



# Nonprofits as Advocates

2019

Essentials  
Conference

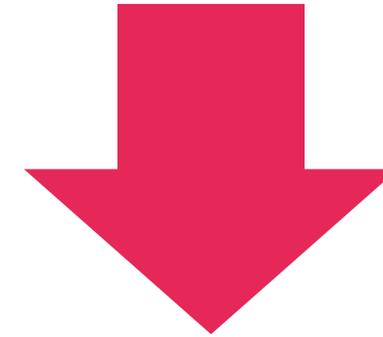
# Introductions

- Name, pronouns, and organization
- Personal/Organizational Experience in Advocacy
- I chose to attend this workshop because...



# Nuts and Bolts

- Why advocacy
- Lobbying
- Relationships with elected officials
- Civic Engagement



Advocacy  
Toolbox



# Public Policy at Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

**Advocacy is a powerful catalyst for change.**

**MCN supports nonprofits and Minnesota's nonprofit sector to be their own voice in the public policy process.**

- Provide training to help nonprofits grow their advocacy muscle
- Serve as a resource to policymakers on the nonprofit sector
- Advocate on issues that impact all nonprofits

**Stay involved and sign up for The Nonprofit Advocate!**



# What is advocacy?

**Advocacy** is a broad range of strategies, which could include lobbying, to advance a cause.





# Nonprofits and Advocacy

**Common types of tax exempt organizations engaging in advocacy:**

- Section 501(c)(3) – private foundations and public charities
- Section 501(c)(4) – social welfare organizations



# Direct Service + Advocacy

## Direct Service

When nonprofits carry out their mission through direct service they address immediate community needs.

## Advocacy

Nonprofits have a further opportunity to advance their mission through advocacy to affect long-term, systemic change.

**Both are needed to build strong, thriving communities.**

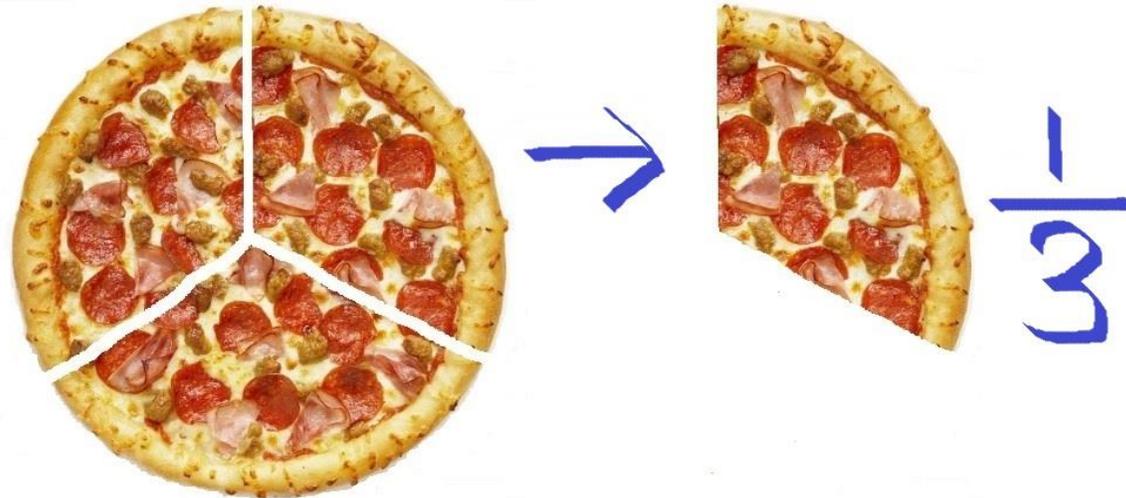
# We can – and must – advocate!

- Advocacy and lobbying brings the voice of your organization and its constituents to the policy table
- Good things (and bad things) that happen in policy making are influenced by advocacy
- Legislators need public input to develop ideas into good public policy



# Government is a critical decision-maker

- One-third of revenue for 501c3 nonprofits come from government through formal contracts and grants.
- On average, nonprofits have six contracts and/or grants per organization.



