

# THE LOBBY HANDBOOK

## Delaware Government



League of Women Voters of Delaware

State of Delaware  
Jack A. Markell, Governor

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# INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a participatory form of government, with the right to cast a vote to elect our leaders being the most familiar method of participation. However, citizen participation need not end at the voting booth. After the election, the opportunity exists for citizens to continue to have an impact on the decisions and policies that affect their lives by lobbying governmental officials.

Politically, Delaware truly is unique. Our small size, both in area and population, gives us greater access to our political figures than is possible in almost any other state. They are not just images we see in the media. They are our neighbors. They live, work, shop, worship and socialize among us. In addition, we can drive to Dover and watch our Legislature in action from anywhere in the state in less than one and a half hours!

This book has been written to give you a short course on the legislative process in Delaware and to offer practical information about influencing it. We encourage you to take advantage of our state's "uniqueness" and to become knowledgeable about and involved in your government.

In memory of Sally J. Knox (1925-1995)

Sally J. Knox was an entrepreneur and an advocate for women's rights.

In 1980 she was appointed by Governor Michael N. Castle to chair the Delaware Commission for Women--a role she filled until 1993.

In the way she lived and through the work that she did, Sally Johnson Knox established a rich legacy for those committed to fairness and equality to follow. For over 20 years Sally was an advocate, mentor, businesswoman, gubernatorial appointee, fund-raiser, and most importantly, a friend to many women.

## PREFACE

In 1920, with the ratification of the Suffrage Amendment, women acquired, along with the right to vote, the right to formally participate in the governmental process, but many of them did not know how. The League of Women Voters of the United States, newly formed by members of the suffrage movement, encouraged these newly enfranchised citizens by helping them to register to vote, learn about the issues and candidates, and to use their new power at the ballot box.

Now, nearly 90 years later, women's involvement has increased greatly, from running for office and heading cabinet departments to lobbying for or against proposed legislation. Many, however, still feel uncomfortable about their ability to get involved because they think they don't have enough knowledge about how "the system" works and where the voices of citizens can affect the process.

In 1990 Barbara E. Corrozi, of the Office of the Commission for Women, Sally Knox of the Commission for Women, Ruth Helm and Joann Hasse both of the League of Women Voters of Delaware, collectively began compiling information regarding the legislative branch of government. With each organization having a common objective to encourage informed and active participation of citizens, particularly women, in the governmental process, the end product of this collaborative effort was a comprehensive, practical and informative guide to the legislative process in Delaware—*The Lobby Handbook*. The Handbook has been revised recently to reflect changes in government structures since the first compilation in 1990.

The Lobby Handbook is intended to be a viable and useable publication for individuals, groups and organizations seeking to expand their knowledge of the Delaware Legislature.

Sources of information contained in the Handbook include: Tell It to Washington, League of Women Voters of the United States; Delaware Government, League of Women Voters of Delaware and State of Delaware Legislative Council.

Copies of the Handbook are available upon request from the Office of the Commission for Women.

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# ORGANIZATION OF DELAWARE GOVERNMENT

The government of the State of Delaware is divided into three branches: Executive, Judicial and Legislative. The Governor is the Chief Executive Officer. He/she appoints the Cabinet Secretaries with the consent of the Senate and approves appointment of Division Directors. The twelve (12) departments within State Government are listed below:

- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ Correction
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Finance
- ◆ Health & Social Services
- ◆ Labor
- ◆ Natural Resources & Environ. Control
- ◆ Safety and Homeland Security
- ◆ Services for Children, Youth & Their Families
- ◆ State
- ◆ Technology and Information
- ◆ Transportation

The Governor also appoints citizens to numerous boards, councils and commissions and is the guardian of our laws and accountable for State finances. The Governor is important to a lobbying effort since it is in his/her power to veto or sign into law bills that have been passed by the General Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor is also elected, but unlike many states, does not run on the same ticket as the Governor. If both are of the same party, the Lieutenant Governor will often stand in for the Governor ceremonially. The main duty of the office is to preside over the Senate. He/she is empowered to cast a tie-breaking vote when necessary.

There are six courts **in the Judicial System.**

- Court of Chancery
- Court of Common Pleas
- Family Court
- Justice of the Peace
- Superior Court
- Supreme Court

The courts are rarely part of a lobbying effort but can be used as a source of information that may have bearing on an issue. The Governor appoints all members of the State Judiciary with the consent of the Senate.

The Legislative branch, called the General Assembly, is where most lobbying efforts will take place. Our Legislature is bicameral. Each house has its own rules. It is important to understand them when trying to guide or follow a bill through the system. A comprehensive description of the organization and function of the Legislature follows in a later section.

There are four Officers within State government who are elected and autonomous. They are the Attorney General, State Auditor, Insurance Commissioner and State Treasurer.

# THE DELAWARE LEGISLATURE

## *The Building*

Delaware's Legislative Hall is a red brick colonial style building erected in 1933. As State Capitals go, it is a modest edifice. There are no scheduled tours. Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the United States, security has been tightened. Except for a limited number of State officials who may use other doors, entry is allowed only through the Legislative Avenue entrance where one must pass through a security checkpoint and those without a permanent pass will receive a one day visitor's pass. Proof of Identity is required.

