

Legislative Advocacy Across Disabilities

Bob Peterson and Sabrina Wyman

Introduction

- **Bob Peterson**

- Served 9 years on the Board of the Arc of Illinois, is now an Arc Mentor, and is an officer for the Arc's National Council for Self-Advocacy
- Has been involved with many advocacy organizations including; Partners in Policymaking (2018 Grad), The Self Advocacy Alliance, the Going Home Coalition, SABE, and UIC

- **Sabrina Wyman**

- Sibling to a younger sister with Down syndrome
- Has worked on campaigns of all sizes, Communications for the Illinois Senate, Legislative Advocacy Coordinator for The Arc of Illinois

Agenda for Today

- Understanding Legislative Advocacy
- Components of Legislative Advocacy
- All About Self-Advocacy
- Bob's Story
- Cycle of Democracy

Understanding Legislative Advocacy

- Legislative advocacy refers to **efforts to influence the introduction, enactment, or modification of legislation**

Importance of Legislative Advocacy:

- Shapes policies that affects communities, organizations, and individuals
- Amplifies voices of marginalized groups (like the disabled community)

Components of Legislative Advocacy

Understanding the Legislative Process

- Who are the decision makers?
 - The State Senate, State House of Representatives
 - The US Senate, US House of Representatives
- How are laws made? How are they amended?

Components of Legislative Advocacy

Building Relationships

- Who can I turn to? Who will teach me what I want to know?
- What organizations or coalitions would best help me?

Components of Legislative Advocacy

Strategic Communication

- Do I have a clear message?
- Does my message make sense for who I am talking to?

Components of Legislative Advocacy

General Monitoring

- How should I track legislative developments?
- Where can I find information to best inform me about certain policy?

What is Self Advocacy?

- The act of speaking up for yourself
 - Making your voice heard
 - Making your own choices
 - Advocating for your rights
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- All individuals have rights and should be treated with respect

What Barriers Are There To Self Advocacy?

- Lack of access to information
- Lack of accessible transportation to meetings, rallies, conferences
- Lack of physical accessibility in legislative buildings and meeting spaces

What Barriers Are There To Self Advocacy?

- Lack of available support workers to accompany individuals with disabilities to rallies and meetings
- Lack of representation of individuals with disabilities that can result in policies that do not adequately address their needs
- Financial constraints

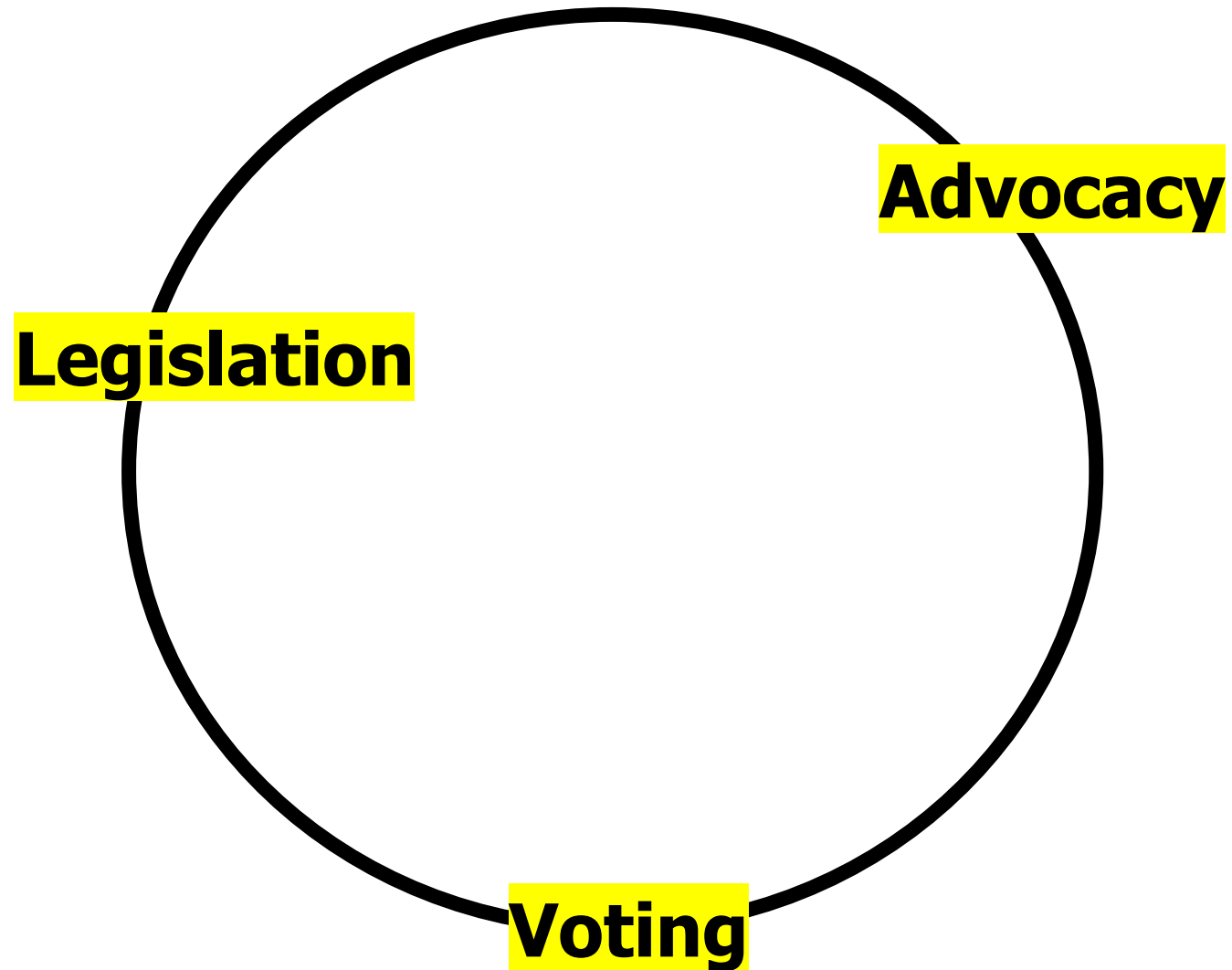
Bob's History with Politics and Advocacy

