

Making a Difference



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Advocacy basics

- ✓ **Enthusiasm and passion**
- ✓ **Provide information and point of view**
- ✓ **Work in and with coalitions**
- ✓ **Legislation = public policy**

How does legislation happen?

- Someone wants the legislature to do something about something they care about (change public policy)
 - A change in law
 - Funding for a program or project
 - A new law

How does legislation happen?

- Decide what you want the legislature to do --
 - Discuss it with others
 - Do some research
 - Research about what you want done
 - Research about possible solutions

How does legislation happen?

- After you know what you want done -
 - Find out if other people or organizations want the same thing and ask them to join with you or you can join with them
 - Coalitions can be more effective

How does legislation happen?

- Talk to your legislators about it
 - Explain it
 - Tell stories to illustrate it
 - If possible, show them the “situation”
 - Listen to ideas that they might have
 - Ask them to help you get it done

When should we start working on making legislation happen? **Now!**

- Working on changes in public policy happens all year long
 - Don't wait until a legislative session starts
 - Interim legislative committees meet during each summer and fall
 - Legislators have more time to talk with you when they are not "in session."

What about the executive branch of government?

- Try to talk with the executive agency or department that will be implementing your legislation.
 - They can be helpful.
 - It is important that they understand how the legislation should be implemented when it becomes law.

What are interim legislative committees?

- Interim committees include legislators from both houses and parties
- They generally meet monthly from June through November
- They are organized by topics
- They recommend legislation

Can I speak before an interim committee?

- **YES!!**
- You should contact the chairman of the committee and ask to be on the agenda for one of their meetings
 - **This is an opportunity to explain what you want the legislature to do**
 - **Use local stories, if you can**

How does a bill get written?

- What you want the legislature to do must be written in the form of a bill.
 - You don't have to write it!
 - The legislator who is working with you will ask the Legislative Council Service staff to write a bill about your issue.

When should we start contacting legislators to support our issue?

- **Now!**
- It is very effective to contact and talk with legislators before a legislative session starts.
 - They have more time to meet with you when they are at home
 - Ask others to contact their legislators

Does contacting legislators make a difference?

- **YES!**
- What you think about an issue counts and legislators care about what you think!
- Your legislators represent you.

Communication Basics

- Be courteous, respectful, friendly and positive
- Don't be arrogant, condescending or threatening
- Be brief and accurate
- Be sure to mention if you are a constituent -- You are important!

Communication Basics

- Listen carefully
- Be appreciative; acknowledge past support
- Be specific; if possible, refer to specific legislation or issue
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" in answer to a question:
 - Find the answer and get back to them later

How do I communicate with policymakers?

Letter Writing, including email messages

- Letters can be the most powerful means of communicating with public officials
- Write about only one issue per letter
- Neatly handwrite, type or email your letter
- Try to include supporting facts and give reasons for your position
- Refer to a specific bill, if possible

How do I communicate with policymakers?

- Put your return address on the letter and the envelope
- Use the proper form of address
 - “The Honorable” on the address on both the envelope and the heading
 - “Dear Representative” or “Dear Senator” is the salutation
- Brevity is even more important for email messages!

How do I communicate with policymakers?

“Letters to the Editor” of a newspaper

- Very effective way of influencing both public policy and public opinion
- Keep your letter short - about 250 words
- Get to the point and write in simple language
- Sign your letter with your contact info
- Newspapers accept letters electronically

How do I communicate with policymakers?

Telephone calls

- During legislative sessions, office staff answer most calls to lawmakers.
- When you call a legislator at home, you may reach them or, more likely, an answering system.
- Be brief and specific
 - Talk about only one issue per call

How do I communicate with policymakers?

Personal Visits

- Follow “Communication Basics”
- It is most effective to try to make an appointment while lawmakers are at home in their districts.
- During sessions:
 - Expect brief visits
 - You may have to simply leave a note saying you came by and briefly stating your position or issue

How do I communicate with policymakers?

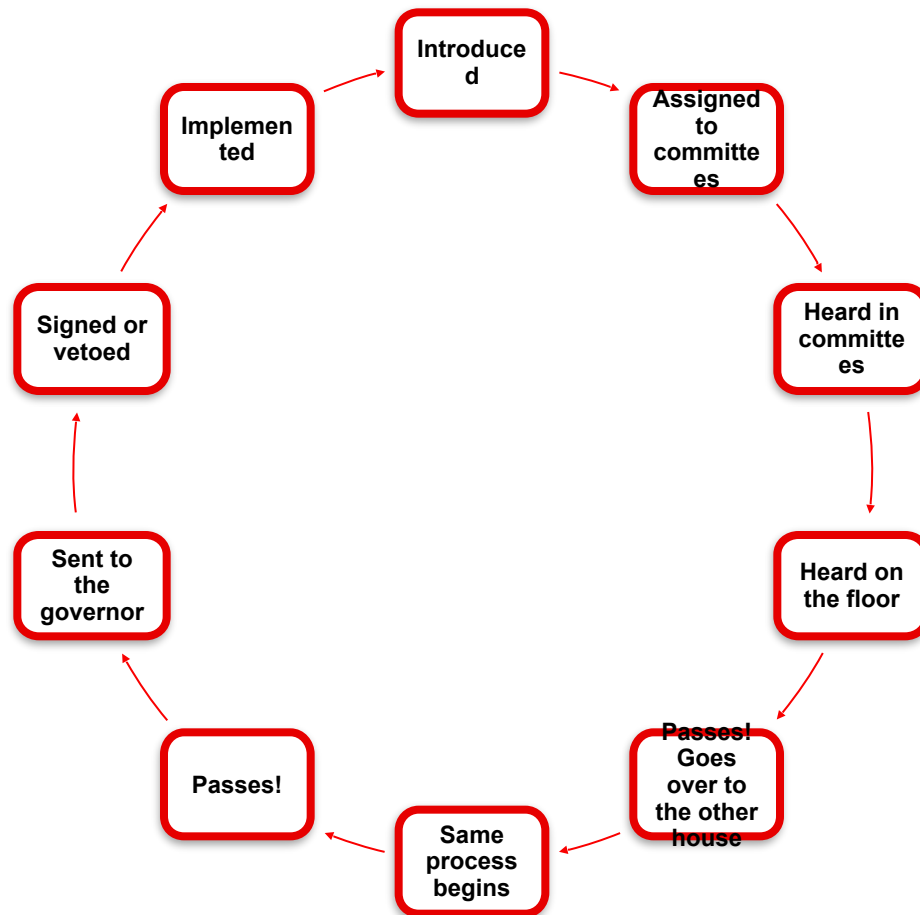
Attend Committee Hearings (interim & session)

- Anyone may attend and testify
- Chairman will ask if anyone would like to speak either in favor of or opposed to the bill being discussed
- Stand, identify yourself, and briefly state your position
- Don't speak for an organization unless you know its official position
- Committee meeting schedules and agendas can be long and unpredictable

Remember --

As long as you are sincere and polite, there is no wrong way to communicate with a policymaker!

What happens to a bill?



You can make a difference!

- **Advocacy is --**
 - **Exciting**
 - **Challenging**
 - **Crucial**
 - **Long term**