

# ADVOCACY 101

## What is Advocacy?

Webster's defines advocacy as "the act of speaking, writing, or acting in support of something or someone." It is articulating your views on proposed laws, regulations, and policies that affect you, your family, and community. Advocacy is best accomplished by having many people voice their concerns

## Public Advocacy

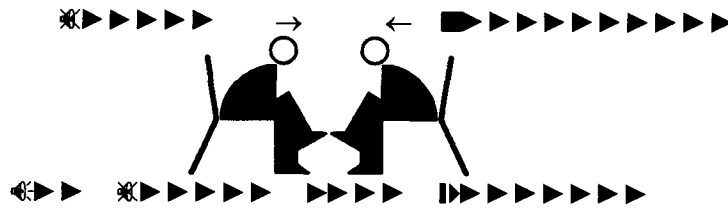
Public advocacy is educating the general public about an issue so that they will better understand and sympathize with your cause. Every time you speak to a group of individuals about your organization or issue concerning the value of the arts in society, you are doing public advocacy. Every time you write a letter to the editor or send an article to the newspaper, you are doing public advocacy.

## Legislative Advocacy

This is what most people think of when they hear the word advocacy. Legislative advocacy is working to influence legislation on a local, state, or national level. This includes legislation to provide additional funding or to create or improve outreach services. Doing legislative advocacy is not difficult. Every time you write, call, or meet with elected officials to inform them about your organization, you are doing legislative advocacy.

## Advocacy Tips

- **Be informed.** Read legislative/advocacy alerts carefully. Know both sides of an issue. Know when a bill is in committee, when the hearing will be held, and who the co-sponsors are.
- **Start early.** Pay attention to issues and proposals early in the process.
- **Be concise.** State your position simply and clearly because you will have a better chance of getting people to listen and respond.
- **Be specific.** Know what you want from your legislator - to draft legislation, propose an amendment, or vote for a bill.
- **Be honest.** Don't exaggerate the facts. Every issue has two sides - be honest about acknowledging the pros and cons of your issue.
- **Give personal examples.** This puts your issue in human terms. Speak from your heart - give real examples of what your issue has meant to you personally. It is much more powerful than giving dry statistics.
- **Practice.** Explain your position to friends and family before meeting with a legislator or testifying before a committee.



- **Continue to communicate.** Keep others informed of your progress and meetings so that follow-up action can be planned.
- **Be courteous.** Always remember to thank legislators for their time and interest, even when they disagree with your position.
- **Be firm and confident.** You are expressing your belief about a particular issue. Be confident in your convictions.
- **Do not make threats.** Telling a legislator that you will not vote for him in the future if s/he does not do what you are asking will only alienate him and may have long standing consequences.
- **Never argue with your legislator.** If it becomes apparent that the person you are meeting with will not support your issue, stick to the facts and ask her to consider your point of view. The goal here is to keep communication open and productive.
- **Do not give up.** Just because your particular legislator may not be supportive, others working with you may have more success. Advocacy is an educational process and takes time.

## **New Mexico Legislative Process: Passage of a Bill**

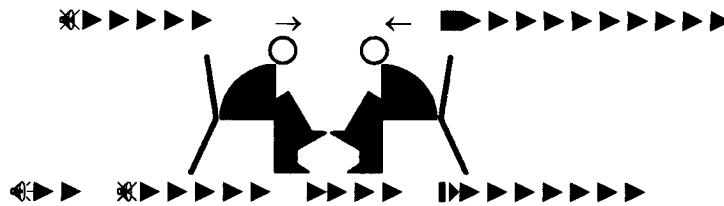
### **Introduction & Committee Referral**

Legislators may singly or by committee introduce bills in either the Senate or the House of Representatives. After a bill has been drafted and prepared for introduction, the Chief Clerk assigns it a number. The Reading Clerk reads it twice by number and title, along with the name of the principal sponsor. The presiding officer orders it printed and assigns it to one or more appropriate committees for further study.

### **Committee Consideration & Action**

Most of the consideration of legislation in New Mexico occurs in committees. It is in committees that the public has the opportunity to testify in favor or opposition to a particular bill. After considering the testimony, the committee can take one of several actions.

1. The committee may recommend to the legislative body that a bill *Do Pass, Do Pass as Amended, or Do Not Pass*, or it may refer a bill back to the floor or to another committee *Without Recommendation*;
2. The committee may substitute a new and similar bill for the original bill, incorporating changes the committee may wish to make;
3. The committee may recommend referral of the bill to another committee; or
4. The committee may simply do nothing and let the bill die by not reporting it out of committee.



