

ADVOCACY

101

LACAN

LOUISIANA COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY NETWORK

LACAN IS AN INITIATIVE OF THE LOUISIANA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL (LDDC)

LaCAN (Louisiana Council's Advocacy Network) furthers the LaDDCouncil's mission by advocating for policies and systems that support inclusion everywhere people learn, work, live, and play.



Christina M.
R1/10



April H.
R2



Julie S.
R3



Mylinda E.
R5



Kristen R.
R6



Mimi W.
R7



Konstance C.
R8



Angel M.
R9

LaCAN Leaders are available to provide additional information and support in your advocacy efforts for systems change.

What We Do

Legislative Roundtables

Information & Action Alerts

Legislative Visits

Yellow Shirt Days

CONNECTION – become a part of a regional team of advocates.

INFORMATION – receive current information on proposed policy changes and how those changes may affect you and others.

TRAINING – learn skills to effectively advocate for systems change.

SUPPORT – receive assistance from a regional LaCAN Leader who will link you with your policymakers and support your advocacy efforts.

LaCAN members participate in various advocacy activities throughout the year. Their efforts have resulted in major accomplishments that have improved the lives of individuals with disabilities. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved. Your level of activity is **totally up to you.**

Linking lawmakers, individuals with disabilities, and family members to make positive change in systems serving people with disabilities.



CREATING A WORLD **EVERYONE** HAS ACCESS TO...

Creating accessibility means making sure everyone can take part in everyday life; where they live, work, learn and play.

This includes making physical spaces, transportation and technology easy for all people to use. When we design things in ways that work for everyone, it benefits not only people with disabilities but the whole community.

THE POWER OF ADVOCACY: HOW CHANGE BEGINS

What Does Advocacy Mean?

Advocacy is when you take action to support or oppose something. Advocacy means speaking up for something you believe in to help make a change. This can be done by educating people, sharing information and organizing people to get involved.

Why should you care about advocacy?

Being a part of systems change advocacy will help you because it can improve the system that provides you support and services. You can also use what you learn to help with your own or others personal advocacy.

Individual vs. System Change Advocacy

Systems change advocacy is different than individual advocacy. Individual advocacy focuses on changing things for one person. Systems change advocacy focuses on changing laws and policies that affect large groups of people.



BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE

ENSURING EQUITY & ACCESS FOR ALL

Protects Rights – Ensures people with disabilities receive equal treatment and opportunities.

Promotes Inclusion – Challenges misconceptions and builds welcoming schools, workplaces and communities.

Improves Access to Services – Helps families navigate systems and secure needed supports.

Amplifies Voices – Centers the lived experiences of individuals and families.

Creates Systemic Change – Collective action drives better policies, funding, and long-term improvements.

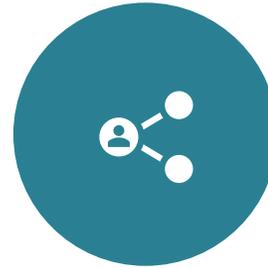
EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS THROUGH DISABILITY ADVOCACY



**EMPOWERMENT
FOSTERS SELF-
ADVOCACY AND
CONFIDENCE.**



**EDUCATION AND
TRAINING ARE KEY
TO BUILDING
SKILLS.**



**SHARING
PERSONAL STORIES
CAN INSPIRE
OTHERS.**



**LIVES ARE
CHANGED WHEN
PEOPLE ARE
SUPPORTED
CORRECTLY.**

ADVANCING EQUITY THROUGH DISABILITY ADVOCACY

Disability advocacy works to protect the rights of people with disabilities and ensure they have equal opportunities. It helps raise awareness about the importance of accessibility and inclusion in our communities.

Effective advocacy brings together families, professionals, community members and policymakers to create meaningful change. Most importantly, it encourages everyone to recognize the value and potential of individuals with disabilities, helping build a more equitable and inclusive society.



ADDRESSING GAPS IN DISABILITY RIGHTS & SUPPORT

Misunderstandings about disabilities continue to slow progress and create barriers for individuals and families. Limited funding and resources make it difficult for services to keep up with community needs, while cultural attitudes can further restrict inclusion and opportunity.