- **Getting started is the hardest part**
- Specifically went after certain advocacy groups to gain knowledge and information
 - Continued the networking – getting to know people and them getting to know him
- First advocacy meeting was called “Advocates United!”
 - Was an advocacy group for parents, Bob went to ask questions and learned a lot
- First day conference was The Arc of Illinois Annual Convention
 - Didn't know the ins and outs but was along for the ride and continued learning!

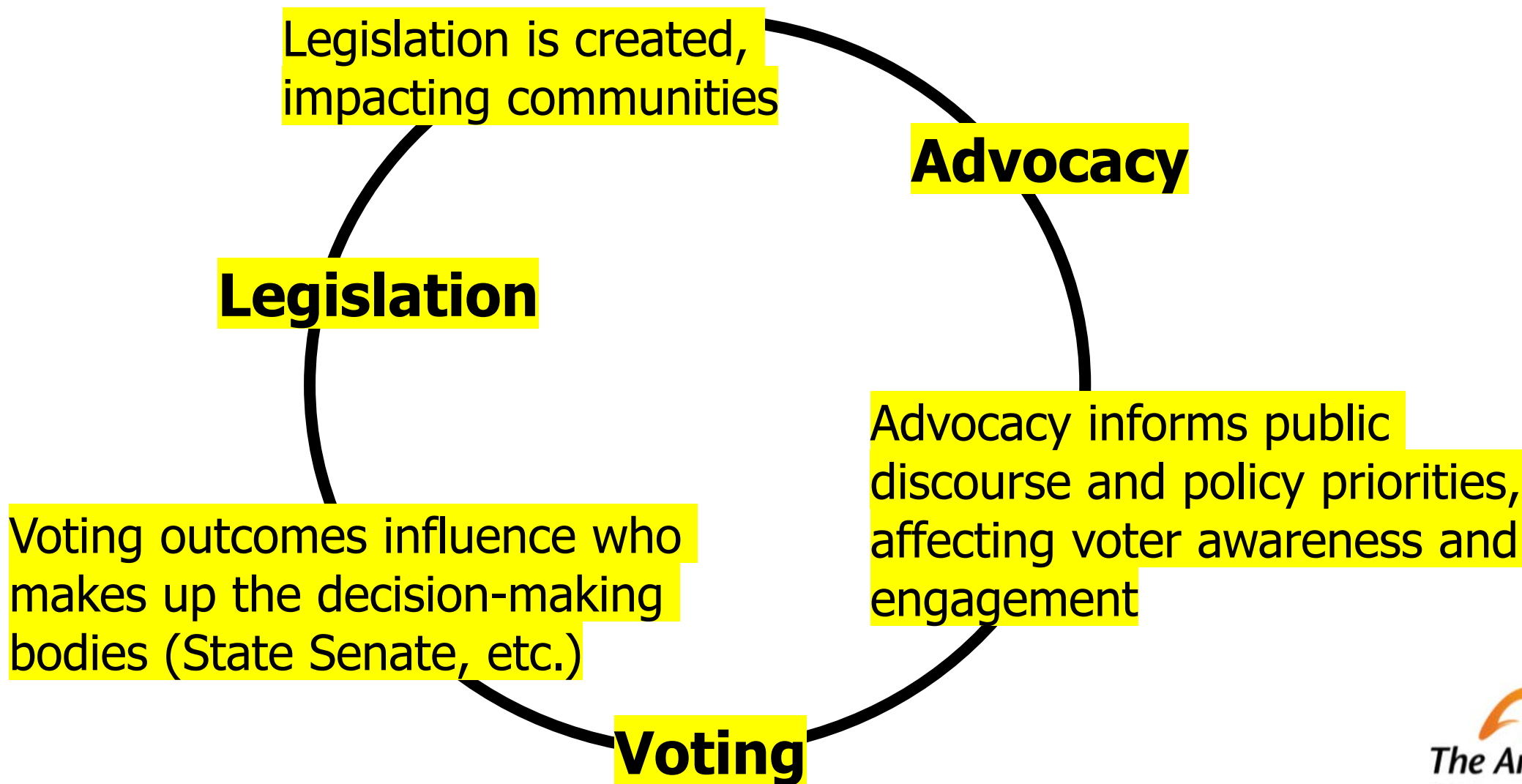
Bob on Advocacy

**“It’s not a matter of having fun, it’s a matter of how do I survive? How do I network fast enough to get to know people to help me out?”
–Bob Peterson**

The Cycle of Democracy



The Cycle of Democracy



The Cycle of Democracy

Legislation

- Addresses issues that have been advocated for by people who have been voted into office

Advocacy

- Grassroots organization
- Lobbying policymakers re: concerns within your community

Voting

- Voting when possible
- Voter registration drives/outreach
- Ensuring accessibility

How Can I Contribute to the Cycle of Democracy?

- Advocate!
- Vote!
- Talk with your legislators!

Legislation

Advocacy

