



Safari Club International

State Legislative Toolkit

Congratulations!

If you are using this toolkit, it is likely that you are plunging (or have already plunged) into the whirlpool of political action. It is an exciting and sometimes scary undertaking, but its rewards will far outweigh the effort.

You are a leader within your local Chapter and your actions will help to preserve our outdoor heritage for future generations. We commend you for taking up this challenge, and provide this guide as one of the many tools available at Safari Club International (SCI) to help you.

SCI benefits from the commitment and involvement of its members, and that dedication is evident in this legislative grassroots toolkit. Please contact us for additional information or resources.

Sincerely,

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Government Relations

One individual can influence state and federal legislation. One individual, on behalf of his or her SCI Chapter, can reach and organize many people to speak out and influence decisions that will affect hunters, trappers, and wildlife conservation. One individual, by taking part in hunter advocacy, can help their Chapter, fellow Chapter members, and others to create a profound political impact for sportsmen and women throughout the community. One person can almost always organize many people and those people, speaking as one voice, can have a profound political impact.

This toolkit provides information about the legislative process and how to use the process to affect legislation at the state level. Because no two legislatures operate in exactly the same fashion, and because the cultures and schedules vary widely, this information is necessarily of a general nature. So, it would be wise to become familiar with the formal and informal structure of your state's legislature.

One word of caution: Once legislation is introduced, it becomes the property of the legislature and, at times, of the committee to which it is assigned. "Ownership" of the bill may become a bit fuzzy; unfavorable amendments may be forced on the author; the bill may become untenable to the very group that initially sought its passage.

State Legislatures

State legislatures are thought of more as the "people's" government than the Federal Government. In serving as a state legislator is rarely their sole occupation - most state legislators earn their living through other vocations.

Because of increased complexity of public policy questions, the urgent need for answers to those questions, and federal deregulation, state legislative and regulatory bodies have gained prominence for innovations and ability to enact change. State legislatures and regulatory agencies have taken over many responsibilities once managed at the federal level. Former federal programs are now state run and states develop and implement new programs to meet the needs of their citizens.

Terminology

Terms may be familiar, but to avoid confusion here are clarifying definitions.

- *Statute* – It's the law, already enacted by the legislature.
- *Bill* – A proposed statute pending in the legislature and subject to amendment before it makes its way to the Governor's desk for signature.
- *Legislation* – See "Bill"
- *Regulation* – It's a rule, made by a regulatory agency or rulemaking body such as a licensing board (e.g. local wildlife commission board). Members of regulatory bodies are usually appointed by the Governor or Legislative leadership.
- *Administration* – The Governor and gubernatorial appointees/staff.
- *Member* – An elected official, a member of either the House/Assembly or Senate
- *Constituency* – Voters who live in the legislator's district.

Structure

While state legislatures are structured similarly, no two operate in exactly the same manner. Most state legislatures are comprised of two chambers: a lower house generally called the House of Representative (or the Assembly) and an upper house called the Senate. (Nebraska's legislature is the only unicameral or single chamber, legislative body. Its members are Senators.) Though there may be two houses, the legislature may act procedurally as one; e.g., in Connecticut, all legislative business is conducted by joint committees of both houses, significantly reducing the number of hearings each bill will receive. The District of Columbia is governed by its City Council.

A demonstration of how a seemingly similar legislative process may vary from state to state is in how bills are written. While Congress writes omnibus legislation that may encompass wide-ranging subjects such as military spending, environmental issues, and health care, state legislatures more often limit bills to one topic. Called the rule of "germane," amendments to the bill may be resisted on the basis that they are not related to the main topic. Given sufficient political or public policy import, however, legislative leadership may bend the rules to expediently achieve its goals; keeping a sharp eye out for changes that affect you is always a good idea.

Operations

Legislative sessions vary greatly; some may meet for only 30 - 90 days a year. Several states with large urban populations basically meet year round.

Legislative sessions generally convene in January and adjourn in April or May. Several states convene two-year sessions in January, adjourn, and convene again for a short term the next February or March. Others are constitutionally limited to biennial sessions, though there may be off year meetings at which only topics specifically noted may be considered.

The Legislative Bodies

There are differences and similarities between the lower and upper houses.

The differences are:

- The "lower" legislative chamber (House or Assembly) is the numerically larger chamber;
- Members of the "upper" chamber (Senate) serve a larger constituency (usually both numerically and geographically) than do members of the lower house; and
- Members of the upper chamber generally serve longer terms of office.

The similarities between chambers are that they:

- Are about equally powerful;

- Have similar workloads;
- Have virtually parallel committee structures; and
- Provide information and assistance to their district's voters.

Legislative Staff

Legislative staffing is quite different at the state level from that of Congress. Members of Congress have *personal staffs* and, if they chair a committee, committee staff as well.

Most state legislators do not have a large staff. A member of a state representative's staff may deal with legislative matters in the state capitol and casework in the home district.

Regardless of the size of the staff, and whatever their duties, they play an important role in your ability to contact a busy legislator in either Washington, D.C. or your state capitol. Treat them with respect and courtesy.

How a Bill Becomes Law

Laws begin as ideas: from a member of the legislature; from the governor; from the legislative body itself; from any citizen. Legislators often react to fix problems identified by the media or by major events such as natural disasters or high-profile legal decisions.

As noted in the previous section, most legislatures allow for the pre-filing of bills and some establish deadlines for the introduction of bills. Others limit the number of bill that may be introduced each session.

