



# USING LEGAL ADVOCACY TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL CHANGE

Legal advocacy – also known as advocacy through the courts – uses the judicial system to advance social change goals. This is often done through bringing forward a legal case in court that focuses on improving a situation for a particular group of people. Take for example, *Brown v. Board of Education*, a classic example of legal advocacy, which argued that separate schools were inherently unequal in an era when legislation on school integration was unlikely to change. *Floyd v. City of New York* is another example where legal advocacy helped reform the discriminatory police practice of stop-and-frisk ([watch TCC Group’s short video for more on this case](#)). Legal advocacy is a critical tool to protect and defend our fundamental constitutional rights. The resources below inform funders, advocates and evaluators how to use legal advocacy as a way to protect against systemic abuses.

## Atlas Learning Project

Now more than ever, funders and advocates need to learn from each other and put effective approaches and strategies into action. The TCC Group and Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law legal advocacy resources are part of the Atlas Learning Project, a suite of resources from The Atlantic Philanthropies and other experts in the field aimed to help funders think strategically about how to defend, sustain and advance progressive policy change. With smart thinking, bold action and sustained focus, funders and advocates will be better positioned to succeed in advocacy and policy change.

## RESOURCES

### [Stepping into the Fight: A Funder’s Guide for Understanding and Supporting Legal Advocacy](#)

In this resource, TCC Group explains how and why funders can engage in and support legal advocacy, going into detail on when to make legal advocacy grants, how to best support grant partners, and how to think about the impact of this work. Information is oriented toward funders without prior experience in legal advocacy, though information will also benefit those with more experience in the field.

### [Stepping into the Fight: A Guide for Nonprofits to Understand and Engage in Legal Advocacy](#)

In this guide, TCC Group describes how legal advocacy can be a synergistic partner to traditional advocacy strategies, including legislative advocacy, grassroots mobilizing, public awareness and education, and media campaigns. The guide dives into how advocacy organizations can think about engaging in legal advocacy and look at their own readiness to engage in this work.

### [Evaluating Legal Advocacy: A How-To Guide for Evaluators, Funders, and Advocates](#)

This guide introduces funders, advocates, and evaluators to four approaches and methods that can be used to evaluate legal advocacy work as well as a comprehensive list of outcomes – including those beyond legal outcomes – that can be measured.

### [Toward a More Just Justice System: How Open are the Courts to Social Justice Litigation?](#)

This piece, written by the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, explores the legal context around pursuing legal advocacy, including factors that favor and obstruct legal advocacy, key strategies to think about while engaged in this type of work, and recommendations for funders and litigators involved in the field.

**“If your goal is social change, you cannot ignore the power of changing law.”**

ANNMARIE BENEDICT, THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES