

Important Players

*People Who Impact the Legislative Process:
Knowing Where They Fit in Will Help You Fit In*

Legislative leadership

On the first day of each legislative session, members are formally elected for legislative leadership offices. In the House, these officers are the speaker, speaker pro tem, majority leader, minority leader, and other party or caucus officers. In the Senate, these officers are the president, vice-president, majority leader, minority leader, and party or caucus officers.

In the House, the speaker (or the speaker pro tem) calls the House to order. The speaker appoints the standing and other committees and refers bills and resolutions to the appropriate committees.

The presiding officer of the Senate is the president, and of the House, the speaker. In the Senate, the member elected to preside when the regular presiding officer is not in the chair is the vice-president. In the House this person is the speaker pro tem.

In the Senate, the president (or the vice-president) calls the Senate to order. The Committee on Organization, Calendar, and Rules appoints members of the standing committees. The president refers bills to committees and appoints members of special committees and conference committees.

The majority and minority leaders and other party officers of both chambers play an important role in organizing and coordinating the activities of their party members with regard to items under consideration.

Governor

Although the focus of lobbying during the session is on the legislature, do not forget the governor. The governor makes the final decision on a bill by either choosing to sign it or to veto it. If you have any indication that the governor might veto a bill, contact the Office of the Governor immediately following final passage of the bill by the legislature – you may write, call, email, or send a fax.

Timing is important because following passage of a bill, the governor has only a limited time in which to sign or veto. Your input during this time is vital.

State departments

On behalf of the governor, state departments and agencies submit both budget and non-budget proposals to the legislature.

Department staff devote considerable time and resources in their lobbying efforts to get their proposals into bill form, find authors, guide the bills through the process, and get them passed.

Departments also are called upon by the legislature to complete fiscal notes on bills that carry an appropriation (cost money), comment on bills that are being heard in committee, and provide other information on the activities and programs of their particular department. Support of the cabinet secretary or state agency head can be key in generating support in passage of legislation.

— *continued*

Important Players

If you plan to lobby on a regular basis, get acquainted with department staff. They can provide information which you may be unable to get from any other source; and, on occasion, their support of your bill is helpful.

NOTE: There also are occasions when a department's support is not helpful. Know when this is the case.

Rule makers

When a bill becomes law, it may only be the beginning of the implementation process. In many instances, rule making is the next step. The legislature has granted significant authority to state agencies to adopt rules that respond to the what, when, where, and how of specific laws. Rules that evolve from this process have the "force and effect" of law.

If you are interested in or concerned about how a bill you supported is going to be implemented, contact the appropriate agency about its rule making process. Because the process is designed to be fair and impartial, public comment is welcome.

Courts

The Judicial Branch is composed of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and District Courts. One of the powers of the court is to interpret laws. Thus, if there is a question on meaning or application, citizens may turn to the courts for assistance.