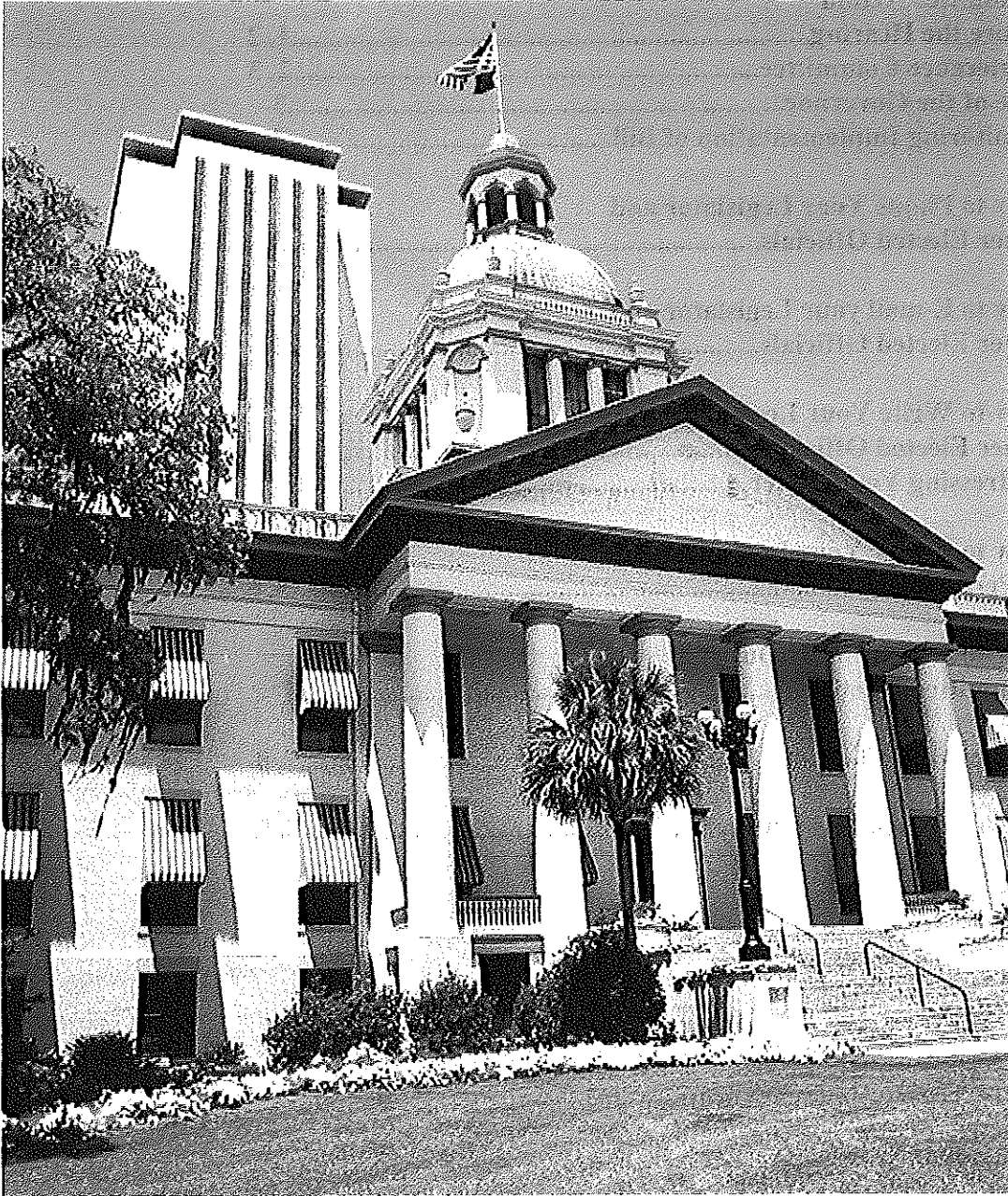


# How to Lobby



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# HOW TO LOBBY

## **We are all lobbyists**

The term lobbyist, which originally described a person waiting in a legislative anteroom or lobby in order to collar legislators and influence legislation, is now used in a wider sense. It may refer to a citizen making a phone call to a school board member or her legislators, to a volunteer advocate for the LWVF, an environmental group, or housing group, to the professional who makes a living advocating for Florida Power and Light, the National Rifle Association, or the Sierra Club. All of us, amateur and professional alike, seek to influence the course of government action.

