

How to be an Effective Advocate  
By Karla Johnson

**What is Advocacy?**

- Advocacy means actively supporting a cause, and trying to get others to support it as well.
- Advocacy also means:
  - Speaking-up and standing-up for yourself or for other people who have been treated unfairly.
  - Drawing attention to important issues that you care about.
  - Participating in the active support for a cause, idea or policy.
  - Using your influence to get others to support a meaningful cause.

**What are common myths about advocacy?**

*Myth: It takes too much time*  
*FACT: You control how much or how little time you spend advocating.*

*Myth: Advocates need to be experts*  
*FACT: You don't have to be an expert to advocate. Legislators need and want to hear from you!*

*Myth: No one will listen to me*  
*FACT: People think their voices won't be heard by elected officials. But when you say nothing, legislators assume that everything is OK. Speak out and let your voice be heard loud and clear.*

**What does advocacy look like?**

- Advocacy involves an **ACTION!**
  - Organizing and building support.
  - Educating legislators or other elected officials about Lupus.
  - Educating the public about the legislative process and about Lupus.
  - Attending special events, like a rally, town hall meetings, forum, training, press conference.
  - Developing and distributing educational materials about Lupus.

**Why advocate?**

- Change lens through which issues are viewed.
- Your voice and perspective will be heard, helping to level playing field.

- Helps you to stay involved in the political process.
- Galvanize the Power of ONE!



### How to Talk so Your Legislators Will Listen – Top 5 Advocacy Tips

1. Research your legislator
  - i. Know what your legislators look like.
  - ii. Learn which committee your legislators are assigned too.
2. Before a meeting with a legislator, have a plan and a script
  - i. Prepare a short “elevator speech”
  - ii. Incorporate a fact about Lupus
  - iii. Tell your story
    1. How to tell your story?
      - a. Introduce yourself. Be sure to let your legislator know you are their constituent
      - b. Let your legislator know you are visiting on behalf of Lupus Awareness Day
      - c. Connect yourself to a larger group of Lupus advocates. (i.e. “there are over 100 advocates here today to raise awareness for Lupus.”
      - d. Finally, specifically articulate why Lupus Awareness Day matters to you.
3. Respect their time; be flexible and willing to go to plan “B”
  - i. Be prepared for unexpected change in plans
  - ii. If your legislator is unavailable, visit their office and speak with an aid or legislative assistant
4. Remember the “ask” (what do you want them to do?)
  - i. Support Lupus Awareness Day and continued advocacy efforts
  - ii. Attend Lupus Media Rally
5. Send a thank you note shortly after your visit
  - i. Helps to build a lasting relationship with your legislator’s.
  - ii. Reminds your legislator’s about your reason for visiting.