The basics: As one enters Legislative Hall, the Senate chamber and offices are on the right, the House chamber and offices are on the left. In addition, the first floor contains offices for majority party legislators of both chambers. The second floor houses the Governor's Ceremonial Office, the House and Senate visitors' galleries and the offices of the remainder of the majority party Representatives, the minority party Senators and the Lt. Governor. Office of minority party Representatives are in the basement level which also houses the offices of Legislative Council, the library, the media room, the print shop and a small cafeteria which is open to the public. Restrooms are found on all levels, the most convenient being those behind the stairs on the first floor.

## *Composition*

The Legislature, also called the General Assembly, consists of a 21 member Senate and a 41 member House of Representatives. Both chambers are apportioned by population. The conformation of the House and Senate districts changes every 10 years when reapportionment is done by the Legislature after each U.S. Census.

All members of the House of Representatives stand for election every two years. Senators are elected to four year staggered terms. (After each reapportionment, ten districts elect on a 2-4-4 schedule and eleven districts on a 4-4-2 schedule). If a vacancy occurs in either chamber, a special election is held in the district to select a successor to fill out the rest of the term. Legislators serve on a part-time basis. Many also have other jobs.

## *Legislative Sessions*

Following each general election, a new General Assembly comes into being for the following biennium. Each is numbered consecutively from the time the State was formed. For instance, the one which came into being after the 2008 election is the 145<sup>th</sup> General Assembly; the one which will come into existence after the 2010 election will be the 146<sup>th</sup>. Legislation introduced but not acted upon during the first year of the biennium is carried over to the second year but not beyond. Bill numbers start at "1" at the beginning of each biennium. (e.g. House Bill 1 of the 145<sup>th</sup> General Assembly)

Although the term of office of legislators actually begins immediately upon election, under the State Constitution the Legislature convenes annually on the second Tuesday in



January. It adjourns at midnight on June 30 when it usually immediately goes into "special session" at least until the early hours of the morning. Between regular sessions, the Governor or the presiding officers can call either or both chambers into special session.

All sessions are open and must be held in Legislative Hall. Seating for the public in the galleries of both chambers is accessed from the second floor. Doors to the chambers are closed when the houses are meeting, but anyone can go onto the "floor" to talk with legislators before or after the sessions or during breaks when doors are open.

A quorum of a simple majority is necessary to conduct business, but it should be noted that all members are expected to be in attendance each day. The vote for passage of legislation is based on the number of those elected to each chamber, not the number present and voting (i.e. 11 in the Senate and 21 in the House -- higher when a super majority is required).

By House and Senate rules, both chambers meet on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. The agenda of bills to be considered each day is posted in Legislative Hall and is available on the General Assembly's website: <http://legis.delaware.gov>. While the usual stated starting time is 2:00 p.m. this is often delayed. Bells announce the call to session: one bell for the Senate and two for the House. The order of business is a part of each house's respective rules. Sometime during each daily session there is usually a break for party caucuses, which can be lengthy. On Wednesdays, the House goes into session briefly and then recesses for several hours of committee meetings to review bills. The Senate has set aside time in the early afternoon on Wednesday when standing committees may meet and usually goes into session between 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Both houses recess in February and early March while the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) conducts hearings and studies the Governor's proposed operating budget. Additional and late night sessions are common when the press of business is urgent, particularly near the end of the session when much legislation is considered.

### *Legislative Organization*

Each chamber of the Legislature is organized by Democratic and Republican party affiliation. The party with the most members in either house is known as the majority party and the other as the minority party. They sit on opposite sides of the Senate and House chambers, and by tradition, the majority gets the window side. Meetings of the legislators of each party are referred to as the party caucus. Unlike sessions of the Assembly itself, these meetings are not generally open to the public.

Technically, both houses organize on the first day of a new General Assembly. Rules, or at least temporary rules, are adopted by resolution. The House elects one of its members to serve as Speaker. In the Senate, the Lt. Governor serves as the presiding officer, but a President Pro Tem is elected and often presides during sessions.

While elected by the entire membership of each house, their respective majority caucuses in fact, select both the Pro Tem and the Speaker. Other leadership positions, the Majority

and Minority Leaders and Whips, are elected by each party. Their primary duty is to guide legislation through to either passage or defeat as determined desirable by their respective caucuses. The five people serving in these positions in each house are generally referred to collectively as "the Leadership".

Each house has standing committees consisting of members of both parties. The chair of each committee is always a member of the majority. Committee assignments are made by the Pro Tem or Speaker in consultation with the majority and minority leadership. The committees review legislation as assigned to them by their presiding officers and take up any other related matters that they deem appropriate. Lists of committees and their membership can be obtained from Legislative Council and are available on the legislative website.

There are also several joint committees in which the chair alternates between the chambers.

The Joint Finance Committee consists of the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. (See the section on Budget Process.)

The Bond Bill Committee, whose members are appointed from both House and Senate, reviews, holds hearings and modifies the Governor's proposed Capital Improvements Program. (See the section on Budget Process.)

