



Different in Every State: There Is No One-Size-Fits-All Approach to Lobbying

We often get questions regarding why we did or did not take action on specific issues. Nurses who travel from other states or monitor other states legislative work make comparisons about other states accomplishments. Advocating within state legislative environments is both nuanced and deeply contextual. While national policy conversations may shape broad themes, the real work of lawmaking happens within fifty distinct political ecosystems—each with its own culture, procedures, leadership styles, and power dynamics. For organizations engaged in public policy, understanding this reality is essential. There is no universal script for lobbying. What works in one state may fall flat—or even backfire—in another.

State legislatures differ structurally in significant ways. Some operate as full-time professional bodies with extensive staffing and long sessions; others meet for only a few weeks each year, creating compressed timelines and high-pressure decision points. In states with shorter sessions, preparation and relationship-building before the gavel drops are often more important than testimony during session. In states with longer sessions, sustained engagement and ongoing policy education may carry greater influence. Term limits in some states create frequent turnover, requiring advocates to continually educate newly elected officials, while states without term limits may have long-serving legislators who value institutional history and precedent. These structural differences shape strategy from the outset.

Beyond structure, political culture varies widely. Every state has its own identity—its own priorities, values, and historical tensions. In some states, fiscal restraint dominates nearly every policy conversation. In others, workforce development,

public health, or access to care may rise more easily to the forefront. Rural and urban states often approach issues differently, even when the policy objective is similar. Successful advocates understand that the message must resonate within the local culture. A proposal framed as an economic development initiative in one state may need to be presented as a patient safety measure or community stability issue in another. The core goal may remain the same, but the language must reflect the audience.

Regulatory authority also differs dramatically from state to state, particularly in areas such as healthcare, education, and professional licensure. Scope of practice laws, telehealth policies, accreditation requirements, and workforce regulations are not uniform across the country. Historical compromises, prior legislative battles, and existing statutory frameworks all shape what is politically feasible. An argument that succeeds in expanding practice authority in one state may face entrenched opposition in another due to long-standing political relationships or regulatory structures. Advocates must understand not only the current law, but also the history behind it.

Equally important are the relationship dynamics within each legislature. In some states, policymaking is highly relationship-driven, where personal trust and informal conversations carry tremendous weight. In others, influence is more centralized within leadership offices or tightly controlled committee structures. Some states rely heavily on formal hearings and white papers; others respond more strongly to grassroots mobilization and district-level constituent engagement. Understanding who truly holds influence—and how decisions are made—is

critical. Advocacy is as much about navigating people and process as it is about presenting data.

Procedural nuances further complicate any attempt at a standardized approach. Filing deadlines, amendment rules, committee referrals, and budget negotiations differ from state to state. In some legislatures, policy language must be negotiated months in advance; in others, significant changes may occur in the final days of session. Missing a procedural window can stall a bill regardless of its merit. Effective advocates study the legislative calendar as carefully as they study the policy itself.

Coalitions also look different in every state. Professional associations, advocacy groups, business interests, and regulatory boards interact in unique ways shaped by history and personality. In some states, coalitions form easily and collaboration is the norm. In others, longstanding rivalries or competing priorities require careful navigation. Identifying allies and anticipating opposition requires local insight. A coalition strategy that is successful in one state may not translate seamlessly into another political landscape.

Perhaps most importantly, effective lobbying requires the ability to blend data with human experience. Some legislatures prioritize fiscal impact statements and economic modeling. Others respond more strongly to personal stories from constituents within their districts. Most require both—but in different proportions. The advocate's role is to understand how evidence is best received in that specific environment and to tailor the presentation accordingly.

Ultimately, there is no blanket way to lobby because there is no single legislative environment. Each state represents

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Five Years of Impact: Investing in Nurses, Strengthening Florida's Future

Jayne Willis, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, CENP, President, Florida Nurses Foundation

The 2020–2025 FNF Impact Report tells a powerful story, one of generosity, resilience, and a deep commitment to supporting nurses at every stage of their professional journey.

At its core, the Florida Nurses Foundation exists to champion and empower Florida nurses by funding initiatives that strengthen our profession. Guided by a vision of a healthier Florida powered by the strength, innovation, and compassion of nurses, FNF has remained steadfast in its mission, despite unprecedented challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and repeated natural disasters affecting communities across our state.

Impact at a Glance

Between 2020 and 2025, the Florida Nurses Foundation invested \$173,500 directly into nursing education, research, emergency assistance, and professional development. During this period, FNF:

- Supported 217 nursing students through scholarships
- Funded 16 nurse-led research projects
- Provided emergency assistance to 54 registered nurses
- Awarded 28 advocacy scholarships through the Barbara Lumpkin Institute
- Sponsored 10 professional conferences
- Raised more than \$405,000 in direct contributions, largely from nurses supporting their own profession

These numbers represent more than financial totals, they reflect lives changed, careers launched, and nurses supported when they needed it most.

