Social media can be a powerful tool to amplify your message and engage with policy makers, the media, and the broader public. Here are some key strategies to consider:

**Define Clear Goals**

Determine what you want to achieve through social media. Are you looking to raise awareness, mobilize supporters, or influence policy changes? Setting goals will help you determine the platforms that you should use and the online identity you will establish.

**Select the Right Platform(s) for Your Audience**

Identify your target audience and which social media platforms they use most frequently (e.g., TikTok and Instagram for young people, Facebook for parents, and LinkedIn for professional colleagues). For policy makers and the media, X (formerly Twitter) has been the platform of choice because it facilitates real-time engagement and interaction. Use of X by the media and politicians has created a symbiotic relationship; politicians get media attention and reporters have an easy way to know what politicians are saying. Recent policy changes at the company, and the outspoken stances of its CEO, have caused a few major media organizations to leave the platform, but it remains the primary social media choice for politicians and the press.

**Establish Your Online Identity**

An important consideration is whether you will post as an individual or on behalf of your organization. Posting as an individual allows you to build your personal online presence, but it may complicate your advocacy since it may be difficult for readers to know whether you are expressing a personal opinion as a private citizen, are speaking on behalf of your organization, or are representing your institution. Posting on behalf of the organization also makes it easier to transfer your profile and to enable multiple association leaders to post under the same organizational profile.

Whatever you decide, complete your profile in the platforms you will use. If you choose to post personally, be clear in your profile that you are expressing your personal opinions and are not speaking on behalf of your institution or organization. If you decide to post on behalf of your organization, first determine whether an account has already been established and who moderates it. Whether an account is new or existing, someone should determine who in the organization is authorized to post and should monitor the account regularly to ensure that posts reflect the organization appropriately.

**Create Engaging Content**

Regardless of platform, posts that are visually appealing have the greatest reach. Use a mix of visuals, videos, and storytelling to make your content more engaging. Share personal stories, infographics, and behind-the-scenes looks to connect with your audience on a deeper level.

**Post Regularly**

Consistency is key. Develop a posting schedule to keep your audience engaged and informed. Develop a posting strategy for significant events, such as a Day at the Capitol, to ensure maximum visibility.

**Build Your Online Community**

To get your message across, be strategic about selecting which accounts to follow and even to tag in your posts. Build your “following” list by searching for your members of Congress, relevant members of your state legislature, state education and budget/appropriations committees, your governor’s office, and other key government offices or officials. In addition, it is a good idea to follow colleagues in your state such as your university or college leaders, union officials, school districts, and key state agencies. When you tag these partners in your posts, they may help your advocacy by reposting your message. Cultivate a mutual relationship with them by reposting their material as appropriate.

Don’t forget to include the press! Following and posting to reporters can be a great way to share your content or perspectives and help build a relationship.

**Leverage Hashtags and Links**

Hashtags can increase the visibility of your posts by connecting you to a wider audience that is interested in similar topics. Unless you are promoting a particular event, avoid the temptation to create new hashtags. Instead, select existing hashtags that your readers are likely to associate with your content and then stick with them. That way, readers will be able to find your content when they search and you can track the attention your posts are receiving. Be sure your posts always connect readers to your web site or other relevant content.

**Engage with Your Audience, Carefully**

We all know that it can get ugly on social media. Nonetheless, a primary benefit of these platforms is the opportunity to interact, and failure to engage will reduce your reach and effectiveness. Respond to comments and participate in discussions when they are polite and respectful, and steer clear of people and posts that won’t advance your goals. Take advantage of positive opportunities to engage by reposting and sharing messages on your priority topics from members and collaborators, and show appreciation for your supporters.

**Monitor and Analyze**

Keep track of your social media metrics to understand what works and what doesn’t.  Common metrics include the number of followers, impressions (number of times a post is seen), “likes,” re-posts, replies, and mentions as well as the click-through rate for links and the popularity of particular hashtags. More sophisticated metrics include sentiment analysis (whether posts mentioning you or your organization are positive or negative), influencer engagement, trend analysis, and media coverage. Depending on the platform, some of these metrics are available for free to users. There are also a variety of commercial firms that provide analyses.