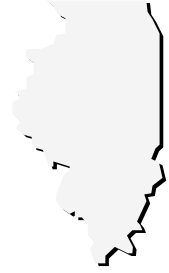


LOCAL GOVERNMENT TOPICS



Tips on Lobbying

Lobbying is a process of gathering information and providing it to policy makers to persuade them to support a particular point of view. When you are lobbying a legislator, your chief objective is to win a commitment to support your interests. Your second objective is to build a relationship that allows you to work together in coming years. It's important not to burn any bridges as you work on an issue – tomorrow is another day; it will bring new challenges and opportunities.

Information about the Illinois General Assembly

Annual sessions of the Illinois Legislature begin on the second Wednesday in January. The legislature is considered to be in one continuous session for the biennium for which members of the House are elected. When the session commences, the first action of both houses is to organize themselves. Each house elects their leadership, then committees are assigned and rules are adopted. Each house imposes deadlines on their actions, and time limits on each stage in the passage of bills.

The information following is a brief and incomplete description of the legislative process. Refer to "How a Bill Becomes a Law" for more complete information.

In odd numbered years, the General Assembly considers both substantive legislation and budgetary matters. In even

measures".

limited to appropriation bills, fiscal matters, and "emergency measures".

Bills may be introduced in either house by individual Members or by standing committees. They are frequently sponsored by more than one legislator, and commonly this sponsorship is bipartisan. Bills are drafted by the Legislative Reference Bureau, or they must contain a stamp indicating that the form of the bill meets the Bureau's standards.

The Illinois Constitution requires that each bill be read in each house three times on three different days.

On the first reading, a bill is numbered, read by title, and sent to the Committee on the Assignment of Bills – which will assign the bill to an appropriate standing committee. In committee, bills are studied for their relevance, necessity, and relationship to existing law. Bills deemed unnecessary or in conflict with leadership interests are allowed to die. Other bills may be amended to conform to legal requirements or political pressures.

For more information about committee assignments, you may refer to the legislature's webpage, at <http://www.ilga.gov/>. The strongest influence on a legislator is from his (her) own constituents. So, the most effective strategies involve contact between a legislator and the citizens, local governments, and organizations in his (her) district.

When a bill is reported favorably out of a committee, it is placed on the calendar for second reading where it receives its first consideration of all the members of

the house. In this process, committee amendments and amendments from the floor are considered. There are rules in each house governing time limits for bills. Legislators may not be familiar with specifics of the bill prior to the second reading; this may be an ideal time to influence their views.

During third reading, legislators are governed by specific rules of how long and how many times they can speak on the bill. If the sponsor deems that there are not enough votes to pass a bill, (s)he may (one time) put the bill on the order of postponed consideration to gather more support. If the bill is passed, it is sent to the other house where the process is repeated. If the second house makes amendments, the bill goes to a conference committee. This is an important time to stay tuned to the process, and interact with your legislators for encouragement to pass or defeat the bill.

Lobbying your Legislator

There are some specific “rules of the road” that will help you plan your strategy and succeed in making your voice heard. ***Most importantly, you need to consider how and when you, as an elected local official, like to hear from your constituents and their organizations.***

These guidelines are culled from the experience of many professional lobbyists, grassroots lobbyists, and experienced volunteers.

Good research is the key to success:

- What positions has the legislator taken relative to this issue? What ties might influence his (her) position?
- What is the history of this issue?
- What are the facts? What studies, surveys, and experiences can you relate to the legislature?
- What are the economic / fiscal implications of this issue?

Political considerations

- Be ready to discuss the Impact on the legislator and his (her) district;

personal experiences and examples have more impact.

- How will this affect your ability to provide services for your constituents?
- Do not mislead a legislator on the issue, the opposition, or any other matter; this will affect your ability to work with the legislator in the future.
- Consider who else might support your position on an issue.
- Work from strength; don't spend a lot of time trying to reverse opinions publicly tied to opposition; it's more effective to shore up legislators who are on your side or at least neutral on a position.

Strategies

- If lobbying by letter or email, remember you will have the most influence with your own legislators. Keep your letter short, and state exactly what your position is and why you support the position. Give the legislator something to work with as (s)he works with the issue.
- If lobbying by telephone, again, keep it short. Be positive, and ask for support for your point of view.
- If you are lobbying in person, make an appointment. Be prepared to present the issue briefly – you may want to have a brief (no more than one page) explanation of the issue and background information. Send a thank you after the meeting; this may allow you to provide follow-up information.