

Best Practices in Advocacy

November 7, 2024

Overview

“If you’re not at the table, you’re probably on the menu.”

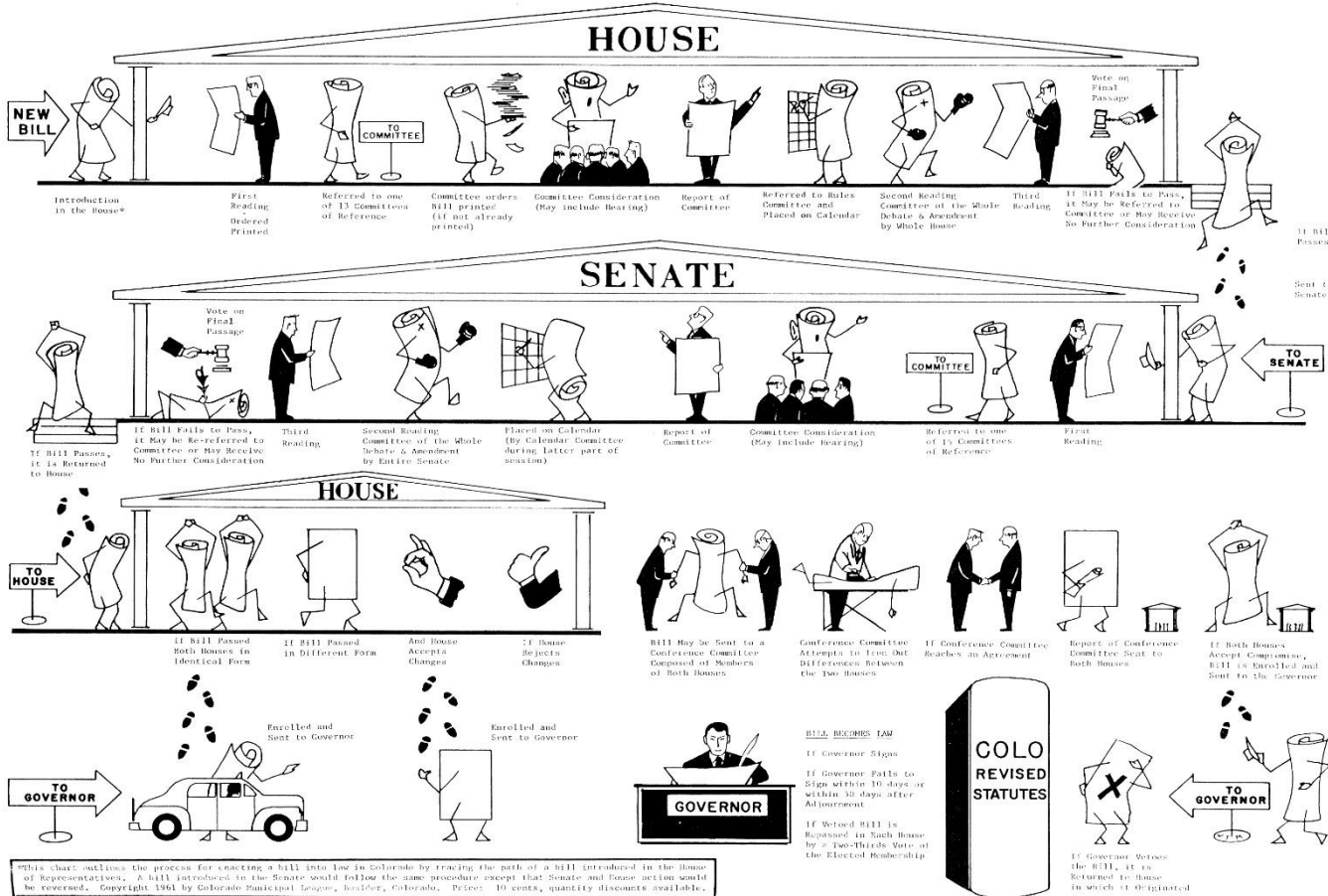
- Local elected officials play a critical role in advocating for their towns and cities by serving as a voice for their communities and constituents.
- Every year the state legislature contemplates many bills that directly impact local government’s budgets, operations, projects, etc.
- We often see a disconnect at the state legislature between large lofty policy goals vs. reality of implementation.
- With shorter term limits at the state level there is often a need to re-educate incoming legislators on ideas like local control, home rule, etc.
- With funding constraints at the state level, there has been a trend towards pushing mandates down to the local level.