## **How a Bill Becomes a Law**

At each step of the process you can become involved in some way. (See the charts on the last two pages. It is important to understand the process and the possibilities for exerting influence at the appropriate stages. An experienced lobbyist would help initiate the legislation, help write the bill, help find the authors (a most important step—the choice can determine the outcome), help make the necessary changes, and guide the bill to its final passage. A good lobbyist may become indispensable to the chief author of a bill. Such complete participation is unusual for the citizen lobbyist, but he/she may seek to influence legislation at any stage of the process.

In developing legislation and/or lobbying, lobbyists will have contact with committee chairs, committee secretaries, research assistants, and the research staff. It is probable that at some point lobbyists will be working with various state departments and state agencies that will be affected by the legislation. These contacts will vary with the issue and personalities involved. Lobbyists may want to contact the governor and administration staff.

## ***Committee Action***

Here is a great opportunity for the citizen lobbyist. All bills are assigned to committees for action. All committee meetings or hearings are open to the public.

## ***Before the Hearing***

1. Write letters, make phone calls, send a fax, or (best of all) make personal visits to all members of the committee. It is helpful to provide each member with a fact sheet and other resource materials. Lots of information is helpful, but be sure to include a one-page condensation for immediate perusal. Legislators do not have time to thoroughly research every bill.
2. Contact any other legislators or public officials, including the governor, who might influence the committee. Keep in touch with any state agencies involved in the issue.

3. Join or organize a coalition of organizations working on your issue.
4. Try to have each legislator contacted by a resident of her/his district.
5. Contact the legislative aide for the committee and ask to get on the list of people who wish to testify.

### ***Chamber***

Contact all legislators now that the full House or Senate will be debating the bill.

1. Provide fact sheets and resource materials to all members
2. Solicit calls to legislators from their constituents.
3. Give your opinions in writing on any amendments that were attached in committee or are contemplated on the floor to key members.
4. Ask all members of your coalition to make similar contacts with legislators.

### ***Calendar***

Contact the legislators again, perhaps with just a short letter or phone call. They should all have the facts from you by now.

### ***Second House***

This will refer to the Senate if action began in the House and to the House if action began in the Senate. Action is the same as in the first house. However, if you are a chief lobbyist (if you have been instrumental in drafting and/or supporting the bill), you will serve as the eyes and ears of each chief author by advising her/him of the action taken in the other house and its committees. There is very little communication between authors in the two houses. You can be that vital communication link.

### ***Conference Committee***

If the House and Senate versions of a bill are not in total agreement, a conference committee is appointed. In reality, the conference committee is composed of separate committees from the Senate and the House of Representatives. As separate committees, they vote separately, not only on the final product but on any subsidiary questions put to a vote. A majority of each committee prevails. These members are appointed by the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader. It is still possible to be influential at this stage. First, have members of your coalition contact the Speaker and the Majority Leader and indicate the importance of including certain members on the committee. Then, members of the committee are your targets; phone calls, letters and personal visits can make a difference. Use your judgment here. Don't overpower them. Generally, by the time these committees are formed it is late in the session, and everyone is extremely busy. Your presence at conference committee meetings may be the most effective

lobbying technique at this stage. Chief lobbyists may be called upon to provide information on the bill.

### ***Governor***

After a bill has passed both houses, your messages should be directed to the governor and his staff. Be sure all members of your coalition make this contact. The governor should hear from all parts of the state. Note: This is probably not your first contact with the governor's office on this issue. He/she has heard from you and/or your supporters since the bill was first introduced. When a bill comes to the Governor's desk, he has choices. He can sign it into law; he can allow it to become law without his signature; or, he can veto the bill and it will not become law. An override of such a veto requires a 2/3 majority in each of the houses.

### ***Monitor the Implementation***

As a concerned citizen lobbyist your job is not over once the governor signs a bill. That bill will not be effective unless it is enforced. Various state administrative agencies are responsible for such enforcement through rule making and supervision. The lobbyist now becomes a monitor. Determine which agency will be responsible for enforcement of your bill. Attend any rule-making sessions. You have opportunities for input here. Keep the public informed on how well the law is being implemented.

### **How to Phone Your Legislator and Other Elected Officials**

1. For legislators' phone numbers, go to the Online Sunshine Website.
  - Click on [flsenate.gov](http://flsenate.gov); this will take you to the Senate website. On the left side of the screen, click on "**Senators**" followed by "Member Pages." You will then be able to access information on any individual Senator.
  - To access Representatives' phone numbers, click on [myfloridahouse.gov](http://myfloridahouse.gov). At the top of the page, click on "**Representatives**"; you will be presented with a list. Click on the name of the legislator you need, and you will get all the information necessary to contact the person.
2. State your name, address, and indicate that you are a constituent.
3. Give the name and House or Senate File number of the legislation that is the subject of your call. For example: HB537 or SB960.
4. State clearly whether you **oppose or support** the legislation. Usually you will be speaking with an administrator or aide who is checking pro or con and the call will last a very short time.
5. State how you want your legislator to vote.