Bill Introduction

Bills are constructed by the legislature's legal counsel. Though a legislator or special interest group may provide draft language, counsel will revise it to fit within the construct of existing law.

The first formal step in the process is for the clerk or secretary to read the bill and assign it a number. The bill is then referred to the committee(s) with jurisdiction over the subject matter.

The title of the bill may influence the committee the bill is assigned to. ("An Act to Establish a Bear Season" probably will be assigned to a committee that deals with natural resources and/or finances due to tag sales.)

Although it takes only one member to introduce legislation, other members may sign onto the legislation as co-sponsors. Co-sponsorship signals support and gives legislators a chance to see who supports the bill. Legislators often ask their peers or

members of certain caucuses to co-sponsor legislation.

In addition to the formal structure of the legislature, there are informal or even loose-knit groups called caucuses. The most obvious caucuses are those divided by party (e.g. Democrat, Republican, Independent). As a hunter, recreational shooter, and/or trapper, you may interact with your state's sportsmen's caucus. The power of these groups should not be downplayed or ignored.

Sunrise and Sunset Reviews

Sunrise

Legislation establishing professional regulations or a new regulatory board is often subject to a "sunrise" process, which varies by state. Usually, there is a public hearing conducted by either the legislature or the appropriate regulatory agency to determine the necessity of new regulation. The results of a sunrise hearing can effectively kill a bill before it is introduced.

At this hearing, the committee will ask questions about how creation of a new licensing category will protect the public, how many people will be affected, and how existing license categories might be impacted. They will want to review the educational standards for the profession and determine how much it will cost the state to set up a new board or advisory committee. The process of "sunrise" can be exhaustive and lengthy; preparation is vital.

Sunset

A "sunset" date is often written into the statute when a licensing category is created. The law will stipulate that, unless the Legislature acts to extend it, the sun will set on the practice act and the established regulatory board on a date certain. In the year prior to that date, hearings will be held or a review will be conducted by a state agency to determine if there is a need for continued regulation.

In essence, the sunset process is a new "sunrise" process and the board and its proponents will be called to report on their activities and how they continue to serve the people of the state as well as the licensees. The process lays everything on the table and is often the mechanism for resolving disputes between licensee categories over scope of practice or other related issues. Key issues will include numbers of new licensees, disciplinary actions undertaken, and the public's access to information about those governed by the regulatory board.

Legislative Committees

The committee system is, in part, the result of the legislatures' need to divide up the work and to develop expertise in particular subjects. Each standing committee has jurisdiction over particular subject matters.

Depending on the particular rules or customs of a state's legislature, committee chairs are generally the most senior members of the committee or are appointed by the leader of the body.

Because jurisdictions often overlap, bills can be assigned to more than one committee. Occasionally, a committee might seek a dual referral after it has heard a bill if questions arise that they feel require the input of another policy committee.

Committees have the power to:

- Hold hearings on the legislation, consider it and report it out;
- Rewrite (amend) the legislation;
- Reject it;
- Report it unfavorably; or
- Refuse to consider it.

In some legislatures, committees can require study periods (sunrise or interim study) on bills from one legislative session to the next. Several legislatures require that all committees report all bills to the entire legislature.

Hearings

Committees and subcommittees conduct legislative hearings. Hearings are held to obtain information, to test public opinion, to build support for the legislation, to allow those opposing the legislation to be heard, and to investigate.

Hearings can be conducted in one afternoon or last for weeks (such as budget hearings). Most hearings are open to the public. Committees are required to make some type of public announcement of hearing schedules.

One of the hardest aspects of the legislative process for the novice to understand is the hurry up and wait atmosphere that pervades the Capitol. Some people are bustling around while dozens of others appear to be idling in the halls. Committee meetings may not start on time, or they may be cancelled at the last minute. It's frustrating to have traveled for hours, only to be told it's going to start at 5:00 p.m. rather than 1:00 p.m. – or it's postponed until next week.

Witnesses presenting testimony should be experts in the subject matter or those who would be affected by the legislation. Witnesses are scheduled through the committee holding the hearing. Witnesses can include the bill's author and its sponsor(s).

Witnesses should prepare complete written statements of their remarks for the committee and it is recommended that these statements be provided to committee members prior to the hearing. Most committees accept testimony via e-mail. Back-up materials such as reports or study's should be supplied at this time, too. Check with the committee staff about rules for submitting materials. A witness' oral presentation should be a summary of the statement submitted of the printed record.

As cable channels proliferate, more legislatures are televising their proceedings; copies of the video may be available after the hearing.

