



Washington State Organization
The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International
Legislative and Advocacy Sub-Committee
Educational Excellence Committee

Advocacy Toolkit

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Updated: Fall 2025

DKG Purposes and the Mandate for Advocacy

DKG PURPOSE #7:

TO INFORM MEMBERS OF CURRENT ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND EDUCATIONAL ISSUES SO THAT THEY MAY PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY TO SUPPORT A SUSTAINABLE WORLD SOCIETY.

DKG PURPOSE #4:

TO INITIATE, ENDORSE, AND SUPPORT DESIRABLE LEGISLATION OR OTHER SUITABLE ENDEAVORS IN THE INTERESTS OF EDUCATION AND OF WOMEN EDUCATORS

DKG purposes make it clear that advocacy is not only an allowable activity for chapters and member but one highly encouraged. DKG can be a force for education and educators; legislators respect our group and the more the know of us, the greater our influence can be.

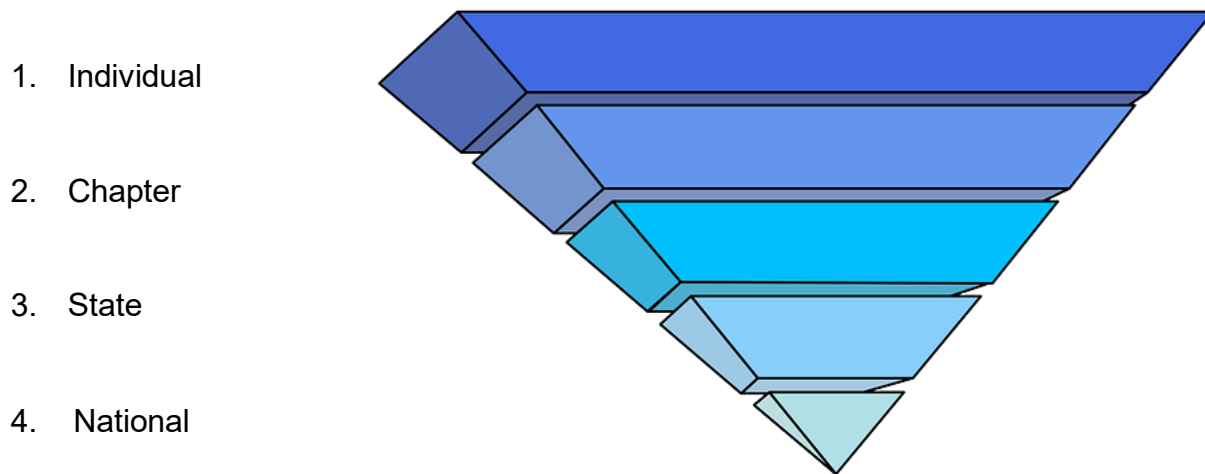
To make our democracy work, it is important that we, the people, are the special interest and the lobby group that our legislators attend to. It is our civic duty, our responsibility to make our voices heard. Research indicates that when legislators hear from five or more of their constituents on a given topic, they take notice.

When we articulate our common values and discuss them with each other and with our decision makers (whether school boards, city/county councils, legislators or congress), we create an environment that unites us in our common values rather than divide us along differences.

By working together, both legislators and members gain through communication which allows the free exchange of ideas and information; we learn about current education bills through contacts with legislators and their staff; and we promote our educational values about educators and educational policies.

Finally, by advocating and demonstrating success in doing so, we are giving something of VALUE to our members, particularly active teachers. When they receive value from us, they want to be remain as members and other educators will want to become members. Advocacy could be our greatest recruitment tool.

Levels of Advocacy



It is important to recognize that there are different levels of advocacy. Advocacy at each level accomplishes different goals.

First as an individual, you have the greatest freedom as to what you advocate for and to whom. You can be a force locally, at the state or the national level. You can endorse specific individuals; donate money; as well as contact legislators or other governmental decision makers on any issue.

But, advocacy at the organizational level has several advantages -whether by the chapter, state or US Forum, our DKG national voice for advocacy. It gives the individual more clout for being backed by and speaking on behalf of the organization. But one must respect the limits of our advocacy (due to our non-profit status) and the need for our chapter, state and/or national advocacy to respect the diverse views of our membership.

It is hoped that the tools and resources in this kit will facilitate advocacy at all levels.