# Ways to Advocate

Educate Public

Nonpartisan  
Voter  
Education

Organize  
Communities

Lobbying  
Exceptions

**PARTISAN  
POLITICAL  
ACTIVITY**

Regulatory  
Efforts

Educate  
Legislators

Educational  
Conferences

Litigation

Encourage  
Voting

**LOBBYING**

Research

Skills Training

Change  
Corporate  
Behavior

# Approaches to Advocacy



## Core questions

- 1) What is the problem or opportunity?
- 2) What do you want to have happen?
- 3) Who decides?
- 4) How do you influence them?

# Engagement Opportunities

## High Engagement

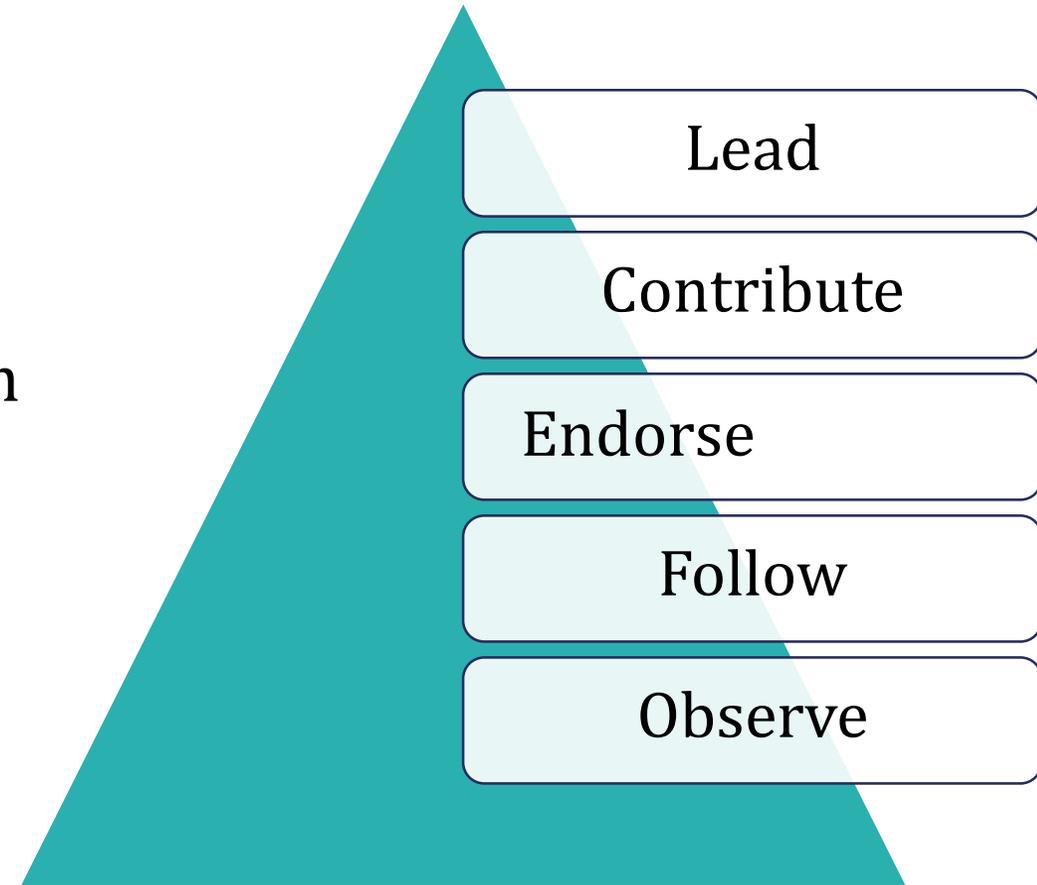
- Meet with elected officials
- Testify before a committee
- Be an active member of a coalition

## Medium Engagement

- Write a letter to the editor

## Low engagement

- Social media
- Sign a petition
- Share a fact sheet



Engagement Pyramid

# Strengthen Charitable Deduction

## Minnesota nonprofits want lawmakers to encourage more giving

Mark Zdechlik · Mar 10, 2018

Politics



A donation is made into a Salvation Army red kettle in 2017. The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits hope lawmakers will make changes to encourage more donations. Joe Reedle | Getty Images

Nonprofits are concerned the Republican federal tax law will effectively discourage charitable giving.

The law greatly expands the standard deduction, giving fewer people reason to itemize and reduce their taxable income through donations.

In Minnesota non-itemizers can deduct half of their charitable giving over \$500. Minnesota Council of Nonprofits Public Policy Director Rebecca Lucero said the state should eliminate those restrictions.

