

health and the environmental health profession? Can we

Can members educate and advocate? Is it a violation of II

The short answer is that it is not only legal but also enco

Our state affiliates have no restrictions on advocacy or lobbying. As nonprofit associations, state affiliates can educate, enlighten, or advocate. Affiliates can lobby if they use unrestricted funds and disclose these activities to the IRS.

Anyone—including people employed by state, local, tribal, or territorial governments—can advocate on public policy. Advocacy includes such activities as educating the public, providing information and resources to individuals in need of help, going into court, commenting on regulations, and helping individuals get benefits or services to which they are entitled.

Lobbying is just one kind of advocacy. It applies to communication with elected officials that takes a position on a pending piece of legislation and urges action. Public employees are prohibited from engaging in lobbying while at their jobs, using their job title, or using public resources (unless they receive permission from their supervisors). But public employees do not give up their rights as citizens when they take a public job. During their personal time, everyone has the right to express a point of view on proposed laws and budgets and to communicate those views to elected officials.

States generally define lobbying as an attempt to influence government action through either written or oral communication.

At the federal level, members of Congress receive millions of emails and hundreds of thousands of phone calls. Congressional staffers participate in up to 15 Zoom meetings daily to address constituent concerns.

Federal agencies introduce approximately 20,000 government actions, such as notices of proposed rulemakings, notices of final rules, and agency meetings. State legislatures introduce 109,000 bills annually and up to 175,000 for the legislative biennium (i.e., a specified period for 2-years). They need insight on how these actions affect the public and environmental health.

Advocacy is a key part of any association. According to the IRS, advocacy is the “promotion of an idea that is directed at changing a policy, position, or program at an institution.” Advocacy is a strategy that aims to draw attention to or educate a policymaker on a particular issue. Environmental health advocacy includes educating policymakers and the public about the environmental health profession. Advocacy can be nonpartisan and based in research and analysis.

Policymakers—the federal, state, and local elected and appointed members who decide on policy, funding, and resources for public health agencies under their jurisdictions—need insight on the needs and issues affecting their state, county, tribe, or city. Policy makers rely on environmental health professionals to provide education and insight into the profession. When an environmental health professional educates an elected official, they are providing information about their community, their agency, their department, or an



F... CE... A... H... A...

The NACCHO Advocacy Toolkit, National Association of County and City Health Officials, 2023
(<https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/Advocacy-Toolkit-February-2023.pdf>).