Pet Partners
Advocacy Manual

*Improving human health and well-being through the human-animal bond*
Pet Partners Advocacy Manual
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A Message from Pet Partners

On behalf of Pet Partners, we are delighted to offer this Advocacy Manual as a valuable tool on the journey to creating an effective grassroots advocacy network.

The idea that animals have a positive impact on human health and well-being is worth defending and promoting, and we are delighted that you are joining us. You may already be involved in local grassroots organizations to affect change in your community, and you know how influential these efforts can be. Pet Partners believes that together we can have the same positive impact on animal-assisted interventions, and more broadly, the human-animal bond.

In establishing this new initiative, members of our Public Policy Committee and our Board of Directors have agreed to the following principles:

**Our efforts are non-partisan.** Our goal is to educate, not promote the election or defeat of candidates for any elected office.

**Our program is voluntary for everyone, including our current therapy animal volunteers.** Our program is an “opt-in” format, which means you only receive special advocacy communications when you register as an advocate.

**Our program is for everyone.** While not everyone interested in the positive impact animals have on human health and well-being is a therapy animal team, anyone can be passionate about the human-animal bond! When people who are new to Pet Partners join forces with our existing passionate volunteers, our collective voices can be mobilized to affect change about important issues we all care about.

**Our advocates are prepared for success.** With free resources like this manual, you can organize locally and rely on Pet Partners for education on important topics, including how to effectively communicate with elected officials.

We look forward to joining forces.

In the bond,

Marc Scarduffa  
Chair, Public Policy Committee, Pet Partners  
Vice President, Government Relations & Public Affairs, Pfizer Inc.

C. Annie Peters  
President & CEO, Pet Partners
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PART 1
Why Grassroots Advocacy?
The Need for Pet Partners Advocacy

Merriam-Webster defines an advocate as “one who defends a cause or proposal.” We believe that the Pet Partners cause is worth defending and promoting. Our volunteers who are associated with the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program are valuable partners as we advocate for greater access to animal-assisted interventions. There are also passionate individuals who don’t currently have an animal suitable for therapy animal work who can be great advocates. And let’s not forget decision makers and champions in health care facilities, on college campuses and in schools.

If you’re a registered Pet Partners volunteer, you’re aware of the stringent requirements that you and your therapy animal must meet. You’re already a part of the leading organization that represents the most rigorous best practices in animal-assisted interventions (AAI). You can read more about this at http://www.petpartners.org/standards. As the leader in this industry, we (and you) can no longer be a “best-kept secret.” Our grassroots program will give all Pet Partners stakeholders the tools to defend and promote animal-assisted interventions.

Why Now?

Pet Partners grassroots advocacy is particularly important now because of the increasing public awareness of the health and well-being benefits of the human-animal bond, which is a positive development. However, well-meaning organizations and individuals with less rigorous standards than Pet Partners can negatively affect future access to therapy animals. Teams without adequate education, assessment or considerations for health and safety are at an increased risk for negative interactions. This results in incidents that contribute to a negative reputation for all therapy animal activity, regardless of organizational affiliation.

Elected officials at all levels make decisions based on voter input and media headlines. As these headlines increase, legislation can be considered without input from those most affected by it — therapy animal team stakeholders and the facilities they serve. All of us must live with the ramifications of new laws, so we have a responsibility to influence the legislative process when legislation that could potentially impact registered therapy animals is considered.
Why You?

You Amplify the Pet Partners Leadership Voice
The Pet Partners staff consistently promotes the benefits of animal-assisted interventions to the public and opinion leaders. However, to an elected official, the staff are only a few individuals. Collectively, our tens of thousands of current and past volunteers, as well as additional stakeholders, can amplify our voice in a way that makes elected officials pay attention.

You Vote
Legislators want to be re-elected. To do that, they have to listen to their constituents (citizens living in their district who can vote for them). You’re passionate about the human-animal bond and you vote. Elected officials will listen to you.

You Are the Expert
According to the Center for Responsive Politics, there are more than 10,000 interest groups registered to make their voices heard before the U.S. Congress. A 2006 survey by the Center for Public Integrity determined that the number of paid lobbyists at state legislatures was almost 40,000 and growing. Each lobbyist represents an organization that has a stake in legislative outcomes.