The committee reports are subject to adoption by the full House or Senate. When the favorable committee report is adopted, the bill is placed on the calendar, which is the schedule of business the House or Senate must consider on any day.

### **Final Passage**

When a bill is called for its third reading, members may debate its pros and cons on the chamber floor. Amendments may be added at this stage, or the entire bill may be substituted by another similar bill. The sponsor of the bill is allowed to close a debate by speaking last on the bill. A final vote is taken and recorded.

### **Sent to the Other House**

After a bill receives a favorable vote, it is sent with a letter of transmittal to the other house where it follows a similar procedure. Duplication of procedure serves as a safety check ensuring that all aspects are considered before the bill is enacted into law.

### **Concurrence**

A bill that is amended in the second house must be sent back to the first house for agreement. This is called concurrence. If concurrence is denied, the second house votes on whether to *recede* or withdraw from its amendment. If it fails to recede, the bill is usually sent to a *conference committee* to attempt to work out a version agreeable to both houses. In order for the bill to pass, both houses must agree to the report of the conference committee.

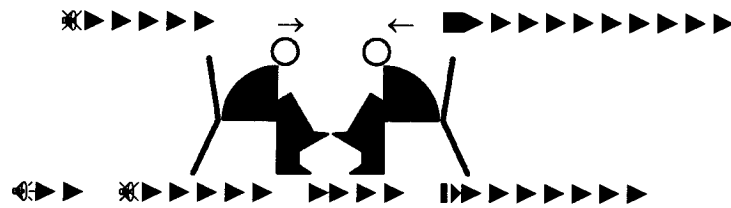
### **Enrolling & Engrossing**

When both houses in the legislature have agreed on a final version of the bill, it is *enrolled & engrossed*, which means that it is copied with all of its amendments or changes. The presiding officers of both houses sign the bill, and it is sent to the governor for his signature.

### **Governor's Action**

The governor may sign the bill, in which case it becomes a law of New Mexico, or

1. The governor may *veto* the bill, which means that he disapproves of it. If the legislature is still in session, it may attempt to override the governor's veto.
2. If the governor fails to sign the bill within three days while the legislature is still in session, it becomes law without his signature.
3. If the legislature has adjourned, the governor has 20 days from adjournment to decide about bills the legislature has sent. If the governor fails to act upon a bill after the legislature has adjourned, it is called a *pocket veto*.
4. The governor of New Mexico may also "line item" veto specifics in bills sent to him.



## Laws

Not all laws go into effect at the same time. Some bills carry an emergency clause and become effective as soon as the governor signs them. All other bills, except bills that carry a later effective date, become effective 90 days after the legislature adjourns.

## New Mexico Legislature: An Overview

The New Mexico Legislature has two chambers.

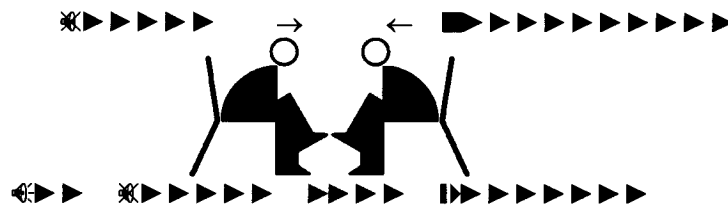
Chamber	Membership	Length of Term	Time of Election
House of Representatives	70	2 years	All seats elected at every general election
Senate	42	4 years	All seats elected at every other general election

Each year the New Mexico Legislature convenes at noon on the third Tuesday in January. The length of a regular legislative session alternates between 60 days in odd numbered years and 30 days in even numbered years. During a 60-day session, the number of bills that can be introduced has very few restrictions. In a 30-day session, the legislature may only consider appropriations and revenue bills, bills drafted pursuant to a special message of the governor, and vetoed bills from previous sessions.

The governor may call special sessions, with only matters contained in the governor's proclamation to be considered by the legislature. The legislature can also call itself into session when three-fifths of its members representing each chamber certify to the governor that an emergency exists in the affairs of the state.

## Organization

The New Mexico Legislature is organized on a partisan basis. Members of the Republican and Democratic parties in each chamber meet in caucus before a session begins to organize themselves. Most of the work of the legislature takes place in bipartisan committees. Standing committees meet during sessions, and interim committees meet between sessions. Committees vary in size, reflecting chamber-wide party strength. Committee chairs have power and flexibility in guiding committee business and expediting or delaying legislation.