Restrictions on DKG Advocacy

501(C)6 STATUS REQUIRES POLITICAL NEUTRALITY

CANDIDATE NEUTRAL

POLICY DRIVEN

PROCESS FOLLOWED

INCLUSIVE of ALL MEMBERS



There are some restrictions you need to understand when you advocate as an organization.

1. First DKG is a not for profit 501(c)6 tax exempt organization. That means we must maintain political neutrality. The DKG constitution requires that the EEC study and recommend action on professional issues and urge states to initiate, endorse and support legislation. Legislative action shall be based on a thorough understanding of the issues involved in supporting excellence in education, equality for women and a safe, peaceful educational environment. The U.S. Forum purpose is to provide a vehicle for members to discuss issues and, potentially, reach consensus on positions that members can then advocate for with appropriate legislators.
2. Neutrality Guidelines in the International GAPP specify that Legislative action shall be concerned with educational issues, not with candidates or political parties. Any advocacy taken on by chapters or the state organization must therefore be neutral with regard to parties or candidates. Further, such actions must be based on a thorough understanding of the issues.
3. Advocacy positions must be related to policy and law not to individuals or political parties.
4. When advocacy is desired, it ultimately can only be as the result of a formal consensus of the members. Members need the opportunity to identify, discuss, and adopt positions on educational issues that become the focus of advocacy efforts.
5. As a diverse organization, we must respect the many positions and views of our members. DKG chapters, state organizations and the US Forum cannot adopt positions that would exclude or offend any member.



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KEY WOMEN EDUCATORS DELTA KAPPA GAMMA™

A strength of DKG women is their knowledge and involvement in the world of education and events that impact educators and learners. DKG members ask questions before they take action. They take action, use their voices, and know they make a difference. They are reasonable and open-minded, and they live in the world with passionate care.

Controversies surrounding the transition of power in the United States have motivated DKG members to ask how the Society itself can "take a stand." In response to these inquiries, we offer the following statement of nonprofit neutrality.

Statement of Neutrality

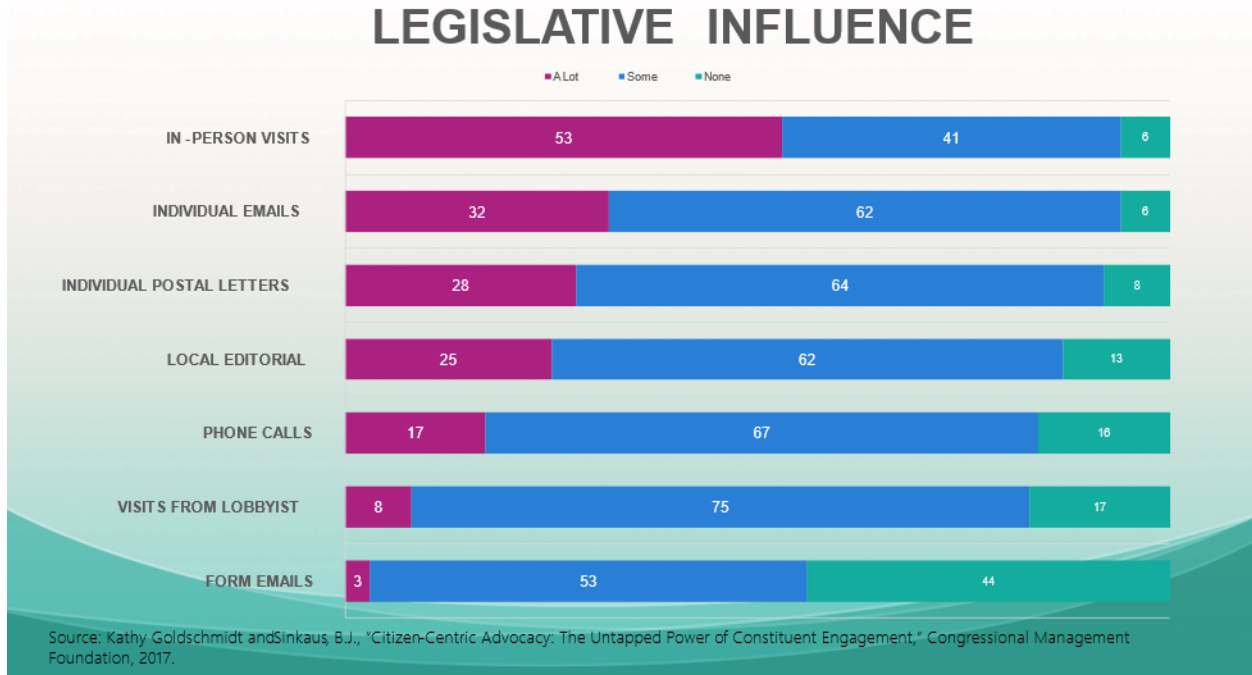
As individuals, DKG members cherish the personal right of free speech. As leading women educators, DKG members want to--and should--take a stand on important issues. Purpose 4 of the Society, in fact, encourages members *"To initiate, endorse and support desirable legislation or other suitable endeavors in the interests of education and of women educators."*