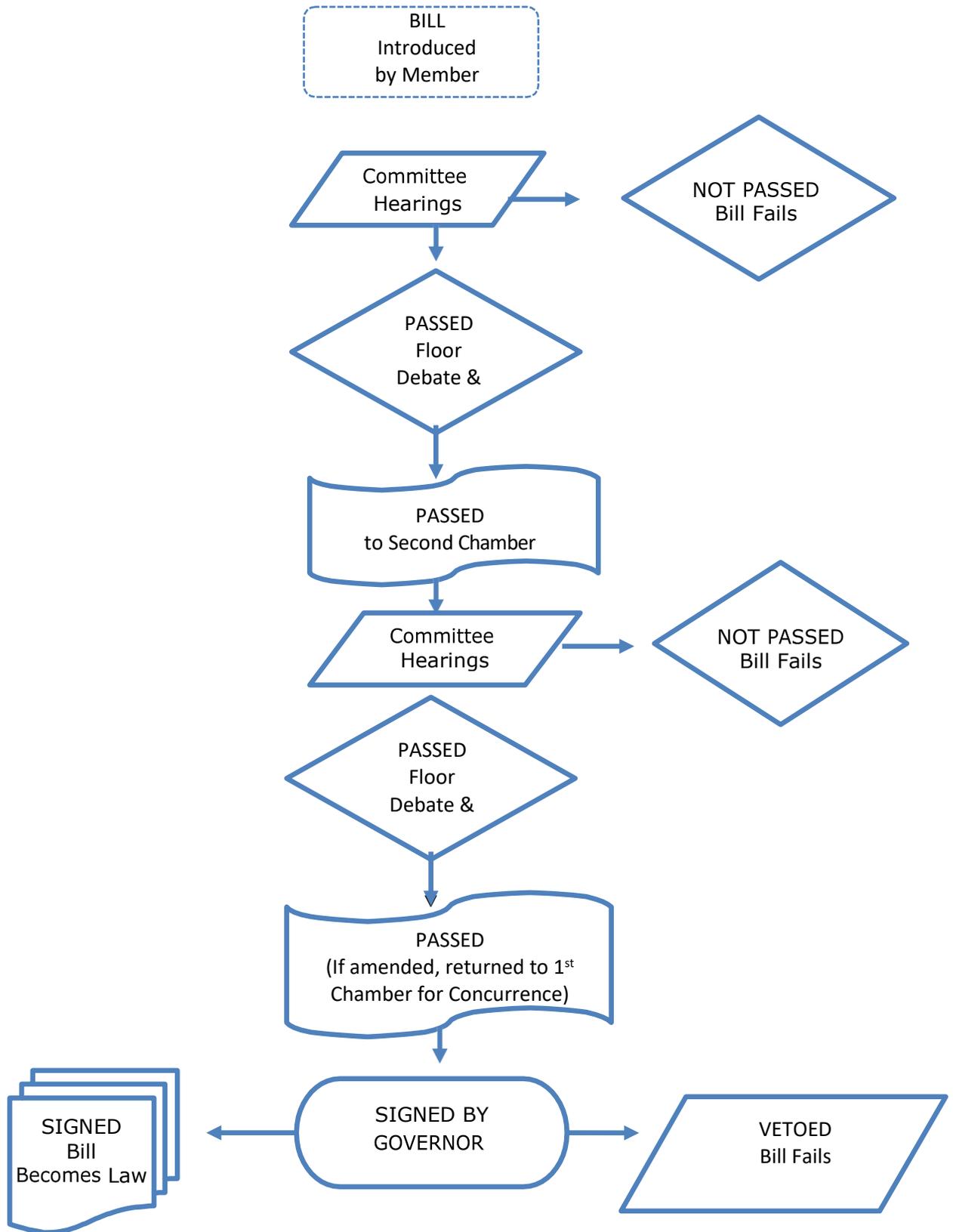
Most state legislatures allow members of the public to track legislation via their website. SCI recommends you sign up for alerts to notify you when a particular bill is going to be heard.

Floor Action

The full chamber debates and votes on bills voted out of committee. If it passes, the bill is sent to the other chamber where it must go through the same committee review, amendment process, and floor voting process. If the second chamber amends the bill, the first chamber must concur with the amendments. If it does not concur, then a conference committee is assembled to develop language acceptable to both houses.

Enactment

If passed by both houses of the legislature, the bill is sent to the governor. The governor may sign, veto, or take no action, which causes the bill to become law without signature, or die depending on the state. See the chart below on the legislative process.



Administrative Agency Regulations

The regulatory process is a very important element of any government relations effort. Getting the bill passed is Hurdle #1; the implementation process can be as lengthy and as frustrating.

An administrative agency is a governmental body created by a legislature or the Governor to administer statutes. Governments are generally organized into Agencies in the Governor's cabinet and departments or other units under their jurisdiction. Cabinet Secretaries, Department Directors, and other officials are usually gubernatorial appointees and may change when an administration changes.

Administrative agencies are granted powers similar to legislative and judicial powers - demonstrated by the responsibility and authority to interpret legislation and ability to conduct hearings, render decisions, and discipline those found in violation of agency rules.

When enacting statutes, a legislature may direct a specific administrative body to develop rules and regulations implementing the legislation. When legislative language is vague, administrative agencies enjoy latitude in writing the implementing rules. Rules and regulations can be viewed as a set of instructions on how to comply with the new law.

Wildlife Commissions

All states have some form of a wildlife commission that enacts rules and regulations regarding the state's fish and wildlife resources. Although each state is slightly different, the commissions are a state government agency created by the General Assembly in to conserve and sustain the state's fish and wildlife resources through research, scientific management, wise use, and public input. Usually, the wildlife commission is the regulatory agency responsible for the enforcement of fishing, hunting, trapping, and boating laws.

Each wildlife commission adheres to a rule-making process that can be generally followed using these steps:

- 1) The public, Commission staff, Department of Natural Resources staff, conservation partners and other stakeholders propose new or amended hunting, fishing, trapping, land management or other regulations.
- 2) Commission staff considers proposals from conservation, enforcement and management perspectives.
- 3) Proposals and staff analysis are presented to the Executive Director for their consideration.
- 4) Proposals are reviewed by Commission committees. Full Commission votes on which proposals to be presented at public hearings.
- 5) The public comments on proposals through e-mails, letters and in person at statewide public hearings.