"We want to remove that \$500 floor so that someone who's only able to give \$400 or \$100 is able to recognize that benefit," she said. "We also want to encourage more giving and so removing that 50 percent limit from the deduction can help."

Media coverage!

### Sign-On Letter to Strengthen Minnesota's Charitable Deduction

Dear Members of the Minnesota Legislature,

Minnesota's charitable organizations are an important part of strong, thriving communities. All 501(c)(3)'s, which includes nonprofits, religious organizations, and some foundations carry out a wide range of activities that improve the quality of life, from health, to education, to human services, and the arts. Additionally, nonprofit employers contribute to job growth and economic stability in every region of the state.

In order to carry out this vital work, the nonprofit sector relies on charitable giving to fuel their missions. Therefore, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, along with the enclosed organizations, urge Minnesota legislators to strengthen the state's charitable deduction for non-itemizers by supporting HF 3464/SF 3777.

230+ organizations signed on!

Rep. Drew Christensen @RepChristensen · 8h  
I'm proud to be a coauthor! #mnleg

MN Nonprofits @SmartNonprofits  
Thank you for your support of HF 3464 that would strengthen MN's charitable deduction @reploeffler, @Masin4Rep, @RepChristensen, @BarbHaleyMN, & @RepTonyAlbright. #mnleg

Engaging legislators!

## LETTER: Charitable deductions benefit our community

Apr 19, 2018

f t e b

To the Editor:

As CEO of St. David's Center, I see firsthand how charitable giving benefits our community. The mission of our organization is building relationships that nurture the development of every child and family. When a community member decides to get involved with St. David's Center by making a financial contribution, this

SUN SAILOR SECTIONS / MAGAZINES

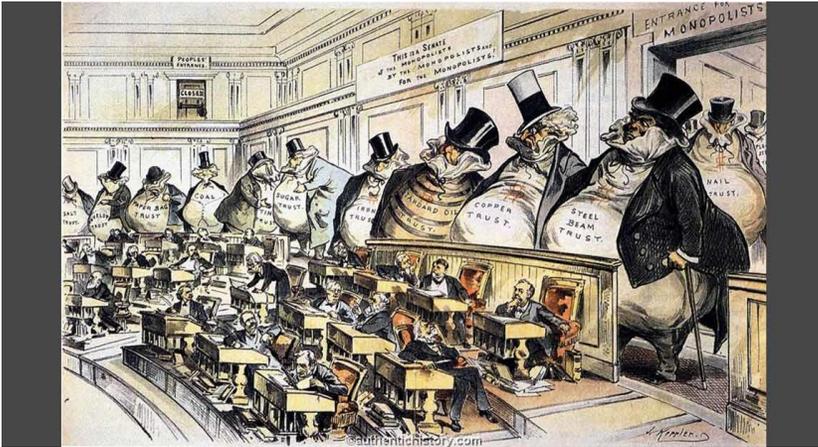


Letters published throughout the state!