In contrast to speaking as an individual, however, "speaking" on behalf of an international, nonprofit organization is a complex endeavor. First, in the United States, the IRS restricts political and advocacy involvement of nonprofits; penalties can include revocation of nonprofit status. Second, the DKG Constitution, echoing Purpose 4, dictates in Article VIII, Section C., f. *"that the committee (Educational Excellence Committee) shall study and recommend action on professional issues and shall urge the state organizations to initiate, endorse and support desirable legislation or other suitable endeavors in the interest of education and women educators."* The International Standing Rules further state in 8.102, c. *"Legislative action shall be based on a thorough understanding of the issues involved in supporting excellence in education, equality for women, and a safe, peaceful educational environment."* The Rule continues in d: *"Legislative activity shall be concerned with educational issues, not with candidates or political parties."*

Of course, the difference between issue advocacy and political intervention can be very difficult, which leads to the third point of complexity regarding "speaking" on behalf of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International. Although united in a genuine spiritual fellowship, we are an organization of diversity--of various positions, experiences, opinions, passions, values and beliefs. The Society ultimately can only "speak" through formal consensus of members on **legislative** matters; without such formal consensus, **neutrality must be the position for this nonprofit organization.**

Thus, when issues or controversies arise, **each member must follow her personal journey to act on her passions and beliefs, whether by contacting a legislator, writing an op-ed piece for a local paper, using social media under her own name, or organizing or participating in a march or demonstration.** We support our love of DKG best, as well as represent our personal values, by acting with grace and supporting our organization as one that includes women with many different viewpoints-- sometimes represented in the same chapter.

Does Advocacy work?



Research by Goldschmidt and Sinkaus in 2017 found that the most powerful influencers on legislators were constituents

- In-person visits were reported by 53% to have a lot of influence; and 41% said they had some influence.
- Individual emails, while not as strong had an overall influence similar to in-person visits as did individual postal letters.
- Notice that lobbyist were reported to have a lot of influence by only 8% of legislators and form e-mails only 3%.

Advocacy Toolkit 2020

Templates and Samples

In the following pages are templates meant to assist members in the advocacy process. Once a position or issue is identified, these templates, samples and tips may assist in writing testimony and delivering content to decision makers. They should allow you to focus on the content of your message and worry less about the format.

Who are my elected officials?

WA State Legislators – Olympia

Legislative District WA: _____

Senator: _____

Representative: _____

Representative: _____

[Leg.wa.gov](http://leg.wa.gov)

US Congressional Delegation – DC

Senator: _____

Senator: _____

Congressional District: _____

Representative: _____

[Congress.gov](http://congress.gov)

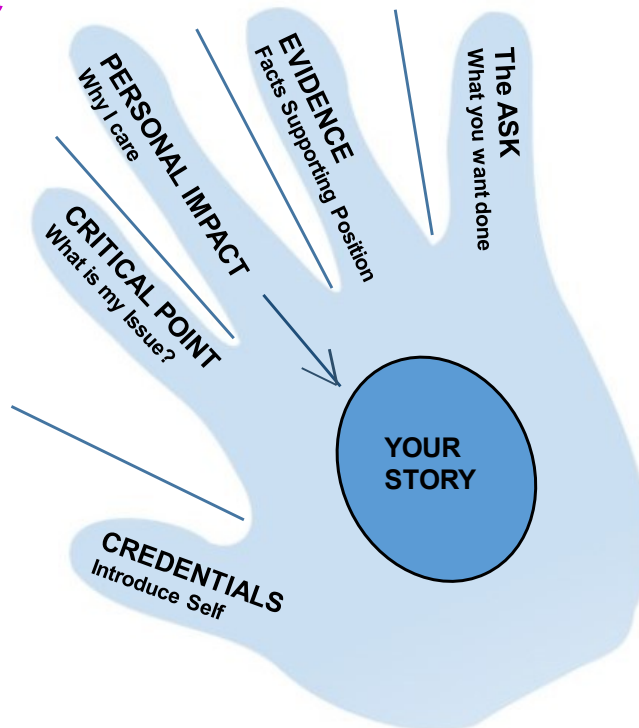
“Who are my elected officials” is an easy first step to becoming an advocate—one who contacts decision makers to let them know your position on issues.