The Joint Sunset Committee consists of the Sunset Committees of both houses. Its function is to provide periodic review of the performance and activities of the various state boards, commissions and other agencies to determine whether or not there is a genuine need for the agency under review and if so, to determine if the agency is adequately meeting the need. The committee recommends continuance, termination or changes for agencies reviewed.

#### *House and Senate Staff*

A Secretary of the Senate and a Chief Clerk of the House, whose main functions are custody of bills and maintenance of the agenda, are elected by their respective chambers. They are not members of either house.

Each house also hires its own staff consisting of attorneys, administrative assistants, research personnel, sergeants-at-arms, secretaries, pages, etc. These appointments are based on party affiliation and many persons holding the positions work only while the Legislature is in session. In recent years interns from the College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Delaware have augmented the staffs.

#### *Legislative Council*

A permanent, full-time staff consisting of professional and clerical employees is provided through the Legislative Council which a policy is making body composed of the Leadership of both houses. The Director is appointed by the Council with the consent of the majority of legislators, but other staff is employed on a nonpartisan basis under the Delaware merit system. The term "Legislative Council" is frequently used to refer to the

staff and/or the area in the basement level of Legislative Hall which houses this function though technically the term means the policy making body (e.g. "Copies of bills can be obtained from Legislative Council.")

The chief functions of the Council staff are that of research, bill drafting and maintaining appropriate files and records. It also has a somewhat custodial jurisdiction over Legislative Hall (except Executive offices), makes available a public toll free legislative information line (800-282-8545), provides comprehensive bill service for a fee or single copies of bills to citizens at no charge and makes available other pertinent information. **A wealth of legislative information is now accessible on the legislative website <http://legis.delaware.gov>**

The Office of the Controller General is an integral part of the Council. Its responsibility is to assist the JFC and the Bond Bill Committee in reviewing the State's proposed budget, capital improvements program and supplemental appropriations, and to provide legislators with data relating to the fiscal affairs of the State. The Office of the Controller General is part of the Legislative Branch and should not be confused with the Office of Management and Budget which is part of the Executive Branch.

## **BILLS**

A Bill is a proposed law presented to the legislature but not yet enacted. After it has passed both houses and received the approval of the Governor, it becomes law and is called an Act or a Statute.

Bills are designated SB if they originate in the Senate, HB if they originate in the House. They are numbered consecutively as they are introduced (SB1, SB 2, HB 1, HB 2, etc.). The date that a bill is introduced is stamped on the face of the bill.

The legislators under whose names the bill is being introduced are called sponsors. Their names appear in the upper right hand corner of the bill. The prime sponsors are listed first. Following a semi-colon, the names of any other legislators who have "signed on" as co-sponsors, usually at the request of the prime sponsors, follow. Signing on as a co-sponsor is sometimes done without much knowledge of the bill and does not always signify the signer's eventual "yes" vote.

Bills which could increase state expenditures significantly (e.g. increasing court costs) should be sent to the Controller General's office for a cost estimate called a fiscal note. If this is done, the notes are available from the Controller General's office but are not given out routinely with a copy of the bill.

**Bills and amendments are available on the legislative website; click on "Bill Tracking."**

### *Types of Bills*

A general bill is a bill having uniform application to all persons or entities in the same category (a bill regarding counties must apply to all counties, etc.).

A special bill relates to particular persons or things rather than to a whole class (used to cover a pension situation for one specific person, granting a charter change or the right to do something for a specific municipality, etc.).

An amendment is a separate piece of legislation having the limited objective of changing a bill which has not yet been enacted into law. Amendments must be germane to the title of the bill. Amendments are also numbered consecutively and are designated, for example, as HA 1 to SB 155. Senate amendments are printed on yellow paper, House amendments on blue. Bills are printed on white paper.

A substitute bill is the replacement for a bill, but with some changes. It is frequently used when adjustments and compromises resulting from committee or public hearings or discussion have produced so many changes in the original bill that it is easier to re-write the bill than to make major changes via amendments. It retains the number of the original bill and is designated, for example, as HS 1 for HB 222. It may still be amended in which case the amendment might be called HA 1 to HS 1 for HB 222.

An appropriations bill earmarks certain sums of money for specified purposes. In Delaware only bills appropriating money for public purposes may cover more than one subject. This is different than the U.S. Congress in which amendments on totally different subjects can be attached to bills.

### *Resolutions*

A resolution is a formal expression of opinion. Joint resolutions must be signed by the Governor to go into effect. Simple and concurrent resolutions do not require the Governor's signature.

Simple (SR, HR) - deal with the internal affairs of either house (organizing, rules of business, etc.) or express the opinion of that house; frequently used for birthday greetings or to send congratulations to some person in the state for some honor received.

Concurrent (SCR, HCR) - deal with the internal affairs or opinion of the entire General Assembly; initiated by either house, concurred by the other; also frequently used to formally recognize someone; sometimes used to set up ad hoc committees.

Joint (SJR, HJR) - used to provide for temporary measures and have the force of law when in effect; frequently used to set up committees for special purposes such as to study a problem and recommend solutions to the General Assembly.