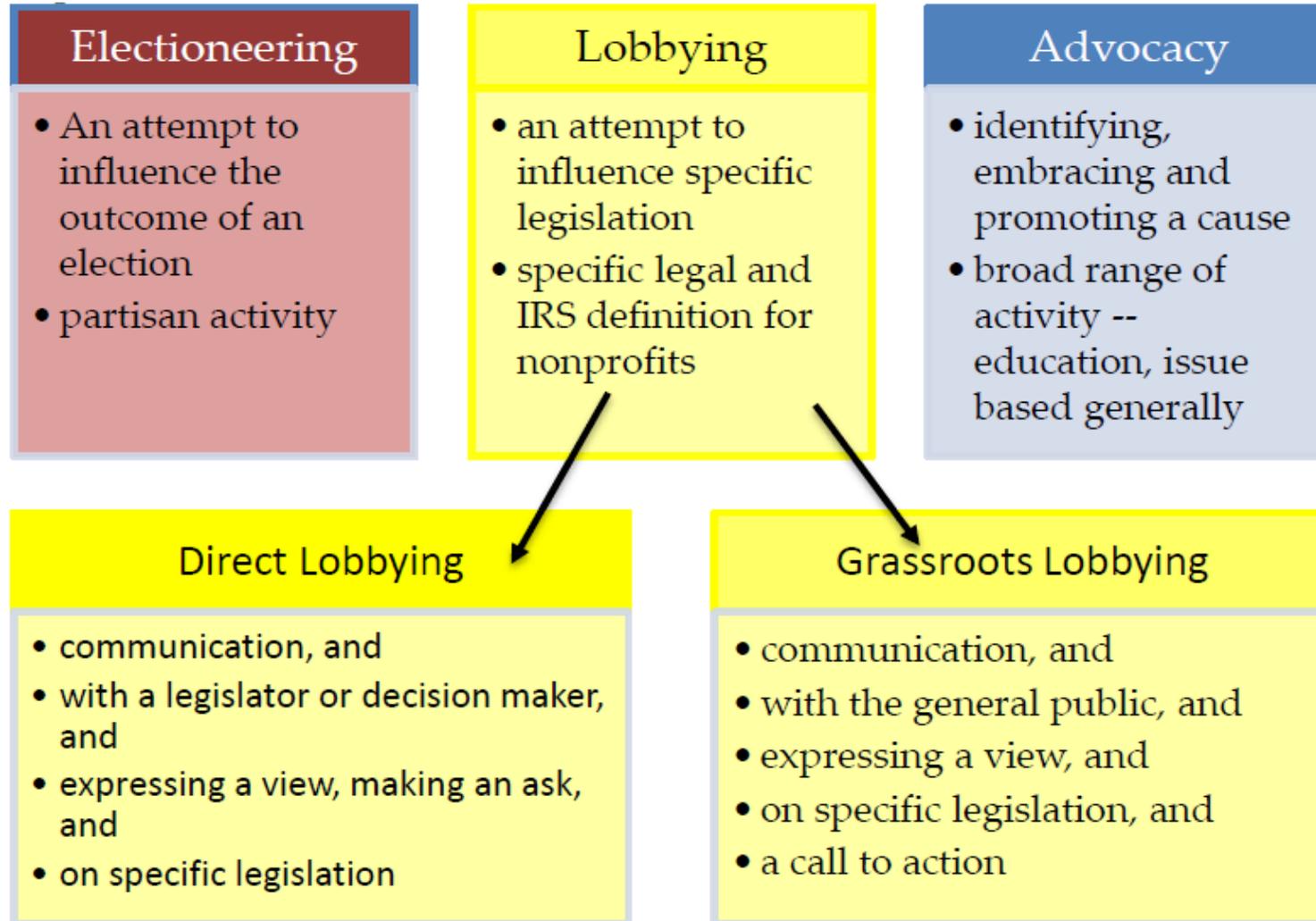
Testifying at the Capitol!

# Why do nonprofits avoid lobbying?



- Misunderstanding of the law and what lobbying is
- Concern that it is inappropriate
- Lack of process to develop positions on issues

# What is lobbying?



# Direct Lobbying

## Direct Lobbying



- communication, and
- with a legislator or decision maker, and
- expressing a view, making an ask, and
- on specific legislation

# Grassroots Lobbying



## Grassroots Lobbying

- communication, and
- with the general public, and
- expressing a view, and
- on specific legislation, and
- a call to action

# Lobbying or Not?

Dear Representative Noor,

We strongly urge you to increase funding so that all nonprofits can purchase treadmill desks and cots for their employees. This will help improve health and productivity. Rep. Becker-Finn is the chief author.

Sincerely,

Minnesota Coalition of Nonprofits

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**At a forum on pet health, asked by a staff person for the Dogs Rule! organization:**

**“Have you seen the latest polling on dog parks? Minnesotans want more dog parks, and they think government needs to do something about that.”**

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**Not Lobbying.**

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**A radio advertisement on K00L 108, paid for by Just Say No to Rodents:**

**“The Legislature is considering a bill that would require all households to have at least four pet hamsters. Call your members and urge them to vote no before the state is overrun with rodents!”**

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**Direct Lobbying.**



# The Rules for Lobbying

**Limits on Lobbying.** Insubstantial part test or (h) election?

**Register** as a lobbyist with the state and other levels of government.

**Report** on lobbying activities and/or expenditures to IRS and State Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Boards.