- 6) The Commission considers comments submitted during the comment period and votes to reject proposals, adopt as presented or adopt in a modified form.
- 7) Adopted rules are filed with a rules review commission for approval or denial.
- 8) Approved rules are entered into the Administrative Code.

During public comment periods, it is imperative to attend and submit written comments voicing your opinion regarding a certain proposal. Although you may not believe your state's wildlife commission is important, they have the ability to affect hunters within the state (e.g. suspending a hunting season).

Lobbying Regulators

Regulators – the experts on how a new law will be implemented – usually make recommendations to the Governor about signing or vetoing a bill. Therefore, it is important to work with administrative agency personnel from the outset as well as during the rule writing process. Agency rules have as much impact or even more than legislation:

Because agencies have such influence, it is a common practice to lobby regulators. Groups that opposed your legislation probably will move their legislative battle to the regulatory level.

Grassroots Advocacy

Grassroots advocacy is a broad term used to describe establishing and using one-on-one relationships between constituents and their legislators. It is the most useful and effective way to influence the outcome of legislation.

There are innumerable methods of grassroots advocacy and this section of the Toolkit will look at the more tried and true tactics. The following is divided into two sections: first, what you must do as an individual, and the second on how to organize your colleagues.

Becoming a Key Contact

The most precious commodity of lobbying is access. Access is being able to see or talk to or influence a key person at the right time. Access is best gained by establishing a strong relationship with your elected representative before you need their vote on a bill. Even if you weren't your state representative's roommate in college and don't drive his kids in the soccer carpool, there are many ways to get to know your legislator on a personal basis. A "key contact" is the sportsman who is recognizable by name and face to the elected official. The ideal contact is the one whose name pops into the legislator's head when the words "hunting" are spoken or read.

To be effective:

- Make sure that you and the members of your family are registered to vote.
- Make an appointment just to introduce yourself. This is best done in the district office when the legislature is not in session. Legislators are difficult to meet during the session.
- Before meeting with the member find out a little bit about his or her background. School attended? Church? How many kids? When were they first elected? What committees do they sit on? Conservative or liberal? Voting record on key issues?
- In your introductory visit, talk to them about hunting in general terms. Let the elected official know that you are interested in them and their positions on issues, that you are an “informed” and voting constituent.
- Leave something behind – a business card, a fact sheet, or pamphlet.
- Create a reason to contact them again, such as leaving with the promise to do something. A tour of your ranch is a perfect follow-up. You are trying to become a familiar face to the politician. Find reasons to see them – at ribbon-cutting ceremonies, football games, or parades. Newspapers list events such as town hall meetings.
- Respect their privacy. Don’t lobby legislators in church or at their home. And don’t talk to their spouses about your issue.
- Ask to be on their mailing list. Volunteer to help the district office with a project.
- Invite your legislator to participate in programs where they will be positively received – your monthly school board meeting, your neighborhood group, your church or synagogue, etc. This gives them the chance to meet constituents and give you the credit for it.
- If you’re a Chapter President, offer to be the liaison with the representative’s office to keep the legislator and the staff informed of your group’s events or local issues.
- If your legislator does something with which you agree – votes your way on an issue, wins an award, or heads a new committee on natural resources – write a letter acknowledging the accomplishment. Much of the mail received by legislators is from unhappy constituents. Set yourself apart.
- Don’t forget to meet the legislator’s district and capitol staff. They funnel information to the member and control the calls and letters that get through.

AND THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO:

Support the legislator’s re-election campaign. It can mean making a contribution, but it also means putting up yard signs, walking precincts, or manning phone banks.

Organize your neighbors and introduce them to the legislator. For an investment of a few hours’ time during the campaign season, you will be repaid with access to your legislator when problems arise or when a vote is needed. Legislators can accomplish nothing if they are not first elected to office, and volunteers are invaluable in making that happen.

Organizing Your Colleagues

The adage “strength in numbers” applies to politics in a big way. As noted in the introductory section, many people speaking with one voice can have a profound political impact.

If you’re not already a leader, get involved in your local SCI chapter. Any action you undertake should be coordinated with the association to maximize the impact and minimize any confusion.

People *don’t* participate in the political process for a variety of reasons. They don’t think they can make a difference. They don’t know whom to contact. They don’t know what to say. They don’t have an issue. Or, *because no one asked them*.

The following are suggested ways to get your colleagues to coalesce around not only the upcoming legislative battle but any future issues for which you will need to mobilize a unified response. The time to organize is before there’s a problem.

Organize your Chapter: With a handful of committed volunteers, set out a plan detailing your needs for a grassroots organization. Determine the activities to be undertaken that will best utilize your army. Will you have a Legislative Day at the Capitol? Will you mount a letter-writing campaign? Forming a PAC? Plan a fundraiser? Do you need witnesses for legislative hearings? Identify “key contact” members?

Ask them: People often don’t know that they’re needed. Host a meeting and invite members, or have a special session at the annual meeting. The purpose of the meeting is fourfold: education, motivation, commitment, and organization.

Education: Inform them about the current legislative situation. Be prepared to answer questions fully and completely. Preparation for the meeting is good exercise for discussions you will have later with legislators. And if a colleague is pessimistic and hostile, that’s a good rehearsal as well.