Wouldn’t you expect airline pilots to advise legislators when legislation regarding their jobs is debated? Shouldn’t health care professionals have a say in issues that affect how they care for patients? Similarly, you’re an expert on the benefits of animal-assisted interventions. Our lawmakers don’t have the same level of knowledge about our issues that we have, and we have a responsibility to share our knowledge with them.

It Works
In today’s rapidly-changing world, there’s something that has remained unchanged: the importance of constituent communication to elected representatives. Regardless of the communications medium, research demonstrates the effectiveness of constituent grassroots advocacy.
Consider this timeline that reflects what has *not changed*.

1992 – The Gallup Organization asked congressional staffers what most influences their bosses. Their replies:

- Constituent letters 78%
- Constituent phone calls 12%
- Other 10%

1998 – Professor Michael Lord of Wake Forest University asked the following question of congressional staff: “What are the most effective ways organizations can impact federal legislation?”

- Grassroots 57%
- Lobbying by Executives 27%
- Other 16%

2000 – National grassroots expert and author Amy Showalter conducted research with state legislators across the country. They were asked, “What are the habits of effective advocacy groups?” Respondents could indicate more than one answer. Their responses:

- Grassroots strength 67%
- Money to get their message out 54%
- Staff and lobbyist leadership 50%
- Organized grassroots 41%

2007 – The Policy Council asked legislative staff how they prefer to learn about legislative issues from advocacy organizations. Respondents could indicate more than one answer. Their findings:

- Constituent meetings 65%
- Lobbyist meetings 60%
- Roundtables/briefings 51%
- Website 50%
- Podcasts 3%
- Webinars 2%

2004, 2010 and 2015 - The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) found in three separate research projects over a ten-year span that direct constituent interactions have more influence on lawmaker’s decisions than other advocacy tactics. Between 94 percent and 99 percent said that “in-person visits from constituents” would have “some” or “a lot” of influence on a lawmaker.
What’s in It for You?

The Benefits of Serving as a Pet Partners Grassroots Advocate

There are many benefits to serving as a Pet Partners grassroots advocate. As an advocate, you:

- Receive advance notice of legislative issues that impact standards for therapy animal teams and access to therapy animals in different settings.
- Participate in grassroots training webinars and classes.
- Have the opportunity to use or expand your leadership capacity by serving as a state advocacy leader.
- Expand your network by collaborating with like-minded individuals in your state.
- Have increased community visibility.
- Can demonstrate your interest and concern for animal-assisted interventions, even if you’re not part of a therapy animal team.
- Work alongside researchers, health care decision makers and other proponents to help shape the future of AAI (animal-assisted interventions).
PART 2
The Legislative Process
Government Structure

The government of the United States is defined by the U.S. Constitution. The federal component is composed of three branches: Executive, Legislative and Judicial. Each branch serves a purpose of executing, making or interpreting the laws of the United States of America. Although each branch of government is equally important, a citizen’s influence and advocacy are best focused on the legislators that they elect to Congress.
The Legislative Process

The federal and state legislative process is very similar. The following graphic uses language consistent with the federal process. For information about your specific state legislative process, go to The National Conference of State Legislatures website, indicate your state and then click Home Page.
The Evolution of Public Policy Engagement

There’s an established process for legislation becoming enacted into law, but the reality is often less complicated, as shown in the infographic below. This graphic demonstrates why it’s important to be proactively engaged in the legislative process by sharing your Pet Partners story before a triggering event necessitates negative publicity that could harm the therapy animal movement.
Mobilizing the Team

As you can imagine, with approximately 40,000 general purpose local governments, there is vast potential to get involved in legislation that affects therapy animals and animal welfare. Many organizations that promote various pro-animal causes may ask for our endorsement or support of their legislative initiatives. However, we cannot and should not be involved in every animal-related issue; it’s important for us to maintain focus.

As the leader in animal-assisted interventions, we will lead on issues that affect therapy team standards and access to facilities and collaborate on other issues that impact human health and well-being through the human animal bond. We will not engage in issues that are strictly related to animal welfare without a human health component; other organizations have already organized advocates around those issues and do it very well.