## House of Representatives

The majority party in the House of Representatives selects a nominee for Speaker of the House and elects a Majority Floor Leader, a Majority Whip, and a caucus chair.

The Speaker of the House is the most important leader. The Speaker is the presiding officer of the House who administers the order of business, answers parliamentary inquiries, and makes parliamentary rulings subject to appeal to the membership of the House. The Speaker assigns bills to committees; signs all passed bills, resolutions, and memorials; and certifies the passage of bills over the governor's veto. The Speaker has the authority to appoint committee chairs and members of all standing committees of the House.

The Majority Floor Leader is second in rank to the Speaker. The Majority Floor Leader plays a major role in the scheduling and conduct of debate and helps to manage the conduct of business in the House.

The Majority Whip assists the Majority Floor Leader and works to keep track of the positions of party members on major issues.

The minority party elects a Minority Floor Leader, Minority Whip, and a caucus chair. Their duties are similar to those of their majority counterparts.

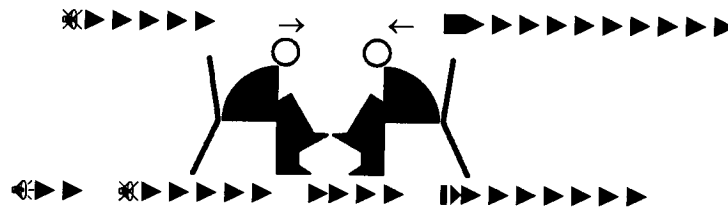
## House Standing Committees

### **Substantive Committees**

- Agriculture & Water Resources
- Appropriations & Finance
- Business & Industry
- Consumer & Public Affairs
- Education
- Energy & Natural Resources
- Government & Urban Affairs
- Judiciary
- Labor & Human Resources
- Taxation & Revenue
- Transportation
- Voters & Elections

### **Procedural Committees**

- Printing & Supplies
- Rules & Order of Business
- Enrolling & Engrossing



## Senate

The lieutenant governor is president of the Senate and its presiding officer. The lieutenant governor can vote only in the case of a tie. The majority caucus selects a nominee for President Pro Tempore and elects a Majority Floor Leader, a Majority Whip, and a caucus chair. The minority party elects a Minority Floor Leader, a Minority Whip, and a caucus chair.

If the lieutenant governor is not presiding over the Senate, the President Pro Tempore presides or appoints a senator to preside. The President Pro Tempore is the most important Senate leader and chairs the *Committees' Committee*, which exercises most of the procedural and administrative powers in the Senate. The majority and minority floor leaders and whips have similar duties to those in the House, except that Senate party leaders also serve on the Committees' Committee.

Subject to approval by the entire Senate, the *Committees' Committee* makes committee assignments.

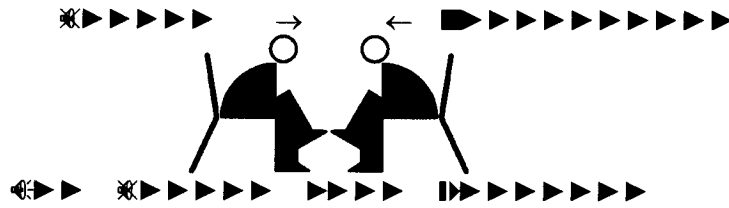
### Senate Standing Committees

- Conservation
- Corporations & Transportation
- Education
- Finance
- Indian & Cultural Affairs
- Judiciary
- Public Affairs
- Rules

## Legislative Process

The New Mexico State Legislature is the primary policy-making body in state government. The legislature passes bills that must be signed by the governor in order to become law. A primary function of the legislature is to appropriate funds for the operation of the state government and for public education. In between sessions, interim committees meet to hear public input and to study issues in greater depth.

The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) is the interim committee that recommends the appropriations to be included in the state budget; the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) prepares recommendations to the LFC for the public education portion of the budget. The executive branch also makes recommendations for budget appropriations. During session, the House Appropriations and Finance Committee and the Senate Finance Committee develop the general appropriation bills. These two committees hear all bills that appropriate money.



The Legislative Council Service (LCS), which ensures that bills are in the proper format and conform to state constitutional requirements, drafts all bills. The LCS provides year-round professional staff services for legislators and is supervised by the LFC, which is headed by the legislative leadership from both parties. LCS staff are prohibited from advocating or opposing legislation, and the law requires confidentiality between the LCS staff and legislators. Additionally, the LCS prepares research reports, maintains a legislative reference library, provides staff assistance to interim committees, oversees the Bill Room, and prepares the Bill Locator, a daily summary of the status of every piece of legislation introduced during a session.

