

Government Relations Toolkit



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last revised: 11/25/2025



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Introduction to ENA Government Relations



Based in Washington, D.C., the ENA® Government Relations Team serves as the advocacy voice for emergency nurses and a resource to ENA member advocates, including government affairs chairs and council leaders across the country.

As you develop and implement a government affairs program in your state, you can look to ENA Government Relations for technical and strategic support, including:

- How to review and track legislation
- Development of letters of support, written and oral testimony, and other materials
- Strategic advice and insights regarding the movement of legislation
- Assistance connecting with state lawmakers
- Guidance and tips for setting up meetings with lawmakers, agencies and other key stakeholders

This toolkit is designed to assist you as a state leader or as the chair of council's government affairs committee. It includes information on your role and responsibilities, how you can shape ENA's government relations activities and how to maximize the impact of your state's government relations efforts by energizing and guiding ENA members to advocate on behalf of themselves and their patients.

For assistance with your legislative and advocacy efforts, contact ENA Director of Government Relations Rob Kramer - rob.kramer@ena.org.

State Policy and Its Importance to ENA

The efforts of ENA members and other grassroots advocates are critical to the work ENA is doing to advance excellence in emergency nursing. State lawmakers and agency officials have jurisdiction over many laws and regulations regarding issues such as workplace violence; emergency nursing scope of practice; access to mental health and substance abuse treatment services; and emergency department staffing standards. The local voice remains one of ENA's strongest advocacy assets. Without you and ENA member advocates from your council, ENA's efforts will fall short of what is needed to fully communicate the association's positions and priorities.

Government Affairs Chairperson – Role and Responsibilities

The government affairs chairperson is critical in helping ENA fulfill its mission advocate for policies to improve the working environment for emergency nurses so they can provide the high quality care their patients deserve.

Responsibilities and activities may include the following:

1. **Advocate on behalf of ENA's policy priorities:**
 - Identify ENA's state legislative priorities on which to act
 - Develop effective relationships with lawmakers
 - Engage in the EN411 Action Network and promote its activities to members in your state
 - Participate in ENA's Day on the Hill in Washington, D.C.
2. **Communicate about advocacy activities:**
 - Update ENA council and chapter leaders, as well as members, about pending priority legislation and other activities
 - Regularly inform councils about ENA government relations activities
 - Attend regular government affairs chairpersons calls and share state updates
3. **Develop your council's government affairs committee:**
 - Educate and recruit other ENA members to support your activities
 - Organize opportunities to attend lobby days, including in partnership with other organizations

Key Skills

- Advocacy and public speaking
- Coalition and team building
- Organizational skills
- Understanding of the legislative process

How Advocates Engage Through ENA

- **EN411 Action Network** – ENA's grassroots engagement platform allowing anyone to communicate directly with their federal lawmakers on priority legislation and other important issues.
- **Day on the Hill** – premier annual event allowing ENA members to receive advocacy training and education while preparing to visit congressional offices on Capitol Hill.

- **State Government Affairs Committees** – guided by government affairs chairs, local advocates organize and advocate for state legislation, attend advocacy events in the state capitol and work with coalitions to support emergency nursing.
- **Social Media** – Platforms such as X, Instagram and Tik-Tok can be valuable tools to communicate and engage with lawmakers at the state and federal level. Most elected leaders have accounts, and ENA encourage you to utilize these applications regularly to communicate with elected officials.

How ENA Government Affairs Chairpersons Support Advocates

One of the most important things you can do as government affairs chair is organizing your council's members to become stronger advocates for issues affecting emergency nurses. Many ENA councils have formed Government Affairs Committees, with the government affairs chair acting as liaison to the council. If you don't have a Government Affairs Committee, consider forming one that includes members who represent different parts of your state.

In your role, there are several ways you can engage and inform members:

- Take part in council meetings and calls as one way to have ongoing interactions with members to inform them about the council's public policy priorities, legislative updates and other advocacy activities.
- Encourage members to join the EN411 Action Network to easily engage with federal lawmakers on ENA priorities. Share ENA Action Alerts on council social media accounts to bring awareness to priority issues. Inform members about the opportunity to attend Day on the Hill to engage in grassroots advocacy at the federal level.
- Advise members to be increasingly active in council government affairs activities, including committees, and mentor interested members on how to become a government affairs chair in the future.