How does Pet Partners determine when to mobilize on a specific topic?

- The Pet Partners Public Policy Committee meets to discuss proposed legislation and how it aligns with our interests and goals.
- Public Policy Committee members vote on whether to support, oppose or monitor the initiative.
- The Public Policy Committee agrees on the appropriate level of support or opposition. For example, depending on the timing, elected official support or opposition, and the possible benefits or consequences of the legislation, possible actions could include:
  - No involvement or comment.
  - No current involvement or comment, but monitor for possible engagement opportunities.
  - Pet Partners private involvement or comment.
  - Pet Partners public involvement or comment.
  - Mobilizing Pet Partners registered advocates to contact elected representatives or express support on social media channels, op-eds, and so on. This process is referred to as an Action Alert.

¹ These government bodies include 19,492 municipal governments; 16,519 township governments and 3,033 county governments; 50 state governments with more than 7,000 state elected officials; and 535 members of the U.S. Congress.
Action Alert

When the Public Policy Committee determines that Pet Partners should mobilize on a specific topic, registered advocates will receive an email communication that will include:

- A description and the status of the proposed legislation.
- Information about which legislators need more communications, and the best type of communications (in-person meetings, social media support, letters, and so on).

Contacting Pet Partners

Pet Partners will actively monitor federal legislation, but if you become aware of a state or local issue that you believe would directly impact therapy animals, we encourage you to contact us through the Pet Partners website. When you use the Contact Us form, you can be assured that your message will always be routed to the correct individual.

Important Reminder:
To maintain both focus and credibility as an advocacy organization, it’s vital that we are consistent and coordinated in our approach.

Requests to support legislation via grassroots mobilization will come directly from Pet Partners headquarters. You should not express opposition to or support for any local or state-related legislation on behalf of Pet Partners to media outlets, on social media or to legislators without first contacting Pet Partners headquarters for input.

For topics outside Pet Partners’ area of focus, you can certainly express your individual support or opposition.
PART 4

Best Practices for Effective Legislator Communication
Speaking with One Voice

Elected representatives at all levels of government are inundated with requests and issue information. Many at the state and local levels don’t have professional legislative staff. Therefore, we must make it easy for elected officials to receive and consider our information. That means that we must consistently and credibly speak with one voice and stay “on message” regarding issues related to animal-assisted interventions. The following suggestions will prepare you to be effective when interacting with your lawmakers.

Get Prepared

➤ Learn about your legislator. Google your lawmaker’s name and title (for example, Senator John Doe or Representative Susan Jones) and then find and bookmark their website.

➤ Peruse your legislator’s website and note the major committees on which he or she serves, where he or she went to school, his or her profession, legislative awards, or other boards or organizations on which he or she serves. Read any available press releases that are archived on the site. This will give you a good synopsis of your lawmaker’s interests and priorities.

➤ Subscribe to your lawmaker’s blog posts.

➤ Set a Google Alert with your lawmaker’s full name and title. You will receive periodic email alerts notifying you of news stories about your elected official.

➤ Follow your legislator on Twitter. You can find their Twitter handle on their website.

➤ Read updates on your legislator’s Facebook page.
Tips for Effective Legislator Communications

Members of Congress and state lawmakers are elected by the people to work for the people. As a constituent, it’s important for your elected officials to hear from you.

Below are general tips for success when contacting your legislators whether in writing, via phone, or in person:

- **Identify yourself.** Let the staff know who you are and why you are contacting them. Explain your role with Pet Partners.

- **Be specific.** Identify the bill or issue. If you don't know the bill number, describe it by its popular title, such as “the pets and women safety act.” Focus on only one issue at a time.

- **Be brief.** Your opinions stand a better chance of being heard if they are stated concisely.

- **Be timely.** Inform your legislator while there is still time to take action.

- **Be constructive.** If you have expert knowledge, share it. A legislator cannot possibly be an expert on every issue. If you believe a bill incorrectly addresses an issue, provide an alternative suggestion.

- **Be direct.** State your position on a bill or issue and the reasons for your position. Use examples from your own experience to make your point. Urge your representatives to support your position when voting for or against a bill in committee or on the floor. Ask that the legislator respond and explain his or her position on the issue.