To follow legislation as it occurs during a session, log onto the New Mexico Legislative Website, [www.legis.state.nm.us](http://www.legis.state.nm.us).

## **Legislative Committees**

There are numerous legislative committees active during the session. Here are links to two of them. To find out who serves on these committees, click on the "Committee" button on the left side of the main committee page.

### **House Appropriations & Finance**

<http://legis.state.nm.us/committeedisplay.asp?CommCode=HAFC>

### **Senate Finance Committee**

<http://legis.state.nm.us/committeedisplay.asp?CommCode=SFC>

To find out about other legislative committees, go to the New Mexico State Legislature home page at <http://legis.state.nm.us/>. Click on "Membership" under the "Committee" heading on the left side of the page. You can then find the committee you want and click on it to see its members or meeting agendas.

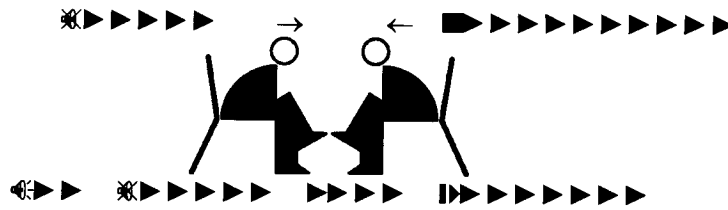
Here are links to the critical interim committees, which are composed of both House and Senate members.

### **Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC)**

<http://legis.state.nm.us/newsite/committeedetail.asp?CommCode=ALESC>

### **Legislative Finance Committee (LFC)**

<http://legis.state.nm.us/newsite/committeedetail.asp?CommCode=ALFC>



## How to Influence the Legislative Process

### Define the Issue

#### Join or Form a Coalition

- Identify others interested in your cause.
- Identify the opposition.

#### Development of a Bill

- Identify and contact key legislator(s) in drafting the language.
- Identify and contact co-sponsors.
- Utilize the media.

#### Attend Public Hearings

- Prepare testimony.
- Make phone calls.
- Utilize the media.

#### Maintain Constituent Pressure

- Write letters.
- Make phone calls.
- Encourage others to write and call.
- Utilize the media.

#### Floor Votes

- Continue advocating.
- Advocate around amendments.

#### Governor's Signature or Veto

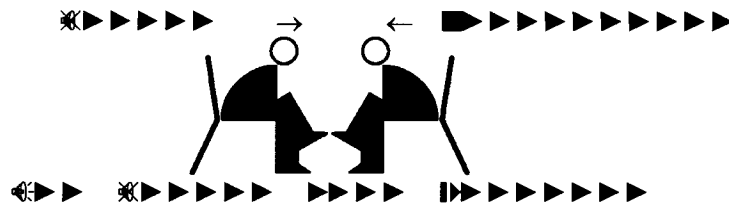
- More letters and phone calls.
- Follow up and send thank-you notes.

### Making an Impact

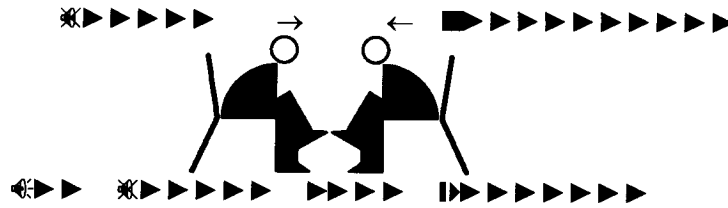
When working with legislators, the following are some useful tips for making an impact.

- **Do your homework.** Understand the issue and make certain that it is a legitimate concern. Do not contact state officials about federal or local matters, but focus only on issues where a legislator actually has influence or impact. When possible, cite a specific bill or law to focus communication. And, as always, be specific.
- **Use personal experience.** When addressing a problem or issue with state government, describe how it personally affects you or the organization you are representing. Be honest about potential negatives. Tell the whole story as you best know it - legislators do not want to be surprised or caught off guard when asked for help.