By going to leg.wa.gov and entering in your address, you will discover your legislative district and who your district Senator and Representatives are. List their names and contact information on this form.

Then by going to congress.gov, you can determine who your national legislative representatives are: your two state Senators and your Congressional District Representative. Enter their names and contact information.

Keep this form in a handy location so you can quickly make contact when it is appropriate.

A "HANDy" Guide for Crafting Your Message



The "HANDy Guide to Crafting Your Message" is a simple way to remember the essential elements of effective testimony.

1. Introduce yourself. Tell your name, where you live, that you are a constituent. If you are advocating for your chapter, state or national organization, state its name and (briefly) its purpose. Legislators will often ask if you are representing a union, so be sure to have your one minute elevator speech about DKG's mission available.
2. What is my issue? State the issue or critical point you want to make. I am here to talk about . . . Be specific if there is a bill number you are asking the legislator to support, if applicable.
3. Why do you care about this issue? What is your story about the impact of this issue on your life or on educators.
4. What evidence do you have? What are the facts, the data supporting your position. Giving facts provides the legislator with reasons why he/she can support the bill.
5. Make the ask. Specifically what do you want your legislator to do? Will he/she co-sponsor the bill? What will he/she do to bring the bill to a vote? This is where you get to ask for accountability from your legislator and determine what your next steps need to be.

Finally, thank them for their work and for meeting with you.

In the templates to follow are specific wordings you might use for each of the elements described above.

Quick and Easy Testifying Fill-in

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you. My name is _____. I vote in the _____ District in _____ (city).

I would like to draw your attention to the issue of _____.

In my neighborhood, _____ (tell your story)

This effectively means _____.

Facts, etc.

1.

2.

3.

The consequence of not fixing this problem include _____.

I ask you to _____.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ WA Zip _____ Date _____

Letterhead with logo



Washington State Organization

P.O. Box XXX
XXXXXXXXXX, WA 99123

<http://dkgwa.org>

S

Brief description of organization

Our purpose in communicating with you today is to ask for your support for – or NO vote on - (number and title of legislation if known OR general topic if no legislation is currently before the legislative body).

1

Position statement

concise points

for your position

Sample
2
template for
legislative contacts
3

Fact Box

Supporting facts (economic, statistics, research results)

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me/us today. If you have any questions or are in need of additional information, please feel free to contact me/us at:

Name

(area code) phone number

Address

email address

City, State, Zip Code

date



Delta Kappa Gamma International Society for Key Women Educators is made up of over 65,000 active and retired educators in 18 countries. There are approximately 50,000 members in the United States with chapters in all 50 states. The mission of DKG is to promote professional and personal growth of women educators and excellence in education. DKG was established in 1929. One of its seven stated purposes is to “initiate, endorse and support desirable legislation in the interests of education and of women educators.”

Our purpose in communicating with you today is to ask for your support for legislation and budget authorization for the provision of enhanced support to school mental health services and curriculum.

1. Mental Health concerns are prevalent in schools across the nation. Improving services is not just a school district or state issue. The need exists for a comprehensive national approach and support to all schools, irrespective of location, financial status, or achievement rates.
2. Mental health concerns are not restricted to students, though their needs are significant. School-based staff are experiencing trauma, bullying, and work related stresses that require interventions and supports at the staff level, as well as for students.
3. School budgets are already stretched to the breaking point to provide necessary and appropriate funding for staff salaries, special education services, transportation, and a myriad of other mandates. Enhanced funding for wrap-around support service staff, including nurses, counselors, social workers, and mental health professionals, who support mental, behavioral and physical health and safety of students and staff is desperately needed, including significant levels of staff training.
4. Mental health needs are new, beyond the current fiscal capacities of schools and, in many cases, beyond the current training and expertise of school staff. Teachers should not have this added to their work loads. National leadership is needed to correct this deficiency.