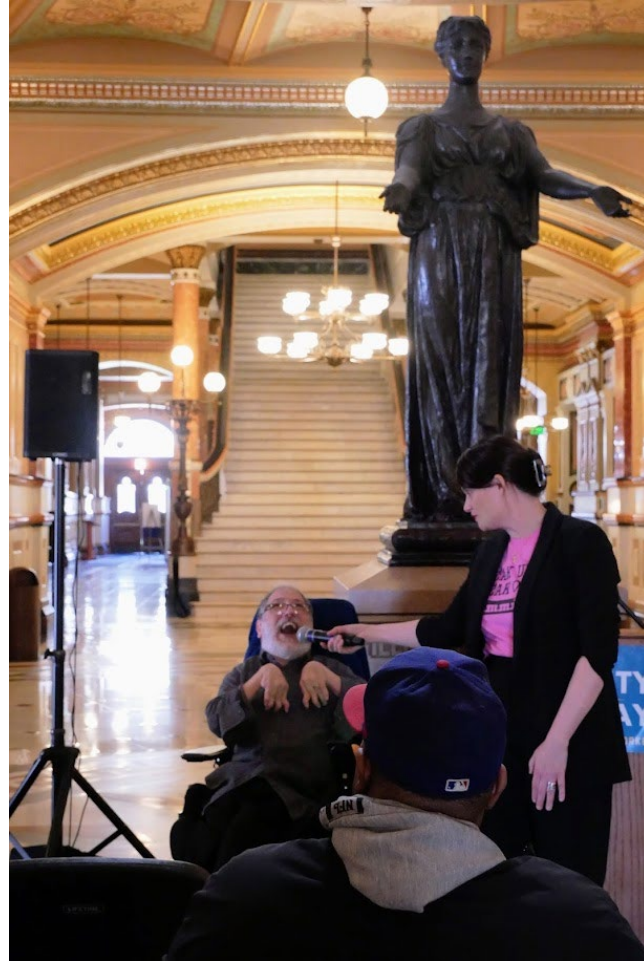
Voting

Illinois Systems: Subminimum Wage

Currently, Illinoisians with IDD are allowed to make under the minimum wage, called a subminimum wage.

The Dignity in Pay Act hopes to phase out the subminimum wage and allow people to get paid for the work that they do.

Bob's Fight for Change: Dignity in Pay Rally



Why is it important to get involved?

- Influence policy decisions
 - Protect rights
 - Create positive change
 - Hold elected officials accountable
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- If you don't get involved, there is no avenue to do legislative advocacy

Review

- Legislative advocacy is a vital tool for effecting change
- This includes:
 - Advocacy about issues important to you
 - like disability rights
 - Voting for the people you believe will represent your needs the best
 - Combining your advocacy tools with the people voted into office to advocate for legislation that will affect you and your community
- Getting started is the hardest part

THANK YOU!

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, you can reach us here:

Bob Peterson: ro3pt@sbcglobal.net

Sabrina Wyman: sabrina@thearcofil.org