When you hear the word "advocacy," do images of marching on Washington, DC, flash through your mind? While that is certainly one way of capturing attention from federal policymakers (and the local DC police!), there are other steps you can take toward making policy shifts or drawing attention within your state. Preeclampsia Awareness Month (May) has provoked volunteers all across the country to secure proclamations or resolutions in 16 states and cities.

In Georgia, veteran Promise Walk coordinator Lori Harrison was fortunate to have some face time with Governor Nathan Deal as he handed her his state's proclamation declaring May Preeclampsia Awareness Month. "It was a surprisingly simple process," Harrison recounted. "I called Governor Deal's office, asked whom I should speak to for my request, faxed in the request and followed up a few weeks later when I was told it was approved." The photo opportunity gave her a chance to personalize the cause for the Governor. "He expressed concern when he found out somebody we knew in common had to deliver early as a result of preeclampsia, not having known that was the cause."

In Virginia, the General Assembly unanimously passed a resolution to declare every May Preeclampsia Awareness Month. Volunteer Julie Dime worked with legislator Timothy Hugo to sponsor the bill. On February 28, it passed the Senate and is now in front of Governor Bob McDonnell where he is expected to sign it by mid-April.

In New York, first time Promise Walk Coordinator Lucy Perez and her family took a unique opportunity to promote the NYC Promise Walk at the State Department of Health. They were there to celebrate the passage of legislation that 27 states have embraced: issuing special birth certificates for stillborn babies. Stillbirth is defined as an unintended uterine death after 20 weeks gestation; anything before that is classified as a miscarriage. In New York state, this multi-year process culminated when the bill, signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo on September 23, 2011 went into effect on March 21, 2012. Now all preeclampsia babies that are stillborn (along with other causes of death) in New York state will be granted an official Certificate of Still Birth to acknowledge the birth of that baby, not just a death certificate.

According to recent data, in 2009 the state had 1,711 stillbirths; nationwide there are 24,000 stillbirths per year.

While this Certificate might seem a trivial matter to some, those who have experienced such as loss often explain that it brings enormous meaning and dignity to that baby's existence. Perez, whose grandson Scottie died several months ago, shared her feelings about this need through the "voice" of her grandson: "Please don't let them say I was never born - I was! I made a great impact in my short life; I taught everyone that tomorrows are not promised, and that we should all cherish every moment we are given with one another."