

LEGISLATION & ADVOCACY

Cornerstone of PTA

Since 1897, when Alice McLellan Birney and Phoebe Apperson Hearst called for action to eliminate threats that endangered children, forming what would become the PTA, legislation and advocacy have been at the heart of our mission. This simple belief, EveryChild OneVoice, is unique to PTA and sets us apart from other parent teacher groups and organizations. The mission is the same today as it was more than 100 years ago - to better the lives of all children. Issues that have been tackled by the PTA include: child labor laws, creation of Kindergarten classes, public health services, the school hot lunch program, juvenile justice system and mandatory immunizations.

Who makes up the Legislation & Advocacy Department? All levels of PTA are involved in and work together to make sure legislation and advocacy is covered from Washington D.C. down to the local city or township.

National PTA Legislative Department

- Develops the PTA Federal Policy
- Tracks Federal bills, appropriations, regulations, reauthorization processes, etc.
- Issues Action Alerts on Federal issues
- Networks with other national organizations
- Organizes testimonies and strategic meetings

Missouri PTA Legislative Department

- Develops the Missouri PTA legislative platform
- Tracks bills Missouri bills, testifies and issues Action Alerts
- Develops the Legislative Handbook & web pages, Contact articles and monthly legislative reports (Sept-May)
- Networks with other state organizations
- Assists units and councils with Town Hall meetings
- Oversees state resolutions and position statements

Unit/Council Legislative Chair

- Gives legislative updates at meetings and in unit/council newsletters
- Passes along Action Alerts to members
- Encourages participation in the JC/DC network
- Organizes Town Halls, candidate forums, voter registration, candidate informational questionnaires, etc.

LOBBYIST OR ADVOCATES?

Quite often the words “lobbying” and “advocacy” are used interchangeably. However there is a difference. All lobbying is a form of advocacy but not all forms of advocacy are lobbying. Advocacy encompasses a wide variety of activities. In the context of PTA, this means supporting and speaking up for children – in schools, in community and before government bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children. Lobbying is defined as the attempt to influence a public official or decision-maker in favor of a specific opinion or cause.

ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

Our voice is defined by our Mission and Purpose, resolutions and positions. Resolutions and positions are drafted and voted upon by the membership at both the National and State level. Resolutions passed and positions approved define how and if we can address or speak to an issue. When representing PTA on a particular issue always present the will of the membership not your own personal view.

Not sure if PTA has a stance on a particular issue? Both National and Missouri PTA’s resolutions and positions are available online. You can find them at:

- <http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3444&navItemNumber=3481>
- www.moapta.org/legislation/resolutions/

You can also contact any member of the Missouri PTA Legislation and Advocacy Department.



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

National PTA Federal Public Policy agenda for 2015 address the following key issues:

- Elementary & Secondary Education
- Early Childhood Education
- Special Education
- Education Funding
- Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention
- Child Nutrition
- School Safety

The entire agenda and an executive summary can be downloaded at <http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3222&navItemNumber=556>

Missouri Legislative Agenda for 2015

- Legislation that protects local control of schools
- Legislation that strengthens laws protecting minors from abuse and increased funding for programs and services aimed at preventing abuse and neglect.
- Increased access to mental health services
- Opposition to vouchers and maintaining or generating funding for education
- Supporting programs that are aimed at increasing family engagement in schools.

When unexpected issues arise, Missouri PTA reacts in accordance to our resolutions and positions.

POLITICS & ELECTIONS

Due to PTA's 501(c)(3) status there are specific things in which PTAs can and cannot engage when it comes to politics. PTAs are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for elective public office. A good rule to follow - if a candidate is involved we must remain completely neutral. However there are many ways PTAs can inform their membership.

When it comes to ballot issues, such as bonds and ordinances, PTA absolutely can take a position of support or opposition. The issues that come before local communities more often than not directly affect the children in that community. It is part of our mission and purpose to make sure the best interest of children remain a high priority in our local communities.

If you ever have any questions about the role of PTA in politics and elections please contact a member of the Missouri PTA Legislation and Advocacy Department. We are here to answer your questions and provide assistance.

PTA Don'ts

- Invite only one candidate in an election to come speak to the PTA.
- Tell PTA members to only vote for a candidate who supports X position.
- Distribute any campaign materials on behalf of a candidate.
- Wear campaign buttons or T-shirts during a PTA meeting.
- Establish, participate in or support PACs (Political Action Committees).

PTA Do's

- PTAs should support issues that are good for children and youth. PTA should oppose issues that are bad for children and youth. That includes state and national legislation, as well as local laws and school district policies. PTA can and should take a stand on bond and levy issues.
- PTAs can sponsor public forums (including candidates forums – all candidates must be invited), lectures and debates.
- PTAs can send out questionnaires to all candidates asking in an unbiased way for their positions on issues. The results must be reported accurately and without editorial comment.
- PTAs can conduct voter registrations. The registration must be open to anyone, regardless of which party or candidates they want to vote for after registering.
- Remind members to vote.
- Educate candidates on issues important to PTA.