# Legislature Timeline

- Session goes from January/February to late May. Odd years are budget, even years focus on bonding.
- Session starts in February 11, 2020.
- Bills are introduced and committees hold hearings.
- Small bills are rolled into large omnibus bills, then conference committees hash out differences.
- Best times to build relationships with legislators: the beginning of session and anytime outside of session! (Right now!)



# Building Relationships with Elected Officials

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# Who represents you?



[www.leg.mn](http://www.leg.mn)

# Rep. Tou Xiong



Rep. Tou Xiong (DFL) District: 53A

533 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-296-7807

**E-mail:** [rep.tou.xiong@house.mn](mailto:rep.tou.xiong@house.mn)  
[Join my email updates list](#)

[Full-size image](#)

**Legislative Assistant:** Anna Fineanganofa [651-296-4110](tel:651-296-4110)

## Committee Assignments:

[Higher Education Finance and Policy Division](#)  
[Property and Local Tax Division](#)  
[Subcommittee on Local Government](#)  
[Taxes](#)

## Biographical Information:

**Home:** 2702 Margaret Ave. E. Maplewood , 55119 \*  
**Occupation:** Nonprofit executive director  
**Education:** B.A., economics, St. Cloud State University; J.D., William Mitchel College of Law  
**Elected:** 2018  
**Term:** 1st  
**Family:**

## Member Links

[Bills Chief Authored](#)  
[Co-Authored](#)  
[District Map](#)  
[District Demographics](#)

## News Items

[POCI Caucus Members Announce Meeting on Child Abuse and Neglect at Southern Border, Impact of Potential ICE Raids in Minnesota - \(Wednesday, June 26, 2019\)](#)  
[Legislative Update - May 20, 2019 - \(Monday, May 20, 2019\)](#)  
[Legislative Update - May 8, 2019 - \(Wednesday, May 08, 2019\)](#)  
[MAP Caucus Statement Celebrating AAPI Month - \(Wednesday, May 01, 2019\)](#)  
[Archived News Items](#)

## Audio & Video

[Audio Commentary](#)

# Purpose + Outcomes of Building Relationships

## Purpose

- To be a resource;
- To connect to people with specific leverage in policy making;
- To tell the story of your organization and the concerns of your constituency

## Outcomes

- Increased awareness of your organization's role and mission
- Increased awareness of the needs of your organization's constituency
- Opportunities to advance the policy objectives of your mission

# Building Relationships with Elected Officials

- Elected officials are expected to have general knowledge on a wide range of issues.
- Each elected official has some areas of personal interest or issue areas in which they are willing to take leadership.
- Elected officials put their primary relationship building efforts into their own constituency.
- Elected officials need research, data and stories, and individuals respond to and make use of this information differently.
- Elected officials have enormous demands on their time and intellectual capacity.
- Elected officials are often very interested in understanding and being connected to the people and institutions in their community.

# Pitfalls and Things to Consider

- Don't be shy—you're both doing your job.
  - Never burn bridges.
  - Find a balance between high and realistic expectations.
  - **Never support or oppose a candidate for political office.**
  - Avoid building relationships solely with members of a single political party.
  - Always listen and tailor your approach to their needs. Assume they are also listening carefully.
  - Always follow through—a critical way to maintain your credibility.
- **Never make up answers or give misleading or false information.**
  - **If you say you will get back to them with information, do so.**
  - Avoid gossip.



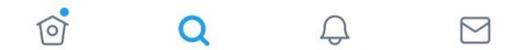
# #mnleg

 **Mary Lahammer** ✓  
@mlahammer

BREAKING: You saw it here first ;) [@mnlegturkey](#) with House Speaker on [#tptAlmanac](#) [@tpt](#)



Tweet your reply



## Tweet

 **Matt Little**  
@LittleSenator

Whether you're a Minnesotan has nothing to do with race, religion, or birthplace. It's about whether you love your neighbor, obsess about the weather, and hold the door open for the next person even if they are an uncomfortable distance away.

9:03 PM · 8/1/19 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

56 Retweets 592 Likes

 **Mike Freiberg** ✓  
@RepFreiberg

Representative Lucero's jackets as My Little Pony: a thread [#mnleg](#)



1:41 PM · 4/26/19 · [Twitter Web Client](#)

70 Retweets 343 Likes



1 2 34

 **Mike Freiberg** ✓ @RepFrei... · 4/26/19



1 2 31

 **Mike Freiberg** ✓ @RepFrei... · 4/26/19





# Pair Share!

Does your organization already do some of these advocacy activities?