### *Voting Procedures*

Usually all bills and substantive resolutions are voted on individually by roll call in both houses. A "Consent Agenda" by which several uncontested or uncontroversial bills are voted on as a unit is sometimes used, usually at the end of the legislative session when time is precious. Both houses also use a "Consent Calendar" for voting on most simple or concurrent resolutions.

Most bills and resolutions require a simple majority vote of all members elected to each house, i.e., 11 votes in the Senate, 21 votes in the House.

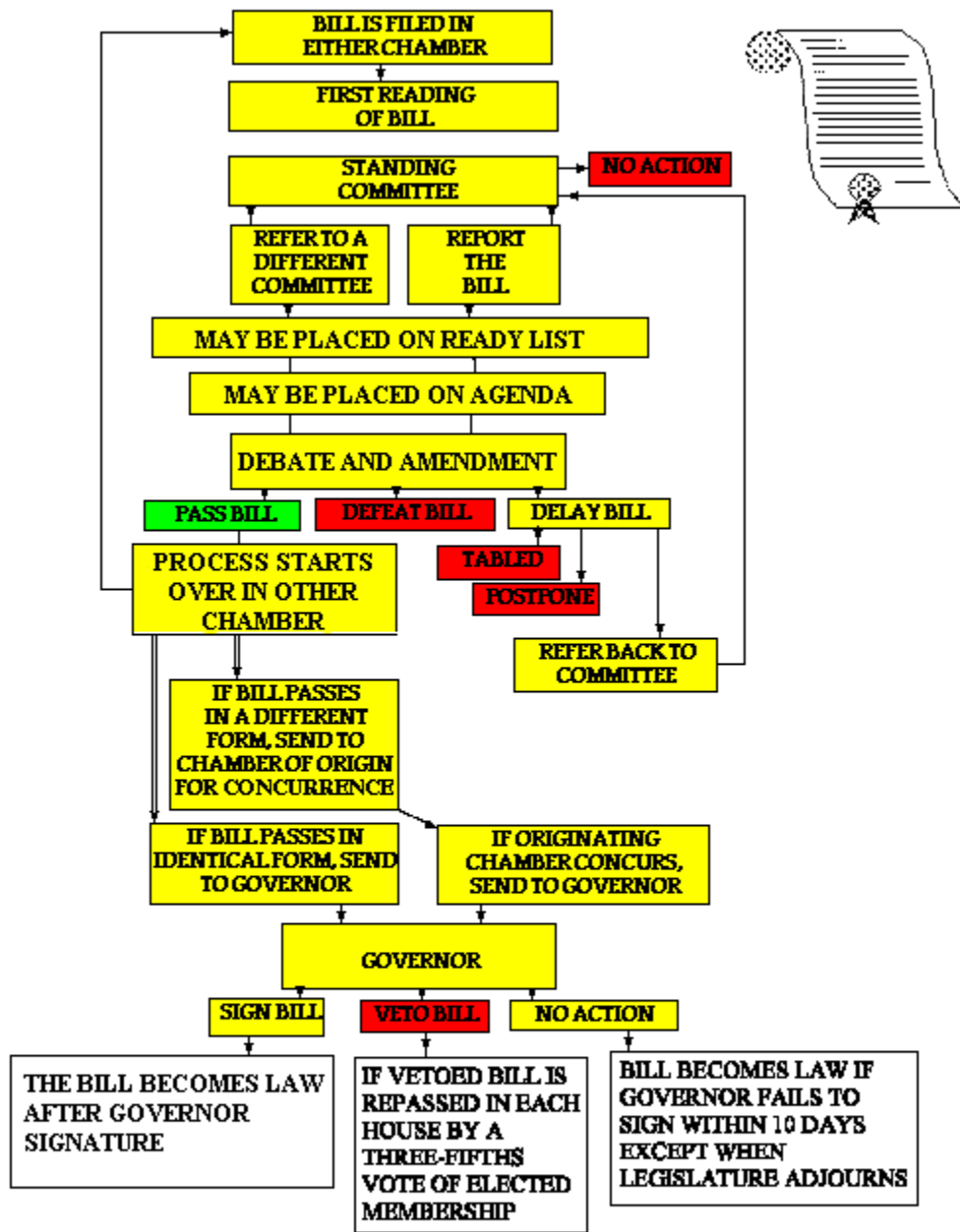
Major and/or common exceptions are:

Two-thirds: Amending a municipal charter; adding to the jurisdiction of lower courts on criminal matters; changing the Constitution (Constitutional changes also must pass two consecutive terms of the General Assembly but do not require the Governor's signature).

Three-fifths: Overriding a veto; raising taxes or license fees, or imposing new ones.

Three-quarters: The Grants-In-Aid bill, which makes grants of money to public and private agencies; the Bond bill, which appropriates money and authorizes the sale of bonds to finance the state's capital expenditures.

# How A Bill Becomes A Law



RULES OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PROVIDE FOR OCCASIONAL EXCEPTIONS TO THIS PROCESS

## *Committee Review of Bills*

The steps that legislation must follow from introduction to passage are set forth in the House and Senate rules adopted for each biennium. Normally all legislation is assigned for review by a standing committee in its chamber of origin. Any bill which authorizes expenditures not previously authorized within the annual budget for the fiscal year in which the expenditure is to be incurred includes a three-year fiscal projection, called a "fiscal note," prepared by the Controller General's office.

