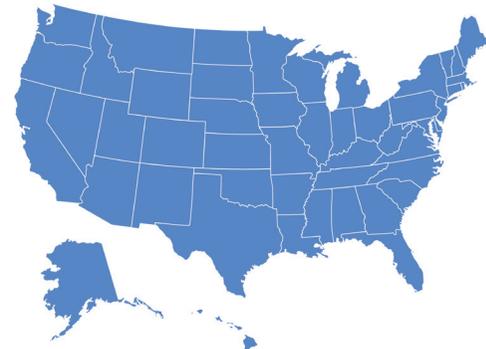


# Toolkit for State Advocacy

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) and its affiliates, the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology (SART), the Society for Male Reproduction and Urology (SMRU), the Society for Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility (SREI), the Society of Reproductive Biologists and Technologists (SRBT), and the Society of Reproductive Surgeons (SRS), work together to advance the science and practice of reproductive medicine.

As part of this mission, ASRM's Office of Public Affairs directs its efforts at educating lawmakers and the press about the importance of treatments for infertility, including the rights of medical professionals to provide treatment and the rights of patients to access treatment. These education efforts also strive to address the burdens imposed on both patients and medical professionals, such as financial barriers that limit patients' abilities to access care, and unduly restrictive regulations which single out this area of medicine.

In recent years, we have witnessed new challenges to our mission: misconceptions about the disease of infertility persist; unwarranted regulations



of the practice of reproductive medicine are proposed; restrictions on third-party reproduction and compensation to egg or sperm donors are debated; and attempts have been made to define a fertilized egg as a person. All of these threats serve to illustrate the importance of our members becoming more actively involved in protecting the field of reproductive medicine.

We have also seen a significant increase in legislative activity on issues of importance to our organizations in state legislatures across the country. The importance of your involvement in the lobbying process, especially at the local level, has never been greater. We welcome and rely on you as a partner in this critical component of the work that we do. You are your own best advocate.



## American Society for Reproductive Medicine

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Society for Male  
Reproduction and Urology  
www.smru.org



Society of Reproductive  
Biologists and Technologists  
www.asrm.org/SRBT



Society of  
Reproductive Surgeons  
www.reprodsurgery.org

# American Society for Reproductive Medicine



## ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



Impacting Reproductive  
Care Worldwide

## What can our members do to advocate for their profession and the rights of their infertile patients?

### Know Your Organization and Its Issues

It is vitally important that you be a credible representative. You are an expert on the services you provide because of your work in reproductive medicine, but it is important too that you be fully aware of ASRM's positions on issues ranging from access to care, financing of care, and reproductive rights, including the right of patients to choose third-party reproduction, and the right of patients to make embryo disposition decisions. Familiarize yourself with our positions on a variety of reproductive issues by visiting [www.asrm.org](http://www.asrm.org) and selecting "Media and Public Affairs" under the "About Us" tab.

### Know Your Opposition

It is important to anticipate the opposition's position regarding the issues on which you and your organization take a position. Think of ways to respond to the opposition's arguments positively before those arguments surface publicly; or, at least be able to react to your legislator's articulation of the opposition's point of view.

### Know Your Legislator

Make an attempt to understand the basis for your legislator's positions, which may include his or her party, position, and tenure in the legislature; constituent pressures; record on related legislation and recorded votes; career background; or general predispositions. Research the committees on which your legislator serves and know which bills he or she is sponsoring, endorsing, or opposing. Lobbying to convince any individual of the merits of your position requires an understanding of the rationale that supports that belief. Your goal is to influence on the basis of your knowledge and understanding of the issues, while also anticipating the position the legislator is likely to take on the issues.

### Know the Process

Most state legislatures open their sessions in January. But some convene in later months, and a few do not have a regular session every year. Learn when your state legislature is in session and its projected adjournment date for the year. A number of states are in session for a short number of weeks in a given year, and a lot can occur in that time frame.