## **How to E-mail your Legislator and Other Elected Officials**

The standard e-mail address format for House and Senate members follows. Check the *Members Directory* or the website if you have a problem. Examples:

mary.smith@myfloridahouse.gov  
doe.john.web@flsenate.gov

For constitutional officers, the format varies. Please check the website [myflorida.com](http://myflorida.com) for contact information. Associated Industries and the both houses of the legislature publish e-mail addresses each session. The Associated Industries booklet is for sale; the legislature does not charge for their publications.

Send an original or personalized message.

Always include your name, address, phone number and e-mail address. This not only indicates whether you live in the district, but will allow the elected official to respond if the message is printed.

## **How to Write Your Legislator and Other Elected Officials**

1. Spell the legislator's name correctly, with proper address. While the Florida Legislature is in session send letters to Senate or House offices; otherwise, send to home or business address per their preferences in the official directory. You may obtain this information from the Online Sunshine Florida Website.
2. Describe the bill by popular name and by House or Senate file number.
3. Know if your legislator is one of the authors and acknowledge it.
4. Be brief and clear. State the issue and how you want your elected official to vote in your first sentence. Give a concise statement of your reasons. Longer letters are appreciated if you have some new information on a subject.
5. Do not express anger. You will want to have future contact with the legislator.
6. Be polite in your request for support or opposition; give reasons why. Never demand. Never threaten defeat at the next election.
7. Include your name and address.
8. Use your own words. Do not use form letters or postcards.
9. Write about only one issue in a letter.

10. Be constructive. Explain an alternative or better solution to the problem.
11. Write legibly or type.
12. Send a note of appreciation when your elected official supports your issue.
13. When you sign your name make sure your officials can tell how you wish to be addressed if they should reply.

## ***How to Address Your Legislator***

### **State Senator**

Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
Senate  
The Capitol  
404 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

Dear Senator:

### **State Representative**

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
House of Representatives  
The Capitol  
402 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

Dear Representative:

## **How to Lobby Your Legislator in Person**

Meet in the legislative office or somewhere in the home district.

If possible, introduce yourself and perhaps your organization immediately after the legislator's election. This would probably be done in the home district before the Florida Legislature convenes. Congratulate her/him on the election. Explain your or your group's legislative interests. Interview your legislator on his/her positions. Try to have a resident in the legislator's district with you, or better yet, have that person conduct the interview. Subsequent contacts may be made in the home district again or at the Florida Legislature.

1. Make appointments if possible. Keep them. Be prompt. If you drop in and cannot make contact with your legislator, deliver your written message to his/her legislative aide. Legislative aides can be your best allies; treat them well.

2. Go in groups of two or three. You can give each other support and provide an effective way to train new lobbyists.
3. At the interview:
  - Identify yourself and your organization.
  - Explain briefly why you are there.
  - Be sure to have a hand-out to leave behind—research on the issue and a one-page summary of your position and rationale.
4. Be brief and to the point as you outline your position. Considerations that led to your group's position add a great deal to your rationale. Because they let the legislators know what people are thinking and how. Don't give personal opinions which might be misunderstood as those of the organization.
5. Know the view of those opposing your position and politely counter them in your discussion.
6. Ask directly what the legislator's position is on the pending bill. Will the legislator play a leadership role in supporting or opposing the bill? Legislators can be vague. You don't want to be surprised about a vote.
7. Be friendly, earnest, and down to earth. If a legislator disagrees with you, don't become hyper-aggressive, defensive, or over-intellectual. You may have to agree to disagree on a certain bill, but remain friendly so that you can start fresh on another bill another day.
8. If you don't know, say so. You can find out answers to questions asked of you and get them to the legislator later. Be sure to follow up.
9. Leave the way open for further conversations on the issue. Even if you will never agree on the issue under discussion, you may want this person's support on other legislation.
10. Follow up your visit with a letter. Thank the legislator for support if support was indicated or for the opportunity to present your view. Also, send any additional information which may have been requested about your issue or your organization. If you had been unable to answer a question during the visit, look up the answer and include it in your letter.
11. Thank you notes are important at all stages of lobbying. We often take our supporters for granted and woo the legislators who are undecided or in opposition. Supporters need strokes too. Don't wait until an issue is settled before you say "thank you."



