April 2018

**Workshop: Training on Effective Lobbying for Higher Education**

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**Recommended Citation**  
DOI: [https://doi.org/10.58188/1941-8043.1745](https://doi.org/10.58188/1941-8043.1745)  
Available at: [https://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol0/iss13/2](https://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol0/iss13/2)

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If you are going to advocate for or against legislation, you have to know some basics about your legislature and the people in it.

Who ARE these people??
Basics about YOUR LEGISLATURE

• How long is the session?
• When do they meet?
• Committees – what are they and who are the members?
• How many legislators are there in each house?
• What is the majority party in each house?
• Who comprises the leadership in each house?
• Is the legislature leadership-driven or lead by caucus?
How long is the session? And when do they meet?

• Some are long

• In NJ, the legislative session lasts TWO YEARS

• There are committee meetings and voting sessions all year
  • Although typically not in July or August, there have been meeting days then
  • Also there is a budget break in April

• Some are short

• In Texas, the legislature operates under the biennial system: they convene regular sessions at noon on the second Tuesday in January of odd-numbered years.

• The maximum duration of a regular session is 140 days.
Committees: what are they and who are the members?

• Every legislature has a committee structure
• Committees are grouped by topic
• Some are specific, some not
  • Higher Education vs. Economic Development

• Who are the chair and vice-chair of the committee?
• Who are the other members?
How many legislators are there in each house? What is the majority party in each house?

- State legislative membership varies in size, currently ranging from 49 to 424 total members.

- A comparison:
  - Rhode Island – 38 State Senators and 75 members of the House
  - California - 40 State Senators and 80 members of the Assembly

- Who are they?
  - Democrat … Green … Independent … Republican. State legislators differ in their political party affiliations, so every legislative election affects the partisan composition of chambers in all states except Nebraska. Legislators in Nebraska are required to run on a nonpartisan basis.
  - Let’s all move to Nebraska!!!
Who comprises the leadership in each house? Is the legislature leadership-driven or lead by caucus?

- What are the leadership positions?
  - Senate Presidents, Speakers of the House, Majority Leaders and Minority Leaders
  - Chairs of Committees, particularly Budget/Appropriations

- Do the leaders lead? Or do the caucuses run things?
  - Even if it is generally one way or another, it can always vary depending on the topic
If you are going to advocate for or against legislation, you have to know some basics about the legislative process.
The Shortest Primer EVER

- A bill is introduced
  - One house or both
- It will be heard in committee
  - This is the public’s opportunity to present testimony
- After it is released from committee, it will be posted for a vote in the full house (called the Board List)
- This has to happen in both houses
- The bills from each house MUST be identical
  - If not, they must be reconciled
- Once both houses have passed identical bills, the legislation moves to the Governor for signing or a veto
On to the real advocacy!!

But, before we get to the hard stuff ...
Basics about your STRATEGY

• What are the priorities of the legislature and the administration?
• Who are the players in your state?
• How do your interests dovetail with the above?
• Which legislators will sponsor or support your legislation? Who will oppose it?
• What are the arguments in favor AND AGAINST your legislation?
• What are the fiscal realities?
What are the priorities of the legislature and the administration?

• Even though these are together on one slide, they may not be the same ... AT ALL
  • The governor and the legislature can be different parties
  • There can be fractures within the same party
  • Sometimes there are differences due to geography, personality, history, etc.

• When thinking about the process, think two big steps:
  • If you get something through the legislature, it still has to get signed by the Governor – will s/he sign it?
Who are the players in your state?

• Which groups have political clout?
  • Unions, farmers, gun lobby
• Which groups have money?
  • Unions, industry, corporations
• Which groups can motivate their members to vote?
  • Unions, police, religious organizations
How do your interests dovetail with the above?

Let’s get real:
Are you picking a fight with an entity that has the political clout, money or membership that can

Squash you like a bug?
Which legislators will sponsor or support or your legislation? Which ones will oppose it?

• This is why you need to know your legislators

• Not all legislators are created equal
  • Some have juice, some don’t
  • Are your supporters weak? In the minority?
  • Is your opposition in leadership? In the majority?
What are the arguments in favor AND AGAINST your legislation? (Here’s your lawyer moment)

• You probably already know why your idea is the BEST EVER
• But no matter what it is, not everyone will agree with you
• You need to think about the arguments against it
  • If anyone says anything negative – don’t argue – LISTEN!
  • Engage people who have different perspectives on it
  • Pretend you are someone opposing it – what do you say? Why?
• How are you going to respond to the arguments?
  • Plan on addressing all of them – but DON’T talk about them if no one else is!
What are the fiscal realities?

• Even when you have the BEST idea, you’ve done all the strategy, everyone agrees it is a wonderful concept, and the legislature and administration LOVE it

• Many times the roadblock is the Almighty Dollar
  • States are still recovering from the Great Recession
  • Other issues are a priority
To sum up - Legislative Advocacy feels like this ...
So, let’s look at puppies!!