



SSWLHC
Society for Social Work
Leadership in Health Care

The value and importance of healthcare social work advocacy

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Objectives

- ▶ Participants will gain an understanding of historical tradition of Advocacy in social work and its focus within SSWLHC
- ▶ Participants will gain an understanding of the social workers in the Congress
- ▶ Participants will be made aware of the collaborative process to meet legislative goals related to social work and recent efforts
- ▶ Recent and current advocacy initiatives

Advocacy

- ▶ Social Work Advocacy – “the exclusive and mutual representation of a client(s) or cause to influence decision-making”
- ▶ Social Work role in Advocacy goes back to 1870's and 1880's with work of Dorothea Dix (almshouse and prison conditions), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (women's rights), Jane Addams (housing conditions and child labor), and Grace Abbott (immigration)

Advocacy History

- ▶ Economic Relief – lead by social workers Harry Hopkins and Francis Perkins
- ▶ WWII – Beginning of use of term ‘social action’
- ▶ 1960’s – Advocacy in civil rights and poverty
- ▶ 1969 – NASW defines advocacy as ‘one who pleads the cause of another’

Are social workers involved in advocacy?

- ▶ Social workers are slightly more involved in comparison to the general public
- ▶ About 1/3
- ▶ What leads to advocacy involvement:
 - ▶ Membership in member organisations such as SSWLHC
 - ▶ Interest in politics
 - ▶ Residence in an urban area

Barriers to Practicing Social Work Advocacy

- ▶ 1. Takes too much time, energy, and finances
- ▶ 2. Lack of perceived relevance to practice
- ▶ 3. Feel they lack competency in advocacy (lack of training by universities and professional organizations)
- ▶ 4. Belief that politics is 'dirty'
- ▶ 5. Misunderstanding of laws related to 'non-profits' or government employees (Hatch Act)

Advocacy in 21st Century

- ▶ Use of electronic advocacy
- ▶ Websites
- ▶ Use of email lists
- ▶ Blogs
- ▶ Social networks
- ▶ Videos

Characteristics of successful advocates

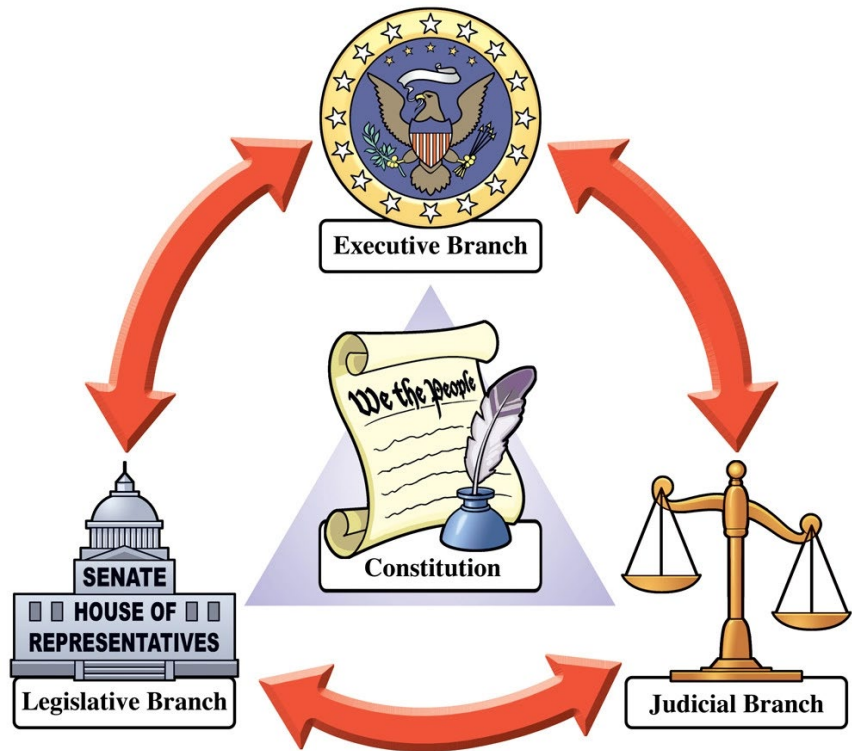
- ▶ Persistent, Tenacious, and Patience
- ▶ Is easy to underestimate the impact you may have
- ▶ Opposite of success is **not** failure – it is being willing to try again and learn from your past
- ▶ Far easier to do nothing than to do something or “kill the bill versus passage of the bill”

Political Process

- ▶ We must understand the political process in order to make changes in social justice goals
- ▶ Policy is developed within the political arenas at the local, state, and national levels
- ▶ Political process has two key processes
 - ▶ Formal – involves committees, bills, rule-making, etc.
 - ▶ Informal – Use of relationships, public pressure, negotiation, etc.