Fact Box: Mental Health in the Schools

- Columbine, Sandy Hook, Parkland, and more: there is an average of 1 school shooting every week. (CDC)
- 1 in 5 students experiences mental health issues during the school years, ages 4 – 18. (USDHHS)
- Half of all mental health illnesses occur before age 14. (Child Mind Institute)
- Anxiety among students is at the highest recorded levels; suicides are on the rise. (CDC)
- 93% of teachers report increasing stress levels; 46% report high levels of stress daily; 78% are physically and emotionally exhausted at the end of each day; teachers are experiencing compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress and burnout; 17% leave the profession in the first five years; 70% of urban teachers leave in the first year. (NEA)

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me/us today. If you have any questions or are in need of additional information, please feel free to contact me/us at:

Name:
Address :
City/State/Zip

phone:
email:
date:



Washington State Organization

P.O. Box 113

Delta Kappa Gamma International Society for Key Women Educators is made up of over 65,000 active and retired educators in 18 countries. There are approximately 50,000 members in the United States with chapters in all 50 states. The mission of DKG is to promote professional and personal growth of women educators and excellence in education. DKG was established in 1929. One of its seven stated purposes is to “initiate, endorse and support desirable legislation in the interests of education and of women educators.”

Our purpose in communicating with you today is to ask for your support of SB 6165 providing a one-time increase in Cost of Living Allowances for Plan I retirees. We would further ask your support of a continuing COLA for Plan I retirees commensurate to that of Plan 2 and 3 retirees and other state employees.

(One person’s story)

As a single person living on a fixed income, and with health issues requiring significant purchase of life saving medication, I often have difficulty making monthly bill payments. I do not have investment income that I can use or that will serve as a saving account or “rainy day” account. Sometimes, I have to make a choice between paying a bill and buying food. Even the small amount of increase in my retirement from a COLA increase would improve that situation. Note: the Governor’s budget calls for an increase of \$22/month, to be capped at \$264/year.

Representative Kristine Reeves, 30th Legislative District, WA. Has pointed out that the cost of providing services to destitute Plan I retirees could be three to four times the amount of paying for the asked for COLA increase.

Last year, the 3% one time COLA increase for Plan I retirees (SB 5400) did not make it out of committee. It would have cost \$18M per year. SB 6165 only funds COLA at a third of that level — insufficient but better than nothing.

Please support SB 6165 and then next budget year, make the COLA increase a permanent fix, equal to that of other state retirement plans.

Fact Box: Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for Plan I Retirees

- 60% of Plan I retirees are women with an average age of 76 (WSSRA).
- The average pension is \$2,000/month; after federal taxes (approximately 15%), monthly income is \$1,620. If she is on PEBB supplemental insurance, another \$250 per month is deducted, leaving the average retiree just \$1,370 to pay for everything else (WSSRA).
- Except for Plan I retirees, the other state retirement systems have a 3% built-in COLA. Plan I retirees have received only one increase of 1.5% since 2010 (WSSRA).
- Purchasing power for Plan I retirees, adjusted for inflation, has decreased 19% for those retiring since 2010, but has decreased approximately 40% for earlier retirees (WSSRA).

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me/us today. If you have any questions or are in need of additional information, please feel free to contact me/us at:

Name:
Address:
City/State/Zip

cell:
e-mail:
date:

Tips on Speaking to Your Legislator

Compiled by Dr. Elizabeth Turner



Prepare before you go. Achieve credibility by following these tips.

