letters or e-mail your legislator’s.</li> <li>• Make a phone call using a prepared script.</li> <li>• Think of yourself as being the expert, and you are just informing the policy makers of what decision they should make on your behalf.</li> </ul>
“I don’t have the time.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going online and signing a petition can make a difference, and it is quick and easy.</li> <li>• Consider how important it is to advocate for children, and quality affordable childcare.</li> </ul>
“What kind of difference can I make?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By doing nothing, you allow others to speak for you.</li> <li>• Your voice is the voice for your family, and joined with other voices, people will listen.</li> </ul>

# Action!

Now that you have some basic information about state and federal legislative processes, how to contact your officials, and strategies to overcome barriers, it is time let your elected officials know how you feel about issues regarding children and families! Remember, you pay their salary with your taxes and they work for you. You have a right to let them know how you feel.

- Make a plan of action. Use the websites resources listed on page 11 to research legislative issues that matter to you.
- Have the confidence to follow through, remember you can start small.
- Join with others either on the web, or through an organization.
- Chart your progress on your advocacy journal (page 10).

**The definition of encouraging is giving courage,  
or confidence or hope.**

**The act of encouraging is incitement to action.**

**If you have found this guide to be encouraging,  
then your next step is action!**



# Advocacy Journal

Keeping an Advocacy Journal is an easy way to track how you are improving the laws and policies that govern our community, state and nation. Here is a sample journal format to keep track of your advocacy efforts and results.

Event	Date	Topic	Results	Notes
Parent Involvement				
Letters to the Editor				
City Council Testimony				
Advocacy Website Participation				
Letter/E-mail to Legislator				
Called Legislator				
Meeting with Legislator or Aide				

# Resources

Use these websites to research public policy issues, sign petitions, and sign up for e-mail update list for important updates.

Subheading	Description
caanv.org	Children’s Advocacy Alliance works closely with the public and private sector to create a stronger community by improving the lives of children in Nevada and includes an Nevada-specific action center to get involved on state-level issues.
usa.childcareaware.org	Child Care Aware of America invites parents and grandparents to raise your hand and be counted for child care.
www.momsrising.org	Moms Rising invites members to work together to create change on a national and state level.
www.nevadawomenslobby.org	Nevada Women’s Lobby is a non-partisan group working on issues that affect women and families.
www.naeyc.org	The National Association for the Education of Young Children focuses on improving the well being of all young children with quality education and developmental services.
www.votesmart.org	Project Vote Smart provides unbiased information for electoral decision-making. Profile information for federal elected officials and candidates is available.
www.lwv.org	The League of Women Voters is a non partisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government.
www.aphsa.org	American Public Human Services Association is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization of individuals and agencies, which educates the media, members of Congress, and the public on what is happening in States around issues involving families and the elderly.
www.childrensdefense.org	The Children’s Defense Fund aims to ensure that every child has a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood
www.everychildmatters.org	Every Child Matters sets out to make children’s needs a national political priority.
www.fightcrime.org	Fight Crime, Invest in Kids advocates for quality child care as an essential prevention tool in reducing crime and other social ills.
www.parentsasteachers.org	Parents as Teachers provides parents with child development knowledge and parenting support and much more.



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[www.childrenscabinet.org](http://www.childrenscabinet.org)