
SUGGESTIONS FOR ADVOCACY BEYOND THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS*

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." -Dr. Seuss, in *The Lorax*

There are many ways to advocate for families and children beyond the legislative process. Laurie A. Couture, M.Ed, LMHC, a mental health counselor and former social worker in the New England area, works diligently to preserve the human rights of children and youth. Her focus is on a number of issues, including corporal punishment, developmentally appropriate and emotionally-safe school environments, and childhood abuse and neglect. Her organization, ChildAdvocate.org, encourages all individuals to become involved. Some of her suggestions include:

START AT HOME

Ms. Couture states, "The most important step to becoming a child advocate is to cherish, love, nurture, and advocate for the children in your own life, and practice positive non-violent discipline at home or in your classroom."

JOIN AN ORGANIZATION

Aligning yourself with an organization that supports your ideals is a good place to start. Ms. Couture also suggests, "If you are bold, start your own organization!"

MENTOR OR VOLUNTEER

Becoming a Big Brother or Big Sister is a powerful way to make a difference. Ms. Couture also suggests:

- Contact your state child protective services and inquire about mentoring a child in state custody
- Contact independent living programs, residential, detention or group homes to mentor children in care situations.
- Locate child advocacy organizations that could use help.
- Contact your state department of social services and ask about local volunteer organizations that could use assistance.

* Taken from Laurie A. Couture, M.Ed, LMHC, *Become Involved*, ChildAdvocate.org, at <http://childadvocate.org>

BECOME A FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE PARENT

Ms. Couture notes, “In the USA, there are thousands of children in the child welfare system that are in desperate need of a temporary or permanent home. The majority have been removed from their biological families due to severe abuse, neglect or abandonment.” There are many opportunities to assist, particularly with older children. Your involvement can make a difference!

USE YOUR TALENTS FOR A GOOD CAUSE!

Use your special talent or skill to assist children in state custody. Ms. Couture suggests providing:

- Tutoring
- Visits with animals
- Free tickets to sporting events, movies, concerts, amusement parks
- Art and photography lessons
- Sports or fitness lessons
- Apprenticeships

IF YOU WITNESS OR SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE, INTERVENE

As mandated reporters, clinical psychologists and others (check your local laws) must report to the appropriate state agency if there is reason to believe that abuse is taking place.

In addition, witnessing child maltreatment in public may call for intervention either directly, if you feel it is safe to do so, or by notifying the appropriate authorities.

As Ms. Couture states, “If you choose to intervene, the parent is likely to respond to your attention by swearing at you, telling you to mind your own business, or by becoming belligerent. However, your intervention may make a difference in the life of a child who is unable to obtain help in any other manner.”

Childhood Sexual Abuse: The Biggest Secret, the Highest Price



Dr. Pamela Pine and *Stop the Silence: Stop Child Sexual Abuse, Inc.* (www.stopcsa.org) have been addressing the needs of sexually abused children in a multifaceted, comprehensive manner since 2002. First established as a coalition, and now as a national organization, *Stop the Silence's* mission is to increase public and policymaker awareness, provide programming to address prevention and treatment, and to address the connection between other social issues, including family and community violence.

Dr. Pine became involved in this cause in 2000 when she tried to obtain basic resources and was amazed to find out that the funding was very limited. This resulted in the completion of a study that revealed that most people do not grasp the full extent of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) as a social and health problem and do not know what to do about it. In addition, she found, the media have not realistically represented the situation, focusing on the most outrageous cases and excluding or misrepresenting scientific research.

Along with completing research and providing professional training, Dr. Pine and members of Stop the Silence have worked to increase awareness through the use of public relations. As part of those efforts, *Stop the Silence* sponsors an annual race/walk that began in 2004 with the help of Sharon Simone, a nationally known CSA survivor, activist and educator. In its third year in 2006, the *Race to Stop the Silence* has grown to 1,100 participants from 22 states. The Race is held each April in Washington, D.C.

In addition to increasing visibility through the media with the general public, the race has obtained the endorsement of a growing number of policymakers from Capitol Hill and elsewhere. Cutting across gender and party lines, legislative representatives have provided various types of support, including assistance with securing federal funding.

