

**Chat Excerpts - Advocacy at Ally Levels: Making Your PFLAG Voice Heard
January 9, 2025**

CC: The League of women Voters is a 501(c)4

SB: Some LWV chapters are c3!!!

DM: How do I join a local chapter?

BS: Diego: <https://pflag.org/findachapter/>

QUESTION: Have you ever attended a community meeting, a hearing at your statehouse, or met with your Congressperson? What did you wish you knew before going?

SM: How to share points succinctly

BS: I wish I knew that it's not as scary as it feels

AB: what types of questions to ask?

SS: How to be an effective participant

TD: The legislator's district!

KW: more about the legislator's schedule

A: Tactics that the anti LGBTQ crowd would likely use to run interference on our participation.

AS: I wish I'd known about protocol and that you are not guaranteed time, so get to the issue ask quickly.

A: The make up of the board or lawmaker

A: That I had to have typed copies of my testimony for all of the committee members

KG: What can I say as a representative of PFLAG? Not say?

JS: How long I would have to wait around to get a chance to speak at a legislative hearing

AK: That individuals can record your public testimony without your consent

JJ: When call to the public happens & if they can respond to speakers directly

BS: Know their voting record!

A: Taking talking points to stay focused

A: Parking, bathrooms, food, more personal information on who im speaking with

DE: How to manage my confrontational style!

AB: What to expect when calling, where do you call, what to say to get an appointment

PK: How to get on the agenda? When/Where do you sign up to make a comment?

LK: making sure to know the specific rules for that meeting (especially if doing formal public comment or testifying)

CM: Robert's Rules of Order are good for that.

LK: if your state has a "LGBTQ+ lobby day" it's a great way to get involved!

AB: I'd love to know how much these groups and individuals at the state and federal levels actually listen and are influenced by us.

NO: ...I've heard that telling a legislator how a proposed bill would impact your family in real life really does make a difference.

AB: ... that is really comforting

JS: ... yes!! That was how we kept the legislature from banning same sex marriage in Massachusetts.

DM: What's a Lobby Day? And does it vary by state?

CM: A lobby day is a gathering where citizens and advocacy groups meet with lawmakers to discuss and promote policies and issues.

LK: lobby days are when a group with a particular focus converges on their state legislature in an organized event

PK: Lobby Days usually include a meeting where people are updating on legislative issues and where the organization stands on that bill. Often talking points are provided before you go meet with your legislator.

AS: Lobby Days are phenomenal and a great way for first-timers to get their feet wet with the process

BS: Yes... Lobby Days were how I first got involved. It's a strength in numbers thing. Great opportunities!

AS: FYI, many politicians use their introduction of a bill as a campaign point while never actually expecting anything to happen with it.

LK: in our state all bills go to committee which can be an opportunity to testify in support of (or against) a bill

DR: Keep in mind, due to Supermajorities in certain States, like Kentucky, many of these steps are NOT being followed. They are jumping steps.

PK: There is usually a state website where you can follow the bill through the process to find out what the status of the bill is.

AB: I did a quick google search and found several Lobby Days here in NC

KS: If you found lobbying days in NC, can you tell me where you found it. I checked but wasn't successful.

AB: NASWNC.ORG ... for the NC advocacy day March 5, 2025

LK: Colorado - Feb 3

<https://www.mobilize.us/onecolorado/event/743522/?emci=58e8a127-95b1-ef11-88cf-6045bdfe8d29&emdi=db9ad2cf-0fb7-ef11-88d0-000d3a9d5840&ceid=847420>

LK: several of the PFLAG chapters in Colorado will be participating in the Feb 3 lobby day! we'd be delighted if you'd like to join us!

DM: Never really been politically active before aside from signing petitions, hopefully this year that'll change

PK: Email campaigns can also be very effective. Legislators do keep track of how constituents feel about a bill. It matters how many emails are received and if people support it or not.

DT: To find your state's leading LGBTQ+ equality org: www.equalityfederation.org

AS: When visiting legislators, it's important to remember to meet with ALL of them, both those you think will vote in your favor and those whom you feel are automatically against.

AB: how do we keep up to date on when anti-LGBTQIA bills are introduced in each state? I sometimes just stumble upon them

LK: ... are there LGBTQ+ rights orgs in your state who might be tracking bills?

AB: ... I usually just follow Equality NC. It's hard to keep up sometimes,, as I work full time

JB: ... this site has great info about legislation:

<https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2024>

LK: if you google something like LGBTQ bill tracking there are several organizations that maintain this info

BS: LegiScan is a great way to keep up on bills. You can be notified by state, topic area, etc. <https://legiscan.com/>

AB: ...THANK YOU!