How to Advocate for Yourself and Emergency Nurses



Get to Know Your State Government

To be an effective advocate, you should be familiar with your state government's leadership structure and the key agencies involved with setting policy.

Visit your state's official government website to learn about legislative and department leaders who will be important to your council's advocacy efforts.

It is also important to identify the legislators who represent the district where you live. These will be key contacts for you and the council as ENA advocates.

One strategy is to establish and maintain relationships with state legislators to maximize their effectiveness as advocates. As an emergency nurse, as well as someone engaged in state advocacy, you can serve as a source of information and expertise on key policy issues.

Here are a few examples of how you and your membership can engage with state lawmakers:

- Invite your state legislators to tour your emergency department and meet emergency nurses who experience the challenges associated with working on the front lines of health care. Share relevant information about how state legislation impacts the delivery of emergency care in your community.

- Request to meet with state legislators while they're at home in their districts when the legislature is not in session. Be mindful of the state's legislative calendar to determine when your lawmakers are likely to be back in their districts. Most lawmakers return home for weekends and holidays, and often plan district events at which constituents, such as you, are invited to attend.
- Join your lawmaker's mailing list to learn more about their priorities, as well as events the member is holding in their district. Town halls and other community events are a great opportunity to voice concerns about your policy priorities and cultivate positive relationships with lawmakers and their staff.
- Communicate regularly with your legislators or their staff. If you prepare a regular update for your council and membership about state government affairs activities, consider sending the same information to your legislators and their staff so they can stay apprised of issues important to ENA.

Legislative Session Dates and Deadlines

Most state legislatures do not hold year-round sessions the same way Congress does. Some hold sessions in the early part of the year, some meet throughout the year and, in rare cases – such as Montana, Nevada and Texas – the legislature only meets every other year.

Based on these varying schedules, it is important to understand how and when bills are introduced. Many states require that a bill be reintroduced during each session of the legislature, but about half allow for the carryover of bills. Carryover occurs when states do not require that a bill be reintroduced each year of a given legislative session. States also commonly hold “veto” or “special” sessions, which take place outside the normal session schedule, to act on specific business. The legislative calendar is important for scheduling meetings and timing other advocacy activities. Visit the National Conference of State Legislatures website – www.ncsl.org – for more information on your state’s legislative calendar.

Engaging with the Governor and their Staff

Establishing a rapport with your governor’s lead health policy staff member can be a very important first step in advocating for key issues of importance to emergency nurses. Health policy staff leads can be a wealth of information on upcoming movement of health care policies for the state and often have the ear of key administration staff as well as the governor. Administrations are normally very busy during a legislative session and will typically plan for the next legislative session soon after the previous one ends. Request a meeting soon after the end of a session to improve your chances of scheduling one meeting. This could also be a time when they’re more receptive to learning about the key issues and bills you want to bring to their attention.

Are Regulations Changing? Call the Agencies!

State agencies implement new laws and administer programs. Meeting with leaders of these agencies to discuss how the implementation of new laws can affect emergency nurses serves as an opportunity to influence how these policies are enacted. Many state agencies seek out professional groups such as ENA

as partners in the implementation of new laws. Also, meeting regularly with these offices can establish ENA as a trusted and valuable resource. This can open doors to participation in statewide meetings, task forces and advisory councils, all of which can have a positive impact on the profile of ENA and its members in your state.

Request meetings with appropriate staff for the specific issues you’re working on anytime throughout the year. Also consider inviting agency staff to council meetings at which key emergency nursing topics, and related legislative or advocacy efforts, will be discussed.

Identifying State Policy Priorities

Developing a policy agenda is one way you can communicate ENA’s priorities to advocates, ENA members, state officials, lawmakers and other stakeholders. Using the current ENA Public Policy Agenda as a guide, develop a list of three to five policy goals that make it clear what priorities your council has for a given year or legislative session.

These priorities, in alignment with ENA, likely will include, among other topics, workplace violence, nursing practice authority and funding for trauma centers. In developing the policy agenda for a given timeframe, consider any council-supported bills that did not become law during the previous session. Reconnecting with your legislative contacts who sponsored those bills will be an important step as you’ll need to gauge their intent for the legislation in the next session.

