

Understanding the Legislative Process and How to Become an Effective Advocate



Presented by:
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Snapshot of Iowa's Government

**Iowa House
of
Representatives**

100

U.S. House

4



**Iowa
Senate**

50

U.S. Senate

2

GOVERNOR

1

How a Bill Becomes a Law

Where the ideas come from

- Individual legislator
- Constituent concern
- Interest group – ie., Hospital Assoc., Farm Bureau
- Initiatives in other states
- Federal level
- Committee bill – ie., Human Resources, Environment
- Leadership bill – House and/or Senate Leader bills
- Gubernatorial legislative agenda
- State agency prefiles – ie., DHS, DoE

What's Next?

- **Bill is drafted – By legislative services agency**
- **Bills are introduced to House or Senate**
- **House File or Senate File, given a number**
- **Individual Legislator Bills**
- **Study Bills**
- **Companion Bills – same bill in House & Senate**
- **Resolutions – Honoring a person, organization, or an expression of the legislature on some matter**

Assignment of Bills

- **Speaker of the House assigns bills to committee**
- **President of the Senate assigns bills to committee**
- **Standings bills**

*Administration & Rules

Agriculture

Appropriations

Commerce

Economic Growth & Technology

Education

*Education Reform

Environmental Protection

Ethics

Government Oversight

Health & Human Services

Judiciary

Local Government

Labor & Workforce

Natural Resources/Environment

Natural Resources

State Government

Transportation

**Technology

Ways & Means

Veterans Affairs

Public Safety*

***House Only**

**** Senate Only**

Sub-Appropriations

Administration and Regulation

Economic Development

Health & Human Services

Transportation, Infrastructure, and Capital

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Education

Justice System

Committee Action & Consideration

- **Subcommittee Assignment**

Subcommittee recommends to report or not report to full committee

- **Full Committee Consideration**

Full committee can report to full chamber with recommendation or without recommendation

- **Re-assignment**

Bill Gets Debated

- **Placed on House & Senate Calendar**
- **Daily Debate Calendar**
- **Amendments**
- **Deferred**

Second Chamber, One More Time....

- **Immediately Messaged**
- **Referred to a Committee**
- **Subcommittee Assigned**
- **Debate: Companion Bills/Substitution**
- **Amendments**
- **Concur or Resist**

Off to see the Governor

- **Sign,**
Effective July, 1 unless otherwise designated in bill
- **Veto – vetoes entire bill**
- **Item Veto – vetoes portions of a bill**
- **Veto Message – Why**

How to develop your message and talk to your Elected Official



Preparing Your Message

1. Define the Problem

- Put it in real terms
- Personalize it – How does it affect you?

2. Identify a possible solution

- What needs to happen and why?

Preparing your Message

3. Research Your Issue

- **Be knowledgeable about the issue**
- **Put together a fact sheet**
- **Why is it important?**

Preparing your Message

4. Research your Elected Official

- Know who is your Senator & Representative
- What committees do they serve on?
- What is their background?
- Look for personal connections

Contacting Your Elected Official

- **Call them on the phone**
- **Meet with them**
 - Attend forums and talk with them before or after the forum. They want to meet you and hear from you!
- **Write them. Send us a letter or email them.**
 - Be sure to give them your address and phone number so they can get back to you.

Delivering Your Message

1. **Introduce yourself**
2. **Identify your issue**
3. **Tell them how the issue affects you**
4. **Tell them what you want us to do.**
5. **Let them ask you some questions**
6. **Ask them questions**
7. **Leave them some information on the issue**
8. **Provide them with your contact information**
9. **Follow – Up!**

Best Ways to Advocate

- **Personal Visits**

- Identify yourself as a constituent

- Schedule an appointment

- Visit one-on-one or in a small group

- Leave something in writing for them to review

- **Personal Letter**

- Write them a letter

- Tell them if you're a constituent

- Explain the issue

- Provide them with your contact information (phone, address)

- **Telephone**

- Call them at home - (Legislators can also be reached at the Capitol, but only while in session)

- Talk with their Staff

- Provide them with your contact information so they can follow-up

Best Ways to Advocate

- **Email**

- They receive a lot of email – so ask your elected official which way they prefer to be contacted

- **Forums & Community Meetings**

- Talk to them before & after – they want to know you
- Get others to attend
- Speak up! They need to hear your issue!

Things to Avoid

- **Threatening comments – (do this or we'll defeat you in the next election)**
- **Form Letters**
- **Multiple topics/issues – separate issues to better focus your concerns**

From the Legislator's Perspective

- They tend to focus on their **constituents first**
- They want to know if **anyone else cares about the issue**
- They want to know who might be **against the issue & why**
- They want to know if the group advocating on an **issue are reputable**
- They want to know **what their colleagues think about the issue (if talked with others)**
- They want to know if there is a **cost**
- **If you don't speak up, they tend to think everything is ok**

Opportunities Start Now

- 1. Call your State Representative and your State Senator**
- 2. Contact your U.S. Senator and U.S. Congressman**
- 3. Meet your State Representative and State Senator, (ie., one-on-one, forum)**
- 4. Establishing those relationships NOW helps when you want to advocate on an issue.**

Links

Iowa General Assembly

<http://www.legis.iowa.gov>

Governor's Web Page

<http://www.governor.iowa.gov>

US Senator & US Congress

<http://www.congress.org>