

# Demystifying Advocacy: How to Advocate Within U.S. Federal and Local Guidelines



You can advocate and make your voice heard on important legislation while following guidelines put in place by your funding sources, institution or government.

Federal and local guidelines aim to ensure that programs are administered in a nonpartisan fashion, to protect employees from political coercion in the workplace, and to ensure that employees are advanced based on merit and not based on political affiliation<sup>1</sup>. *Example: you may not endorse a candidate, but you can often endorse legislation that may align as long as you are not using your position to do so.* Institution guidelines also exist to make sure that resources from your workplace are not used inappropriately. Odds are that your institution has an office of Government Relations (or similar), to help facilitate your work with along with the ASM Advocacy team.

## What Government Relations Staff (and Related Professionals) Want to Know

1. You are doing advocacy as a private citizen.
2. ASM is a nonprofit scientific society dedicated to promoting and advancing the microbial sciences with members around the globe.
3. The “asks” or main messages you’ll be promoting (reach out to ASM for details and precise wording depending on the time of year, current legislative activity, an event that you’re participating in and more).

One more tip, make sure to allow for plenty of time to reach out to necessary parties!

## How to Navigate Guidelines Based on Home Institution

### Consult your government relations office for specifics.

Generally, as long as you are telling your own personal story and not representing your institution (without permission), you can educate lawmakers on your experience.



### Consult the [Office of General Counsel Website](#)<sup>1</sup> or your

### government relations office for

**specifics.** Generally, the fewest restrictions apply as long as you are off government property, wearing clothing that does not identify you as an employee of your institution and you are off the clock.

### This list is not meant to be exhaustive or to cover every

**individual scenario.** If you have any questions about advocacy activity, contact ASM Advocacy ([advocacy@asmusa.org](mailto:advocacy@asmusa.org)) and ASM staff can help you with talking points and questions for your institution. Learn more at [asm.org/advocacy](http://asm.org/advocacy).



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<sup>1</sup><https://osc.gov/Services/Pages/HatchAct.aspx?>