The time and place of most committee meetings is announced in advance and posted in Legislative Hall. They usually appear on the General Assembly's web page <http://legis.delaware.gov>. This posting includes a listing of bills and other matters to be considered. The public may attend committee meetings and normally has an opportunity to testify after the bill has been discussed by the committee members. If a bill has a great deal of public interest widely publicized hearings may be held.

After a bill has been reviewed, the committee votes whether or not to release it for consideration by the full chamber. Votes are reported as favorable (F), unfavorable (U) or "on its merits" (M) which means the legislator neither supports nor opposes it but believes it should be released from committee so that it can be voted upon by the entire membership. After the bill is released or "reported out" by a vote of the majority of the members of the committee (indicated by their signing of the bill's "backer"), it is placed on the "Ready List." The daily agenda of bills to be considered by the entire membership of the House or Senate is developed from this list. If the majority of committee members do not agree to release the bill, it remains in committee. It cannot be considered by the full chamber except by a vote to suspend rules, or by a little used procedure known as "petitioning" which requires a majority of signatures of all members of the chamber.

After changes were made in the Senate Rules in 2009, both houses now have rules which state that bills and resolutions must be acted on (i.e. publicly reviewed and voted upon by the committee to which they were assigned) within 12 legislative days. A legislative day is one on which the legislature is in session. Twelve legislative days does NOT mean 12 calendar days.

When a bill reaches the full House or Senate for debate, any amendments that have been introduced are considered first and voted upon. Then the bill as amended is debated and voted by roll call. Bills which have been passed are delivered to the other chamber where they follow the same procedure. If a bill is amended in the non-originating chamber, it must be returned to the originating chamber for a vote on the bill as amended. Both houses must pass the same version before the bill is sent to the governor for signature or veto.

## **BUDGET PROCESS**

The fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30 but preparation of the State budget is a continuous process. A fiscal year is denoted by the year in which it ends (i.e. FY'10 ends on June 30, 2010 and FY'11 will start on July 1, 2010.) Shortly after the ink is dry on the budget for the current fiscal year and often before, the various departments and agencies

begin preparing their requests for the next one. General parameters regarding budgetary goals are communicated from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Executive branch. This is the time for the public to start to influence the budget, the time to convince the appropriate agency or department that a particular cause for which funds are needed should be included in its request.

The next step occurs in the fall, usually late in October or November, when the Administration, through OMB, holds hearings. (The hearing schedule is available from OMB at 302-672-5240 or the Governor's Office in Wilmington, 302-577-3210.) At this time, each agency presents its request for both operating and capital funds. Members of the public may also speak and statements are often made in support of certain items, requesting additional amounts or other changes.

Following the hearings, operating and capital budgets are developed by the Administration. The Governor gives the Budget Address to the General Assembly sometime late in January. The operating portion is introduced as a bill and is assigned to the JFC for review. The Capital Budget becomes the Bond bill.

In February and early March, the JFC conducts extensive hearings. (The hearing schedule is available from the Controller General's Office, 302-744-4200). The department heads again explain their financial needs but the focus is on the budget agreed upon with the Administration. This budget does not necessarily mirror the original requests. Again, the public has the opportunity to speak, and pleas are made for more funds, for changes, etc.

The hearings completed the JFC schedules various "mark-up" sessions, usually in late May and/or early June in which it develops the operating budget which will be presented to the entire General Assembly for adoption. Following legislation passed in 2009, the "mark-up" sessions will be open to the public.

During the entire budget writing process, attention is paid to estimates presented by the Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council (DEFAC). This is a high level Council with members from the Legislature, Administration, business and economists from the University of Delaware. It is their duty to prepare estimates of General Fund revenues and expenses for the current and next fiscal years and to submit reports no later than the 25th of September, December, March, April and May, and the 20th of June. The Governor submits these reports to the Legislature. The June 20th report, made official by Resolution of the General Assembly, becomes the basis for the final budget which must be adopted by June 30.

### *Bond Bill*

Long term Capital Improvements Program projects are authorized in the Bond Bill, so named because it authorizes the sale of general obligation and revenue bonds. This provides the largest portion of the required funds, although some general funds and other special funds are also used. While the original proposal is presented by the Governor, the bill that is finally sent to the General Assembly is the result of work by a joint House/Senate Bond Bill Committee, usually after intense negotiation with the



Governor's Office. The Bond Bill Committee meets after the JFC has completed most of its deliberations. Contact the Office of the Controller General (302-744-4200) for a schedule.

### *Grants-In-Aid*

During the budget process, some money is also set aside for grants to support specific projects that the Legislature considers of value to the State. A formula is used to set aside portions for senior centers, fire companies and veterans' groups, but usually about half the total is allocated to social service and cultural organizations. Agencies are required to submit detailed applications and financial data. They also are subject to performance audits by the Controller General's Office. Forms and information on deadlines for applications may be obtained from the Controller General's Office (302-744-4200).