- **Be organized.** Make sure you are well-prepared in your thoughts and comments prior to contacting your legislator. If you’re calling about a specific bill, familiarize yourself with the bill number and name, and with the specific section of the bill about which you will be speaking.

- **Be nice.** An overly aggressive or disgruntled attitude will not win you favor.

- **Get personal.** It’s easier to drive home a point with individual experiences than generalizations. If you can share a relevant personal story, do so.

- **Say thank you.** Be sure to thank your legislators for their time after a meeting or a crucial vote.

- **Follow up.** If you offer to follow-up on a question or send materials, keep your word. If the legislator or staff does not give you a “yes” or “no” answer, or if they say they will “look into the issue,” be sure to follow up a week or two later. Be polite, but persistent.

- **Be a resource.** As a part of your communication, and especially in your follow-up, offer to be a resource on issues regarding therapy animal issues.
Letter and E-Mail Communications

The thoughtful persuasive letter or e-mail can make a difference. Legislators both expect and depend on written communications from their constituents.

The following is the proper address and salutation for letters. The same format can be used in the body of an email.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Senator</strong></td>
<td>The Honorable (full name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington, D.C. 20515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Senator (last name):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Representative</strong></td>
<td>The Honorable (full name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington, D.C. 20515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Representative (last name):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Senator</strong></td>
<td>The Honorable (full name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(State) Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City, State, ZIP Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Senator (last name):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Representative</strong></td>
<td>The Honorable (full name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(State) House of Representatives/Assembly/House of Delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City, State, ZIP Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Representative (last name):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governor of a State</strong></td>
<td>The Honorable (full name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State Capitol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City, State ZIP Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Governor (last name):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tips for writing letters and emails

- **Be focused.** Write only to your own elected officials. Do not write to all members of a committee or all members of the House or Senate. Legislators pay attention to communications from their constituents.
- **Remind them that you are a voter.** Write as a constituent, using your home address and not on any Pet Partners or local group letterhead.
- **Identify your subject clearly.** Describe the legislation about which you are concerned, and identify it by bill number if you can.
- **Stick to one issue.** Keep focus. Don’t raise a host of issues.
- **Get local.** Emphasize how the legislator’s constituency will be affected by the legislation. For example, if therapy animal access to facilities is limited, which groups in the legislator’s district would be affected?
- **Just the facts.** Support your position with facts, and share a personal story (if applicable) about how the issue could affect you, your therapy animal, and the community groups you serve.
- **Be nice.** Avoid angry comments, and never threaten to retaliate at the polls.
- **Ask for action.** Ask the legislator to vote in favor of the legislation or conversely, to oppose legislation.
- **Follow-up.** If you don’t get a reply or if you receive one that is unsatisfactory, write again or call.
- **Express thanks.** If the legislator votes your way, write or call to say, “thank you.” If he or she doesn’t vote with you, send a note of thanks for considering your position. Either way, the official will know you are committed to staying informed about the issue.

Communicating by Telephone

Often Congress, and particularly state legislatures, act on issues quickly, with no time for a letter to reach them, or for the staff to retrieve and process emails. When phoning, it’s important to understand that you may not speak with the legislator directly; however, you may speak with the staff person who specializes in your area of concern. Don’t be disappointed if you’re referred to staff members. Write down the staff member’s name so that you can ask for that person on your next call, or when you visit the representative or senator’s office at a future time. The importance of rapport with personal and committee staff is invaluable.

To reach the Capitol switchboard, call **202-225-3121**. The operators will connect you to your senator or representative’s office. To obtain phone numbers for your state senators and representatives, see your state legislature’s website.
Part 4: Best Practices for Effective Legislator Communication

Speaking with One Voice

Tips for phone calls

- **Try to speak with the right person.** In most situations, the “Health Legislative Aide” or “Health Legislative Assistant” will coordinate issues pertinent to therapy animal issues. Take note of the name of this staff member so that you can ask for him or her the next time you call or visit the office.

- **Be prepared for your phone call.** Prepare a specific list of points that you want to make.

