How to make the State House work for YOU: Lobbying 101

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Who’s your legislator?

Familiarize yourself with the following:

- Your current state representative and senator (both for your hometown and where you work)
- The current Speaker of the House
- The current Senate President
- The current House Ways and Means Chair
- The current Senate Ways and Means Chair
- The stages of a bill becoming law

Find your legislator here: https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator
See Leadership here: https://malegislature.gov/Legislators/Leadership
501(c)3s, don’t be afraid to engage...

✅ You can...
- Direct contact (in person, letter, digital) to support/oppose legislation
- Testify/provide testimony
- Educate/conduct requested studies
- Treat all candidates equally

❌ You cannot...
- Endorse candidates
- Engage in campaign activity
- Exceed lobbying thresholds*

*See Lobbying Disclosure Act if you have questions
The Legislature
MA Legislature

House
(160 members)

Senate
(40 members)

~37,000 constituents

~160,000 constituents

~5,000-7,000 bills introduced
<10% become law

Two year session
Legislator Roles

- Representative of constituents (individuals)
- Delegate of communities (municipalities)
- Allocation of Resources
- Leader
- Policy expert
The Legislative Process
Engage throughout the process...

- Know your legislators! (get in the door early with new legislators to educate on your issues)
- Consistent interactions (Local events, meetings, office hours)
- Legislative breakfasts/briefings
- Recognition of key legislators
- Media (Social, organizational, local, public)
- Asks - opportunities for leadership (Leading bills, co-sponsorship, budget earmarks)
Bills filed by 3rd Fri. in Jan. – can start in House or Senate

*Opportunity for members to lead or co-sponsor bills

Co-sponsors due by 1st Fri. in Feb. (House only)
Law Making in Massachusetts

*Your opportunity to testify/send letter

Finance-related bills start in House

Track a bill here: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/Search
What can happen to a bill in committee?

Subject-area committees review legislation

Bill to advance:
• Favorably
• Amend the bill or redraft
• Discharge to another committee

Bill dead:
• Unfavorably or Ought NOT to pass
• Study order
Law Making in Massachusetts

* You can send letters to other committees to weigh in throughout process
Important Players for Legislation

• House Speaker Robert DeLeo
• Senate President Karen Spilka
• House Ways & Means Chair
• Senate Ways & Means Chair
• Minority Leaders and Asst. Leaders
• Environment Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs (House and Senate)

See Leadership: https://malegislature.gov/Legislators/Leadership
Budget Timeline – Points of Engagement

Nov.
Representatives share top budget asks with House Ways & Means

3rd Wed. in Jan.
Governor files budget

May
Senate Ways & Means releases budget
• **Amendments/Earmarks

Jul.–Aug.
Gov. submits proposed vetoes, reductions or amendments subject to legislative override

Jan.
Senators share top budget asks with Senate Ways & Means

Apr.–May
House Ways & Means releases budget
• **Amendments/Earmarks

June–July
House and Senate Conference Committee appointed

Track the budget here: https://malegislature.gov/Budget
FY21 Green Budget

- Department of Conservation and Recreation – Parks
- Department of Fish and Game – Division of Ecological Restoration
- Department of Fish and Game – Natural Heritage Program
- Department of Environmental Protection – Administration

+ Many other organizations!
Working as a Coalition

Early on:
- Find partners (think outside the box)
- Agree on a unified, basic position
- Be transparent about where priorities overlap/don’t
- Determine how to work collectively

During advocacy:
- Be strategic about who to bring to meetings – the messenger is the message
- Consider talking to opposition so you can anticipate challenges and look for compromises
- Regular and transparent communication
- Be open to new partners, opportunities, and compromises
Ways to Engage
We need you!

Congressional staff who think the following strategies have a lot of influence on a legislator who is undecided on an issue

- 46% In-person lobby visit from constituents
- 36% Contact from a person who represents many people
- 20% Individualized postal letters
- 19% Individualized email messages
- 14% Phone calls
- 8% Visits from lobbyist

Congessional Management Foundation, 2010 Perceptions of Citizen Advocacy on Capitol Hill

Find out more: www.fcnl.org/congress_communication
Opportunities to engage

- Call or email
- Comment letters (all committees)
- Testimony on bills (joint committees)
- In person visits
- Public regulatory hearings
- Joining a coalition
- Site visits
Prepare for the visit

Know your Legislator
- Identify a success
- Role/ability to help

Know the Legislation
- Status, prognosis, supporters, opposition
- Define your “ask”

Build your Team
- Talking points
- Assign roles
Meeting Agenda – Thank, Update, Ask

1. Identify yourselves
2. Start with a ‘thank you’
3. Describe the bill and its support
4. Make a clear ask
5. Provide Information/
   Make yourself available in future
Your Legislator is Thinking...

“How do I move my agenda through the legislative process?”

• Do I have the information for colleagues?
• Where is it in the process?
• Is there district support? Who supports and opposes?
• Is there support among leadership?
• Do I have to spend political capital?
Post-Meeting Follow up

- Write a thank you note
- Provide Information
- Repeat your ask
- Consider thanking publically
  - Ex. Letter to the Editor, newsletter, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
- Look for additional ways to engage
It all applies to the local levels, too
Current Political Context

Challenges
• Covid-19 and economic implications
• New leadership and need for education on our issues
  • Will be new legislators next year, too
• Competing priorities
• Federal rollbacks

Opportunities
• Focus on climate adaptation and mitigation
• Green budget and various climate funding proposals
• Momentum on Conservation Land Tax Credit; victory with Community Preservation Act
Questions?
FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US!

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