Currently, this group is developing a National Children's Bench Book to educate judges about the impact of CSA so that they are able to make fully informed decisions about the cases in front of them. Dr. Pine continues to seek and receive meetings with congressional staff advocating for change in policy, funding and opportunities to speak before congress, and provide advocacy and educational outreach for communities.

Taken from Dr. Pamela Pine, *Stopping the Silence: Taking Action About Child Sexual Abuse*, APA Division 37, Child Maltreatment Newsletter, Volume 10, Number 2, Fall, 2005 and personal communication, June 30, 2006.

Personal Commitment to Advocacy

Dr. Michael de Arellano, Assistant Professor at the National Crime Victims Research Center in the Department of Psychiatry at the Medical University of South Carolina, was the winner of the Division 37, Section on Child Maltreatment 2004 Early Career Award for Outstanding Contributions to Practice in the Field of Child Maltreatment. Dr. de Arellano has been a beacon of hope for child victims from traditionally underserved populations.

Successfully bridging the gap between research and practice, Dr. de Arellano's work focuses on increasing the quality of and access to services for these groups. Specifically, he has developed, organized and implemented a Hispanic Outreach Program – Esperanza (HOPE) Clinic in South Carolina. This clinic enables therapists to provide empirically supported

assessment and treatment to abused children and their primary caretakers in community locations that are convenient to access. His work for the clinic included obtaining a Victims of Crime Act grant to fund the program. Subsequently, he expanded the clinic to serve other disadvantaged populations, such as families that live in rural areas, and obtained a second Victims of Crime Act grant to fund the Community Outreach Program- Esperanza (COPE).

In addition, Dr. de Arellano is intimately involved with a number of community liaison activities, including giving regular talks to organizations serving Hispanic migrant workers, such as Head Start, Child Protective Services, and Community mental health agencies and serves on the boards of several organizations that provide services to the community.

Information taken from Thomas D. Lyon, News from Hawaii and Section Activities, Division 37, American Psychological Association, Section on Child Maltreatment Newsletter, Volume 9, Number 2, Fall 2004

CONCLUSION:

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!



Why should you become more politically aware and involved?

Because there are decisions made each and every day by federal, state, and local legislators that have an impact on children, youth, and families. The officials making these decisions are, with precious few exceptions, not experienced in the subject matter that may be ***your*** area of expertise. These men and women must, therefore, rely upon the expressed views of their constituents, expert information, and their own opinions to make decisions. As a psychologist, and a citizen, you have a right--and a responsibility--to inform those decisions.

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GLOSSARY*

A

Act - A bill or measure passed into law. Also used to describe a comprehensive piece of proposed legislation with multiple components.

Adjournment - To end a legislative day. Recess does not end a legislative day.

Adjournment sine die - To adjourn without setting a time to meet again. It denotes the end of a congressional session.

Amendment - A proposal to change, or an actual change to, a given piece of legislation.

Apportionment - Allocation of legislative seats by law. The 435 seats in the House of Representatives are apportioned to states based on their population.

Appropriation - The process by which Congress provides budget authority, usually through the enactment of 13 separate appropriations bills.

Authorization - Authorizes a program, specifying its general purpose and, broadly, how that purpose is to be achieved, and sets a funding ceiling for the program.

B

Bill - Formally introduced legislation. Most legislative proposals are in the form of bills and are designated as H.R. (House of Representatives) or S. (Senate), depending on the House in which they originate, and are numbered consecutively in the order in which they are introduced during each Congress. Public bills deal with general questions and become Public Laws, or Acts, if approved by Congress and signed by the President. Private bills deal with individual matters such as claims against the Federal Government, immigration and naturalization cases, land titles, et cetera, and become private laws if approved and signed. **H.R.** House Bill **S.** Senate Bill

Bloc - Representatives or senators who are members of a group with common interests.

Budget - An annual proposal that outlines anticipated Federal revenue and designates program expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year.

Budget Authority - Permission, provided by law, for federal agencies to spend or otherwise obligate money.

Budget Outlays - Money that is actually spent in a given fiscal year, as opposed to money that is appropriated for that year.

* This glossary was taken from the APA Public Policy Office, Advancing Psychology Education and Training: A Psychologist's Guide to Federal Advocacy found at <http://www.apa.org/ppo/ppan/guides.html>

C

Calendar - A list of bills or resolution to be considered by a committee in the House or the Senate.