Because disability services can be fragile and easily affected by policy or budget changes, strong and consistent advocacy is essential to protect and improve these supports.





THE IMPACT OF SYSTEMS CHANGE ADVOCACY

Grassroots advocates are everyday people who speak up by contacting their elected officials to bring attention to important community issues.

Through training and education, they help inform both policymakers and the public. This type of advocacy empowers individuals and organizations to influence political conversations, build widespread support and create meaningful, lasting change.

STEPPING INTO ADVOCACY WITH CONFIDENCE

ADVOCACY THAT BREAKS BARRIERS

“Policymakers are intimidating.”

Policymakers are regular people who want to understand your experiences.

“I might upset someone.”

Legislators *need* to hear what’s working and what isn’t.

“No one will listen.”

Policymakers are elected to represent you - listening is their responsibility.

“I don’t know enough.”

Your personal story is enough. LaCAN provides the information you need.

“I don’t have time.”

Advocacy can be quick - an email or call makes a big impact.

“My voice won’t matter.”

It does. Louisiana’s disability services improved because families spoke up. Change happens when people like you get involved.

BUILDING INFLUENCE: SIMPLE STEPS TO REACH POLICYMAKERS

Build Key Relationships:

Successful advocacy goes beyond one email or meeting—it's built on ongoing, positive relationships with policymakers and their staff.

Visit Your Policymaker:

In-person visits are one of the most powerful ways to advocate. They allow you to share your story, explain concerns, and make a memorable impact.

Call Your Policymaker:

Policymakers expect calls from constituents. This direct contact helps them make informed decisions, especially when quick action is needed, such as during LaCAN action alerts.

Write or Email Your Policymaker:

Letters and emails remain essential advocacy tools. Policymakers rely on written input from the public to understand community needs and guide their votes.

SHARING YOUR STORY: ADVOCACY THAT MAKES AN IMPACT

Write Your Story:

Your personal story is your strongest advocacy tool. Policymakers need to understand how their decisions impact real lives, and personal experiences move them.

Provide Public Testimony:

As bills move through committees in the House and Senate, the public is invited to share input before lawmakers vote. Testifying gives you a direct voice in the legislative process.

Advocate Through the Media:

Media outreach is an effective way to highlight issues, influence policymakers and spark social change - from local officials to members of Congress.

Etiquette at Public Forums:

No food, drinks or hats are allowed in committee rooms or chambers. Silence cell phones, and no calls during meetings. Overflow seating is usually available. Public outbursts are not permitted.

UNDERSTANDING GOVERNMENT: A FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

