

HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE FOR CONSERVATION

What Is Advocacy and Why Does It Matter?

- There is so much money in politics and money influences legislators.
- Private sector special interests dominate campaign donations.
- It's a competition between the Public (volunteer or nonprofit) and Contract Lobbyists (paid full-time for very specific interests) to get time with their legislators. Lobbyists will always get their calls answered by politicians to whom they donated.
- Dominion Energy is a top ten donor to both parties and they will be at the table, influencing the process.
- Majority of General Assembly members' backgrounds represent big business, PR firms, or financial backgrounds; only twelve of current legislators are former educators, and only six from nonprofits--could argue they have a connection to the issues more.
- Civic engagement starts at the ballot box.

Lobbying Vs. Political Activity

To lobby means nothing more or less than trying to persuade the members of a legislature – whether city council, county commission, state legislature, or US House of Representatives or Senate – to enact legislation favorable to your cause or on occasion defeat or repeal legislation unfavorable to your cause. It is that simple. The legislation may set up a new program, change an existing one, guarantee certain rights, appropriate funds, etc. **For our club's purposes, we often use the term *advocacy*, but it is interchangeable with the term *lobby*.**

To engage in political (electoral) activity means to directly participate or intervene in any political campaign (at any level of government) on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office, which includes the publication or distribution of written or

printed statements on behalf of, or in opposition to, a candidate. **A good rule of thumb is to remember that Lobby means issues; Political means people. We do not engage as a club in political activity.**

**IMPORTANT: ALL OF OUR ADVOCACY
EFFORTS ARE BIPARTISAN.**