- **Be timely.** The most effective communication is that which arrives early in the legislative process, preferably at the committee level.
- **Decide how best to contact a legislator.** Use common sense as to which method is most appropriate for your issue.
  1. **Write a letter.** Through a letter, you can provide written documentation to which the legislator can refer as s/he addresses your issue. Individuals are often more complete in their communications through letters because they are writing down their thoughts, views, or questions. Letters generally reach legislators when they have the time to review and reflect on their content. It is more effective to send a letter to your own legislator(s) rather than contacting legislators from other parts of the state.
  2. **Visit your legislator.** To find out when it is best to make a personal visit, contact the legislator's office to confirm office hours and to set up an appointment for your meeting. In most cases, legislators will be willing to meet with constituents locally, but you must be flexible as to time and place, especially during the legislative session.
  3. **Use the telephone.** Direct communication with the office of the legislator is the quickest way to get attention regarding an issue.
  4. **Use e-mail.** This method should only be used as a final option of contact. Many legislators may not read their e-mails, though their aides will make note of the topics and positions of emails received. If you decide to use this method of contact, put your issue on the subject line. At least that way, the legislator will be alerted to your cause.
- **Request a response.** If appropriate, ask for a specific response from the legislator. For example, if a bill is coming up for a hearing, ask a legislator to attend the hearing and to share her thoughts. If a bill will be voted on, ask the legislator to contact you regarding her vote on the issue. If you receive no response, follow up.
- **Reward good work. Say thank you.** If the legislator has made a special effort on your behalf, recognize that by attending a campaign fundraiser, writing a letter to the local media, or letting his peers know what s/he has done.
- **Use the legislator's staff.** Every state legislator has staff. These are full-time or part-time state employees who generally work on constituent questions with state agencies and who also work on legislation. In most instances, contact with a staff member is as effective as direct contact with the legislator.
- **Maintain the relationship.** The best way to get a legislator's attention is to be a friend. It is important to keep in touch with your legislator on a regular basis, not just when you need something.



- Legislators are human. Each legislator is one out of hundreds of decision-makers. Do not expect a legislator to perform miracles for you. Keep in mind that legislators have many demands on their time and attention. Always be considerate of the legislator's time both in the office and away.

### Contacting a Legislator

Here are some thoughts to keep in mind when contacting your legislator.

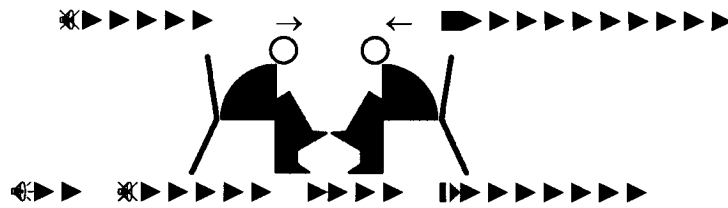
- Legislators want to hear from their constituents about important issues.
- Face to face contact is better than a letter. Meetings make individuals develop a relationship. If you cannot come to Santa Fe, make contact at the legislator's home district office.
- A personal letter has much more impact than a phone call because you have the time to be more thoughtful of what you want to say and how you wish to present your case. The least effective methods are form letters and petitions (either mailed or e-mailed) because they have the least amount of impact in getting your point across. However, sheer volume can have an impact, so it is better to send a form letter or sign a petition than to do nothing.
- Personal meetings also have the advantage of giving you the opportunity to quickly explain your position and clear up misunderstandings if an aide or other staff member does not clearly understand something you have said.
- Whatever method you use in contacting a legislator, keep it brief and focus on only one or two issues at a time. Legislator's offices get flooded with mail, FAX and phone messages, and visitors. Each legislator needs to know a little about hundreds of issues each session. If you make your point quickly and clearly, it will be remembered.
- Timing is important. If you go too early in the process, your issue may be forgotten. Follow the progress of a bill and make contact with the right people at the right time. Keep informed and up to date.

### Writing Your Legislator

When writing to your legislator it is important to give tangible evidence of your concerns. The more simply your position can be explained, the more likely the legislator will be persuaded to support your position. Get to the point in clear, concise language with the most salient facts and arguments up front. How is it affecting you and your community? What specific action would help you with your need?

Before you start, remember to

- Use personal or business letterhead if you have it available. If not, write your complete address on the letter - envelopes can get lost.



- Handwrite your letter if your writing is legible. If not, type it, but always sign by hand. If you feel your signature is not legible, print or type your name beneath your signature.
- If you are citing a specific bill in your letter, mention it by number (HB### or SB###).
- Identify yourself as a consumer, parent, or board member and explain how the issue personally affects you or your community.
- Be brief and stick to a single issue. Keep your letter to one page. If you feel you need to say more, include a fact sheet or other pertinent materials.
- Say things in your own words. Even if you are following a sample letter, change it so that it sounds individual.
- Request a specific response. Ask whether the legislator will sponsor a bill for you, vote for or against an existing bill, etc. If you do not ask, you will get a vague response thanking you for your input, but with no real commitment or information.
- Send a thank you letter when your legislator votes as you have requested or helps you with your cause.