Expanding Access Through Scholarships

Education remains a cornerstone of FNF's work. With more than 30 named scholarship funds, the Foundation supports nursing students across Florida, from associate degree programs to doctoral study. Over the past five years, \$117,250 in scholarship support has helped reduce financial barriers for students pursuing nursing degrees, advancing careers, and preparing the next generation of nurse leaders.

The true value of this work is best captured in the words of our scholarship recipients, students balancing coursework, clinical training, work, and family responsibilities. Time and again, recipients tell us that FNF scholarships not only ease financial strain but also provide encouragement and affirmation that the profession is invested in their success.

Advancing Nursing Knowledge Through Research

Nursing-led research is essential to improving patient care and advancing evidence-based practice. Through 10 named research grant funds, the Florida Nurses Foundation has supported 16 studies over the past five years, providing resources that allow nurses and nursing students to explore innovative solutions to complex healthcare challenges.

In addition, FNF's longstanding support of the Florida Nurses Association Research Conference has expanded opportunities for scholarly exchange, reaching hundreds of nurses statewide and strengthening research literacy across practice, education, and leadership settings.

Standing with Nurses in Times of Need

Perhaps no program better reflects the heart of the Foundation than Nurses in Need. This confidential assistance program provides emergency financial support to registered nurses facing hardship due to illness, disability, aging, or unexpected life events.

Over the past five years, FNF provided approximately \$27,000 in emergency assistance to 54 nurses, including those impacted by Hurricanes Ian, Nicole, Idalia, Milton, and Helene, as well as nurses affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. In moments of crisis, the Foundation responded with compassion, dignity, and timely support, affirming that nurses are never alone.

Developing Nurse Leaders and Advocates

Through education and advocacy initiatives, including the Barbara Lumpkin Institute, FNF continues to strengthen nursing leadership across Florida. By awarding advocacy scholarships and supporting participation in Advocacy Days and the FNA Membership Assembly, the Foundation helps nurses use their voices to shape health policy and influence the future of healthcare in our state.

Each year, the Foundation's Scholarship Awards Luncheon, held during the FNA Membership Assembly, offers a meaningful opportunity to celebrate students, researchers, and donors—bringing together the full circle of giving and impact.

Building a Lasting Legacy

Long-term sustainability is essential to our mission. Between 2020 and 2025, FNF established several new endowed funds, honoring nursing leaders and benefactors while ensuring lasting support for scholarships, research, and Nurses in Need initiatives. These endowments reflect donor confidence in the Foundation and a shared commitment to investing in nursing for generations to come.

Gratitude and a Call to Continue

None of this impact would be possible without the generosity of our donors, most of whom are nurses themselves. Your contributions demonstrate the collective power of nurses who support their profession and invest in one another.

As we look ahead, the Florida Nurses Foundation remains committed to expanding opportunity, advancing innovation, and standing with nurses in moments of challenge and growth. Together, we are not only supporting nurses but also strengthening the health of Florida.

Thank you for being part of this important work. To read the report go to www.floridanurse.org/Foundation

Please consider donating to the Florida Nurses Foundation to support our work. ■

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a distinct political culture shaped by its history, leadership, demographics, and priorities. Advocacy demands flexibility, preparation, cultural awareness, and ethical engagement. It requires listening as much as speaking and adapting without compromising core principles.

The most successful advocates recognize that policy change is relational and contextual. They do not simply transport the same talking points across state lines. Instead, they take the time to understand the landscape before stepping into it. In doing so, they respect the complexity of state governance and position themselves to advance meaningful, sustainable change.

Advocacy is not about volume or repetition. It is about strategy, credibility, and understanding that in state politics, context is everything. This is why we do not encourage our members to go off on their own and speak to legislators without guidance. We hire lobbyists who are experts in policy and have experience in our specific environment. We have had members derail bills and impede progress because they did not understand the delicacy the process sometimes has. In some cases, it took years to rebuild relationships and re-establish our credibility. Sometimes, we had to wait until a new legislator was elected. Education is the core of our legislative program and building a powerful, knowledgeable "Nurse Force" is our continual goal. Please join us and become a legislative leader in healthcare. ■



**68% of smokers say
they want to quit.
Only about 7% succeed.**

Ask your patients if they use tobacco, and if they're ready to consider quitting. If they are, Tobacco Free Florida can help. **Your referral, even a brief one, can make all the difference.**

For more information on how you can team up with us to help your patients quit, visit TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/Healthcare.

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