## **LOBBYING**

Lobbying is the act of influencing the outcome of legislation. **Persuasion, the most important tool of the citizen lobbyist, may be accomplished by providing facts and figures, informing legislators of positive or negative outcomes likely to result and/or presenting information about similar legislation in other states.**

Those who lobby on behalf of an organization must register with the Public Integrity Commission. Contact the Public Integrity Commission at 302-739-2399 for information on this procedure.

### *Lobbying Techniques*

- **Know the legislative process.** Once you know how a bill becomes law, who the key players are, and the role of the legislative leadership, you will be less likely to waste time and effort, and your actions will be right on target.
- **Know your facts.** Information is important to legislators. Your credibility is a valuable asset, now and in your future lobbying efforts. Be sure to express facts and figures accurately and positively, citing sources whenever possible. Leave concise, easy-to-read, single-page summaries of facts and arguments. **When errors do occur, correct them immediately.**
- **Plan your lobbying contacts carefully.** Know where key legislators stand on your issue. Be aware of the role they will play. Know the status of the bill and what options might be possible.
- **Keep the interview (call, letter, email) short.** Legislators represent a lot of people. You are more likely to get their attention if your communication is brief and to the point.
- **Follow up on lobbying contacts if important decisions or plans were agreed upon.** Send a brief letter summarizing your understanding of the conversation. Keep careful notes about meetings and conversations.

- Build support for your issue. Whenever possible, work in coalition with other individuals and organizations that share your commitment to the issues. Agree on mutual goals and strategies. **Do not demand that your allies agree with you on other issues.**
- Remember, the name of this game is persuasion, not war. Listen to your legislator's concerns and try to answer them. Commend her/him for the things you find commendable. Avoid being arrogant, condescending or threatening. Above all, do not argue or back your legislator into an opposing position from which it will be difficult for her/him to retreat.
- Keep your sense of humor. Lobbying is serious business, but try not to take yourself too seriously. Do not take criticism or rebuttal personally. If you do not win today, there is always another time.

### *Building Support*

In all probability, it will be necessary to bring together a group of citizens to organize the lobbying effort for or against a bill. The size of this effort will be determined by the intensity of the issue.

Look for support among organizations that can identify with the issue. Supporters may be found among businesses, voluntary community organizations, legislators and individuals. Some organizations may not join the effort, but might provide information to their members so that they can act as individuals.

The issue must be clearly stated so that there will be no misunderstanding of the goals of the lobbying effort. It is important to:

- Clearly define the issue
- Identify supporters
- Develop facts and support information
- Offer a plan for action

The following will be a helpful guide:

### A Plan For Action

#### I. Initiating a bill

1. Determine if a similar bill has already been written by a legislator, an allied group or in another state.
2. If no bill is available, you can write one. You will need legal advice and an interested legislator. It must be clearly and accurately written.
3. Check with those who will be affected (e.g. local governments, school boards, state agencies, farmers, retailers or unions.) This step is vital for disclosing potential problems, disarming critics and arranging compromises.

4. Build cooperation with the Governor and interested legislators. Cultivate it throughout the process.

## II. Bill Sponsorship

1. Bipartisan co-sponsorship in both houses can smooth the path through party caucuses, where the bill will ultimately be considered. The ideal sponsors for your bill are the majority and minority leaders of both houses.
2. More realistic and also desirable as prime sponsors are enthusiastic and articulate chairpersons of the House and Senate committees to which the bill is likely to be assigned. They will be of the majority party. It is an unfortunate fact of political life that minority sponsorship is less persuasive.

## III. Introduction and Committee Assignment

1. Do not wait until the waning days of the session to introduce a bill. Many bills get lost as the workload increases.
2. The presiding officer makes committee assignments. In some cases, there is more than one "appropriate" committee. At this point, persuasion may be helpful in getting the bill into a committee with a friendly chairperson. If the chairperson opposes the bill, it can be troublesome.
3. House committees meet regularly to consider bills.
4. Committee evaluation of bills is becoming more structured in the Senate.
5. Any legislator can introduce amendments. The amendment must be germane to the title of the bill. Check the legislative website <http://legis.delaware.gov> and click on "Bill Tracking" or use the legislative calendar in the General Assembly library to keep up-to-date.

## IV. While the bill is in committee

1. Keep checking with the prime sponsor on the bill's progress.
2. Offer help to the sponsor in lobbying committee members. Remember, a bill needs a majority to be reported out.
3. Attend committee meetings at which the bill is to be considered.
4. If all else fails, a bill can be petitioned out of committee by a majority of the whole chamber. This process is rarely used.

## V. Public Hearings:

A committee chairperson or the Bill sponsor may arrange for one or more public hearings. Public Hearings are more formal than the regular legislative committee meetings which also are open to the public and at which the public may offer comments after the legislators have finished their discussion of the bill under consideration.

1. This is an opportunity to raise public consciousness and gather support. Contact allied groups to appear at the hearing. They might be the basis of an

informal coalition effort. Keep them informed. Ask if you may use their names as supporting organizations. Do not overlook groups opposing you on other issues if they are with you on a specific issue.

