



Delivering Next Generation Care

Guide To Effective Legislative Advocacy



2008

Legislative Affairs Contact Information:

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Be Involved.....

The involvement of Children's staff, physicians, patients and families, and friends is vital to the success of Children's grassroots lobbying efforts. Only you can give legislators the most accurate picture about how issues really affect you and your daily life. As Franklin Delano Roosevelt stated, "Nothing just happens in politics. If something happens you can be sure it was planned that way."

Thirteen Rules of Legislative Advocacy....

1. **Be informed.** Get to know your audience. Who is your elected representative? Is your representative a Republican or Democrat? Liberal, Moderate, or Conservative? What committees does the representative serve? What are the priorities and interests of the representative?
2. **Be prepared.** Know your issue and bring effective handouts. Present your opinion and back it up with facts including background information, statistics and studies that support your point of view, and personal stories. If there's a bill number you're interested in, include the bill number (i.e. HR 2300, S. 234). Know the opposing arguments and frequently asked questions, and have answers ready to go. Make your representative's job easier.
3. **One Issue At A Time.** Every communication-telephone, written or personal visit-should stick to 1 issue. You should not present a laundry list of concerns. Pick the most vital and explore it in depth. Present the facts in an orderly, concise, positive manner. Stay on issue.
4. **Be friendly.** Build a relationship with the representative and their staff. Don't let persuasion turn into a threat. Be prepared to listen and to speak. Making contact repeatedly and being credible and reasonable every time will help build a relationship between you and your representative. Be sure to get the name of the staff member covering your issue.
5. **Bring Solutions.** Don't just talk about how bad a problem is, relate the positive impact of legislation you support and the problem it corrects. Be prepared to offer solutions and tell your representative what you'd like to see done to fix the problem. In addition, let the representative know what they should do: make speeches, cosponsor legislation, write to the appropriate agency, sign onto a letter, or draft a bill.
6. **Use Personal Anecdotes.** Nothing drives home the importance of an issue like a personal story. All politics is local! Tell your representatives how the issues affects their constituents.
7. **Timing!** The most eloquent letter or call does no good if it comes *after* a vote. If a letter arrives too early, it is forgotten. Letters should generally arrive a few days before the vote, whether in committee or on the full chamber floor. However, don't let waiting for the right time to come along keep you from writing. It is better to reach someone early in the debate than after they have made up their mind or not at all.
8. **Personal Visits.** The personal visit is the single most effective advocacy technique. The issues brought up are attended to more quickly and seriously. Your representative will be impressed with the effort you're putting forth and will usually make time to meet with you. Arrive on time. Fifteen minutes is a

realistic expectation for your meeting. Do not be surprised if your meeting starts a bit late or is cut short or you are not able to speak directly with your representative. Address your legislator as “Representative” or “Senator.”

9. **Staff Matter.** Often, staff members meet with constituents and you should treat them in the same manner as you would the representative.
10. **Never Lie, Never Guess.** If you're not sure of an answer, say, "I'll check and get back to you." Then, find out the answer and let your legislator know what the answer was. You must follow-up!
11. **Expect Surprises and Be Flexible.** Legislators have unpredictable schedules on session days. Make the most of your meeting by focusing on a few key issues. Stay on message and try to understand where they are coming from and tailor your approach accordingly. Maintain your position, even if you know they don't agree. If they change the subject to avoid getting pinned down on an issue, try to bridge the discussion back to your message.
12. **Follow-up.** Be polite and persistent by following up with a thank-you letter. Representatives clearly remember the constituents that follow up. It reminds your representative of how passionate you are about the issue. Ask for an update on where the issues stands.
13. **Common Sense Rules.** Introduce yourself. Make your appointment well in advance. Indicate the date you'll visit and what you'd like to discuss. Be fair, realistic, and reasonable. Kill them with kindness and start with a compliment. Be a good listener and don't do all the talking. Try to have a conversation and always, always arrive on time.

Ways to Communicate....

By Letter:

Personal letters stating your views on how an issue or proposed legislation will affect your profession, schools, or community are a good use of communicating with your representative. You should write primarily to your own legislator, and possibly committee members. Be brief and try to keep your letter limited to one page. Get to your point in the first paragraph and use factual information to back your views. State what you would like the representative to do and be positive. Timing is vital. To be effective, your letter should be sent when the legislature is in session and your issue is about to come under consideration in committee, subcommittee, or floor action.

By E-Mail:

When speed is desirable because of imminent action on a piece of legislation, e-mails may be sent to a legislator. E-mail to a legislator should be treated as seriously as a traditional letter. Resist the temptation to use the informal language and symbols often associated with e-mail communications. Never use impolite language or make "demands." Make sure the text of your e-mail includes your full name and street address, including zip code. Many legislative offices screen e-mails for address information identifying the sender as a constituent. E-mails that may appear to come from outside the district are unlikely to be read and might be blocked by filtering programs. Do not "copy and paste" text from grassroots advocacy alerts, use this information to write your "personal message."

By Telephone Call:

This form of communication is particularly effective to express support or opposition to an upcoming vote. Identify yourself to the person who answers the phone. Be sure to say that you are a constituent in the legislator's district. Be prepared and tell the legislator the issue or bill number you're calling about. Give the position and reason for your position. Be polite. Keep party politics out of the discussion. Say, "thank you" for your legislator's consideration of your views.