QUESTION: Share an example of a meeting you have had with a lawmaker (or their staff).

DE: Local "meet and greets". Our reps come to our town frequently.

JS: Two parents of trans kids and I talked to our Congressman at his district office, trying to convince him that trans kids have a right to appropriate medical interventions.

HF: During Lobby Day in 2021, we met via Zoom with our PA Senators, and several of us told how the Equality Act would benefit our families.

RK: I met with over a dozen Delegates yesterday at opening day of the Maryland General Assembly on multiple issues including decriminalization of HIV transmission

CC: I met with my state senator to urge protection for trans students. He was all "men in women's bathroom"

BS: At a lobby day in Oklahoma, I met with lawmakers to encourage them to pass a bill that would have outlawed "conversion therapy" in the state. I wore a "protect trans kids" shirt and chatted with several different reps. It was obvious they were uncomfortable, but they listened to what I had to say and to the statistics I brought.

AS: I once had a meeting with Sen. Scott (R-SC). It was one of the LONGEST meetings I've had as the staff was very interested in the information and the asks. I expected a pro-forma meeting, but it ran so long, that other meetings were rescheduled to accommodate

JJ: City Council takes two members to place on agenda-- schedule an appt w/two new members to explain where & why we want to have a memorial painted rock garden

PK: Sharing Personal stories and experiences will affect you or your loved ones are very effective.

SP: PFLAG set up a virtual meeting with the office of one of our US Senators and I joined to share my story

LK: I've participated in lobby days and testified for (and against) bills)

LD: When I was in college, I went to a community meeting with an alum of the school was our rep in congress

BS: I also had a person phone call with my House rep and told her our personal story. She was very receptive and empathetic.

DG: I participated in Lobby Day in DC, organized by National, and I went to the office of the very conservative GOP Rep for our state to talk about how not having federal-level protections affect our families.

PK: Went to a State School Board meeting about anti-LGBTQ curriculum. Did not get to speak but wrote a letter later. Writing a letter was actually better as testimony was limited to 2 minutes.

JS: I'm not sure our meeting worked. But I sent the Congressman a Xmas card to let him know I wanted to keep talking.

AB: love the Christmas card idea!

DE: Personal stories! Humanize one another.

RK: AGREE TO DISAGREE WITHOUT BEING DISAGREEABLE

EE: I would bring a man. The day we went to state capital the legislators only came out to speak to men.

AB: Loved the PFLAG scripting with recent legislation to assist in my first phone call.

HF: We started by thanking them for their time, and if appropriate, thanking them for their allyship.

A: What has worked best is 1) a pre-existing relationship (not approaching them for the first time when I need something) and 2) storytelling

A: In person - be calm, speak slowly and really listen to what they say too, have a conversation

AS: Story telling, Story telling, Story telling

JG: Talk to staffers!

AS: Also, staffers tend to flow around offices, so you never know where they may end up

JS: Sometimes legislative aides are more supportive than their boss!

AS: Practice your 'spiel' - be comfortable with what you have to say, and be flexible for questions that may interrupt

A: For anyone in Florida, we will again be joining Equality Florida for "Pride at the Capitol" in Tallahassee.... March 18, 19 and 20.

AB: Is there a place where you can find out who voted how on what piece of legislation?

CC: try Vote Smart

PK: You can also invite legislators to come speak at PFLAG gathering to give updates on LGBTQ+ legislation. You can invite them to participate by zoom as well.

JS: Asking seriously: I'm an old fart. Can I assume that a legislator under 40 can read a handwritten letter in cursive?

MJ: ... yes they'll be able to, or their staff will be able to

DM: Can I put a little heart on my letter? Jkjk

A: A couple staffers told me emails via their website were the most effective because of how they get processed

BS: Military can reach out to reps where you are stationed AND where you vote.

DT: If your chapter has a newsletter, get your rep to sign up to receive it.

LK: I worked as a legislative intern - I did a lot of reading emails / tallying emails

HG: I've heard other advocates say they have a 1 minute, 3 minute and 10 minutes prompts when meeting with lawmakers

RK: i ask them why they feel that way and tell them "let me tell you how I feel and why to see if their might be a point we can agree on"

AB: That's a great narrative to use.

DM: My goal this year is to attend one protest

AS: Every contact with a politician matters -- they are ultimately sensitive to "shifting winds" of the political landscape, and want to ensure their reelection

IE: We received some wisdom from a representative locally. They said if we aren't advocating, they may only hear from our opposition.

NO: I've heard it said: complacent is complicit