

The Legislative Process and You

Influencing Public Policy



- Overview of the legislative process – How decisions are made
- Why get involved
- How to get involved – make an impact

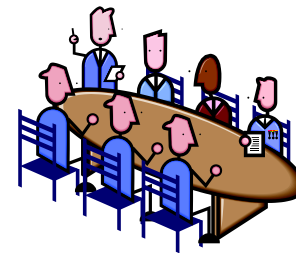


Your State Government

- Massachusetts has a 2-year legislative session, running from January of the odd numbered year to December of the even numbered year (although formal sessions end earlier)

Your State Government

- 5,000 – 6,000 bills
- \$30+ billion state budget
- 30 Committees by subject matter



The Legislative Funnel

Members of the Legislature

Committees

Ways & Means Committee

Leadership Team

**Governor, Speaker &
Senate President**

How A Bill Gets Started

- Voters



- Opinion/industry leaders



- Constituency Groups



- The Media



How A Bill Becomes A Law

A bill is filed in the House or Senate.



It is given a bill number and assigned to a Committee.

First Step

The Committee holds a public hearing on the bill.

At this point oral and written testimony is offered to the Committee in favor or in opposition to the legislation.

OPTIONS

- The Committee has four options:
 - put it into a study Committee
 - put it on an "extension" to take up later in the legislative year
 - give it an "unfavorable report"
 - give the bill a "favorable report."

More Committees

A bill must also pass through the Steering and Policy Committee for each respective branch before being sent to the floor for a vote.



To the Floor

A "favorable" bill is put on the House Calendar for debate and vote.



Second Reading

The bill goes through a 'Second Reading'. At this time the bill is debated and may be amended. The House then votes on the bill to pass on to a 'Third Reading'.

Third Reading Committee

The bill proceeds to the Committee on Bills in the Third Reading. Here the bill is reviewed for accuracy, legality, consistency, and constitutionality.

Third Reading

The bill goes back to the House floor for its 'Third Reading'. It is again subject to debate and amendments. The House then votes to pass it and sends it to the Senate.

Both Houses

The bill follows the same
'Three reading' path through
the Senate as it did in the
House.



Conference Committee



If the bills have differences
the bill must go to a
House/Senate Conference
Committee to reconcile the
differences between the two
bills.

Final Vote



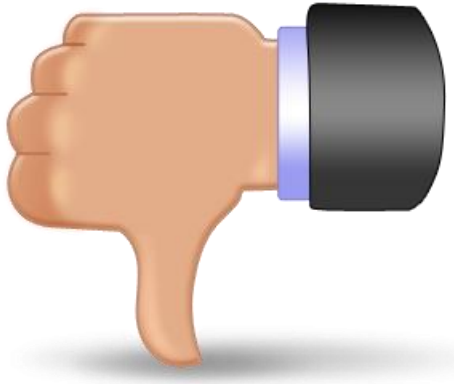
The bill is sent to the House
and
Senate floor for final
enactment.



The Governor



The bill then goes to the Governor's desk, where he has 10 days to either sign it, veto it, send it back to the legislature with amendments.



Veto

If the Governor vetoes the bill,
the legislature can 'override'
the veto with a two-thirds vote
in each branch.



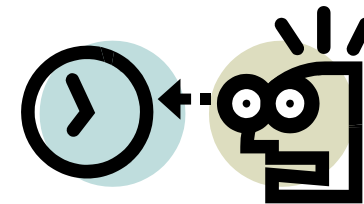
Get Involved???