Formal Political Process

- ▶ Encourages addressing conflicting views with a process of checks and balances
- ▶ Involves the three branches of government:
 - ▶ Congress – Legislative
 - ▶ White House – Administrative
 - ▶ Supreme Court – Judicial



Legislative

- ▶ First, an idea to deal with an issue is put in the form of a bill which must have at least one legislator that will support it.
- ▶ Idea is written up in the form of a bill
- ▶ Bill is then assigned to a Committee (i.e. Veterans Affairs Committee)
- ▶ Committee reviews the bill

The Legislative Branch



Legislative Process

- ▶ Important to have bill assigned correctly (wrong committee and it may die)
- ▶ Obtain bipartisan support if possible
- ▶ Know who will be your potential opposition
- ▶ Chair of Committee is key – he/she can refuse to place bill on agenda or introduce bill and put it in a 'bad light'

Legislative Process

- ▶ Committee may report bill to whole committee favorable, with amendments, unfavorable, or table (kill), or send bill to another committee.
- ▶ Bill goes to the full body (either the House or Senate).
- ▶ If bill is passed it goes to the 2nd House (i.e. Senate to House or House to Senate)

Legislative Process

- ▶ When bill passed by both Houses (Senate and House) will go to Conference Committee to work out differences between Senate and House bills.
- ▶ After Conference, both Houses again for the bill.
- ▶ Bill then goes to the President or Governor for signature

Formal Process - Regulation

- ▶ All signed bills go to the respective Agencies (i.e. HHS, DOD, DVA) to 'promulgate the rule'
- ▶ This is the process of converting legislation into a 'practice design and delivery'
- ▶ Public input is 'always' sought in rule-writing. Offers the opportunity for social workers to ensure the intent of the bill is carried out.

Informal Political Process

- ▶ Is referred to as 'politics'
- ▶ Politician must listen to opposing opinions
- ▶ Politicians do have their own ideology, preferences, and priorities
- ▶ Good legislators try to compromise with a 'win'-'win' situation
- ▶ One must be aware of and use both the Form and Informal Political Processes.

