



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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Lobbying 101 The Connecticut General Assembly

One of a school board member's roles is to advocate on behalf of your students and districts at the state level. Just as you are elected from the citizenry so too are members of the General Assembly. They *learn from you* what resources the district needs.

We will lead you through how the General Assembly is organized so you can best advocate for your students.

Legislators

Each Senator and House member serve for 2 year terms.

There are 36 Senators and 151 Representatives.

The size of a Senate district is about 4 times that of a House district.

Leadership

President Pro Tempore- majority party leader in the Senate, voted on by full Senate.

Speaker of the House- Majority party leader in the House, voted on by the full House.

Committees

Connecticut is unique to every other state, it has joint Senate and House committees.

The largest committees are Appropriations; Finance, Revenue and Bonding; Labor; Public Health; and Education. The other ones we most often lobby and monitor are: Children's, Planning and Development, Government Administration and Elections, and Environment.

Each committee has co-chairs, vice chairs (majority party) and ranking members (minority party).

Legislation

Proposed bills are first voted on in committee (usually proforma) before a public hearing is scheduled.

A proposed bill can be one sentence or 50 pages.

Public hearings are opportunities to offer testimony in support or opposition to a bill. Testimony may be digitally submitted if you can't be there in person. There is no substitute to being there in person. You can poke

holes in the testimony offered before you and you can lay the ground work for those that will follow you. The opportunity to answer a legislator's question on the spot is invaluable.

After the public hearing process, committee meetings are scheduled to vote on legislation. The terms used in referring to if a bill was voted out of committee is "JF", joint favorable. As mentioned, all committees are made up of Senate and House members jointly and they favorably voted on the bill. If the language of a bill is amended in committee it is JFS'd, noting the substitute language. Often, a committee will be debating a bill and mention the phrase: "It is a work in progress." That can be both good and bad.

A JF/JFS'd bill can go straight to Senate/House or to another committee.

Each of the 4 caucus's screen bills before they are considered for debate in the House or Senate chambers. They can refer a bill to any committee as it sees fit, for cognizance or in hopes of killing the bill.

In Session

When the Senate or House meet they work off a calendar. Any bill that is double starred may be considered for action. When the bill is screened by leadership it gauges if it needs or may attract amendments. If an amendment failed in committee, it could come back. If in the weeks since the committee vote another issue arises, the bill can be amended.

In the Senate, members of both sides will caucus and again review the screened bills before the Lt. Governor gavel them into session. Usually, the Senate has lunch and caucus and it can be 3pm or later when they gavel in. The calendar is marked in caucus with the bills they will actually consider that day. The Senate utilizes a consent calendar to its best ability and can act with all deliberate speed when leadership on both sides are of the mind to do so.

The House does not caucus before each session, saving caucuses for major legislation. A smaller version of the calendar in the House is morphed into a Go List that is found online about an hour before the House gavel in and is usually longer to alert members, the Senate, the Governor and lobbyists that a bill is moving along and could be considered within the next few days as well as those that will be debated that very day.

Lobbying

Before the session begins each year CABA adopts its positions at its Delegate Assembly. From there, CABA's State Relations committee creates legislative priorities. CABA holds breakfasts with Legislators, Board of Education members and Superintendents to discuss those priorities prior to session. Staff meets early on with all members of the Education Committee on those priorities and works to better understand a legislator's particular bills to influence their efforts to be mindful of the impact on local districts. As a bill is scheduled for a public hearing, CABA sends out an email summarizing the bills. When bills go to public hearing CABA testifies or submits testimony. **The more input we have from districts, the better we can advocate on your behalf.**

As a bill moves to the Senate or the House chambers for debate, CABA is lobbying members to gauge support or opposition, help kill a bill, or to sense if a bill is moving or languishing on the calendar. Legislators seek CABA out to better understand a bill if, in particular, they don't serve on the Education Committee and we are able to assist them. CABA is in the halls of the Capitol to advocate and inform Legislators.