

Compose an Advocacy Portfolio

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In order to help students gain a more in-depth understanding of the policy making process, I ask them to form teams of 3–5 members to research a bill currently pending before the US Congress, analyze the bill and attendant landscape, and develop professional-quality materials to support a lobbying effort. The team’s work is represented by a written portfolio that includes these items:

- *Description of the underlying problem:* What problem is your bill attempting to address? Provide background and statistical information that elucidates the causes, scope, and trends relevant to the underlying problem.
- *Summary and status of the bill:* What would the bill do? How would it change current policy? What is its status? If there are bills in both houses, how do they differ? Has this, or a similar bill, been introduced before? If so, how far did it get toward enactment?
- *Analysis of the playing field:* Who are the major supporters of the bill? Who are its opponents? What factors in the larger environment might predispose the bill toward success? Toward failure?
- *Arguments pro and con:* Provide a well-documented and articulate list of arguments in favor of the bill, followed by a list of arguments against it.
- *Strategy:* Describe your group’s objective. Will you try to help get the bill passed? Killed? Amended? **How is this consistent with social work values?** What is your strategy: which activities would be most productive?
- *Fact sheet:* Prepare a one-page sheet to be used as a lobbying tool.
- *Letter to Congress:* Draft a letter to a member of Congress, advancing your position on the bill. What deliberate choices did you make in terms of tone, format, and content, given this particular audience?
- *Media/Social media:* As part of your outreach, (1) draft either a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece and (2) create a Facebook page or Change.org petition advancing your position on the bill. What deliberate choices did you make in terms of tone, format, and content, given your likely audience?



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