JC/DC NETWORK



ACTION ALERTS

Missouri PTA and National PTA both send out Action Alerts when immediate action is needed on legislative issues. The JC/DC Network is an email notification system utilized to alert subscribers when an Action Alert has been issued. The list is confidential and only utilized for this singular purpose. Because most legislative issues are time sensitive, email alerts are the most effective way to reach members quickly. Responding to an action alert is quick and easy. Missouri PTA will state in the action alert the issue and why we support/oppose. By going online to either the Missouri House of Representatives or Missouri Senate website, members can use the wording in the action alert to email their own elected officials. National PTA uses a Capwiz program that has suggested wording already in place. Members can opt to use the preformatted wording, edited it or replace it with their own. Not sure whom are your elected officials? Located within Missouri PTA Advocacy resources web page is a “find your elected officials” widget.

Not a member - Sign up today!

Subscribe to the JC/DC network at <http://mopta.org/jcdc-take-action/>

You can also subscribe directly to NPTA's alert system at <http://cqrcengage.com/npta2/home>

KIDS FIRST TOWN HALLS

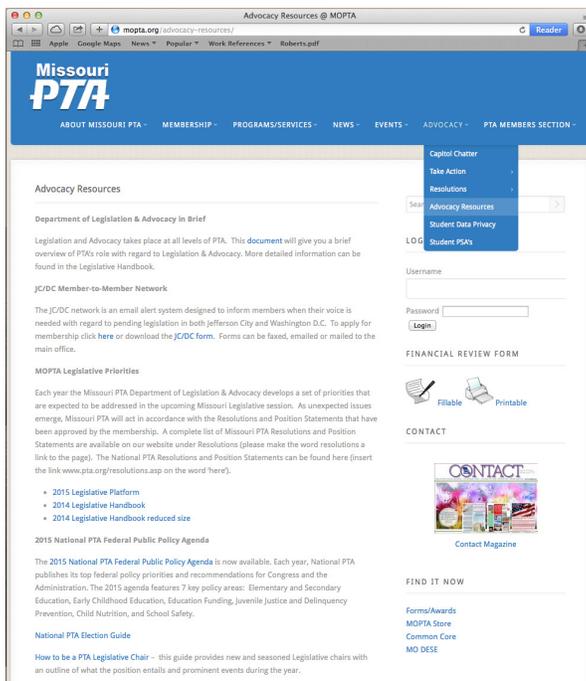
One of the most productive ways to build a relationship between legislators and PTA members is to host a Kids First Town Hall. This legislative forum provides a unique “kids only” platform of issues designed to inform your legislators about PTA issues, give members the opportunity to hear what their legislator's stance is on PTA issues and provide an environment for members to network directly with their representatives. Town Halls are not difficult to host, but they do take a bit of planning. The Missouri PTA Department of Legislation will assist you with this endeavor and provide a moderator for the event. A step-by-step guide is available in the Legislative Handbook. This handbook can be found online in the Advocacy resource webpage - <http://mopta.org/advocacy-resources/>

The Missouri General Assembly runs from January through May. Town halls are hosted all across the state starting in the month of November and wrapping up in April. Consider hosting a town hall next school year.

RESOLUTIONS

What role do resolutions play in developing the Missouri PTA legislative platform? Resolutions form the foundation for all Missouri PTA positions and legislative priorities. Our legislative platform is based on the adopted resolutions, and programs are designed to address the issues stated by those adopted resolutions. The resolution process gives us direction to make our world a safer, brighter one for all Missouri children and youth.

The development of resolutions is a project that all PTA members, units, and councils should take seriously and become actively involved in. If there is an issue that you, your unit, or your council are concerned about and needs to be addressed by a resolution on behalf of all Missouri's children, it is incumbent upon you to take action. The Legislative Handbook can provide you with more in depth information about how to go about writing and submitting a resolution. The handbook is located in the Advocacy Resource section of the website.



RESOURCES

A variety of resources are available to assist you with your legislative and advocacy endeavors and they can all be found online. Take some time to browse around and bookmark both the Missouri and National PTA legislative webpages. For first time legislative chairs we have even created a "How to be a Legislative Chair" to help guide you through the school year.

Missouri Legislative website - www.mopta.org/legislation

Advocacy resources webpage

- How to be a Legislative Chair
- Monthly legislative Chair suggestive reports
- Letter to Legislator Template
- Voter information and registration
- Guide to hosting candidate forums
- Media contacts
- Legislative Handbook
- Legislative Platform
- Links to National PTA resources

Capitol Chatter webpage

- Bill watch list
- State and National legislative articles/information

Resolutions webpage

- Current and historical MOPTA resolutions
- MOPTA position statements

National Advocacy page

- Advocacy toolkit
- Federal Public Policy
- Common Core State Standards
- Election Guides

PTA One Voice Blog - onevoice.pta.org

PTA Takes Action Update e-newsletter - <http://www.pta.org/about/SignUp.cfm?navItemNumber=3365>

ATLAW AWARD

The Advocacy through Legislation Award (AtLaw) is offered by Missouri PTA to: give Missouri PTA members, units and councils who champion the issues of children some of the recognition they deserve, and encourage other members to step forward as caring voices for children. Missouri PTA members, units and councils earning this prestigious award will be recognized at Convention with a certificate and a special lapel pin to identify the awardee as an advocate for children in the fullest and best sense of the word. More information and forms for the AtLaw can be found in the Legislative Handbook and downloaded from the form section of the MOPTA.org website.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SAVE THE DATE!!

Missouri PTA Annual Convention April 22-24
Columbia Missouri

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Join PTA members from across the state to share networking tips, engage in workshops, and visit with vendors. Convention is a unique opportunity to enhance your advocacy knowledge and expand your leadership skills.