Colorado State Government Structure

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW a complicated procedure

PREPARED BY THE COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE



*This chart outlines the process for enacting a bill into law in Colorado by tracing the path of a bill introduced in the House of Representatives. A bill introduced in the Senate would follow the same procedure except that Senate and House action would be reversed. Copyright 1981 by Colorado Municipal League, Boulder, Colorado. Price: 10 cents, quantity discounts available.

Key Players:

- Legislative Branch
 - Majority/Minority Party Dynamics
 - Legislative Leadership Dynamics
- Executive Branch
 - Governor's Office
 - Departments/Regulatory Agencies
- Interest Groups
 - YOU! And a LOT of other people



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Building Strategic Relationships

Engagement

- Important to establish connections with legislators through informal meetings and events when possible.
 - Invite legislators to a council meeting to report on their legislative priorities and hear from council.
 - Invite them to a land use hearing, or a city project.
 - Invite them to attend a celebration, a ribbon cutting, festival, etc.
 - Try to attend district events, community meetings, or listening sessions sponsored by your legislator.
 - Developing relationships outside the Capitol building ensures better results when you're in the Capitol building.
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Crafting Your Advocacy Message

Remember the ABC's

- Accuracy, brevity and courtesy are three of the most important things you can remember when dealing with legislators.
- Give accurate and concise information. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and never give out false information. Be brief and to the point, don't ramble on. Legislators are besieged with information. They appreciate someone who gets right to the point.
- be persistent, but never abusive. Never badger, bully or threaten a legislator.
- Don't forget to say "thank you" to your legislators. When your legislators do support your efforts, a thank-you note, or other special recognition is really appreciated and goes a long way to solidifying relations.

Provide Examples

- be prepared with sufficient information to articulate your arguments, to respond to questions, and to be able to counter the opposition. Wherever possible, quantify the impact of a proposed bill and explain how it will affect specific projects in your city or town. This is the kind of information a legislator can use and appreciates having.

Pay Attention to Timing of Legislation



Lobbying Techniques

Formal Meetings

- Request appointments with state legislators to discuss local issues.
- In-person meetings are always best if possible.

Written Communication

- Provide legislators with letters, position papers, and emails to articulate your advocacy.

Public Testimony

- Committee hearings offer important opportunities to influence the outcome of a vote
- CML's advocacy team are testimony experts and are happy to help you prepare, answer questions, and be there to guide members through the process the day of.



Mobilizing Community Support

Grassroots Advocacy is Effective!

- Utilize local chambers of commerce, Registered Neighborhood Organizations (or their equivalent), local service groups, community wide organizations, NGO's you have relationships with or partner with, or businesses the city contracts with to advocate for or against specific legislation.

Utilizing Social Media

- Know your town or city's individual policies for social media
- Online platforms can be a great way to raise awareness and engage constituents.



Follow-up Strategies

Ongoing Communication

- Keep legislators updated on issues and community sentiments.
- Make sure they're signed up for newsletters, meeting notices, etc.

Post-Meeting Actions

- Send Thank you notes and recap discussion to maintain relationships.
- Continue the relationship outside of the legislative session.



Ethical Considerations

Understand Colorado Lobbying Regulations

- Familiarize yourself with state laws governing lobbying practices.
- Understand your munis rules around engagement and lobbying.

When do you need a registered lobbyist?





How CML can help

- We are your lobbyists!
- We can help facilitate introductions, conversations and meetings with legislators.
- We can keep you up to date on legislation



How CML Keeps You Informed

- *CML Statehouse Report* in your inbox
 - Sign up on CML's website: <https://www.cml.org/home/publications-news/periodical-subscription-request>
- CML's website – www.cml.org/advocacy-legal
 - CML position papers
 - Legislative Webinars
 - CML box score and list of bills followed
- Social media
 - Facebook  
 - X (Twitter)(www.X.com/co_municipal)
- *Annual Colorado Laws Enacted Affecting Municipalities*
- *CML Newsletter* (bi-weekly)
- *Colorado Municipalities* magazine (bi-monthly)



Thank you!

Questions?

Contact me anytime!

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