

PTA is a child advocacy association. Its legislative mission is to speak on behalf of all children and youth at the local, state and federal levels. One of the Purposes of PTA is “to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.” PTA promotes and encourages legislative advocacy for the education and welfare of all children and youth.

ROLE OF PTA IN LEGISLATION

As local officers of the largest grassroots child advocacy organization in the state, PTA legislative advocacy chairs are responsible for demonstrating leadership on children’s issues at the local level by educating PTA members, community members and elected officials about PTA’s issues of concern and legislative priorities and goals.

The California State PTA takes positions on issues/legislation based on position statements in the *California State PTA Toolkit*, California State PTA convention resolutions, California State PTA Legislation Platform and National PTA positions and convention resolutions.

The unit, council or district legislative chair provides PTA members with information about PTA positions on current legislation and issues.

WHAT TO DO

In order to ensure your success, regardless of your level of legislative experience, we have broken out the “What To Do” sections by “Newcomer” “Continuing” and “Advanced.” So, please go to the section that best fits you and remember to incorporate the Newcomer and Continuing actions even when you’re Advanced!

Remember: No amount of fundraising can have as much impact as a single piece of legislation.

Newcomers to Advocacy

Please obtain materials from your predecessor and/or unit/council/district president. If no materials are available, please begin a new procedure book.

If you are new to advocacy, we encourage you to do the following:

- **Request that advocacy is on the agenda of every meeting and give a legislative report.** Share with PTA members about issues affecting the school and community as well as legislative activities at all levels of government. Remember we are a nonpartisan association, so please be objective and factual. Be sure to include PTA positions when appropriate. Circulate materials from council, district, State, and National PTA when available. Have copies at PTA meetings or information on websites or links where the information can be found.
- **Write articles for your PTA newsletter.** Please observe Legislation Policy 11 (4.2.5k) which discusses guidelines for sending materials home with students.

- **Schedule at least one meeting per year with your elected representatives** to discuss your PTA’s local issues of concern and legislative priorities of the California State PTA. Take a few members from your PTA with you.
- **Participate in one of the following:** a letter writing campaign, a postcard campaign, a rally to support a PTA position.
- **Attend some local school board meetings.** Communicate advocacy positions as authorized by your PTA board.
- **Establish a method for sharing PTA Legislative Alerts** and other important information with PTA members.
- **Take Action on Legislative Alerts** from the California State PTA and National PTA and encourage other PTA members to do the same.
- **Maintain current contact information for all elected representatives** in your area: U.S. Senators, U.S. Congress member, State Senator, State Assembly member, Board of Supervisors members, city council members, and school board members.

Feel free to take advocacy actions from the other categories at any point that you feel ready.

CONTINUING ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION EFFORTS

If you have served as the legislative advocacy chair for one to two years at the unit or council level, you will likely be ready to take your advocacy to the next level. Please continue with all your *newcomer* advocacy actions and also add as much of the following as possible:

- **Organize a voter registration drive** annually. Remember to include new residents and high school seniors.
- **Organize a letter-writing, e-mail** or call-in campaign to communicate legislative priorities to legislators one to three times per year. Provide a sample letter, e-mail or phone script.
- **Encourage PTA members** to attend meetings with State Assembly and Senate representatives, meet with local government officials (e.g., school board and city council members, county supervisors), and know the local policies and ordinances affecting children and youth.
- **Schedule at least one public appearance of unit, council or district representatives** to highlight California State PTA’s legislative priorities and local issues of concern. Some examples of appropriate forums are school board meetings, the local chamber of commerce, and meetings of local service clubs.
- **Submit at least one letter each year to the editors of local newspapers** on behalf of your PTA highlighting California State PTA’s legislative priorities and local issues of concern (with signature of district, council or unit president).
- **Train your members to be advocates.**

- **Visit Sacramento** with other PTA members to meet with elected representatives and key education leaders.
- **Invite legislators/policymakers/elected officials** to visit a local school.
- **Establish contacts** with local individuals, groups, organizations and agencies to develop sources of information on local and statewide issues that affect the school, families and community.

Please consider advancing to the next level of PTA by volunteering to serve on your council advocacy team, or your district advocacy team.

ADVANCED ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION EFFORTS

If you have been serving as an advocate for several years, you will be ready to go to the advanced level! Please continue with all your *newcomer and continuing advocacy efforts* and also add the following:

- **Meet with federal legislators**, when they are in their local district offices.
- **Host a presentation on advocacy issues.** Invite a council or district PTA counterpart to present.
- **Organize a rally** to highlight a key PTA issue. Invite legislators and other speakers, as well as the press.
- **Invite the press to PTA advocacy events**, and publicize PTA advocacy activities and positions.
- **Organize a candidates forum**, working with PTA council and other local community organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, to sponsor nonpartisan candidates forums preceding elections. (*Election Campaigns and the Role of PTA 4.3; Nonpartisan Policy 1.3.3.*), see Fig. 4.2.
- **Consider authoring a resolution on an issue of concern to your PTA** to submit through appropriate channels to the California State PTA or National PTA. (See *Toolkit* section 2.9.)
- **Provide leadership and support for PTA-approved local school bond and parcel tax campaigns.** (See *Toolkit* section 4.3)
- **Organize/participate in a legislation study group** if a local issue arises (*How to Make a Study – Toolkit 7.4.2*). Consult with a council or district PTA legislation chairman to coordinate efforts with other PTAs in the area. Forward findings to appropriate people, if study involves a district PTA or state issue.

HOW TO STAY INFORMED

Sign up to receive regular e-mail updates from:

- Your school district
- Your PTA council (if available)
- Your PTA district
- California State PTA – www.capta.org
- National PTA – www.pta.org

EVENTS TO ATTEND

(Attend as many as your schedule allows.)

- California State PTA Legislation Conference in Sacramento
- California State PTA Convention
- Council/district PTA-sponsored visits to Sacramento and other advocacy events.
- EdSource Forum
- National PTA Legislative Conference held in Washington D.C.

HELPFUL WEBSITES/RESOURCES

California State PTA – www.capta.org

- **Legislative Alerts (please sign up on the website to receive e-mail updates)**
- *PTA in California* newsletter
- *Toolkit (Available in both English and Spanish online, in print or on CD)*. Chapter 4 is Advocacy and includes: local advocacy, elections, legislative program, legislation platform, listing of resolutions, position statements, policies and procedures
- Resolutions Book

National PTA – www.pta.org

- **PTA Takes Action Network (please sign up to receive e-mail updates on federal policy and PTA Action Alerts)**
- *National PTA position statements and resolutions*
- *Online Advocacy Toolkit, Federal public policy agenda and issue briefs*
- *National PTA Quick-Reference guide*
- *Our Children – National PTA Magazine*

California Budget project – www.cbp.org

California Department of Education – www.cde.ca.gov

California Secretary of State – www.sos.ca.gov

EdSource – www.edsource.org

Legislative Analyst's Office – www.lao.ca.gov

Official California Legislative Information – www.leginfo.ca.gov

For any assistance that you need to help you be successful, please contact your district legislative chair, your State PTA legislative liaison or the State director of legislation.

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