State Bill Tracking

Success in implementing your state policy agenda requires active efforts to stay informed about the progress of legislation your council supports or opposes – this is a critical function for every government affairs chairperson. It starts with knowing and communicating with bill sponsors and cosponsors to develop a relationship that can help shape future efforts. Similarly, tracking a bill’s progress through committee can help you identify lawmakers who are important targets for generating further support for the legislation. For instance, if you know a bill the council supports is scheduled for a committee hearing, the government affairs chair and other ENA members

might request meetings with committee members who have not acknowledged their intentions for the legislation to inform them of ENA's position on it.

Committee hearings are also opportunities for the council to potentially speak as a witness or file written testimony on behalf of ENA for consideration by the committee prior to a vote.

Regardless of what bills you end up supporting or opposing, these tips are key to developing policy priorities for your council:

- Review the current ENA Public Policy Agenda for potential ideas for legislation the council could support in your state.
- Identify legislation that accomplishes the council's policy priorities related to emergency nursing issues.
- Work with like-minded groups or coalition partners to help you identify specific bills to stay aware of and track through the legislature.
- Be on the lookout and track bills that might be harmful to emergency nurses or the patients you serve if implemented.
- Keep in mind some bills might not be directly related to the council's policy priorities but still present opportunities for advocacy activity, such as legislation to establish a task force on trauma care or a bill that would enter the state into the APRN Compact.

Once your council identifies a bill it would like to support or oppose, notify ENA Government Relations – gov@ena.org. Although the Government Relations team compiles a list of state-level bills being tracked, it is the responsibility of the government affairs chair to provide updates to ENA Government Relations on the legislation's progress and any activity the council has engaged in related to those bills.

Please contact ENA Government Relations for questions related to strategic and technical support on advocacy, including assistance drafting materials to communicate the council's position to lawmakers.



Helpful Resources



Meeting Requests

When contacting a legislator's office to request a meeting, remember to identify yourself as the government affairs chair representing ENA members from across the state. Make sure to mention if you are a constituent of the district or region and offer specific dates and times for a possible meeting. It is usually a good idea to reference which issues or legislation you'd like to discuss.

Template

Dear [Name of Staff Member/Representative/Senator]:

As a constituent and emergency nurse living in [City/State], I am writing to respectfully request a meeting with [Representative/Senator Last Name] to discuss issues of importance to me and emergency nurses across [name of state]. I will be in [State Capitol] and available to meet in your office on [Date] at [insert time]. Specifically, I would like to discuss healthcare issues and legislation that directly impact emergency nurses and the care received by patients. If [Representative/Senator Last Name] is unavailable to meet, I would be pleased to meet with the staffer handling healthcare issues.

I look forward to hearing back from you. Thank you for your time and attention to my request.

Sincerely,

[Your Name] [Address] [Phone Number] [Email]

Letter of Support for Legislation

Whether you meet directly with a lawmaker, a letter of support for a specific bill or initiative is a great way to connect with a legislator's office and allows the council and its members to share their thoughts and build awareness about ENA members as active advocates.

Any letter from the council should be signed by the council president. After the letter has been sent to the lawmaker, the president should share it with members and through council communications platforms.

Although the subject matter of your letter may vary, the general structure of the letter should include:

- An introductory paragraph that includes the number of ENA members in your state, the purpose of the letter and what specific mention of the bill or initiative you're writing about.
- A paragraph that lays out the landscape for emergency nurses currently with regard to the particular issue and how the legislation impacts emergency nursing and emergency care in the community.
- One or two paragraphs that support your position using evidence-based data and statistics, as is available. Government Relations can provide examples of relevant supporting information, including any ENA research related to the issue.
- One short paragraph that relays the purpose of the legislation or initiative and where the council stands on it.
- A closing paragraph which encourages their support and expresses a desire by the council to work with them to support the legislation or initiative.

View letters ENA has written or signed onto related to our priorities.

Public Policy Agenda

The bi-annual public policy agenda lays out descriptions of various policy positions that are current priorities of ENA. It is developed by the Government Relations team and approved by the

ENA Board of Directors. It reflects longstanding policy priorities directly linked to emergency nursing practice as well as more recent reflections of current interests and developments that may stem from approved resolutions from ENA's general assembly or board-approved position statements.

Review the current Public Policy Agenda here.

Washington Update

All ENA members receive the monthly Washington Update newsletter that includes relevant information related to policy priorities at the state and federal level. In addition to providing regular updates on legislation, the Washington Update provides opportunities to engage in EN411 Action Alerts as well learn more about upcoming ENA events.