- **Be brief.** Congressional and state legislative staffers spend an extraordinary amount of time on the phone and in meetings. Use their time well by communicating your message clearly and concisely.

Social Media Communications

Legislators are adapting to social media use, and we encourage you to follow them on various social media channels. It’s important to note that research shows that legislators still view it as their broadcasting tool, rather than a listening tool (*Congressional Management Foundation, 2014*). Therefore, it’s important to understand the capabilities and limits of social media for grassroots advocacy.

Tips for Social Media

- **Do** use social media to publicly thank or commend a lawmaker for voting with you on an issue.

- **Don’t** use social media channels to reprimand a lawmaker or urge others to vote against him or her.

- **Do** use social media to thank legislators for meeting with you and other Pet Partners advocates (this should be done in addition to, not in lieu of, a written “thank you” note) as well as to thank them for “shadowing” you during a therapy animal team visit.

- **Do** use social media to post pictures of meetings with elected officials.

- **Do** use social media in advance of legislator meetings to spread the word about the meeting; legislative staff pays attention to social media mentions of their boss.
PART 4

Maximizing Legislator Meetings
“We Have to Keep Meeting Like This”

The Importance of Face-to-Face Communications

Despite the ease of social media and email communications tools, research overwhelmingly supports the power of face-to-face interaction to build relationships and persuade. Because Pet Partners is the leader in standards for animal-assisted interventions, we should also be integrating best advocacy practices into our grassroots efforts. Face-to-face meetings are an advocacy best practice, and you are encouraged to engage in face-to-face communications with your lawmaker as much as possible.

Meeting with your elected officials is a powerful way to raise the profile of therapy animal issues and to affect change. It’s difficult for local and state representatives — even Members of Congress — to be well-versed on every issue, so this is an opportunity to educate them. You don’t have to be a scholar or expert to contribute to a policy maker’s understanding of the benefits of animal-assisted interventions. Remember, meeting with constituents is part of an elected official’s job. It’s also how policy-makers gauge what’s important to those living in their district or state. And it is how we help influence our government’s priorities.

Educate First

An important advocacy strategy is to build awareness and relationships with your state and local representatives before an event occurs which requires you to advocate. The good news is that basic educational meetings are easy, feel-good opportunities for you to get comfortable with face-to-face meetings like this. You have the opportunity to position yourself as an engaged constituent who is willing to be a resource when the time comes – so don’t miss out!
Part 4: Maximizing Legislator Meetings
“We Have to Keep Meeting Like This”

Pet Partners wants to support you in building relationships through education. We’ve prepared support materials on two core topics which can be good places to start your conversation.

1. **The difference between therapy animals, service animals and emotional support animals.**

   It is very common for these terms to be confused, and that confusion could result in therapy animals being erroneously included in legislation for the simple reason that the bill’s author was unclear on the difference.

   If you’re a past or current therapy animal handler, this is a great chance to share some of your favorite stories of impactful visits. In addition to clarifying the difference, you can illustrate how therapy animals contribute positively to the community.

2. **The benefits of therapy animals and importance of standards.**

   While many of us recognize our own animals can be personally therapeutic, that doesn’t mean every pet can or should be a therapy animal.

   There has been increasing interest in some states around legislating pet ownership and possibly therapy animals. We want to ensure that decision makers have current information on what makes for a safe and effective therapy animal visit, and why animal welfare is a critical consideration, before they introduce any laws that could impact therapy animals.

Resources on these topics are available from the Pet Partners website: https://petpartners.org/act/learn-about-advocacy/

**How to Schedule an In-District Meeting**

Did you know that the average Member of Congress holds 13 meetings a day? That does not include committee and sub-committee meetings. You want your meeting to be an effective use of your time and one that’s remembered by the lawmaker and/or his or her staff.

The following checklist uses language referencing congressional meetings, but the same process can be used with state legislators or even local government such as your mayor or members of your city council, although most of those meetings can simply be scheduled via a phone call or email to their office.
Checklist for Scheduling Legislator Meetings

1. **Decide which Congressional offices you want to meet with.**
   We each have three federal legislators who represent us: two Senators and one Representative. These Members have offices in your home state or district where they and their staff can meet with you in person. You can use Google, or another search engine, to easily identify your representatives and find their websites.

