

Legislative advocacy is often looked at as a daunting task, one that frightens many as they do not know how to get started in making their voice heard. To some, making their voice heard and “making the ask” is easy; for others, it can be something they do not even know how to begin.

I challenge each of you to recognize that **your voice matters**. Let me give an example. Imagine someone stepping up to the front of the room or onto a stage, all alone and without a microphone. In a large space, or even a smaller space, but with competing noises, the voice may be hard to detect or go unnoticed altogether. Now imagine that others come and “join the chorus.” The stage is filled, the voices become louder and the sound carries, making what is being sung, shared, preached, or told audible and noticed.

When voices come together around legislative advocacy, it is as if our message – our ask – is amplified. Our policy makers, whether on the city, state or federal level, begin to hear the same things repeatedly, and it resonates that the ask is real and important to those they serve.

Legislative advocacy can take many shapes or forms, and while this year is not a legislative year in North Dakota, there are still many things that our officers, members and units can be doing in the legislative arena. I hosted a virtual Legislative Advocacy Training on February 17. The session was recorded so you can watch either individually or as a group. Email me at legislation@ndala.org for the video link. Some of the things covered included:

- How to write a letter to the editor
- How to reach out to an elected official
- The process of how a bill becomes a law
- How you can make a difference for veteran’s issues with your voice and actions

I hope you will join me and learn how you can become part of our American Legion Auxiliary “legislative chorus.” While it may seem easier to take a backstage, we all need to do our part, make the chorus louder, the ask clearer and the work lighter for everyone. Our elected officials and those running for office in upcoming elections this fall are counting on the voice of those who know and understand veteran’s and military issues. Come, join the stage!

Carma Hanson

Legislative Chairman