1. Virtually every issues that affects municipal tax policy is impacted by the decisions made by your state legislators.



2. Legislators make different decisions when watched by affected constituents.



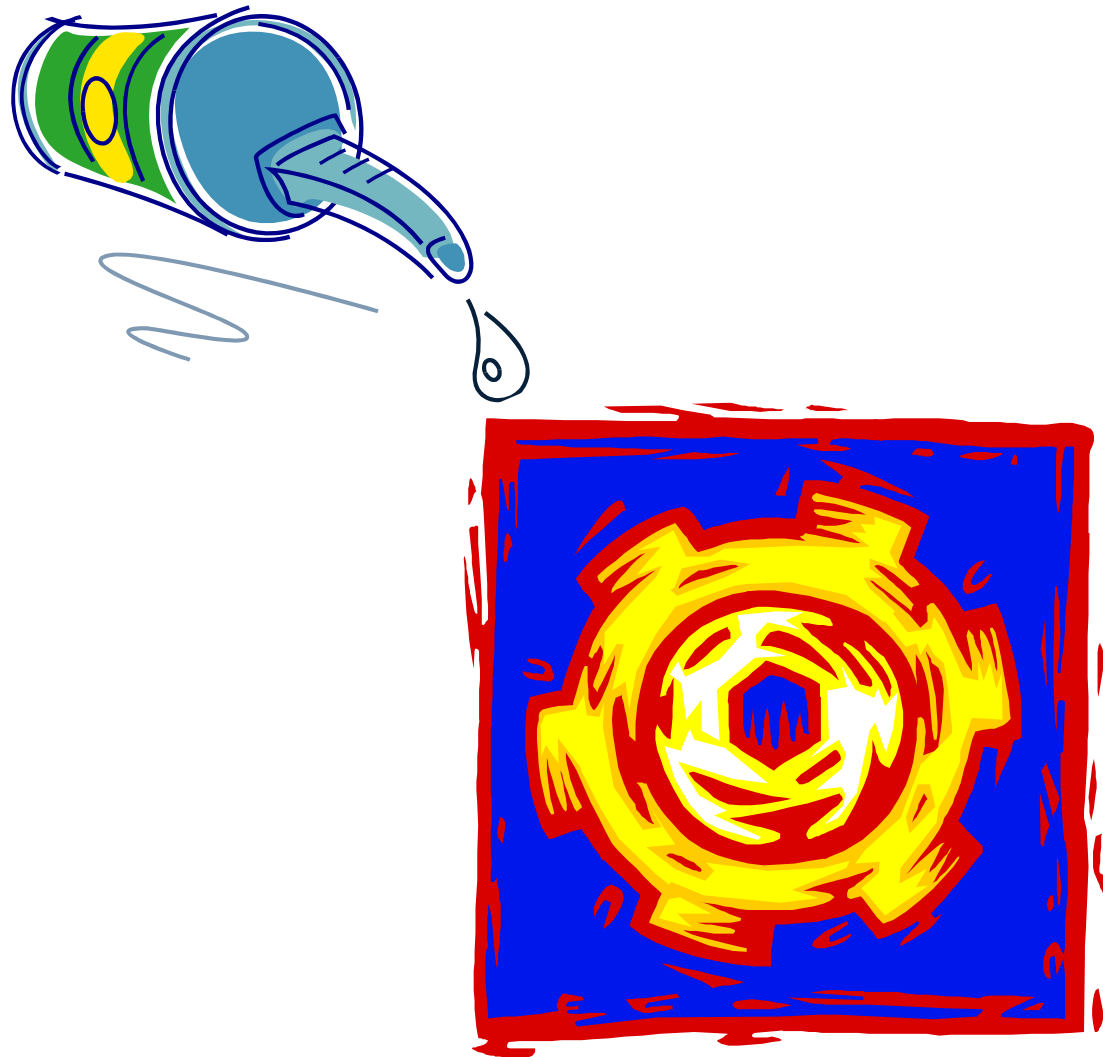
3. There are hundreds of issues, thousands of bills and funding proposals filed each session. No legislator or staff has the time to know all of them or be an expert on them. **YOU ARE THE EXPERTS.**
4. Competition. A lot of bills, not a lot of time to pass them.



5. You are the experts!



. . . The Squeaky Wheel Gets the Grease



The Wheel of Influence

What Makes Legislators Act?

Voters

Media



Leadership

Governor

Interested Groups

Lobbyists

Other Government Officials

The environment we work in

- Countless number of issues – interest groups and media pressure working to push an agenda
 - Each organization working to forward their cause
- Legislators are generalists - We must educate members and their staff on issues
- Legislators are good snapshots of their district

The environment we work in

- Legislators have numbers of influences on their decision making process
 - Speaker has a different set of influences than the freshman legislator
 - Political clout of members
 - An interest groups political clout

Where Legislators Get Information From to Make a Decision



**How to get
involved and
make an impact**

There are 3 distinct phases to every advocacy campaign

- Awareness
- Action and enactment
- Implementation

Building a Strong Lobbying Program

- Use data and research to make your argument
- Develop a consistent, simple message
- Influence public opinion – Public opinion drives public policy
- A communications plan – internally and externally
- Constituent pressure from the district
- Validators of your position
- An everyday presence in the State House
- Lobby Day
- Building coalitions

- Build the relationship – get to know your State Senator and State Representative – you have an advantage
- You are the experts – use that to your advantage
- The more personal the more impact
- Keep it ABC. Accurate, Brief, Concise

- **There is not one silver bullet**
- You have to get involved and stay involved
 - Turnover of legislature
 - Out of sight out of mind
 - Too many other issues

Grassroots lobbying

The more personal the contact the more impact it has: (We will go into detail on each of these)

- Postcard
- Email
- Write
- Phone
- Visit



- Public hearing



- Types of advocates

- Experts in the field
- Celebrity' (ie Tedy Bruschi)
- Survivors
- Grassroots
- Experience on the issue

- Events or forums

- Lobby Day



- Finding a legislative champion
 - Local issue in their district (feel strongly about)
- Be sure legislators get credit for good work

The Toolbox of Constituent Lobbying



Personal contact is the most effective way to impact an elected officials stand on an issue



Write Your Legislators

Writing to your legislator is an effective way of expressing your concerns about an issue.

- Letters provide much of the fuel that powers the legislative process.
- A stack of mail relating to a particular issue, especially if the letter is personal and handwritten, is very influential with a policy maker.



Email Your Legislators

- A quick and effective tool
- Useful in a time-sensitive situation



Postcard Drives

- A quick and effective tool
- Creates larger numbers of contact



Phone Your Legislators

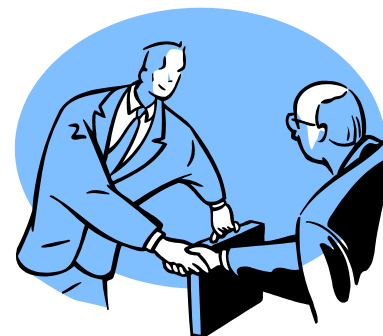
Calling legislators is a quick and effective way to express your concern over an issue of extreme importance to you.

It also allows you to connect more with the office staff, who are key allies when working with elected officials.



Visit With Your Legislators

Visiting a legislator is the most personal contact a constituent can make to discuss a policy issue or specific legislation.



Visit with State Legislators in Your District

The most effective and influential thing you can do is have your State Legislators visit your program site.

- Have yourself or organize a small group to meet with your legislators.



Remember these Rules of Lobbying

1. ABC

- Accurate
- Brief
- Concise

2. The more personal, the more impact

3. The squeaky wheel gets the grease