   Visit your legislatures’ websites to learn which of their district offices are closest to where you live. This information is usually found under the “Contact Me” section of the website.

2. **Get the offices scheduling information.**
   Call the district office where you’d like to meet. Let the receptionist know that you are planning to send in a meeting request and ask for the name of the district scheduler and his or her contact information. Find out whether the scheduler prefers to receive meeting requests by email or fax.

3. **Send in your meeting request.**
   Send a request to your Member’s district scheduler that includes:
   - The issue that you want to discuss (include a bill number if applicable).
   - The dates that you prefer to meet.
   - At which district office you prefer to meet.
   - The names of other constituents who plan to attend with you (if this is not finalized at the time of your request, don’t worry — you can update this later with the scheduler).
   - Your name, address and all contact information

   If you’re a registered therapy animal handler, consider asking if you can bring your registered therapy animal to the meeting. You can add that many office staff appreciate a visit from a registered therapy animal. They may have to check with their landlord, so indicate that you plan to visit even if you can’t bring your animal.

4. **Confirm that your request was received.**
   Two to three days after you submit your meeting request, call the district scheduler to make sure he or she has received your request. These offices get a lot of requests, so you want to make sure yours doesn’t get lost.

5. **Follow up.**
   Continue to follow up with the scheduler every few days to make sure your meeting gets scheduled. It can sometimes take several follow up calls or emails to get your meeting scheduled. Persistence is key!
6. **Schedule your meeting.**
If the Member of Congress is unavailable, the scheduler will direct you to a legislative aide who will meet with you. Don’t be discouraged! This meeting is still very worthwhile. Aides often recommend positions to Members of Congress — it’s very important to make sure that they are well informed about and aware of support in the district.

7. **Prepare.**
Know your personal story. Also review the Standards document and any legislation you will be discussing.

8. **Find others to join you.**
Members of Congress are impacted by vivid representations of public support for an issue. Demonstrate that support by considering who might be the best people to bring with you to an in-district meeting (such as a prominent person in your community or a representative from a facility that supports therapy animal visits). Before attending the meeting, make sure everyone coming with you is clear on the purpose of the meeting, and understands that there is one main message to convey.

**Tips for your legislator meetings**

- **Plan in advance.** Have a detailed plan of the points you want to discuss and make sure that your information is as up to date as possible. Bill numbers and names are important. If possible, provide staff members with information in advance, usually in your meeting request.

- **Take an appropriately sized group with you.** There is safety in numbers, but you don’t want to have such a large group that your message gets distorted by having "too many messengers." Five people are a manageable size for the small legislative offices.

- **Follow all Pet Partners policies and procedures if your therapy animal will be accompanying you.** Consistency is key, both in words and actions. You’ll undermine your own authority if you can’t demonstrate the standards you’re promoting.

- **Treat staff members with courtesy.** Often, staff are more knowledgeable on the specifics of legislation than the Member. They can be influential partners, so treat them well.

- **Be prepared to make your point.** Legislators are besieged with advocates for countless groups and causes. Often, they try to keep the conversation general, talking about everything except what you want to talk about. Be prepared to politely direct the conversation to your topic.

- **Avoid using medical or therapy animal jargon.** Issue-specific jargon might confuse the legislator and staff members. It’s always best to make your argument in lay terms.

- **Don’t feel snubbed if you meet with a staff member.** Many staff members are more informed about the issues than their bosses. They are responsible for distilling
information for their lawmaker. Meetings with legislators (in Washington D.C., or the state houses) can often be interrupted by a recorded vote on the floor or by a committee vote. This is a common occurrence and should not be viewed as an attempt to "get out of the meeting" with you and your group. Leave time, if you can, to be responsive to the frenetic schedule of the legislators and their staffs.

► **Be prepared for a brief and hectic meeting.** Space is very limited in congressional and state house offices, so expect to have a meeting in a small lobby or conference room, or perhaps even a hallway or the cafeteria. It’s likely that you’re one of several other meetings the staffer has scheduled, so convey your message clearly and concisely.

