

SVP Seattle Advocacy FAQ

Advocacy Basics

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is an activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions. There are many types of advocacy efforts. For example, electoral advocacy is focused on helping candidates win races and legislative advocacy is focused on pushing for bills that align to one's values. SVP Seattle is focused on educating and engaging partners in advocating for new laws or policies that will advance economic justice by challenging and changing systems, such as how [Washington State generates revenue](#).

Why is SVP Seattle engaging in advocacy? Why should philanthropists care about advocacy?

Social and racial inequities are often the result of broken systems that create barriers to change. Traditional philanthropy alone isn't enough to achieve lasting progress, that's why SVP Seattle is reimagining the philanthropic toolkit. Read more: [Advocacy - SVP Seattle](#)

What's the difference between advocacy and lobbying and what are the guidelines for nonprofits?

Nonprofits can engage in unlimited advocacy and limited lobbying activities, as determined by the IRS. While advocacy is the process of stakeholders making their voices heard on issues that affect their lives and the lives of others, lobbying involves activities that are in direct support of or opposition to a specific piece of introduced legislation. The IRS has strict rules about how much of a nonprofit's budget can go toward lobbying activities. Learn more: [Comparison of 501\(c\)\(3\) and 501\(c\)\(4\) Permissible Activities — Bolder Advocacy](#)

SVP Seattle's advocacy program is primarily focused on education on economic justice, the importance of civic engagement as part of philanthropy, and amplifying partner organizations' work in support of legislation and policies that address systemic wealth inequality. When SVP Seattle communicates support for legislation that works towards closing the wealth gap, we will remain well within lobbying standards as defined by the IRS.

Is SVP Seattle aligned with a political party?

No, we are focused on issues around equity and ensuring all can thrive. While policies to drive systems change may be aligned more with one party or the other, SVP is not party aligned, we are values/issue aligned.

SVP Seattle's Advocacy Efforts

What is SVP Seattle advocating for?

Currently, there is [greater wealth inequality](#) in the US than just prior to the Great Depression. Because there is no state income tax, revenue is raised with regressive – everyone pays the same amount no matter what their income or wealth – measures including car tabs, the sales tax, etc. A millionaire pays the same X fee for car tabs as someone struggling to pay the rent. In Washington state, X families live in poverty and X children count on the Free and Reduced Lunch Program to eat lunch during the week.

SVP values equity and economic justice is part of that. Reforming how revenue is raised in Washington State is one solution we can have an impact on.

There are several organizations working on economic justice, why is SVP Seattle getting involved?

We see ourselves allying with [organizations](#) who have collectively been working on economic justice in Washington State for decades and amplifying their work. SVP Seattle's unique contribution is that we are adding advocacy to what it means to be an effective philanthropist and engaging people who have resources – time, talent, and ties – to address systemic injustice. The injustice we are working to address is our state's [regressive tax system](#), which disproportionately affects and disadvantages low-income and already disadvantaged people.

What are some examples of what SVP Seattle will be advocating for?

SVP Seattle supports policies and legislation that are aimed at allowing more individuals and families to prosper by addressing wealth inequality with progressive revenue reforms.

A Capital Gains tax was passed during the 2021-2022 session and upheld by the Washington State Supreme Court. During the 2023-2024 session, additional progressive reforms were introduced, and had public hearings, but did not cross the finish line – yet. These will be taken up again in the 2024 session:

- **SB 5486 / HB 1737 – Wealth Tax:** The very wealthy pay more of their fair share with a new 1% tax on a taxpayer who has over \$250 million worth of stocks, bonds and other intangible assets. The expected \$3 billion/year revenue will go to K-12 public schools, housing, developmental disabilities services, and tax justice. [Wealth Tax fact sheet](#).
- **HB 1795 – Estate Tax Reform:** Increase exemption to 2.6 million, increase tax rate on estates above 3 million, add new tiers and rates for estates over 9 million. The projected 60 million per biennium would be dedicated to the Education Legacy Trust Account to address equity in homeownership and homelessness. [Estate Tax Reform fact sheet](#).
- **HB 1045 – Guaranteed Basic Income (GBI) Pilot:** Launch a statewide GBI pilot, making WA the first statewide program in the country reaching approximately 7,500 participants. GBI is a proven strategy to reduce poverty by offering participants the freedom and dignity about how best to provide for their families. [GBI fact sheet](#).
- **SB 5125 / HB 1094 – Future Bonds (aka Baby Bonds):** Address the wealth gap and disrupt the generational cycle of poverty by allocating \$4,000 each to children born under the state's Medicaid program, Apple Health. These children would have access to the funds between the ages of 18 and 30 to use for education, housing, or small business. Approx 40,000 newborns would qualify. [Baby Bonds perspective](#).

Will you be endorsing candidates?

No, SVP Seattle does not, as an organization, endorse political candidates.

How can I get involved? Sign up for SVP Seattle [Advocacy Emails](#) that will start up in the fall. And join our volunteer Task Force to help develop SVP Seattle's newly established advocacy program.

Individual Advocacy

How can I learn how to advocate for an issue I care about?

Attend the SVP Seattle Advocacy trainings that will be scheduled in Fall 2023. Send [an email](#) to indicate your interest!

If there is an issue that you particularly care about, check out this [list of organizations](#) by issue.

Do I have to be a registered voter to advocate with lawmakers?

While it is not required to be a registered voter, it is preferable to be a registered voter to engage and have influence with lawmakers and government officials.