No matter what your concern or issue is, to give your letter the most impact always include the following:

- My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I live in your district.
- I work in your district. (if applicable)
- I vote in your district.

## Letter Format

[Your Name]

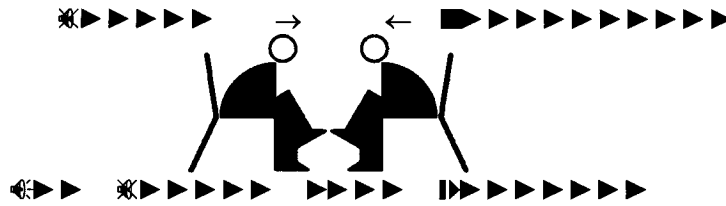
[Your Address]

[Date]

The Honorable [Name of Legislator]  
Capitol Building, c/o The Mail Room  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear [Senator or Representative (insert name)]:

- *Introduce yourself and your relevant affiliation(s)*
- *State the issue*



- *Explain and illustrate your personal position (how this affects you, your family, your community)*
- *Summarize and repeat your request*

*Sign your name and print/type your name and title (if applicable)*

### Postcard Format

[Date]

Dear [Senator or Representative (insert name)]:

*Using your own voice and style, briefly state the issue and your opinion. Express how you would like your legislator to act on the issue. Three or four sentences should be sufficient.*

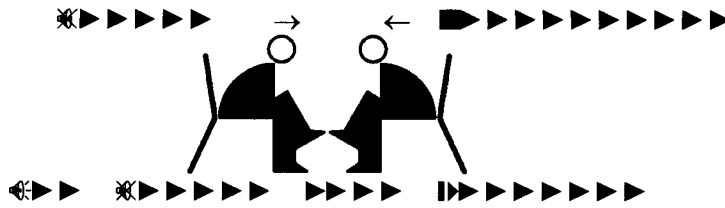
*Sign your name and print/type your name and title (if applicable)  
Include a return address*

### Visiting Your Legislator

Perhaps the most effective way to voice your opinion is through personal contact with your legislator at her office or home district. Establishing and maintaining a relationship with your legislator is useful because as other issues arise, you will already have an interested party in place. A good time to meet with your legislator is when s/he is home before or after the session.

Before you meet with your legislator, it is important to have a plan of action.

- Always have three or four key points clearly in mind. Writing them out will help.
- Research your legislator's position on your issue before you go. Knowing where s/he stands on the issue will help in framing your point of view.
- If available, bring along information, such as fact sheets, that will help in making your point. Use your time with your legislator wisely. Do not digress and spend too much time with small talk.
- Be on time. Legislators are busy people and have tight schedules. If you are going to be late, call to let him know.
- Dress appropriately. Treat this meeting as you would any other business situation.
- Have an agenda prepared and stick to it.
- Be brief. Expect no more than 15 minutes and in many instances, 5 minutes.



- Do not be upset if the legislator is not available when you arrive or has cancelled. You need to understand that their schedules can shift suddenly, especially during the session. If possible, ask to speak with an aide and present her with the information you have prepared. Follow up with the legislator in writing concerning the meeting.
- If you have successfully met with your legislator, follow up in writing and briefly restate your position. Thank the legislator for his time.

### Calling Your Legislator

Calling your legislator is a less effective way to inform him of your issue because you will seldom be able to reach your legislator directly, and you may have to leave several messages before you get a response. An alternative is to ask staff to log your call and your position on the issue and relay that information to your legislator.

There are only two situations in which calling a legislator is recommended.

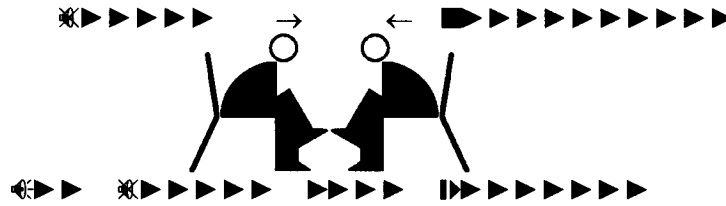
1. If there is no time to send a letter. For example, you have been notified that a hearing or vote is about to occur.
2. If a large group is being organized for action and they cannot or will not write a letter.

