NLC’s Core Advocacy Principles

Fund Federal Mandates
When requiring state and local activity in a given area, the federal government should provide adequate funds to address the fiscal impact of those policies. Federal policies should not mandate new costs for local governments without considering the increased financial liabilities and including reimbursement mechanisms to minimize disproportionate responsibilities.

Respect Local Authority
Activities such as franchising, zoning, issuing permits and licenses, and establishing local code are fundamental responsibilities of local governments. Federal policies should respect these activities and not preempt local authority to protect the health, safety, and welfare of local residents. Additionally, the federal government should defer to municipal authority regarding making fundamental employment decisions and mandating specific working conditions.

Promote Intergovernmental Partnership
A well-functioning intergovernmental system offers significant opportunities for all levels of government to serve the nation’s citizens more effectively. Federal grant programs, regulatory requirements, funding formulas, and other practices should promote cooperation at the local and regional levels. The intergovernmental partnership must be strengthened to provide a framework for economic growth that also preserves important principles of freedom.

NLC Advocacy Resources
NLC is here to help your advocacy go farther. Use these resources as part of your advocacy work:

- **NLC staff** can answer questions, help you find information, and connect you with other city leaders. Help us connect your advocacy work to our national strategy by emailing advocacy@nlc.org when you send a letter or meet with your legislator on a federal issue.

- **NLC University** offers courses on the skills you need to be an effective city leader, including advocacy skills. Learn more at www.nlc.org/university.

- **NLC’s website** hosts background information on legislative priorities, talking points, sample resolutions and letters, and material you can share with your legislators at www.nlc.org/advocacy.

- **NLC’s Federal Advocacy Update** delivers a dose of policy analysis, news, and resources direct to your inbox every other week. To subscribe, email advocacy@nlc.org.

Get Involved

Join the NLC Advocacy Network!

Sign up today to make sure you don’t miss a single action alert, learning opportunity, or current updates on NLC’s legislative strategy. Join online at www.nlc.org/advocacynetwork.
Dear City Leader,

Thank you for standing up to advocate for your city, and for the 19,000 cities and towns throughout America. Direct advocacy by city leaders is the cornerstone of NLC’s efforts to drive federal policy. When we work together to connect the needs of cities to the actions of lawmakers in Washington, we can make a difference. We know the impact federal decisions can have on our communities, and it is our responsibility to remain informed and proactive on those issues.

This year, NLC’s legislative agenda is organized around the simple theme of “go local.” That means passing e-fairness legislation to close the online sales tax loophole and allow enforcement of existing sales taxes. It means investing in our cities’ economic futures with a new, long-term federal surface transportation program that upgrades older infrastructure and creates new road, transit, and alternative transportation options for communities. Going local also means protecting a crucial vehicle for financing public projects alive and preserving the federal tax exemption for municipal bonds.

I hope you will join me in standing up for cities this year. Whether you connect with your legislators in Washington, connect with NLC’s committees to take action, or connect with your peers to learn about the impact federal policies can have at home; you can be a positive force for change in your community and our nation.

Sincerely,

Ralph Becker, Mayor, Salt Lake City, Utah

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Top Five Tips for Advocates

1. **All Politics Is Local.** You serve the same constituents as your legislators, and they want to know about the local impact of federal or state policy. You have influence as a representative of your city.

2. **Set Goals for Your Advocacy.** You have many demands on your time as a city leader. Setting “S.M.A.R.T.” (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely) goals for your advocacy work helps keep you focused, efficient, and effective.

3. **Advocacy Comes in Many Forms.** Think outside the DC meeting. Connect with your legislators through local events, tours of city sites, publications in local media, and even social media outreach.

4. **Know Your Audience.** Research your legislators – and key staff members – to understand their backgrounds, positions on issues, and committee roles to better influence their decisions.

5. **Don’t Give Up.** The policy making process can often take a very long time, stretching across years. Good advocates are persistent, and don’t get discouraged by setbacks or delays.

How to Make Your Voice Heard

Communication with members of Congress and the Administration can be done in a variety of ways. The more personal and direct the method, the greater your influence. Your federal representatives want to hear from you.

1. **Personal visits:** You can meet with your members of Congress and their staff in Washington, or in your home state in district offices. Likewise, federal agencies have representatives in Washington and around the country.

2. **Phone calls:** A well-timed phone call can be very effective in sending your message, especially before key votes or actions.

3. **Email or Official Correspondence:** Sending a written message to policy makers allows you to provide more detail than a phone call in a written format.

4. **Social media:** Use Twitter and Facebook to send advocacy messages to your legislators in “real time” in a highly visible setting.

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How to Have a Great Advocacy Meeting

Meetings with your legislators can be a highly effective advocacy tool. However, a meeting can do more harm than good unless you observe the “five P’S” for a good advocacy meeting:

- **Be prepared.** Do some background research on your legislator before you get there, and be familiar with the policy process, your message, and talking points for your “ask.”
- **Be punctual.** Give yourself enough time to get to your meeting ten minutes early, and call if you will be late.
- **Be polite.** Even if you disagree, treat your legislator (and their staff) as you would like to be treated.
- **Be personal.** Your legislator wants to talk to you because you represent your community’s interests. Make sure you relate your policy issue to the impact on your city’s residents.
- **Be persistent.** After your meeting is over, you still have work to do. Follow up with a thank you note, and keep in touch with relevant staff members to provide updates on your issue of concern periodically.