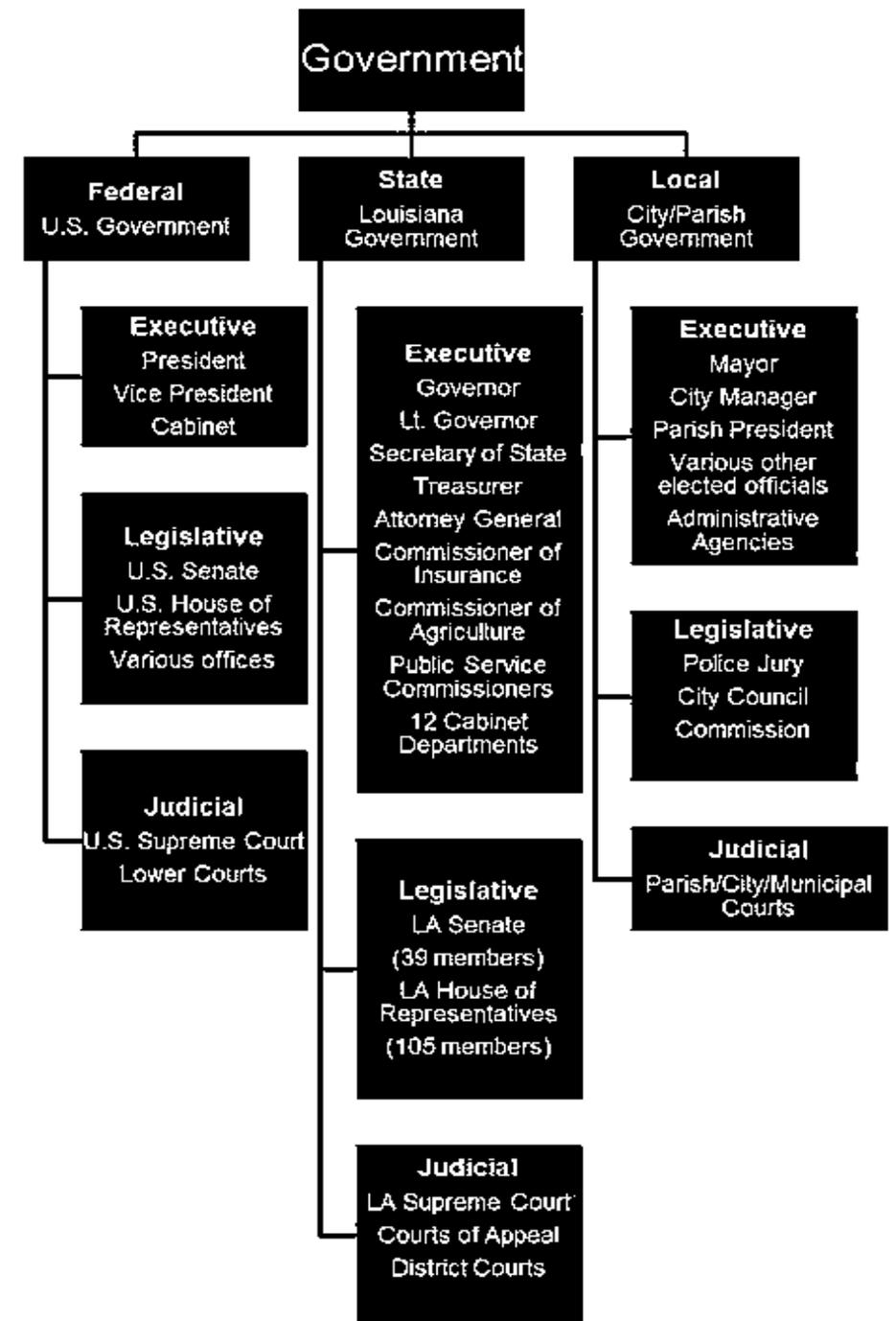
LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

Government in the United States is separated into three levels: **federal, state and local.**

In general, the **federal government** is tasked with dealing with issues that impact the entire country such as national security and Medicaid and Social Security.

State governments are tasked with dealing with issues that impact the citizens of that state. For example, Louisiana is responsible for providing basic services to its citizens.

Local governments (town/city/parish) are responsible for dealing with issues that impact the citizens of that municipality. For example, local school boards manage the schools in your area and each parish has a health unit responsible for providing immunizations.