Depending on the enthusiasm of the crowd, time available, etc., you may want to take the time for some Political Training 101. Pass out “letter to legislator” samples and give brief instructions on how to write and send the letter. Explain simplistically the legislative process. People are more likely to get involved if they know what’s expected.

Motivation: Share your vision of the benefits of seeking legislative changes and the importance of preparing to defend the profession against any incursions into the scope of practice. Urge them to register to vote and become a “key contact” as described above. If appropriate, you may ask the lobbyist to attend this meeting.

Commitment: Ask the participants for a commitment of resources, i.e., time or money, to get the project going. Time is the more valuable resource, as you will need manpower for all the projects you have planned.

Organization: Depending on how many commitments you receive, you may need to organize into smaller groups based on activities or geography. Identify leaders to head up these groups. Note particularly anyone who is highly respected or highly visible within the professional community who could encourage other sportsmen to get involved. Make sure you have everyone's current contact information.

Alert the members to the legislative schedule and when they may be called upon. If you've already settled on a date to rally in the Capitol, give them the particulars. Provide information that will prepare them to respond quickly when you need them.

Communicate regularly: It is vital that the members feel they know what's going on. This will help them respond to your calls for action in a more professional, knowledgeable manner. Also, regular communiqués will allow you to send information out in smaller, more digestible bites than an occasional 4-page memo.

In general, in-person communication works best. It gives people a chance to seek clarification and to share the experience and enthusiasm of other members.

Set up a telephone or e-mail communication network for critical information. The old-fashioned telephone tree works very well in grassroots organization and alleviates any one person having to make too many calls. Even in this electronic age, not everyone checks his or her e-mail regularly. There may be times when telephoning will be essential. However, for passing along updates and other general information, an e-mail list is ideal.

Schedule a Day at the Capitol. Giving members a first-hand look at how their legislation is proceeding, as well as giving them a chance to meet their legislators in a group, is an excellent way to both energize your members and to have an impact on legislators before they vote on your bill. They will be impressed if you can fill the building with sportsmen wearing identification (e.g. blaze orange). It also provides accountability for legislators to see their constituents who have invested their time and money traveling to the capital.

Recognize volunteerism: Publicly thank those members who give of their time and money to assist in this effort.

Remember this: members are more responsive when they are knowledgeable and when they have been given the tools to do the job.

Communicating with Legislators

No matter how you choose to communicate with your legislator, make sure your message is clearly and concisely presented. Three types of information are most useful to legislators: *accurate information about current conditions; purpose of proposed legislation; and the impact of proposed legislation.*

Who is your legislator? You can find that out by using [SCI's Action Center](#) or contact us at stateadvocacy@safariclub.org.

Preparation

Meetings with legislators are scheduled through their staff. To schedule a meeting, call the Representative's office and ask to arrange a meeting (generally you will be referred to the *scheduler or administrative assistant*). After reaching the appropriate individual, explain your purpose for calling. Follow up on this conversation with a letter or e-mail to the staff member thanking him/her for the assistance and reiterating your purpose. If a meeting was scheduled during the telephone conversation, confirm the meeting date and time in this letter.

In The Legislator's Office

Make your presentation interesting. For example, consider beginning "I'd like to talk to you about how to increase the amount of hunting licenses sold and provide an economic boost to the local economy ..." rather than "I'm here to discuss hunting licenses issues with you."

Begin promptly. Be prepared for your meeting to be interrupted – staff may need to grab the Representative. Keep your presentation brief and concise – 10 minutes at the most, and start with the most important information. If it lasts longer, you'll have a chance to bring up the less important issues.

Do not omit negative but vital information from your presentation. Better to get the good, the bad, and the ugly out immediately. Do not discuss issues not on the 'agenda,' or you may find yourself unprepared to answer certain questions. Do not make commitments on behalf of the organization unless you are sure that you have the authority and that the commitment is in concert with association policy.

Ask what you can do or how you can best assist the legislator in complying with your request.

Make sure you've done exhaustive research on your subject matter. Be prepared to answer the question you least want to be asked. If you're asked a question to which you do not know the answer, offer to provide it later. Avoid the temptation to speculate or guess at the answer, or if you do tell them you'll have to check and verify. Research and respond promptly if asked to provide additional information, and send enough copies for distribution to all legislators and staff who were present.

Leave a brief summary of your presentation with your legislator. (Make sure you leave copies for staff, too.) The summary should include what action you're requesting, how your issue impacts on the legislator's constituents, and draft language. Leave business cards or contact information.

Follow-Up

After your meeting, keep in touch with the staff, updating them on your progress. *Send thank you letters promptly.*

Written Communication

Despite the advent of the Internet, state legislators still pay the most attention to *letters from constituents*. Effective communication involves common sense:

- Use letterhead
- Include your return address
- Communicate in your own words, about your particular experience or situation

In order for an organized letter writing campaign using a form letter to succeed, there must be a *massive* number of letters flowing in.

Tips for Making A Point Most Effectively

- Mention the bill number and common name in the first sentence.
- Mention whether you support or oppose the bill in the second sentence.
- Keep it short; no longer than one page.
- Explain how the bill will affect you and the legislator's constituents
- Sum up your arguments.
- Involve other stakeholders (e.g. other outdoor groups).
- Honesty and accuracy are premium; do not exaggerate.
- Be clear by using layman's language.
- Use honey rather than vinegar; no scare tactics or threats.
- Include a return address prominently at the top of the letter.
For a sample letter, see the last page of this section.