## 2. Statements

- a) Statements should be typewritten and handed to legislators and to media representatives.
- b) It might be useful to get copies of statements from other testifying groups for use in later lobbying.
- c) Statements may be entered into the record without being read aloud.
- d) Statements should be concise, factual and should counter objections raised by opponents.
- e) You may be questioned. If so, answer honestly about the bill and issue. **If you do not know, say so, and then get the answer for the legislators as soon as possible.**

3. A large show of interest at a public hearing will help get a bill out of committee, even if the chairperson is reluctant to release it.

## VI. Bill on the Agenda:

(Time for a major lobbying effort. Stay in close touch with the prime sponsor.)

1. Materials for legislators and the media (to include paper, radio, TV, etc.)
  - a) One-page synopsis of the bill, preferably in outline form.
  - b) One-page fact sheet about the issue and need for the bill.
  - c) List of other supporters (organizations and individuals.)
2. Visibility is important for some issues. Seek cooperation of allied groups to keep their members informed and to help build groundswell support via:
  - a) Letters to the editor columns.
  - b) Op-Ed Page columns.
  - c) Radio spots and call-in shows.
  - d) Petitions and surveys.
3. Personally contact each legislator to determine his or her stand. Keep a tally. A majority is needed to pass most bills, some need more. Bond bills or those affecting local charters, for example, require more than a majority.
  - a) Who are certain allies?
  - b) Who are certain opponents?
  - c) Who needs more information? This group needs particular attention from those familiar enough with the bill and the issue to supply data.

4. Find out from the prime sponsor when the bill will most likely reach the floor for debate. Be prepared for delays, since the agenda is often unpredictable.
5. Just before the bill is due for floor debate is the time for constituent lobbying showing support for the bill. Try to insure that each lawmaker will be contacted. Be sure that someone is coordinating the effort. Check the tally and see that additional information is delivered when needed.
6. On the floor:
  - a) Have supporters present if possible.
  - b) Let the prime sponsor and your own legislator know you're there and why.
  - c) If there is going to be outside testimony given on the floor, the expert should:
    - know the bill and the issues thoroughly
    - **be able to explain it clearly**
    - know its impact on Delaware
    - have a friendly, open demeanor
- VII. **The PROCESS IS REPEATED** through the other house.
- VIII. **BILL GOES TO THE GOVERNOR.** Presumably, he/she is familiar with it and will not block it.
- IX. Now all you've got to do is **MAKE SURE THE LAW IS ENFORCED** and is working as intended.
- X. And on to the **NEXT ISSUE.**

## **SUPPORTING A BILL THAT HAS BEEN INTRODUCED**

It is more likely that you will not be initiating a bill, but will be supporting a bill that has already been introduced. In that case, begin the process with III above, and continue through.

## **DEFEATING A BILL**

If your intent is to defeat a bill, you can take action by intervening at any point in the process, beginning with the drafting and introduction of the bill. You can:

1. Urge the committee not to release the bill.
2. Urge the majority leader not to bring the bill up in his/her caucus or not to put it on the agenda.
3. Urge the sponsor not to push the bill in the other house.
4. Contact the Governor's office and let them know why the bill should not become law.

## **KNOW YOUR LEGISLATORS**

If you do not know who your legislators are, it is possible to obtain the number of the election district in which you live by contacting your county Department of Elections or the League. The roster of legislators, listed by Senate and House district number is available on the legislative website or from the LWV office. It is also important to learn the Party designation of your legislators and to know whether his/her Party is the majority or minority Party in their respective chambers if trying to contact them at their legislative offices.

Department of Elections (all area code 302)

Kent County 739-4498

New Castle County 577-3464

Sussex County 856-5367

## **LOBBYING BY PHONE**

When a trip to Legislative Hall is not practical or possible, a phone call to your legislator can provide the opportunity to discuss an issue. For persons who do not feel comfortable speaking to their legislators directly, messages of support or opposition to bills may be left with the receptionist who answers the phones at legislative offices. All phone numbers are area code 302.

### *Senate Office*

**Dover** 744-4286 (majority)  
744-4048 (minority)

**Wilmington** 577-8744 (majority)  
577-8714 (minority)

**Georgetown** shared phone line: 865-5108

### *House of Representative Offices*

**Dover** 744-4171 (majority)  
744-4351 (minority)

**Wilmington** 577-8723 (majority)  
577-8476 (minority)

**Georgetown** shared phone line: 856-4656

## **LOBBYING BY MAIL**

The letter is a widely used form of communication with legislators. It can be an effective way to lobby when it is impossible to talk to him/her in person or by phone. When writing, make the letter friendly and personal. Form letters and petitions do not carry the same weight because they may be signed by people who have little interest or commitment to the issue.

Write to the legislator from your district. If you write to a committee member who is from another district, send a copy to your legislator.

## **LOBBYING BY E-MAIL**

Almost all state legislators now have e-mail addresses to which messages may be sent. Some legislators read their own e-mails; other relies on their assistants.

Due to heightened security in the U.S. capital, mail service to the Washington, D.C. offices of Delaware's three congressmen may be delayed. It is best to send letters to a local office. To send e-mail, do so from their websites since they require a Delaware address and respond to Delaware residents only.