LOUISIANA'S LEGISLATURE



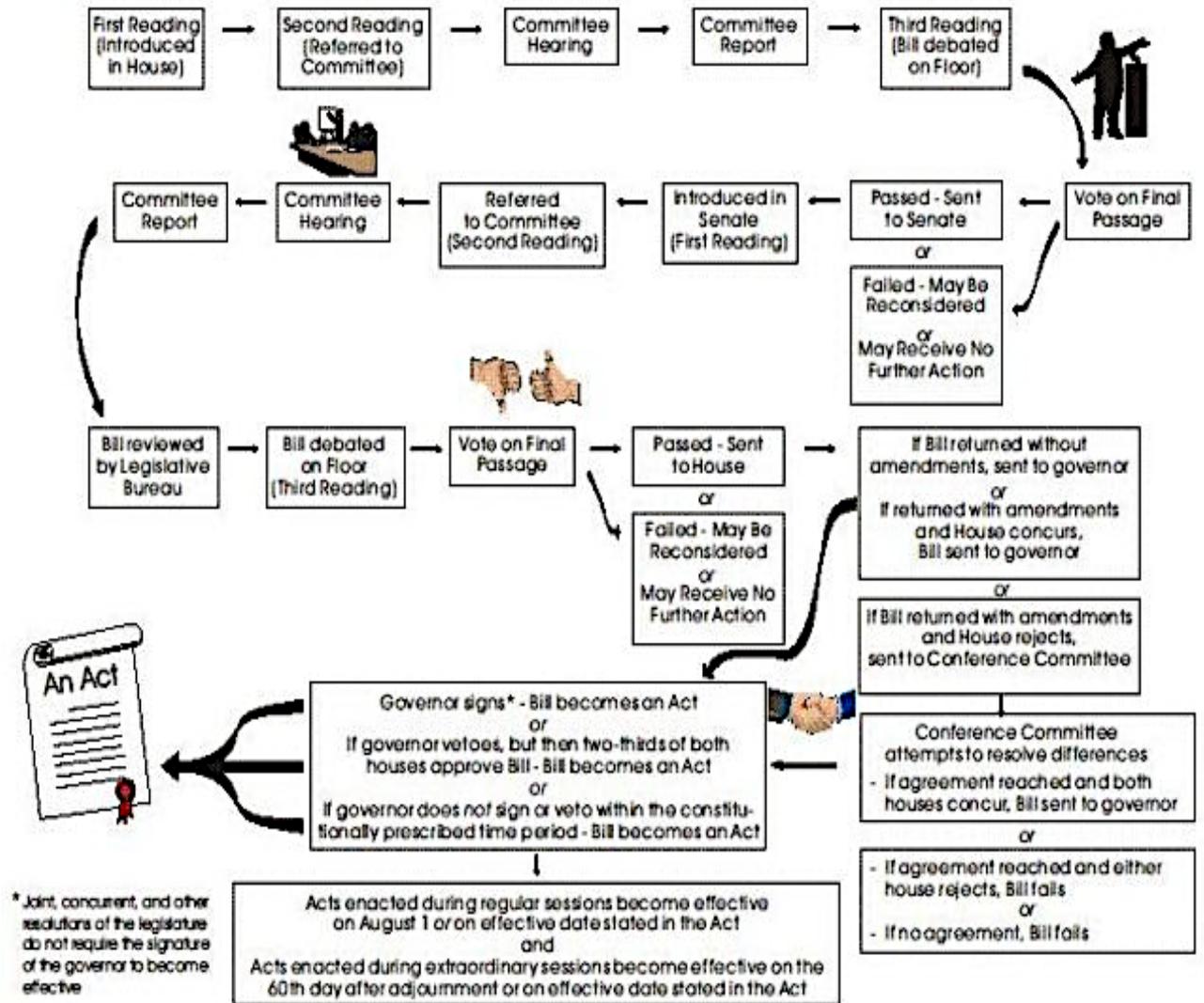
The Louisiana Legislature is composed of two chambers,
The House of Representatives and ***the Senate***.



Annually, the Louisiana Legislature convenes for what is called a legislative session. A legislative session is a period in which the legislature meets for the ***purpose of lawmaking***.

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

Once a bill is filed and the legislative session begins, the bill begins the process of becoming a law. However, there are various rules as to how many bills legislators can introduce, when the bills can be introduced and the subject matter of the bills before it can begin the legislative process.



Retrieved from: www.legis.la.gov

KEY TAKEAWAYS



- ✓ **Advocacy = Speaking Up**

Use your voice to support or oppose something that affects people with disabilities.

- ✓ **Two Types of Advocacy**

Individual: helps one person.

Systems: changes laws, policies, and services for many.

- ✓ **Your Voice Matters**

Policymakers *expect* and *need* to hear from real people. Your story is powerful.

- ✓ **Common Fears Are Normal**

Not knowing enough... worrying about conflict... feeling intimidated...but none of these should stop you.

- ✓ **Small Actions Make Big Impact**

A call, email, or showing up can shift policy. Collective voices drive results.

- ✓ **Grassroots = Strength in Numbers**

When many people share the same message at the same time to the same target, change happens.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING!

We appreciate your commitment to supporting individuals with disabilities and strengthening advocacy across Louisiana. Together, we can create meaningful, lasting change.

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council (LADDC)

Website: <http://www.laddc.org/>

Access statewide resources, policy updates, Council initiatives, and public input opportunities. Learn about projects that improve services, supports, and community inclusion.

Louisiana Council's Advocacy Network (LACAN)

Website: <https://laddc.org/lacan/>

LaCAN works to influence systems change by connecting families, self-advocates and community members with policymakers. Stay informed on legislative issues, action alerts and regional updates. Join the network to make your voice heard and help shape disability policy in Louisiana.