## **How to Get the Most Out of a Committee Meeting**

1. Committee schedules are printed at the beginning of each week during the session. Schedules are also printed daily and updated if necessary. They may be obtained in the Printing Office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Senate Office Building or the House Duplicating Center on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Capitol. You may also obtain committee schedules at [www.flsenate.gov](http://www.flsenate.gov) or [www.myfloridahouse.gov](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov).

Legislative Tracking provides personalized legislative tracking and e-mail notification for current Florida Legislation. You are able to:

- Add House and Senate bills to your list by number.
  - View the legislative status of your bills.
  - Modify your list at any time.
  - Choose frequency of e-mail updates.
2. When you arrive at the Capitol, go to either printing office to pick up a schedule of committee meetings or a packet for the meeting you are going to attend; the packet will give the agenda and a copy of the bill.
  3. Arrive at the committee meeting early enough so that you can:
    - Get a seat
    - Pick up any materials available.
    - Network with others working on your issue.
    - Identify committee members as they arrive. All legislators have name plates at their places in the committee meeting. If you have a Directory, you will find pictures of the members. These also include committee lists and are very helpful in identifying legislators and staff members. This identification gets easier with experience.
  4. Once the hearing is underway, pay strict attention, take notes on who said what if you can, and try to get the gist of arguments pro and con, questions that committee members ask, and the tenor of committee reaction. Notice if a legislator is following the party line (or leadership) or acts independently. It is acceptable to quietly enter or leave the room during the hearing.

## **How to Write Testimony**

1. Identify yourself (the person presenting the testimony) in the first paragraph.
  - If testifying as an individual, give name and address.
  - If representing a group, give your name and the name of the group.

2. Give the reason for your interest in the subject of the hearing or committee meeting.
  - If testifying as an individual, explain why the bill or administrative rules or proposed action by a governing body would affect you.
  - If representing a group, explain the group's interest and how you know that other members of the group share the opinions expressed in the testimony.
3. Outline the problems as you see them.
4. Give solutions you think would be acceptable and alternatives to propose solutions with which you do not agree.
5. Be sure to emphasize the good things you see in the bill. If you are testifying against a bill or proposed action but do agree with some of it, be sure to mention those parts you do support.
6. If the body of your testimony is long or complex, summarize it in one paragraph.
7. State clearly whether you support or oppose the subject under consideration.
8. Thank the committee or governing body for the opportunity to express your opinions.
9. Prepare enough copies of your statement for all members and staff of the committee and the press.

## **How to Present Testimony**

1. Once you enter the committee room, there will be forms available for those people who wish to address the committee. Fill out the form and give it to one of the attendants who will get it to the committee chair. You should have copies of your testimony for committee members; either deliver the testimony to the committee administrator or bring it to the hearing and give it to the staff to distribute. It's a good idea to have some copies available for the press.
2. At the hearing, the order in which speakers are heard is at the discretion of the chair of the committee. He/she may take all proponents and then the cons, or he/she may alternate. There will be time limits. The chair will first call on the sponsor of author of the bill. If it is a department bill, the sponsor may defer to the department head immediately.
3. Look pleasant, speak up, but don't shout. Speak as clearly and forcefully as possible, being sure to introduce yourself as representing your organization. Speak informally whenever possible. This presentation is generally accompanied by a written statement of position and concerns in more formal language. If time is obviously a factor, briefly summarize and refer to the written copy that has been handed out.

4. Thank the committee for its attention or for the opportunity to give your statement when you have finished.
5. Often committee members' attention wanders or there is conversation among them. It's nothing personal.
6. When you're finished, be prepared for questions. Be ready to tell how you arrive at a position and any facts gleaned during your study that will further bear out your position. If you don't have a position on a particular aspect of the bill, say so. Don't extrapolate your group's position. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so, and promise to find out and to get the information to the committee chair. Often the question-and-answer period is the most fruitful part of the hearing.
7. Look for ways in which your organization can be of further service. If more information is obviously needed, alert the appropriate organization chair who will take care of it.
8. Keep an eye out for media representatives, whom you'll get to recognize. If you have extra copies of your statement, offer them to news correspondents.
9. Don't relax yet. The committee hearing is only one of the early stages of the legislative process. The committee votes, the House votes, the Senate votes, and anywhere along the line the bill may be substantially amended or killed before it gets to the governor for final action. Follow through.
10. Be brief and concise; strive for one typewritten, double spaced page.