Caucus - The meeting of members of a legislative body usually to decide policy or select members to fill positions. It is also used to refer to the group itself.

Chairperson - Member of the majority party who presides over the work of a committee or subcommittee.

Cloture - The only procedure by which the Senate can vote to place a time limit on consideration of a bill or other matter, and thereby overcome a filibuster. Under the cloture rule (Rule XXII), the Senate may limit consideration of a pending matter to 30 additional hours, but only by vote of three-fifths of the full Senate, normally 60 votes.

Committee of the Whole - Business is expedited in the 435-member House of Representatives when it resolves itself to the “committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union.” Rules are relaxed, and a quorum is easier to obtain. A minimum of 100 members must comprise the committee.

Committee -Specialize in specific areas of legislation. Almost every bill introduced in either house is referred to a committee for study and recommendation. The committee may approve, revise, kill or ignore any measure referred to it. It is nearly impossible for a bill to reach the House or Senate floor without first winning committee approval.

Concurrent Resolutions - A concurrent resolution is a legislative proposal that requires the approval of both houses but does not require the signature of the President and does not have the force of law. Concurrent resolutions generally are used to make or amend rules that apply to both houses. They are also used to express the sentiments of both of the houses. For example, a concurrent resolution is used to set the time of Congress’ adjournment. It may also be used by Congress to convey congratulations to another country on the anniversary of its independence.

Conferees - Members of a conference committee, which is composed of representatives and senators named to work out differences between same-subject bills passed by both chambers.

Conference Committee - Committee made up of conferees who must work out a compromise between same-subject bills passed by both chambers before the bill becomes a law

Congressional Research Service - Congressional support agency that provides political analysis and information at the request of individual members of Congress.

Continuing Resolution - Legislation providing continued funding for a federal department or pro-gram, usually at the level of the precious fiscal year. It is used when Congress has failed to pass a necessary appropriations bill for a new fiscal year.

D

Discretionary Spending - Spending for programs that Congress finances as it chooses through annual appropriations. About a third of all federal spending falls into this category.

E

Extension of Remarks - Material inserted by a representative or senator in the Congressional Record. It is not spoken on the floor.

F

Filibuster - Informal term for any attempt to block or delay Senate action on a bill or other matter by debating it at length, by offering numerous procedural motions, or by any other delaying or obstructive actions.

Fiscal Year - The financial operating year of the federal government, beginning October 1st and ending September 30th of the next calendar year.

G

Government Accountability Office (GAO) - Congressional support agency that reviews and evaluates the management of Federal programs and activities, primarily at the request of individual members of Congress.

H

Hard Earmark - Congressional funding directed specifically to an entity in a designated geographical area, as cited in an appropriation conference report. Agencies have no discretion with hard earmarks.

Hearing - A meeting or session of a committee of Congress, usually open to the public, to obtain information and opinions on proposed legislation, conduct an investigation, or oversee a program.

Hopper - Box in which proposed bills are placed.

J

Joint Committee - A committee consisting of Members of both the House and Senate.

Joint Resolution - Joint resolutions, which are essentially the same as bills, usually focus on a single item or issue. They are designated as either 'HJ Res' (when originating in the House) or 'SJ Res' (when originating in the Senate).

L

Legislative Assistant (LA) - The professional staff member in charge of a particular issue or issue area.

Line-Item Veto - The power of the executive to disapprove of particular items of a bill without having to disapprove of the entire bill.

M

Majority Leader - Leader of the majority party in either the House or the Senate.

Mandatory Spending - Spending mostly on entitlement programs, whose eligibility requirements are written into law.

Mark-up - The review and possible revision of a piece of legislation by committee members.

Minority Leader - Member of the minority party in either the House or the Senate.

P

Pocket Veto - When the President withholds approval of a bill after Congress has adjourned, thereby killing the bill without a formal veto.

Point of Order - An objection by a representative or senator that a rule is being violated.

President of the Senate - The Vice President of the United States officially presides over the Senate. Except during times of very important debate, a President pro tempore is elected.

Previous Question - By a motion to “move the previous question,” a representative seeks to end debate and bring an issue to a vote. Senators do not have this debate-limiting device.

