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## Executive Advocacy Information Sheet

Americans have a great opportunity to share their concerns with elected officials and influence policy at the local and national level. Much of the lobbying that goes on in Washington D.C. is focused on supporting, opposing, or modifying Congressional legislation. However, citizens can also influence policy through executive level advocacy. President Obama has promised a transparent, responsive White House during his administration and provided additional avenues for citizen input on executive policy.

This briefing provides an overview of Executive Advocacy including:

- I. What is Executive-Advocacy?
- II. Types of advocacy asks
- III. Mapping Executive Advocacy—departments overview
- IV. Executive level advocacy – procedures
- V. Additional Resources

For more information, contact AIDemocracy at 202-544-9662 or [info@aidemocracy.org](mailto:info@aidemocracy.org)  
More Toolkits and Fact Sheets can be found on our website at [www.aidemocracy.org](http://www.aidemocracy.org)

### I. What is Executive Branch Advocacy?

Executive Branch Advocacy is about using effective tools to create change in the actions and policy initiatives of the President, the Cabinet, and White House policymakers.

### II. Types of Advocacy Asks:

#### A. Process Asks

These asks concern the process of developing policy and involve asking Federal Agencies to increase civic engagement in their deliberative processes. Such asks may take one of the following forms:

- **Creation of interagency task force**—creates a group that would coordinate policy around critical groups and may involve citizen/NGO representatives to the group.

Ex: the President's Interagency Council on Women (PICW) brought together senior officials from State Department, USAID, Department of Labor, Department of Health



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and Human Services, and Department of Education to coordinate activities for U.S. women and women globally.

- **New appointments to current committees**—Appointing a representative from a relevant NGO or demographic to already established committees or working groups.

There are many committees, task forces, and advisory groups comprised of corporate, NGO, and government officials that advise federal agencies. These advisory committees vary in their strength and influence but are often important players in influencing legislation, regulations, and executive orders.

- **Requesting ongoing civil society meetings with relevant federal agency groups.** This allows greater access to policymakers, provides points for increased pressure, and perhaps provides potential allies and responsive experts.

Ex: Under the Clinton Administration, civil society groups met with U.S. trade representatives who dealt with services, intellectual property rights, the environment, agriculture, and labor on a regular basis.

## B. Policy Asks

Executive Branch advocacy focuses on influencing the substance of one or more of these policy instruments:

- **Executive Orders (EOs)**—*“Stroke of the pen. Law of the land. Kinda cool.”* Paul Begala, Clinton AID, NYTimes July 5, 1998.

EOs are legally binding orders given by the President to Federal Administrative Agencies. EOs are generally used to direct federal agencies and officials in their execution of established laws and policies. However, they have also been used to guide agencies in directions contrary to Congressional intent. Some EOs pertaining to National Security are National Security Directives. EOs do not require Congressional approval but they carry the same weight as laws passed by Congress.

Many important policy changes occurred through Executive Orders such as Harry Truman integrating the Armed Forces, Dwight Eisenhower desegregating schools, and Lyndon Johnson barring discriminatory housing, hiring, and contracting practices. Congress is less likely to challenge EOs on foreign policy, national defense or treaties.



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- **Regulations**—once a law is passed by Congress, Congress authorizes certain federal agencies to create regulations which develop/create the details for implementing a law. These details are unlikely to be included in the actual legislation. Regulations set requirements about what is or isn't legal. For example, a regulation from the EPA might set standards on how much pollutant can be legally emitted into the air and what the consequences are if they emit too much. Agencies research the issue and propose regulations which are listed in the Federal Register so that the public can comment on the regulation. Then the comments are considered and a final rule issued. Twice a year each federal agency publishes a list which reports on all the regulations it is working on or has finished (usually in October and April) as the Unified Agenda of Federal Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions.
- **Vetos**—trying to influence the President to veto legislation
- **Proposed Budgets**—influencing the Executive Branch's thinking about the amount to fund X project so that they set, in the State of the Union or in other documents, the amount they wish to allocate for certain projects
- **Executive Guidance**—a document from the President instructing organizations to act in a certain way (to ensure that youth and youth's views are represented for example) when developing foreign policy. This instructs all agencies to do this as they make their foreign policy. There often isn't enforcement or follow-up though so getting a Congressional Report Services (CRS) or General Accounting Office (GAO) report about the implementation might be a good way to maintain accountability.
- **International treaties**—treaties are negotiated among sovereign nations. While some treaties may require Senate and House ratification, other treaties, known as Executive Agreements are negotiated by the Executive Branch alone. The Vietnam Peace agreement was the sole domain of the President.

Congress can:

- Introduce resolutions and policy statements
- Enact legislative restrictions and deny funding
- Initiate legislative directives
- Apply legislative pressure—legislation to sanction South Africa for apartheid for example
- Advise informally
- Conduct policy oversight—hearings and investigations



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### III. Mapping Executive Advocacy

Below, issues areas are paired with the executive level departments and agencies responsible for their management.

#### Development

- Poverty reduction-USAID
- Fair trade-USTR, USAID, STATE
- Anti-trafficking, Water-USAID, STATE
- Food Security-USAID, USDA
- Gender, Labor rights-USAID, DOL, USTR

#### Health

- HIV-AIDS- USAID, DHHS, STATE
- Malaria, tuberculosis and preventable diseases-USAID, DHHS
- Access to medicines-USAID, USTR, STATE
- Reproductive rights and justice-USAID,
- Gender-USAID, DOL, STATE
- Water and sanitation-USAID

#### Environment

- Climate change-EPA, CEQ, STATE, USAID
- Green Jobs internationally-USAID

#### Peace and Security

- U.S.-Muslim relations- STATE, USAID
- Middle East- STATE, USAID, DOL
- Iran- STATE
- Nuclear nonproliferation-STATE, DOD
- Torture, detention, rendition-STATE, DOJ, DOD

USAID – U.S. Agency for International Development

USTR – U.S. Trade Representative

STATE – U.S. State Department

USDA – U.S. Department of Agriculture

DOL – Department of Labor

DHHS – Department of Health and Human Services

CEQ – Council on Environmental Quality

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

DOJ – Department of Justice

DOD – Department of Defense



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#### IV. Executive Level Advocacy

Process is similar to Congressional advocacy but the targets and asks differ.

- Meeting—meet with decisionmaker and make policy or process ask.
- Continue to meet and follow up with decision-maker.
- Email/letters—Collect letters/emails/other from citizens (possibly high-level influencers) to decisionmaker
- Reports—write, fund or support reports to look at issue (ie youth views integration in X agency)
- Leverage Congress—ask Congressional allies to hold hearings on issue; request a GAO or CRS report on the subject; hold Congressional sponsored event with other groups, youth reps from other places...

#### V. Additional Resources

##### Information on the Executive Branch:

White House Website

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/our\\_government/executive\\_branch/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/our_government/executive_branch/)

*Information on the executive branch and links to federal agencies and commissions. Find names of Cabinet members, White House staff, and more*

USA.gov website

<http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/Federal/Executive.shtml>

*Provides links to Federal Agency websites. Organizational flowcharts outlining the departments within each agency and their responsibilities can be found on agency homepages as well as information on agency staff*

##### Contact the White House

Email Form: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

Phone: 202-456-1111 – The White House Comment Line

Mail: 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20500

The Office of Public Liaison and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPL-IGA)

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/opl/>

*Website still in progress – fill out the online form with your input for the President and check back for more resources*

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