Addresses for state and federal officials, or to learn the name of your representative, go to the [SCI's Action Center](#) or contact us at stateadvocacy@safariclub.org.

Phoning Your Legislator

State legislators give serious attention *telephone calls* from constituents, especially in

smaller states. Many include their personal phone number in their material. If you call, first identify yourself and be sure you can express your verbal points concisely. If it makes you more comfortable, *write out points* you want to make before you call. Keep that list handy while on the telephone. Speak in your own words.

Faxes and e-mails are now acceptable forms of communicating with your legislators. Be prepared, however, for the fax line to be busy during business hours, and the e-mail box to be full. E-communication should be as well written and as neat as a mailed letter.

Timing Your Contact

The best time to communicate your view depends on the position(s) held by your representative. If you are writing to a legislator who is on the committee that will hear the bill, send your position before a committee vote is scheduled so that your input will be used in the analysis and will be in the legislator's file as s/he hears the bill. If your representative will consider the bill for the first time when it comes up for a floor vote, then wait to send your letter until the bill has passed out of its last committee. You may want to write to all members of the committees that hear the bill, although the most effective communication is to your district representative. Don't forget to write to the governor once the bill is approved by the legislature.

Communicating with Staff

It is inevitable that one day you will arrive for an appointment, only to find that your representative has been summoned to the Governor's Office or to an urgent caucus meeting. Don't be offended; this is the legislative way of operating.

Now is the time to work with staff, if available. It is written elsewhere in this Toolkit that staff is important, and that is especially true in more populous states. If you find yourself present with no one to meet with, ask to talk with the chief of staff or staff member who handles natural resources. Talk with them just as you would with the legislator, and leave your prepared information behind. It is fairly certain that your message will be passed along, particularly if you are a district resident. As you would with the legislator, follow up with a thank you note.

Social Media

There is no denying that social media in all its forms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) has changed the way we communicate. For many Americans social media is the preferred platform to connect with friends and family and to express our opinions on matters ranging from the mundane to the profound. Social media's impact on the political landscape has steadily influenced how elected officials and their staff interact with the public. However, as convenient as these platforms may be through the use of smart phones, effective political advocates can't rely solely on social media to connect with elected officials.

Some key points to consider as you develop your communications strategy and determine what role social media will play in your efforts:

- Elected officials' use of social media vary greatly. Some are avid users; for example, several members of Congress live Tweet from the House chamber during the State of the Union address. Some have accounts on the major providers but delegate the use of the account entirely to staff. Some have no social media presence whatsoever.
- This form of communication is new and rapidly evolving. Elected officials and their staff are still developing internal procedures for measuring constituents' responses to events and issues via social media. Traditional means of contact by scheduling face to face meetings, making phone calls, and writing letters are still the primary means of communication to and from most elected officials.
- The internet is forever. If you are connecting to an elected official or his staff through social media, you must assume they are, or will at some point, be looking at your Facebook page, Twitter account, or whatever medium you used to connect. You can destroy your credibility with one photo, one comment, or one post.
- Social media can be a great avenue to recruit young people into your organization, keep them informed on the issues, and put them to work in a technology with which they are very comfortable and highly skilled.
- Social media can be an effective supplement to a well-planned communications strategy, but it must not become a substitute for one.
- Make sure to follow SCI on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/safariclubintl>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/safariclubintl/>).

Fundraising

You may want to raise funds to support the organization's legislative efforts. There will be expenses for witness travel, expenses related to coalition meetings, etc.

Funds raised for political activities may be subject to reporting requirements under the state's lobbying or political campaign statutes. Check the applicable state law. When fundraising for political purposes outside the membership, you must be sensitive to the type of event you sponsor and with whom you partner.

The following are some fundraising ideas:

- Dinner and auction
- Sport tournaments: Golf, Softball, Basketball, Shooting Sports
- Road racing 10K
- Hold a raffle or sweepstakes. (Check on your state's gambling laws)
- Seek sponsorship to underwrite overhead of a fundraising event

Suggested Strategies

Using SCI for Assistance

SCI has committed extraordinary resources to furthering the legislative goals of state chapters. Equally important, the Governmental Affairs Committee SCI's Washington, D.C. Office has valuable resources in terms of collateral material, strategic advice, language review, etc.

Organizational Issues

This is a good time to think about the way your state legislative committee is organized. There are myriad ways, of course, but a broad-based committee that truly represents all segments and settings of the membership will represent the views of varying types of practice settings.

It's important, as well, to seek members for the legislative committee who have real life experience in politics. They may have been active in a single or many political campaigns, may have been activists in college, or simply have an interest in the process. Ask among your colleagues to find these gems, and try to get them involved. "New" members are often energized by the challenge and eager to be of assistance. "Old" members may have become discouraged by the lack of past success and are ready to move on to another committee or activity.

Too, you may want to motivate senior committee members by giving them the facts about the current administration, or why THIS is the time to go forward with your bill. Concrete plans will make the chances of success seem more realistic and may re-energize some volunteers to get going again.

Increasing Visibility Among Legislators

- On the first day of session, give out welcome bags to the legislators. In the bags are items with information about SCI, events your local Chapter is holding, a breakdown of issues facing hunters in your community, and contact information.
- Educate legislators during the day at the capitol. You can have educational booths or host a lunch or breakfast briefing.
- Have a recognition night for the legislators at an event at your local Chapter.
- Host a dinner for legislators and recognize those who have helped your Chapter.
- Host a competition (e.g., House vs Senate) with a shooting sporting activity at a local range.
- Organize a Lobby Day at your state Capitol.

