

Advocacy tools

How a bill becomes a law, whether it should, how to stop one, or is it all about money?

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Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people, who come down to some perfectly contented class of the community and sow seeds of discontent amongst them. That is the reason why agitators are so absolutely necessary. Without them, in our incomplete state, there would be no advance toward civilization.

-- Oscar Wilde

Advocacy vs lobbying

Advocacy

- Much bigger than lobbying
- Any activity meant to change government policy

Lobbying

- Very specific, narrow meaning
- CGS says “communicating directly or soliciting others to communicate with any official . . . For the purpose of influencing any legislative or administrative action

Persuasion, creating relationships

- Know as much as you can about your target
- Meet them where they are
- Be friendly, helpful
- Be sure what you want to say, practice
- Get it down to an “elevator ride”
- Understand that sometimes the answer is no
- Create a long term relationship, check in even when you don't need anything

People who love the law or good sausage
should never watch either being made.

-- German Chancellor Otto von Bismark, 1815-1898

legislative advocacy

- This is often what people first think of as “advocacy” or lobbying
- Legislative process is far more open and responsive to the public than other branches
- Public input is a formal part of the process



legislative advocacy

- **Patience** – rare that a bill passes in its first year
- **Perspective** – understand that your issues have to get in the queue
- **Understand and respect the system** – experience has value, seek it out
- **Create relationships** – most important of all
- **Offer solutions** – don't just complain
- **Respect your lobbyist**

how a bill becomes a law

- Sponsors
- Committees
- Chairs, screening, JF days
- Hearings, Meetings, Changes
- Referrals
- Calendars, both houses, screening
- Amendments, Christmas trees and vehicles
- Governor signs (or not)

how a bill really becomes a law

- Choosing a champion/shepherd
- Backrooms, good intelligence/gossip
- Fiscal notes, is it in the budget?
- Agency support/resistance
- Attentiveness -- 1000s of ways to kill a bill, millions of ways for a bill to just putter out
- Politics, old scores and other baggage

Rules and customs for navigating the Capitol & LOB

- Act professionally
- Wear comfortable, conservative clothing
- Bring fact sheets, copies of testimony
- Lobbyists and badges
- Velvet ropes and notes into the chamber
- No cell phones in hearing rooms or galleries
- Connecting with a legislator
- Hearings, Committee meetings
- JF day, End of session drama

legislators – who are they?

- Part time
- Work for their voters
- Not wonks
- They need your input
- Diverse
- Do not make assumptions about their views, ask them
- Rely on staff heavily
- The importance of leadership



the importance of legislative staff

- Usually longer tenure than most legislators
- They run the process
- Overworked, many are open to your help/input
- Partisan vs. non-partisan
- OFA, OLR, LCO, committee staff, caucus staff, aides
- Can be incredibly effective champions
- Often the only route to backrooms
- Many are advocates for the causes you care about

Legislative tools

- Legislative breakfasts
- Writing letters
- How to call a legislator
- Visiting with policymakers
- Writing effective fact sheets
- How to testify at a public hearing
- How to research statutes
- How to work with a lobbyist
- How to work with campaigns
- Directions and rules and customs for the Capitol and LOB
- More on how a bill becomes a law

Throwing money at a problem has a bad rap – it's like
firefighters throwing water on a fire