If you decide to call, some points to remember include the following:

- Call the legislator's office directly.
- Give your name and address, especially if you are a constituent.
- Have your information organized and keep it brief.
- Practice what you will say before you call.
- If you cannot reach your legislator, ask to speak to the aide responsible for your issue. In many instances the aide knows more about your issue than your legislator and will present your ideas to her.
- Clearly articulate whether you are in support of or against a specific bill.
- Thank your legislator for her time.
- If time allows, follow up with a letter restating your points and thank the person for their time.

Remember, an effective telephone call always includes these items:

- "My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I live in your district."
- "I work in your district (if applicable)."
- "I vote in your district."



## Public Hearings

Throughout the legislative session, public hearings are held on bills. Citizens may provide testimony at these hearings and often have significant impact on the outcomes.

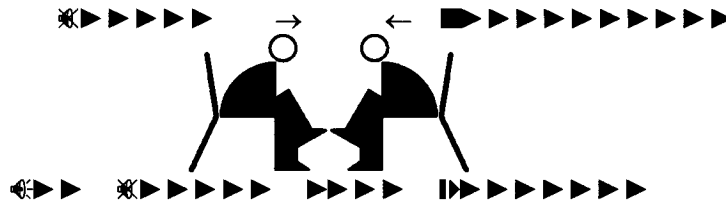
It is critical that anyone testifying at a public hearing be very well prepared. Speakers generally have no more than five minutes to express their opinion, with three minutes often being the norm. The following points may be useful in preparing to give testimony:

- Always verify the date, time, and place of the hearing. Call the sponsor of the bill or the clerk of the appropriate committee.
- Make certain that you understand the bill or issue. Know the status of the bill and its potential impact on your community. Be familiar with any opposing views and be prepared to speak to those issues as well.
- Write your statement out in clear, concise language. Bring double-spaced, typed copies for committee members and other interested parties. Use only one side of the page.
- Rehearse your testimony. Try to anticipate any questions you may be asked by committee members and practice answering them.
- As a group, plan who will be at the hearing and who will testify first. Assign different parts of an issue to various speakers. Follow up any testimony with personal visits to legislators' offices, phone calls, and e-mail.
- If you cannot attend a hearing, mail a copy of your statement to the hearing committee and ask that it be included as part of the record. Also request a copy of the testimony presented at the meeting.

## During the Hearing

If you have been selected to speak on behalf of an issue, at the hearing

- Dress professionally. Your appearance may be as important to some legislators as what you have to say.
- Arrive early (at least 30 minutes) and register so the committee will know that you plan to testify. Fill out a registration slip even if you do not plan to speak. It will serve as a measure of how many people are in favor of or against an issue. Give your registration slip and copies of your testimony to the committee clerk or page.
- Be prepared to wait. There may be other bills on the agenda.
- Pay close attention to other testimony and the committee members' reaction to those comments. This information can help you present your testimony more effectively. If



you do not have anything new to add to other testimony given, simply note that you agree with the earlier speaker(s) and move on.

- When you begin to speak, first greet the chairperson and the committee members. ("Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the committee...") Introduce yourself and, if appropriate, your organization or group.
- Be brief. Plan on speaking for 3-5 minutes or less.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Remain courteous and do not argue with committee members or members of the audience. Simply state the reasons for your position.
- Mention why action is necessary in support of your issue. Mention others who support your position.
- Speak from your heart. Powerful testimony is a combination of personal stories and accurate, current statistics.
- Following your testimony, ask if there are any questions. Answer only those you know you can answer correctly. If other members of your group are present and can answer those you cannot, point them out to the committee members. If you do not have an answer, simply state that you do not know. Never pretend to know an answer. Write the question down and tell the committee that you will get back with them with a response. Send the response in writing to the chairperson.
- Thank the chairperson and committee for the opportunity to express your concerns.

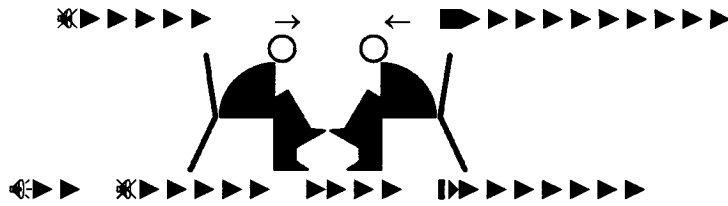
#### Following the hearing

- Keep a copy of all statements made along with any questions that you or other members were asked and the responses.
- If you promised to provide additional materials, be sure to do so as soon as possible.
- Continue to follow the bill's progress. Contact legislators personally or write a follow-up letter.
- Have the group meet soon after the hearing to plan any follow-up activities and to reassess strategies.