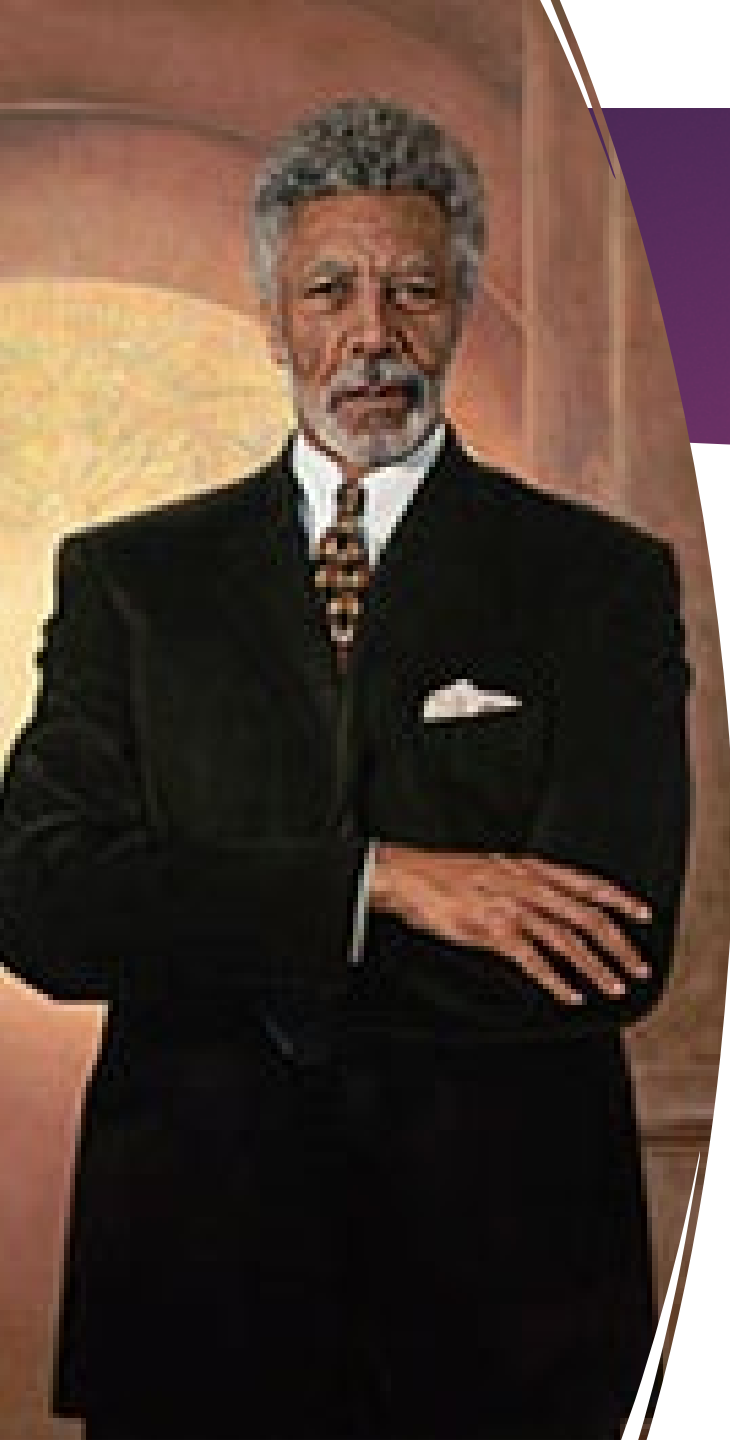
Political Social Work





Past and current Social Workers in Congress

- ▶ Jeanette Rankin – 1st women elected to Congress in 1916 (prior to Women's Suffrage)
- ▶ 1907 - took job as social worker in San Francisco. Enrolled in New York School of Philanthropy from 1908-1909
- ▶ Introduced legislation which eventually began to 19th Constitutional Amendment granting women the right to vote nationwide



Ron Dellums, MSW, USC

- ▶ Psychiatric social worker and activists in the 1960's
- ▶ 1970 – elected to CA 9th District (Oakland)
- ▶ Co-founded Black Caucus in 1971 and on of 13 founding members
- ▶ Served 13 terms retiring in 1998

Ed Towns, Jr. MSW, Adelphi

- ▶ US Army veteran and administrator at Beth Israel Medical Center
- ▶ Served NY 11th District (Brooklyn) 1983-1993 and 10th District 1993- 2013
- ▶ 2010 – founded Congressional Social Work Caucus



Barbara Mikulski, MSW, Univ. of MD


- ▶ Social worker and community organizer before elected to Baltimore City Council in 1971
- ▶ Serve U. S. House of Rep 1977-1987
- ▶ First female Democrat elected to the U. S. Senate from Maryland
- ▶ Served 5 terms in Senate retiring in 2017
- ▶ Longest serving women in history of Congress





Currently serving U. S. Senators

- ▶ Debbie Stabenow, MSW Michigan State
- ▶ While graduate Social Work student elected to first public office as County Board of Commissioners
- ▶ Served in Michigan House and Senate
- ▶ 2000 – elected U. S. Senator and in 2018 elected to 4th term



Kyrsten Sinema, MSW Arizona State

- ▶ School Social Worker
1995-2002 in Phoenix, AZ
- ▶ JD and PhD from ASU
- ▶ 2012 elected to Congress
& 2018 to US Senate
- ▶ 1st openly bisexual person
and 2nd LGBT women
- ▶ Lead on social work safety
bipartisan bill



Current House of Representatives Social Workers

- ▶ Karen Bass, MSW, USC
- ▶ Completed MSW while serving in Congress.
- ▶ Served CA 33rd 2011-2013 and 47th since 2013
- ▶ First African American to serve as Speaker of CA State Assembly
- ▶ Former Chair of Black Caucus and member of Social Work Caucus



Barbara Lee, MSW, UC

- ▶ Served the CA 13th District since 1998 when she replaced Ron Dellums
- ▶ Served as staff member for Ron Dellums and member of CA State Senate before entering House
- ▶ Founding member of LGBT Equality Caucus and currently Chair of Social Work Caucus

117th Congress Social Workers



- ▶ Sylvia Garcia, BA Social Work from Texas Women's University, D-TX served since 2019, among the first two Latinas elected from Texas
- ▶ Val Demings, BA Criminology, Florida State, D-FL 10th District since 2016, worked as a state social worker in Jacksonville for 18 months after graduating from college



Congressional Social Work Caucus

- ▶ Created in 111th Congress (2009-2011), but relaunched in 2013
- ▶ Represents the interests of 700,000 social workers in the United States
- ▶ Chair is Barbara Lee

117th Congressional Social Work Caucus

- ▶ Membership Composition:
- ▶ 42 members
- ▶ 5 Senators and 37 members of the House
- ▶ 41 Democrats and 1 Republican

Other Social Workers in Politics

- ▶ Approximately 180 social workers in U.S. hold some type of elective office. Of these, 170 are Democrats and 8 are Republican
- ▶ Approximately 40 social workers work in the offices of Congressional Legislators.