► **Provide a “leave behind.”** A “leave behind” is a document that summarizes your talking points and provides contact information for you and for Pet Partners. Downloadable versions are available on the Pet Partners advocacy webpage. Don’t forget to personalize it with your name and contact information.

► **Give thanks.** Thank the legislator and staff for seeing you and follow up with a letter or email that re-emphasizes your points.

### Bringing Therapy Animals to Advocacy Events

One of the most compelling parts of a visit to your district office can be the presence of these amazing pets and their handlers, and the opportunity for legislators to interact with them. But as seasoned handlers know, bringing animals into a new location can pose challenges. The following are some considerations for handlers who are considering bringing their registered therapy animal with them on a visit to a legislator’s office.

**Will your animal enjoy it?**

Our commitment to animal welfare is at the core of the Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program. Stop to consider the following potential conditions. Will the presence of other animals be a detractor for my animal? How long will we be comfortable visiting? If your animal indicates that they are tired or stressed, will you be able to leave easily? How far will you have to travel, and will that create excessive stress? Pet Partners works to promote YAYABA™, not just with therapy animal handlers, but with all animal owners. It’s critically important that we publicly demonstrate meeting our own standards at public events designed to educate others, so please make wise choices about the presence of your animal.

**Can’t bring your animal? Bring their story!**

If you decide that it isn’t in the best interest of your therapy animal to bring them along, or you learn that the office will not allow therapy animals to be present, you can still bring your story to share with lawmakers and their staff through photos and stories you share about the impact your team has had on those in your community.
PART 6

Rules of Non-Profit Advocacy

Pet Partners
Touching Lives, Improving Health
Not-for-Profit Doesn’t Mean “Not for Advocacy”

Non-profit organizations are restricted from engaging in partisan political activity — doing so puts the organization's charitable status at risk. Contributing to or otherwise using the assets of the charitable organization to support or oppose candidates or political parties is considered partisan political activity, and is prohibited. Thus, Pet Partners is similarly restricted from using public funds to support political candidates or political parties.

The main point to remember is that any political activity must not be done in Pet Partners’ name — instead, it must be done in an individual’s name, and the individual must not be reimbursed by Pet Partners or a local group for any expenses. The following is a basic list of do's and don'ts with respect to political activity. It’s not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of what is permissible or prohibited. If you are uncertain whether an activity is permitted, contact Pet Partners.

Do’s

- A Pet Partners advocate can use their own personal funds to contribute to a candidate's campaign fund, a PAC or a political party.
- An advocate can express support or opposition to any candidate for elective office on personal social media sites.
- An advocate can send emails, social media messages or letters soliciting support for or opposition to a candidate, or contributions to a candidate, as long as the email address and social media pages of Pet Partners or your local group are not used.
- An advocate can host a fundraiser or reception for a candidate at his or her home or at a location that's not affiliated with Pet Partners or your local group.
- An advocate can serve on a candidate's campaign committee and allow their name to be listed on the campaign letterhead or website and otherwise be used by the candidate to indicate the executive or board member is a supporter of the candidate, as long as your title or affiliation don’t include any reference to Pet Partners or your local group.
An advocate can provide educational materials that discuss a particular issue of importance to therapy animals to employees or medical staff of facilities where therapy animals visit, provided the articles do not mention a particular officeholder or candidate. For example, an article about therapy animals’ access to courtrooms can be provided to employees of organizations that benefit from therapy animal team visits, as long as the article does not discuss individual legislators’ positions on the issue. Note that this type of article must be carefully written and reviewed to ensure it cannot be construed as advocating support of or opposition to any candidate. If an issue is associated with a particular candidate, there is a risk that the materials may be construed as supporting or opposing that candidate, even though they do not mention the candidate’s name. This is particularly true if the article is published close to the election and coincides with political advertisements that oppose a candidate for their position on the issue.

Don’ts

Your group’s funds cannot be used to contribute to or otherwise support candidates, a political party or a PAC that contributes to candidates or political parties.

In-kind contributions of materials, supplies or services cannot be made by your group to a candidate or lawmaker.

Your group cannot use its assets to form a political action committee (PAC), or lend its name to a PAC.