Expanding External Support

There is a section of this toolkit on building coalitions, but there may be other supporters a little closer to home that are overlooked. ATC students may be an untapped source of manpower for a letter writing campaign, provide extra “bodies” for the Capitol Day, may make excellent witnesses before the legislature, and may have contacts with school officials. As with their more experienced colleagues, they will need a bit of coaching and support but they will also bring a unique perspective.

Help students prepare their own talking points. They can speak personally about the cost of their education, their career goals, and potential obstacles to reaching those goals.

Legislative Witnesses

Having articulate, credible witnesses for legislative hearings is critical. Although it’s common for a witness to walk to the microphone, give brief testimony, and walk away, it’s also possible that they will be asked questions or otherwise become engaged in a dialogue with legislators. On rare occasions, a witness will be subjected to what may appear to be harsh or even hostile questioning, calling for cool under fire. It’s important that witnesses be chosen carefully.

The first and obvious place to look for witnesses is among your Chapter’s leadership. These are people most likely to be familiar with the issues and to have practical experience. However, the ability to speak well in front of a potentially large audience and to think on one’s feet may not go hand-in-hand with knowledge. If you do not have an obvious choice for spokesperson, seek training in public speaking for your most likely candidates.

A common debate is whether to use celebrity hunters as witnesses or spokespersons during the campaign. This is a double-edged sword calling for discernment and judgment. A well-known witness will certainly draw attention to the issue, but without sufficient preparation and style for public speaking, the result may be more negative than positive.

It’s best to observe an individual in a similar setting (e.g., press conference) before putting your fate in their hands. In addition, legislative schedules are notorious for changing and celebrities often have limited time available.

There may be other ways to utilize the name of a celebrity hunter. You could ask them to sign a letter to legislators, pose for a picture with the governor or legislative leadership, or provide an item for your Chapters auction.

Legislative Staff

Cultivating professional relationships with legislative staff will help you succeed in your legislative efforts. Whether involved with a state or federal legislative issue, it is important to build relationships with both the member's personal staff and the staff of the committee reviewing your bill. Develop a group of professional friends – *champions* – who know you and your organization's goals. These champions are the legislators and their staff you will eventually ask to sponsor your legislation.

The best way to ensure a good relationship with staff members is to *make their jobs easier and make them look good to the boss*. If you want your representative to prepare legislation or amend existing legislation, *provide the staff member with draft language*. Always *provide accurate information* about your issue, both its pros and cons. Provide information supporting your issue and arguments mitigating its negatives.

Don't try to circumvent the staff for any reason. Apprise staff of developments concerning your issue through regular e-mail, faxes, and phone calls.

Get the Facts

Prepare to answer questions from legislators, legislative staff members, and your opponents. SCI's Hunter Advocacy staff can assist you in gathering information about the following for your state.

National Issues

SCI on behalf of its members lobby on issues that affect sportsmen and women in Washington before Congress and relevant regulatory agencies. While states regulate hunting in their specific borders, many critical decisions affecting hunters and wildlife conservation in this country ultimately lie in the Federal arena.

If you have questions about SCI's Congressional efforts, please contact SCI's Department of Hunter Advocacy.

Resources

Where to Get Information

As previously mentioned, you will want to learn as much as possible about what goes on in your state Capitol. This may take a little time and some ingenuity, but it won't be hard work. Best of all, this information is mostly free.

First, look on the Internet for information about current legislative leadership, including chairs of the committees most likely to hear a hunting bill (such as natural

resources or energy). Read up on the chair and vice chair; their biographies (found through the legislature's web site) will tell you about their background and how long they've been in the legislature. If they've been on the committee for some time, they will be familiar with. Determine the upcoming session's schedule. Look for the committee schedule and, if available, note the names of committee staff.

Next, identify friends, neighbors, and colleagues who are politically active. Contact them and ask about the CURRENT legislative cycle (old news is interesting, and might even prove helpful, but you really need contemporary information). On the assumption that you know little or nothing about the current political situation, potential questions include:

- What are the major issues facing the legislature?
- Who's the most powerful/knowledgeable legislator on natural resource issues?
- What is the political climate? Factors such as a power struggle for legislative leadership, a several fiscal crisis, political scandals, or a contested redistricting plan can seriously derail legitimate but low-profile legislation.

A wealth of information (pamphlets, information bulletins, studies, educational videos) is available through the many state legislative offices – most is free; occasionally you'll be asked to pay a few dollars to cover the cost of printing and mailing.

Private contractors and publishing companies provide bill monitoring and reporting functions, delivery of daily digests of legislative actions, and directories. These services, however, may be pricey.

Also, information is available through the local and state headquarters of the Republican and Democratic parties and through other groups organized around a particular philosophy or issue.

State Legislative Information Offices

A good source of basic information about a state's legislature is the state's legislative office. The telephone number for each state legislative information offices is provided below. The staff of this office can assist you in locating legislative staff, legislative offices and a variety of documents.