Which do you think your organization could take on next?



# Nonprofits + Civic Engagement



# Nonprofits + Elections: Rules 101

501c3 nonprofit organizations **must remain nonpartisan.**

501c3 nonprofit organizations **can...**

- Voter registration
- Voter education
- Get out the vote activities
- Support or oppose ballot measure questions



501c3 nonprofit organizations **cannot...**

- Support or oppose specific candidates for office
- Support or oppose political parties

# Said in a different way...

**Electioneering is not allowed by 501c3s.** Electioneering and political campaign activities refer to the attempt to influence the outcome of an election – either the party or the candidate.

**In order to successfully stay nonpartisan,** think of your nonprofit election activities as exclusively focused on the goal of **engaging the community in the connection between your organization's mission and democracy.**

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# Census 2020

- Constitutional mandate to count U.S. population every 10 years
- Nonpartisan
- Promotes civic engagement and participation in democracy
- MCN supporting nonprofits through grants, resources, and marketing any nonprofit census events.

# Everyone can play a role!

**Tier 1: Easy to do**

**Tier 2: Medium level of capacity**

**Tier 3: Requires significant work**



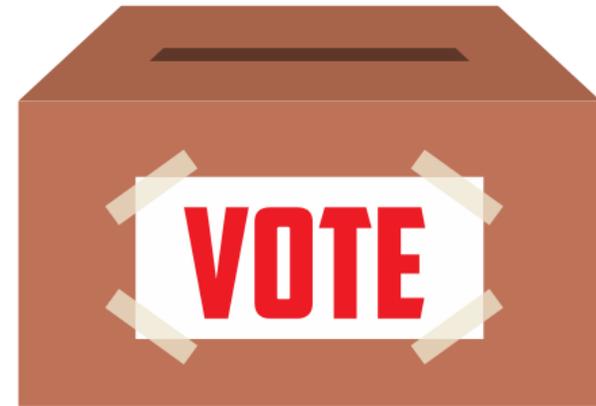
# Tier 1

- [Use your social media](#) channels to encourage staff, volunteers, board members, community partners, donors, and others to be a voter!
- [Send an all-staff email](#)
- [Adopt a Time Off To Vote Policy](#)
- Add a reminder in your email signature