Partisan activity may not be sent in Pet Partners name or by using Pet Partners resources. For example, you should not post on social media or write a letter to the editor of your local paper to the effect of: “As a Pet Partners volunteer, I urge you to vote for John Doe because of his position on AAI issues.” Inserting “Pet Partners” into the endorsement places our organization in the partisan political atmosphere, and the Internal Revenue Service doesn’t allow non-profit organizations to engage in such activity. It draws scrutiny and can place our tax-exempt status at risk. Any partisan activities should be conducted through your personal identity as a voter, not as a representative of Pet Partners.

Articles supporting or opposing a candidate cannot be included in Pet Partners or your local group’s publications, regardless of whether the publication is directed to group members or the public.

Pet Partners mailing lists cannot be provided to a candidate or be otherwise used to support or oppose a candidate.
Appendix
Legislative Terms

**Act:** A bill that has been made law by passing both houses of Congress and signed by the President.

**Amendment:** A proposal by a member of Congress to alter the language of a bill.

**Appropriation:** Funds set aside by Congress from the Treasury for specific government expenditures.

**Bill:** A proposed law. Identical bills introduced in both houses are called “companion bills.”

**Caucus:** “Caucus” is used as both a noun and a verb. As a noun, a caucus is a group of people who share something in common (for example, they are members of the same political party, and/or have the same legislative interests such as agriculture or health care.) When they caucus (used as a verb), they meet to address their group’s legislative issues. *There is a Human-Animal Bond Caucus that focuses on issues important to Pet Partners.*

**Cloture vote:** A vote in the senate that limits debate. Cloture votes require 60 votes to pass the Senate.

**Conference Committee:** Selected Members of the House and Senate, tasked with resolving differences between similar bills passed independently by the House and Senate.

**Constituent:** A citizen residing within the district of a legislator.

**Filibuster:** A delaying tactic to prevent action on a bill. In the Senate, a Member or group of Members can filibuster by speaking continuously.

**Germane:** Relevant to pending legislation. In the House, proposed amendments must be germane to the bill or law they would amend. In the Senate, germaneness is not normally necessary.

**Motion:** A request by a Member to institute any one of a wide array of parliamentary actions. The outcome of a motion is decided by a vote.

**Political Action Committee (PAC):** Groups representing particular interests that raise money from their members and give it to political candidates who support their position. Non-profit organizations are prohibited from forming PACs unless they establish a separate entity for political fundraising.

**Quorum:** The number of legislators that must be present to do business. The Constitution requires a majority of Members of Congress for a quorum (218 in the House and 51 in the Senate).

**Session:** The period during which Congress assembles and carries on its regular business. Each Congress generally has two regular sessions (a first session and a second session within a two-year period), based on the constitutional mandate that Congress assemble at least once each year.

**Veto:** A Presidential refusal to sign legislation passed by the House and Senate. A veto can be overridden by a two-thirds vote of both houses.
Advocacy Program Terms

**Action Alert:** An alert that asks Pet Partners advocates to contact their legislators on a state, federal and sometimes local legislative issue. Action Alerts are sent only when the request is urgent and prompt action is needed.

**District Office Visit:** An advocacy activity you can undertake to build relationships and help educate your elected officials on therapy animal topics.

**Public Policy Committee:** A committee of Pet Partners stakeholders who review legislation and proposals that could affect the Pet Partners mission and make recommendations on support or opposition to such initiatives.

**State Advocacy Leader:** A volunteer who coordinates the dissemination of information regarding legislation and therapy animal developments in their state. State advocacy leaders serve as a liaison between elected officials and Pet Partners by helping increase their awareness of the benefits of high standards for therapy animal teams and encouraging other advocates in their state to do the same.

**State House Therapy Animal Day:** An event at the state Capitol that brings together Pet Partners therapy animal teams and advocates from across the state to increase awareness of the benefits of animal-assisted interventions.

**Pet Partners Standards documents:** These documents are essential to helping the public, legislators and the media understand the rigorous standards Pet Partners believes all therapy animal teams should meet, regardless of organizational affiliation. They should always be given to anyone you meet who is new to therapy animals, or who needs to learn more about the differences between various therapy animal organizations. They are available at https://petpartners.org/standards/.