There are many opportunities to attempt to influence an issue. These include when a bill is being drafted, after it has been formally introduced, when it is referred to a committee with jurisdiction, and when hearings are held and the committee is accepting testimony in support of or against it (whether in person or in writing). Additional opportunities arise prior to a vote on the bill, or referral to the other chamber, where the path to a final vote usually follows the same route through committee and floor action. This chamber may approve the bill as received, reject it, ignore it, or change it. If this chamber also approves the bill, it is then sent to the governor to sign or veto; before such time is another opportunity to weigh in with your support or opposition.

## What to Do with This Knowledge?

### Vote

While it may sound obvious, it is important that you become educated on the policy positions of the candidates running for elected office in your state and vote for those who understand the importance of reproductive health and whose positions support it.

### Foster Relationships

Relationships matter. Building relationships with your elected representatives before it becomes necessary to contact them on an issue is an important investment. There are a number of ways you can initiate the process of building relationships. You can register to receive your elected representative's email updates and constituent newsletter, and attend "meet and greet" sessions or town hall meetings hosted by candidates or those already in office, taking that opportunity to raise your issue. You may consider hosting or attending a political fundraiser. You may also want to visit with your elected representative or his or her staff at the state capitol in order to introduce yourself and offer to serve as a source of information about infertility and its treatment. Alternatively, you can invite your elected representative to visit your medical practice and tour your facilities.

Making regular contact will help build a relationship between you and your legislator. Over time, you'll become part of your legislator's support system and he/she might even come to you for advice.

Always remember: you have something to offer. The topic of infertility is unlikely to come up during a campaign. However, your perspective, as an expert in the field of reproductive medicine and a member of the community, can help policy makers better understand a complex

topic. Legislators want to hear from you. Nothing is more important to an elected official than the concerns of his or her constituents.

### Formalize Your Contact

Write letters, make phone calls, and send emails regarding the issue, and encourage your colleagues to do the same. Here are some tips for effective communication:

Be selective. When sending a formal communication, clearly identify the one issue you'd like to discuss and then share how the issue affects you, your practice, and your patients. Identify your own credentials or expertise on the subject of legislation under consideration. Do not muddle the message with your points on various issues, even if they all relate to reproductive medicine.

Be brief. Your letter, call, or email need not be lengthy. In a phone call, take no longer than one minute to state what you want and why you want it. If you challenge yourself to deliver the message in under a minute, you will boil it down to its essence. A written communication regarding an issue should also be succinct and to the point. In both, you should be courteous and reasonable.

### Join Forces

Another very effective lobbying strategy is to partner with other groups or organizations with common concerns or a common support for a particular issue.

Join your state medical society. Your state medical society not only provides you with opportunities to network with professionals in your field, it offers the opportunity to work collaboratively on issues of mutual concern.

Coordinate with the infertility patient advocacy community. RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association, maintains an advocacy network in each of its regions around the country. These networks include patients who have become motivated by their infertility experience to become active politically and to fight for making infertility treatments more affordable and accessible.

Depending on the issue, you may consider partnering with the local section of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Planned Parenthood affiliates, local office of STD prevention, law offices working on third-party reproduction, cancer specialists, and others. Share the work load and double the impact.

### Utilize Your Resources

ASRM's Office of Public Affairs is ready to assist you in your lobbying efforts and to help you coordinate your message. The Office of Public Affairs, based in Washington, DC, employs a staff of professional lobbyists. We subscribe to a service that helps us track legislation at the federal and state levels and a complementary service that will help bolster communications to lawmakers on Capitol Hill and to state lawmakers.

Keep us apprised of your lobbying activities at the state level. We welcome news of your contacts with state policy makers, knowledge of existing personal relationships and new ones, copies of your written communications, and stories of your lobbying challenges and successes. When you share this information with us, we are able to pass along pointers to your colleagues in other states who are advocating on similar issues.

## Address Your Senator or Representative Properly

- Know the status of the legislation. Refer to a bill by number whenever possible.
- Remember that a legislator's time is limited, as is the time of his or her staff.
- Write the chair or members of a committee holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested if you have facts that you think should influence their thinking.
- Write to say you approve, not just to criticize or oppose.

*You are your own best advocate.*



For more information, visit [www.asrm.org](http://www.asrm.org)