

MOAA CHAPTER GUIDANCE

A legislative committee, under the general direction of the board of directors, should:

- serve as a single point of contact to influence federal advocacy efforts in their congressional districts;
- monitor local, state, and national legislative developments that might affect servicemembers, veterans, and retirees and their families, or national security;
- keep the chapter's board and members informed about legislative developments of particular interest;
- recommend to the board, when appropriate, new or revised policies or objectives in the field of legislative affairs;
- execute tasks related to advocacy the board of directors specifically might direct or authorize;
- liaise with other local organizations concerned with military, veteran, or retiree issues, with a view to obtaining their support for the achievement of the chapter's legislative objectives;
- liaise with the legislative committee of the state council of chapters and with MOAA's Government Relations Department regarding state and national political offices on matters of vital interest affecting servicemembers, veterans, and retirees and their families, or national security;

- ascertain and disseminate to chapter members, but not the general public, the records and positions of candidates for local, state, and national political offices on matters vitally affecting servicemembers, veterans, and retirees and their families thereof, or national security; and
- as far as possible, establish and maintain good working relationships with local, state, and national legislators (and their key staff members) representing voters in a chapter area.

A legislative committee should consist of at least three members. Continuity of membership is important, because usually little can be accomplished in the course of a single year. We encourage legislative chairs and liaisons to learn more about the roles and responsibilities of the position, grassroots advocacy efforts, and legislative priorities by viewing a specialized training webinar (see appendix).

Committee members should be assigned responsibility for monitoring legislative developments at each of the three levels of government: local, state, and federal. For example, at the local level, follow local elections, city or county ordinances, and local tax proposals as they affect servicemembers. At the state level, follow statewide legislative matters as they relate to veterans' issues, taxes on military retired pay, and support for military families. At the federal level, working with a state council and

national MOAA, assign one or more legislative liaisons to maintain contact with congressional representatives in a chapter's area. During the month of August, most elected officials will return to their home districts or states to meet with their constituents. This is a great opportunity for council and chapter leaders to visit legislators' local offices and advise them of their and MOAA's concerns on important matters.

To assist you in preparing for these meetings, we've developed all the tools you'll need for success.

Each August, MOAA publishes an online guide about contacting your elected officials, reviewing fact sheets, and getting talking points on key issues.

Many states have legal restrictions on lobbying, and these vary widely from state to state. Before engaging in any form of advocacy, a legislative committee should become thoroughly familiar with pertinent provisions of state law, especially requirements for registration and for filing of financial reports.

A legislative committee should understand a chapter must be politically nonpartisan. As an organization, a chapter should not support or oppose any candidate for political office (see Chapter Guidance, Chapter 7). However, a legislative committee can and should make a deliberate effort to inform its membership of the records and positions of opposing candidates so they are well informed

when voting.

A legislative committee also can arrange for opposing candidates to speak at chapter meetings. The committee can prepare and submit written questions on a few selected issues to the various candidates and publish the replies in a newsletter. However, care must be exercised to avoid displaying any bias with questions that are asked.