What you can do?

- ▶ Realize only 8% of bills pass in a given year
- ▶ Majority never get a single hearing
- ▶ Get out of your comfort zone!
- ▶ Be more confrontive than the 'nice social worker'
- ▶ Avoid getting into a prototype such as: passive female, angry black women or Asian female stereotype

What can you do?

- ▶ Tendency to be conflict avoidant
- ▶ Look at both sides and being respectful of everyone
- ▶ Stay informed on the impact on your clients
- ▶ Advocate through use of phone, email, and letter (personalization is best)
- ▶ Testify at a public or legislative hearing
- ▶ Personal visit to your legislator

What you can do?

- ▶ Clients are your greatest asset. Have a client story that you can use.
- ▶ Get your clients to register and to vote!
- ▶ Volunteer to be a candidate yourself (i.e. school board, city council, delegate, state senator)
- ▶ Join SSWLHC Advocacy committee
- ▶ Participate in NASW PACE (donate)
- ▶ Mobilize others



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Congressional Activity

The Association of VA Social Workers serves as the independent voice of VA Social Workers. AVASW advocates and educates Congress on issues that effect VA Social Workers

The following are some of the activities AVASW has been involved with during the 116th and 117th Congress

NASW Supported Congressional Bills

- ▶ Safety – Protecting Social Workers and Health Professionals from Workplace Violence Act (S. 4412)
- ▶ Student Loan Forgiveness – Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Payment Completion Fairness Act (HR 7565)
- ▶ Integrated Care – Collaborate in an Orderly and Cohesive Manner Act (HR 5218) (HHS grants for integrated behavioral health and primary care models)
- ▶ School Based Social Work – School Social Workers improving Student Success Act (HR 7037)

NASW supported Legislative Bills

- ▶ Differential Response in Policing – The Community-Based Response Act (HR 3862/S 2046) (dispatch professionally trained mental health workers instead of law enforcement)
- ▶ Reimbursement and Scope of Practice in Medicare – Improving Access to Mental Health Act (HR 2035/S 870). Bill will increase Medicare Reimbursement for Clinical Social Worker from 75% to 85% of the physician fee schedule, allow Clinical Social Workers to bill independently at Skilled Nursing Facilities and Bill for Health and Behavioral Assessment and Intervention services

NASW Policy update

- ▶ Progress on Interstate Licensure Compact for Social Work – Development of an interstate compact for social work licensure is in process and draft legislation was released by Council of State Government (CSG) with a 60-day comment period into September 2022.
- ▶ Goal is to have model legislation available to states for passage, starting in 2023 legislative sessions

SSWLHC activity

- ▶ SSWLHC developed a new Advocacy and Policy Committee which started to meet in January, 2021
- ▶ Zach McGeorge, selected as Chair of Committee in March 2022
- ▶ Explored development of the Toolkit
- ▶ Joint Conference zoom call meeting April 15, 2022 with NASW (Dina Kaster and Sarah Butts) discussing legislation they are supporting

SSWLHC Advocacy and Policy Committee

- ▶ Examined development of SSW Advocacy Warrior program
- ▶ Purpose of Warrior Program is to get members of SSW to engage in policy by:
 - ▶ Commitment to 1 year of service
 - ▶ Make quarterly contact with their federal representative
 - ▶ Report back on efforts
 - ▶ Participate in a special session at the Annual conference (if they attend)
 - ▶ Receive a pin and certificate to thank for participation

Hatch Act

- ▶ Enacted into law August 2, 1939
- ▶ Main Provisions:
 - ▶ 1. Prohibits employees in the executive branch (except the President, VP and certain high-level leaders) from engaging in political activism.
 - ▶ 2. Prohibits use of public funds for electoral purposes
 - ▶ 3. Forbids using the promise of a job, promotion, financial assistance, or contracts to encourage campaign contributions or political support



Three Key Elements of Hatch Act

- ▶ 1. Do not engage in political activity while **on duty** or in the **workplace**
- ▶ 2. Do not engage in political activity in an official capacity **at any time.**
- ▶ 3. Do not solicit or receive political contributions **at any time.**



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