#### More Tips for Successful Public Testimony

Public hearings are an excellent way to influence decision-makers and to get your issues out to the general public. It is vital to develop public testimony that is clear and concise, has emotional impact, and will be heard and remembered by public officials. The best testimonies have common characteristics. Most importantly, testimonies should be accurate, logical, dignified, useful, short, and heartfelt.

**Accurate** When using statistics to back up any testimony, make certain that they are



correct and up to date. Accuracy also means sticking to the issue at hand.

**Logical** Present your testimony in a logical order. Make a statement describing the issue or problem and give your position. State how your position helps solve the problem and recommend reasonable actions to resolve the issue.

**Dignified** Pay attention to protocol. In New Mexico, protocol is extremely important and must be followed at all times. This includes greeting the committee appropriately (*Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and committee members*) and following that protocol throughout your presentation. Always recognize the chairperson before speaking, followed by a particular member if a question has been asked. For example, you would say, "Mr. Chairman, Senator/Representative Smith". Always thank the committee following your testimony.

**Useful** Don't waste time. The best testimony provides decision-makers with useful information they did not have which serves to resolve the issue at hand. If you have a solution, make it a part of your testimony. Make sure beforehand that whatever you recommend is amenable to others in your group.

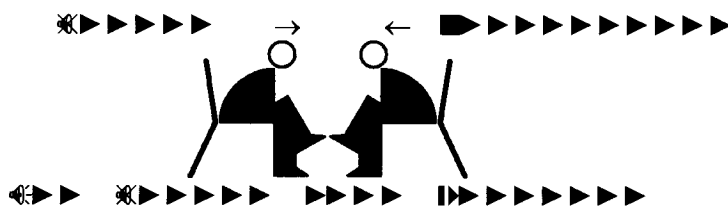
**Short** If you cannot get your point across in three minutes or less, you will most likely be cut off before you are finished. Short, concise, and well-delivered testimonies are received more favorably, making the testifier appear knowledgeable and capable. Irrelevant and repetitive testimony has the opposite effect.

**Heartfelt** Presenting your testimony in human terms stirs emotions whether it hits at the gut level or goes for the throat. Emotions are best stirred in testimony delivered by individuals who are directly affected by the issue. Talking about individuals has greater impact than talking about groups or organizations. Don't forget to keep the logical with the emotional, otherwise your message may get lost.

## 12 Ways to Help Legislators Feel Good About What You Do

- Write a thank you letter to your state representatives whenever you receive a grant or other support from the State of New Mexico.
- Keep legislators on your permanent mailing list so they are aware of your activities.
- Always invite legislators to your events. When they attend, acknowledge their presence.
- Invite legislators to programs that feature students and young people. Take them on a tour of your arts education program(s).
- Establish a legislative committee on your board of directors.
- Send your business card to legislators and offer to serve as a contact for arts information.





- Consider giving your legislator an award for his support of the arts.
- Thank, acknowledge, or feature profiles on legislators in your organization's published materials (newsletter, program, etc.)
- Convene a meeting each year before the legislative session with local legislators and arts colleagues to discuss key issues affecting the arts.
- Hold a "Business and the Arts" breakfast or lunch for local legislators, business leaders, and arts supporters.
- Consider placing a legislative spouse or partner on your board.
- Always attend committee hearings when arts funding is being considered.

## Never Forget to Say Thank You

It is important to always thank those public officials who have assisted you in affecting change and solving an issue that you have brought to their attention. Some tips on how and where to say thank you include:

A thank you letter. This is the simplest effort. In your letter tell your legislator how s/he made a difference and insert a compelling anecdote. If a public official's action required special courage or effort, let her know how much you appreciate that. Keep it short and to the point.

Send the same letter to the "Letters to the Editor" of your local newspaper. This is one of the most widely read pages in any local paper. The goal here is not to persuade, but to publicly applaud the public official's efforts.

Say "thank you" in a public forum. This can be a general event, such as a town hall meeting in your community hosted by your legislator, a related event -- such as a meeting of arts organizations at which the legislator will appear -- or an unrelated event that provides a public opportunity to thank the individual(s) who helped with your issue.

## Acknowledgements

The information for this handbook was adapted from the following resources:

Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Wisconsin Legislative Advocacy Handbook

Americans for the Arts

Arizonans for Cultural Development - Advocacy Tips

Citizens for the Arts in Pennsylvania

Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation

Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry-New Mexico

Missouri Citizens for the Arts

Wisconsin Assembly for Local Arts - Advocacy Resources

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families