Private Bill - Bills that provide for special treatment for an individual or business entity. Such bills are subject to presidential veto.

Privilege - A privileged question is a motion that is considered before the motions. A “question of privilege” relates to the personal privilege of a representative or senator.

Q

Quorum - The number of Senators or Representatives who must be present in their respective chambers before business can be conducted.

R

Ranking Member - Members of the minority party on a committee who ranks first in seniority after the chairman.

Ranking Minority Member - The minority party member with the most seniority on a committee.

Reauthorize(ation) -Sanctions anew, usually with changes, a previously approved program.

Recess - Marks a temporary end to the business of the Congress and sets a time for the next meeting.

Reconciliation - The process by which tax laws and spending programs are changed, or reconciled, to reach outlays (money spent) and revenue (money taken in) targets set in the annual budget resolution.

Reports - A report is a document that presents a committee's explanation of its action regarding legislation that has been referred to it. Each House and Senate report is assigned a number that includes the number of the Congress during which it is published (e.g., "H.Rpt. 105-830" refers to a report created in the House during the 105th Congress). Conference reports are numbered and designated in the same way as regular House and Senate reports. Most reports favor a bill's passage, although a bill can be reported without recommendation. When a committee report is not unanimous, the dissenting committee members may file a statement of their views (minority views) in a minority report. A reported version of a bill references the applicable report number.

Note: Reports may be found in the [Congressional Reports database on GPO Access](#).

Rescission - The cancellation of preciously appropriated budget authority—a common way to save money that already has been appropriated.

Resolution - A formal statement of a decision or opinion by the House, Senate, or both.

Revenues - Taxes, customs duties, some user fees and most other receipts paid to the federal government.

Rider - A provision added to a bill so it may "ride" to approval on the strength of the bill. Generally, riders are placed on appropriations bills.

Roll Call Vote - A vote in which each Senator votes "yea" or "nay" as his or her name is called by the Clerk, so that the names of Senators voting on each side are recorded. Under the Constitution, a roll call vote must be held if demanded by one-fifth of a **quorum** of Senators present, a minimum of 11.

S

Secretary of the Senate - The chief administrative officer of the Senate.

Sergeant at Arms - Legislative officer who maintains order and controls access to the chamber at the direction of the presiding officer.

Session of Congress - Refers to the 2-year cycle of activities of the legislative branch. For Example, the 106th "Congress" began January 6, 1999, and included a 1999 and a 2000 "session." Proposed legislation introduced during a 2-year Congress may be taken up at any time during that period, but once Congress has ended, pending measures are no longer viable and must be introduced anew in the next Congress in order to be considered.

Soft Earmark - Congressional funding directed to be spent on a particular activity (this may or may not include a geographic designation) in which a certain entity or entities are part of a narrow class of competition and would naturally be the recipients of the funding. Agencies have discretion in implementing.

Speaker of the House - The presiding officer in the House of Representatives. The Speaker is elected by the majority party in the House.

Special, Select or ad hoc Committees - These committees are created for a specific investigation or oversight function and are more apt to die and have functions routed to a standing committee.

Subcommittee - Subunit of a committee established for the purpose of dividing the committee's workload. Recommendations of a subcommittee must be approved by the full committee before being reported.

Suspend the Rules - A motion in the House intended to bring a bill to a vote quickly.

T

Table a Bill - A motion to remove a bill from consideration.

Teller Vote - A House vote whereby members' votes are counted "for" or "against" as they file past tellers in the front of the chamber. A count is taken, but there is not official record of how each representative voted.

U

Unanimous Consent - A timesaving procedure for non-controversial measures whereby measures are adopted without a vote. A member simply says, "I ask unanimous consent" for and states his/her proposal.

Union Calendar - The calendar on which money bills are placed in order of date reported from committees.

V

Veto - Disapproval of a bill or resolution by the President.

Voice Vote - Members answer “yes” or “no” in unison. The presiding officer decides the result, how a member voted is not recorded.

W

Whip - A legislator who is chosen to be the assistant to the leader of the party in either the House or Senate.

Y

Yield - The request “Will the gentleman/gentlewoman yield?” is an expression used to seek permission from a member already speaking on the floor in order for another member to be recognized.