-- Rep. Barney Frank

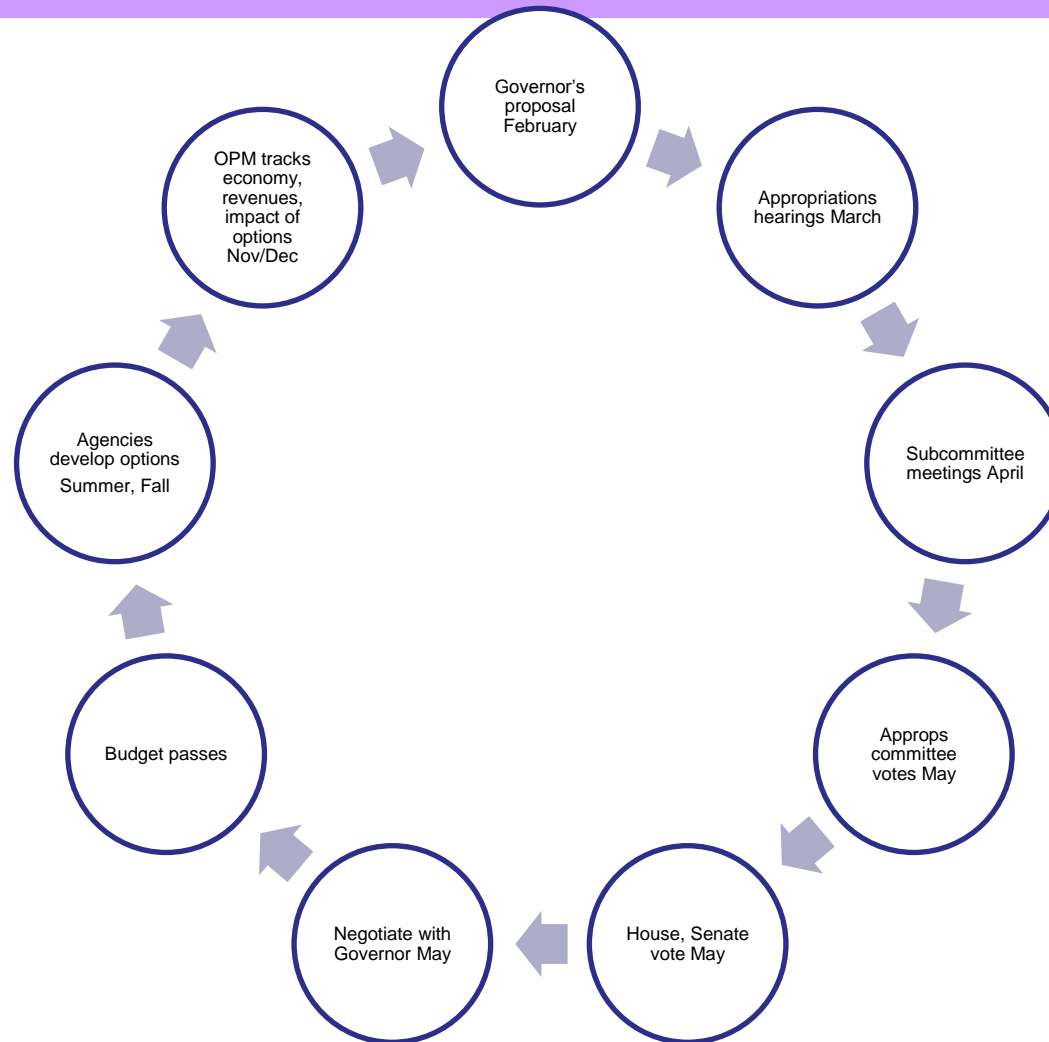
We can't afford any more of your savings.

-- OPM staffer

budget

- Constant tracking of revenues, spending, economic trends
- Agencies send options to Governor
- Governor's proposed budget
- To Appropriations subcommittees by issue area
- Hearings, votes, negotiation
- Less public process than other bills
- Chairs, staff very important
- CT -- budget bill has the numbers, implementers have the narrative
- Biennial budget -- sort of
- Rainy Day Fund, Spending Cap
- Bonding, borrowing
- Fed.s can run a deficit, state can't (theoretically)

CT budget timeline



I congratulated a DSS official on her promotion and asked "Isn't it great being up there where the buck stops?" Her answer: "I'm not sure where the buck stops. I don't really think that it's here. But I have seen it roll over us at times."

CT Health Policy Project Advocacy Toolbox

administrative advocacy

- Very powerful
- Include them early – both top and bottom of food chain
- Create relationships of trust -- can be champions and important sources of info
- They implement the laws – they are the devil in the details
- They are not elected, they don't answer to you or to voters
- Appointed vs. civil service
- Agency turf issues

freedom of information

- State and federal laws
- Powerful tool
- Agencies usually cooperative
- Right to obtain records and attend meetings, public notices, with reasonable exceptions
- Rights to inspection during business hours
- Can be hard to get access to data
- Check yourself first, it can be a burden on the agency

regulations

- Statutes give guidance, regulations give detail
- How to find them, if they exist
- Process – Reg.s Review Committee
- Under-appreciated by advocates, legislators
- Other planning documents



other tools

- Media
- Coalitions
- Lobbyists
- Judicial advocacy
- Electoral advocacy

common advocate mistakes

- Learn the system first
- They don't have to "get religion", they just have to vote yes (or no)
- Don't leave without closing the deal
- Always follow through
- Don't take anything personally
- Be patient
- Be flexible

tips no advocate should forget

- Always be polite
- Say thank you, to everyone who helps
- Get your story straight
- NEVER make up an answer
- Trust your champion/lobbyist
- Patience
- Perspective

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.

-- Dr. Seuss



For help – CT Health Policy Project
Advocacy Toolbox

www.cthealthpolicy.org/toolbox