- How a bill becomes a law
- How to draft legislation
- Where to get reports on daily legislative actions
- Background information on legislators
- Bill status
- Chamber rules

| State | Capitol Phone | Capitol Website | Commission Website |
|-------------------|----------------------|--|--|
| Alabama | (334) 242-7560 | www.legislature.state.al.us | Conservation Advisory Board |
| Alaska | (907) 465-4648 | www.legis.state.ak.us | Fish and Game Advisory Committees |
| Arizona | (602) 926-3559 | www.azleg.state.az.us | Game and Fish Commission |
| Arkansas | (501) 682-1937 | www.arkleg.state.ar.us | Game & Fish Commission |
| California | (916) 445-3614 | www.legislature.ca.gov | Fish and Game Commission |
| Colorado | (303) 866-3055 | www.leg.state.co.us | Parks and Wildlife Commission |
| Connecticut | (860) 240-0555 | www.cga.ct.gov | Conservation Advisory Council |
| Delaware | (302) 744-4114 | www.legis.state.de.us | Advisory Council on Game and Freshwater Fish |
| Dist. Of Columbia | (202) 724-8080 | www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us | |
| Florida | (904) 488-2812 | www.leg.state.fl.us | Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission |
| Georgia | (404) 656-5015 | www.legis.state.ga.us | Board of Natural Resources |
| Hawaii | (808) 587-0666 | www.hawaii.gov/lrb | Game Management Advisory Commission |
| Idaho | (208) 334-2475 | www.legislature.idaho.gov | Fish and Game Commission |
| Illinois | (217) 782-6851 | www.legis.state.il.us | Nature Preserves Commission |
| Indiana | (317) 232-9856 | www.in.gov/legislative | Natural Resources Commission |
| Iowa | (515) 281-5129 | www.legis.state.ia.us | Natural Resources Commission |
| Kansas | (913) 296-2391 | www.kslegislature.org | Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission |
| Kentucky | (502) 564-6543 | www.lrc.ky.gov | Fish & Wildlife Commission |
| Louisiana | (504) 342-2431 | www.legis.state.la.us | Wildlife and Fisheries Commission |
| Maine | (207) 287-1600 | http://janus.state.me.us/legis/ | Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Advisory |
| Maryland | (410) 841-3810 | www.mlis.state.md.us | Wildlife Advisory Commission |
| Massachusetts | (617) 722-2356 | www.mass.gov/legis | Fisheries and Wildlife Board |
| Michigan | (517) 373-2400 | www.michiganlegislature.org | Wildlife Council Commission |
| Minnesota | (612) 296-1563 | www.leg.state.mn.us | Game and Fish Fund Citizen Oversight Committee |
| Mississippi | (601) 359-3728 | http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/ | Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks Commission |
| Missouri | (314) 751-4633 | www.moga.mo.gov | Conservation Commission |
| Montana | (406) 444-3064 | http://leg.mt.gov | Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission |
| Nebraska | (402) 471-2271 | http://nebraskalegislature.gov | Game and Parks Commission |
| Nevada | (702) 687-6800 | www.leg.state.nv.us | Board of Wildlife Commissioners |
| New Hampshire | (603) 271-2239 | www.gencourt.state.nh.us | Fish and Game Commission |
| New Jersey | (609) 292-4840 | www.njleg.state.nj.us | Fish and Game Council |
| New Mexico | (505) 986-4600 | www.legis.state.nm.us | State Game Commission |
| New York | (518) 455-4218 | www.senate.state.ny.us | State Fish and Wildlife Management Board |
| North Carolina | (919) 733-7044 | www.ncleg.net | Wildlife Resources Commission |
| North Dakota | (701) 224-2916 | www.legis.nd.gov | Game and Fish Dept. Advisory Board |
| Ohio | (614) 466-3615 | www.legislature.state.oh.us | Wildlife Council Commission |
| Oklahoma | (405) 521-2502 | www.lsb.state.ok.us | Department of Wildlife Conservation |
| Oregon | (503) 986-1848 | www.leg.state.or.us | Fish & Wildlife Commission |
| Pennsylvania | (717) 787-4816 | www.legis.state.pa.us | Board of Game Commissioners |
| Rhode Island | (401) 277-2473 | www.rilin.state.ri.us | Bureau of Natural Resources |
| South Carolina | (803) 734-2145 | www.scstatehouse.net | Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee |
| South Dakota | (605) 773-3251 | www.legis.state.sd.us | Game, Fish and Parks Commission |
| Tennessee | (615) 741-3511 | www.legislature.state.tn.us | Fish & Wildlife Commission |
| Texas | (512) 463-1252 | www.capitol.state.tx.us | Parks and Wildlife Commission |

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|-------------|----------------|---|---|
| Utah | (801) 538-1032 | www.le.state.ut.us | Wildlife Regional Advisory Councils |
| Vermont | (802) 828-2231 | www.leg.state.vt.us | Fish and Wildlife Board |
| Virginia | (804) 786-6530 | http://legis.state.va.us | Board of Game and Inland Fisheries |
| Washington | (206) 786-7550 | www.leg.wa.gov | Game Management Advisory Council |
| W. Virginia | (304) 558-2040 | www.legis.state.wv.us | State Advisory Committee |
| Wisconsin | (608) 266-0341 | www.legis.state.wi.us | Natural Resources Board |
| Wyoming | (307) 777-7011 | http://legisweb.state.wy.us | Game and Fish Commission |

SCI Resources

SCI has additional resources available on SCI's website (www.safariclub.org/hunteradvocacy) or by email at stateadvocacy@safariclub.org.