## **HOWEVER YOU LOBBY**

Public officials hear most often from constituents who oppose their actions or who need assistance. They need positive reinforcement occasionally. Communicate with them also to say you approve, praise some actions that has been taken or to say that he/she is doing a good job. This could open an ongoing line of communication.

## **FUNDAMENTAL DO'S AND DON'TS OF LETTER WRITING:**

**DO** spell your legislator's name correctly and address him/her correctly.

**DO** send a typewritten personal letter if possible. Handwritten letters are fine if legible.

**DO** identify yourself. Include your name and address. Explain any family, business or political connections you have that are related to the issue.

**DO** be brief and to the point. Discuss only one issue in each letter. Quality is more important than quantity.

**DO** coordinate your letter writing with the progress of the bill. Write when the bill is in committee, or write just before the bill comes to the floor for debate and vote.

**DO** write a follow-up letter to thank your legislator for his/her support of your position, especially if the vote on the bill is in your favor.

**DON'T** be rude or threatening.

**DON'T** begin on the righteous note of "As a citizen and a taxpayer..."

**DON'T** apologize for taking his/her time.

**DON'T** attempt to bribe or pretend to possess political influence. (Criminal offense)

## **ADDRESSES AND SALUTATIONS**

### **President**

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500  
Mr./Ms. President:  
Dear Mr./Ms. President:  
Dear Sir or Madam:

### **U.S. Senator**

The Honorable **John Doe**  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Dear Sir or Madam:  
Dear Senator Doe:

### **State Representative**

The Honorable Jane Doe  
Legislative Hall  
Dover, Delaware 19903  
Dear Sir or Madam:  
Dear Representative:

### **Governor**

The Honorable **Jane Doe**  
Carvel State Office Building  
820 N. French Street, 12th Floor  
Wilmington, DE 19801  
Dear Sir or Madam:  
Dear Governor Doe:



**U.S. Representative**  
The Honorable **John Doe**  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Dear Sir or Madam:  
Dear Representative

**County Executive**  
The Honorable **Jane Doe**  
City/County Building  
800 N. French St.  
Wilmington, DE 19801  
Dear Sir or Madam:  
Dear County Executive:

**State Senator**  
The Honorable Jane Doe  
Legislative Hall  
Dover, DE 19903  
Dear Sir or Madam:  
Dear Sir or Madam:  
Dear Senator Doe:

**Mayor**  
The Honorable Jane Doe  
Mayor of the City of Wilmington  
City/County Building  
800 N. French St.  
Wilmington, DE 19801  
Dear Sir or Madam: Dear Mayor

### **Closings**

Respectfully yours, Very truly yours,  
Sincerely yours, Faithfully yours,

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

### *Internet*

State website <http://legis.delaware.gov>

\*\*\*The General Assembly's website <http://legis.delaware.gov> is an invaluable source of information in any advocacy effort.

Many State offices/ departments have their own websites which are listed in the government pages in the phone book.

**Most of the materials listed below under Legislative Council are available on and can be downloaded from the legislative website**

*Legislative Council* - 800-282-8545

Free single copies of bills and amendments may be picked up in person or requested by toll free phone.

Copies of daily House and Senate agenda

House and Senate Rules, which are adopted every two years by Resolution at the beginning of each new General Assembly .

Committee lists, chamber seating arrangement (so one can tell who is who from the gallery), lists of General Assembly members with Legislative Hall offices and phone numbers

## **Information on status of bills, committee meetings and public hearings.**

Controller General's Office 302-744-4200: Schedule of budget hearings, fiscal notes.

### *Legislative Hall Library*

House and Senate calendars, which are updated daily, are available to look at and give current status of all bills and resolutions which have been introduced--includes listing of sponsors, which committee bill is assigned to, votes of committee, floor votes, amendments added, etc.

### *Delaware Code*

The Delaware Code has 31 titles bound in several volumes; available at local libraries and at Legislative Hall. Frequently one must refer to the Code to determine what current law is in order to understand what a bill would change. The Code is available online at <http://delcode.delaware.gov/index.shtml>

### *Newspapers*

The State's two daily papers, the News Journal and the Delaware State News, have extensive coverage of the General Assembly.

### *League of Women Voters*

They Represent You brochure is published every two years after general elections and lists names, addresses, phone numbers of elected officials from President on down. Free: 302-571-8948.

Delaware Government book with basic information about the organization of Delaware's government is no longer in print. All public libraries have a copy but more recently updated versions are available online on the League website: <http://www.de.lwv.org>

### *State Chamber of Commerce*

A booklet published every two years early in new General Assembly sessions contains names, addresses, pictures, phone numbers, brief bios and committee assignments of each legislator for sale from the Chamber. The purse size is valuable when trying to learn faces.

### *Not to Be Overlooked As Sources of Information*

Attending Budget Hearings -- see budget process.

Attending House and Senate Committee Meetings and Public Hearings open to public. Meeting notices are posted on bulletin boards in the hall near Legislative Council and on doors of House offices and on the legislative website. Announcements of public hearings sometimes appear in newspapers. Regular committee meetings are usually scheduled on Wednesdays when the General Assembly is in session.