1. Wear professional dress without DKG badges with pins—signals sorority, and the pins can be distracting to your message.
2. Do your business card and/or handouts state what they need to state?
 - * Key Women Educators
 - * Delta Kappa Gamma—geographic state
 - * Mission Statement
 - * Founded in 1929
 - * Talking points in professional presentation
3. Materials to leave behind: folder labeled with DKG Educators with brochure, list of legislative priorities, business card, position paper on issues.
4. Practice your handshake and get feedback.
5. Know your audience, and know how long you have to visit.
6. Write out what you want to say. This will help you stay focused and you will be able to get your message across better. (See Quick Fill-in guide)
7. Greet the audience and introduce yourself.
 - * Who are you? Give your name, telephone number. State if you are part of a group or a registered voter.
 - * Who are all of you?
 - * Use your elevator speech for the organization. Why are you addressing them?
 - * What professional or personal information makes you an expert on the subject.
8. Tell the audience what you are there to discuss with a brief overview of your comments. (See HANDy Guide.)
 - * Tell them what you are going to tell them.
 - * Choose three to five points to make, and discuss these items clearly and concisely.
 - * Use facts or figures to make your case. Know the bill number and name.
 - * It is often helpful and memorable to make a point using a personal story or anecdote.
 - * Appeal to the legislator's own experience or background to make a point.
 - * Explain how the legislator's decision will affect your life. Include who else in your community shares your views, especially if they are from a different background or hold different ideological views.
 - * Conclude, summarizing your points very briefly. Tell your legislator what you would like done.
 - * If appropriate, ask if he or she has questions.
 - * Offer to serve as expert testimony for hearings.
 - * It is the legislator's responsibility to listen and to make decisions based on their constituency's concerns and needs.
 - * Write a thank-you note or email or fax, preferably to district offices.
9. Leave a written copy of your comments. (See sample template.)
 - * Keep it to one page and organize with bullets for easy reading
 - * Include contact information (name, address, phone, email)
 - * What you state is as important as what you say.
 - * Listen carefully—learn more about your lawmaker's position and gain some insight into how this issue may be playing out in the Legislature or Congress.

Resources

The Resources section of the Advocacy Tool Kit posts lists of agencies and organizations who have staff on hand to gather facts and explain issues. By going to these sites, members may obtain information needed to complete the content or facts portions of advocacy testimony or letters.

Most of the organizations listed are non-profit and non-partisan. The views of the organization do not reflect the views of the WSO DKG and are provided for informational purposes.

Members may add to the list by submitting agency/organization information to the WSO legislative liaison.

The resource list is organized by category:

- Educational Policies and Legislation
- Women/children's Health
- Civic Engagement
- Voting
- Other

Educational Policies and Legislation

WASA School Administrators www.wasa-oly.org

WSSRA School Retirees www.wssra.org

Know Your Rights at School COVID19SchoolsWorkplaces.pdf

WEA/NEA/AFT Education Associations www.washingtonnea.org/ www.nea.org/
www.aft.org

WSACDA Curriculum www.wsascd.org

BATS Teacher Advocacy www.badassteacher.org

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS – WA www.lwwa.org

US FORUM Forum Connections Newsletter www.usforumdkg.org

Women and Children's Health Issues

WA Dept. of HEALTH www.doh.wa.gov
www.health.wa.gov.au
www.womenshealth.gov

211.org

National CDC www.cdc.gov

Healthy WA Coalition www.healthywa.org

WA State Public Health Association www.wspha.org

Health is a Human Right Coalition www.healthisaright.org

WA League of Women Voters www.lwwa.org

Civic Engagement

Leg.wa.gov information on current legislation

Civics Education - <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/civics/>

League of Women Voters www.lwvwa.org

Vote411.org one stop shopping for all questions re voting

Washington Voting Justice Coalition <https://wavotingjustice.org>

Fair Vote Washington <https://fairvotewa.org>

Pocket constitutions (available for cost of postage from Keitha Bryson)

Voting

Secretary of State – Washington <https://www.sos.wa.gov/>

Check your voter registration/status of vote - <https://voter.votewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx>

Election Information and Results - <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/>

Fix Democracy First - protecting voting right - www.fixdemocracyfirst.org

Other

Films of interest

Slay the Dragon (gerrymandering)
by Chris Durrance and Barak Goodman

Suppressed: the Fight to Vote (voter suppression strategies)
by Robert Greenwald

The Democracy Rebellion (positive stories about democracy in action)
by Hedrick Smith

This Advocacy Tool Kit has been compiled in Fall 2025 by

Pat Bennett-Forman, WSO 1st Vice President/ Educational Excellence Chair

<bennettforman.p@gmail.com> &

Keitha Bryson, EEC Legislative Liaison <ksbryson2533@gmail.com>

Please send any corrections, comments or additions to them.