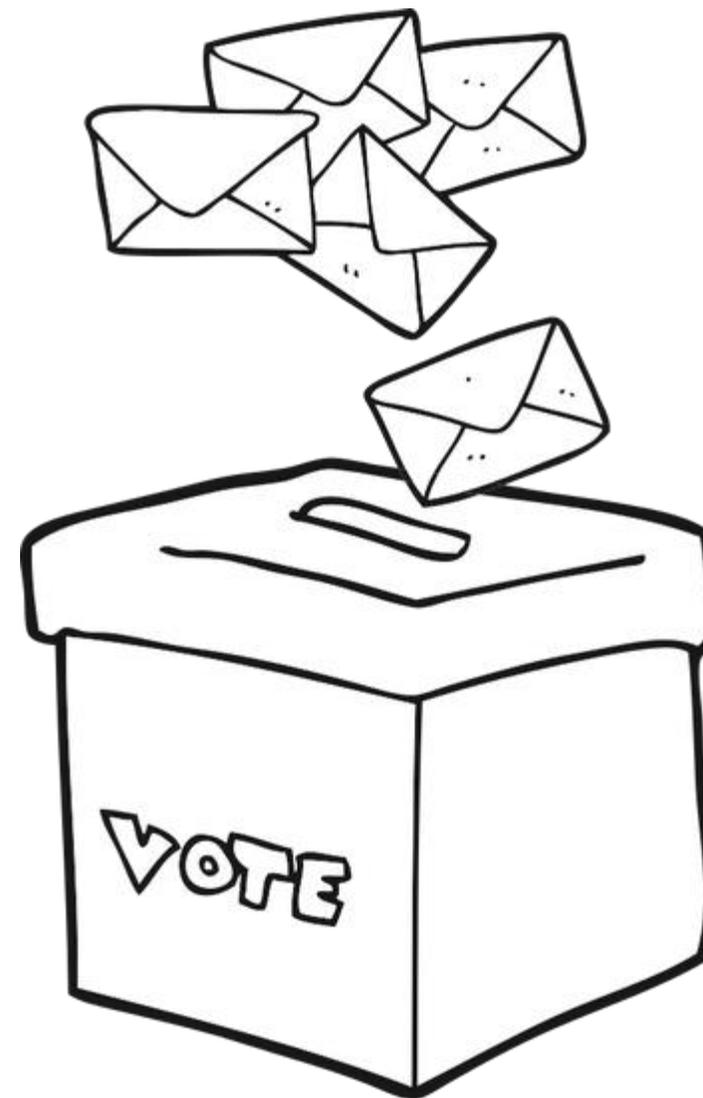
# Tier 2

- Attend a public forum, debate, or a community event with legislators
- [Distribute outreach materials](#)
- Plan a community event
- Send an external email
- Write a blog post



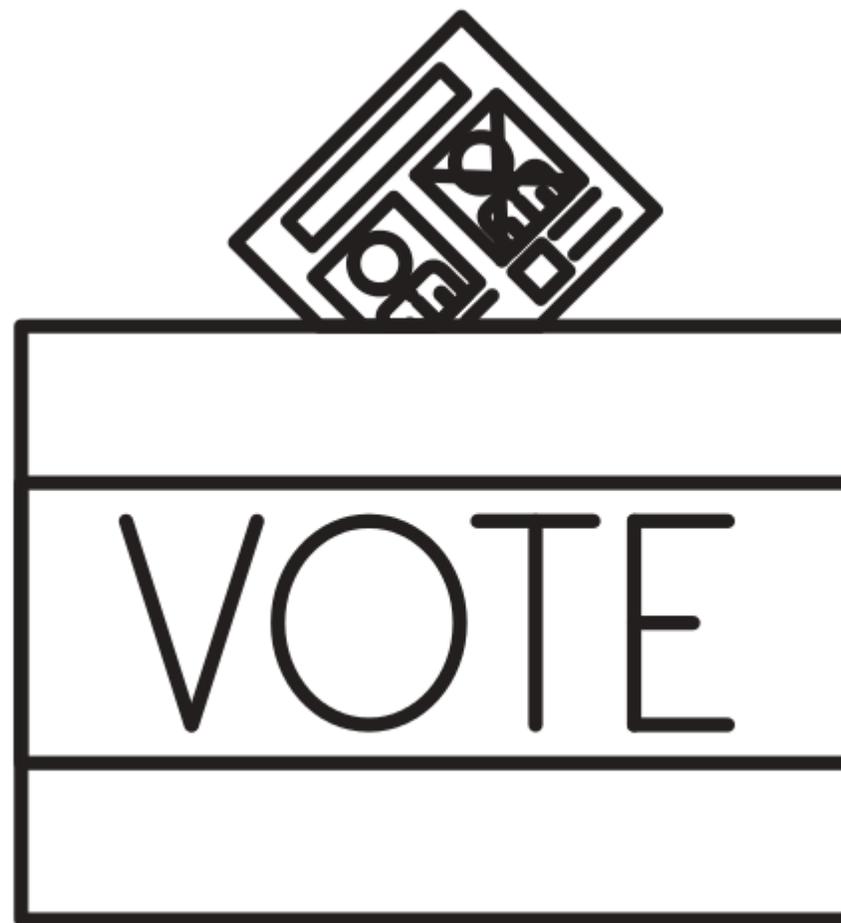
# Tier 3

- Create a webpage
- [Register people to vote](#)
- [Commit people to fill out the census](#)
- [Get Out the Vote](#)
- Get out the Count



# More Resources!

- [Minnesota Secretary of State](#)
  - Register to vote
  - Election day voting
  - Early voting
  - Sample ballot



# Pair Share

- Did your organization work on Census or Voter engagement in the past? What did your organization do? What groups did you involve?
- Is your organization planning to do Census or Voter engagement for 2020? If yes, share those plans. If no, what are some ideas you could bring back to your organization?

# Questions?

Marie Ellis

[mellis@minnesotanonprofits.org](mailto:mellis@minnesotanonprofits.org)

651-757-3060

Michelle Chang

[mchang@minnesotanonprofits.org](mailto:mchang@minnesotanonprofits.org)

651-757-3078