By Personal Meeting:

The most effective communication, naturally, is that which takes place face to face. These meetings must be planned with care and you should be prepared. Make your appointment well in advance. Indicate the date you'll visit and what you'd like to discuss. Be fair, realistic, and reasonable. Introduce yourself. Kill them with kindness and start with a compliment. Be a good listener and don't do all the talking. Try to have a conversation and always, always arrive on time. It may be helpful to role-play these sessions in advance to gain understanding of the issues and dynamics of the issues involved.

Addressing Written Correspondence....

For U.S. Senators The Honorable (full name) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 Dear Senator (last name):	For members of the U.S. House of Representatives The Honorable (full name) United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 Dear Representative (last name):	For State Legislators: The Honorable (full name) State Capitol Saint Paul, MN 55155 Dear Senator (last name): or Dear Representative (last name):
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Testifying Before A Legislative Committee.....

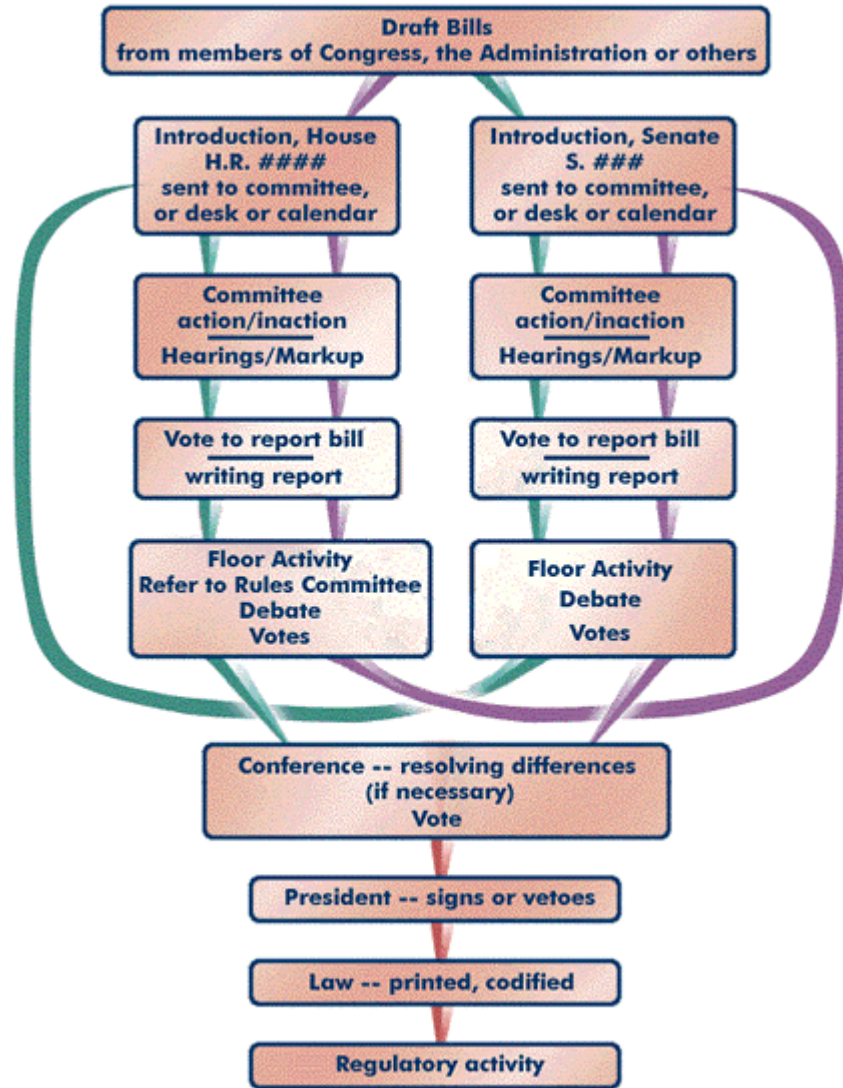
Testifying before a legislative committee can seem intimidating, but the task can be much less daunting if you are prepared and follow some basic principles. Your goals when giving testimony should be to inform and persuade. Testimony is not just reading words. Thus, your testimony will be most effective if it is delivered in a conversational style and draws upon your own experience, real-life examples and case histories.

- Be honest, brief and accurate.
- Don't play to the crowd, play to the legislators.
- Treat the panel with respect; find ways to get them to trust you.
- Don't read your testimony. If you use an outline or printed text, look down and pick up a complete thought, then establish eye contact, deliver the thought and look back down only when you've finished the thought.
- Deliver your testimony as a conversation between you and a friend—don't teach, preach, recite, or orate.
- If you are testifying as a member of a panel, be alert and look interested when you are not speaking; give the speaker your mental and physical attention.
- State your message and main point first, then prove it. If you are cut off because of time, you will have made your point.

Did You Know?

When testifying you must first introduce yourself to the committee or panel. If you are testifying on behalf of a professional association, you should identify yourself as representing that organization.

How A Bill Becomes A Law.....



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