



## **LOBBYING: A CITIZEN'S GUIDE**

*Serving the Iowa Legislature*

Lobbying is encouraging the passage, defeat, or modification of legislation. Lobbyists convey views and information to legislators in order to persuade them to act upon an idea for legislation.

The term "lobbyist," was first applied in Great Britain, where members of Parliament met with outsiders in a special room known as "The Lobby."

Anyone can lobby. It is not necessary to be a paid representative of a specific organization. A citizen acting out of personal interest can call, write, or meet with legislators to convey views and information on a particular issue or piece of legislation.

In deciding whether to vote for or against a bill, amendment, or other proposal, members of the Iowa Legislature may consider several factors. These factors include their own beliefs about the proposal, constituent views, the effects it will have on their constituents, the impact it will have on Iowa, the position taken by their party or caucus, the views of their fellow legislators, and information received from lobbyists.

Unlike individual constituents who may lobby by speaking with their legislator(s) on a particular issue or area of interest, a lobbyist usually works on behalf of a group or client. Large and well-organized groups with ample resources may have one or more full-time, professional lobbyists working for them. These lobbyists are at the State Capitol in Des Moines each day the Legislature is in session to monitor the progress of legislation and talk with legislators.

Groups with fewer resources may rely on the efforts of volunteer or part-time lobbyists. These groups may have their members monitor legislation and contact legislators by mail, e-mail, or telephone.

### **Legislative Internet**

The Iowa General Assembly web site [www.legis.iowa.gov](http://www.legis.iowa.gov) is a source for all information concerning the Iowa Legislature. Data is available on all legislation introduced, status of bills, and subsequent actions by the Governor. A current log of daily floor action is featured during session, in addition to audio links to each chamber during floor debates. Legislator listings, photos, and contact information are accessible. Contact the Legislative Information Office (LIO) for assistance with the site.

The web site contains information regarding the daily activities of the Senate and House. This includes the current regular debate calendars, all legislation dealt with (publication *Session Daily*), amendments, committee information, and the previous day's journals.

Bill tracking is a feature of the web site. Bill versions, amendments, resolutions, study bills, bill histories, fiscal notes, and sponsor information are all listed. Committee assignments for study bills are also featured. Bills can be located by number, subject, legislator, or committee. Amendments can be located by amendment and/or bill number, sponsor, and date.

Bill lists are also a feature on the web site. This includes enrolled bills, similar and companion bills, and bill dispositions. Fiscal notes and fiscal analysis of bills, analysis of fiscal impact on

Administrative Rules, and appropriations tracking are listed, as well as general budgeting information, interactive budget references, and fiscal service publications.

Standing committees are listed, along with membership and leadership. Joint appropriations committees, Legislative Council, permanent statutory committees, and interim committees are also listed, including membership and leadership.

The Iowa General Assembly web site is a source of information regarding all aspects of the Iowa Legislature. By utilizing the site, lobbyists can track the progress of a bill and time lobbying efforts to coincide with key points in the process.

More specific information, such as the voting records of legislators, requires more research. The results of roll call votes are published in the Senate and House journals. After each session, the journals are bound and published with an index. The Law Library and the LIO can provide instruction on how to use the indexes to determine how a legislator voted on specific bills or amendments during recent legislative sessions. This information is also published on the web site.

### **Research**

Many issues confront the Iowa Legislature each year. Hundreds of legislative bills are introduced in an attempt to deal with those issues. One issue alone may be included in several different bills. To support viewpoints, accurate up-to-date information may be obtained.

Lobbyists may also research relevant legislation considered by the Legislature in previous years, types of studies, reports, or other recommendations issued by the Legislature or state agencies. An archival page is available on the Iowa General Assembly web site. The Iowa Law Library is a source for how legislatures in other states have dealt with an issue.

The Legislative Services Agency (LSA) 515-281-3566, the LIO 515-281-5129, and the Law Library 515-281-5124, all located at the State Capitol, can assist by answering research questions. If they do not have the information, staff personnel can provide other possible sources.

### **Legislators**

Lobbying involves communicating views and information to legislators. Log on to the Iowa General Assembly web site or call the LIO as a resource to find who holds leadership positions—President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Senate Majority Leader, Senate Minority Leader, House Majority Leader, and House Minority Leader. This leadership sets the legislative agenda each session.

The Iowa General Assembly web site also lists the memberships of the various Senate and House committees, their chairpersons, vice chairpersons, and ranking members. A lobbyist should know who serves on the committee or committees relevant to their issue(s), particularly the chairpersons. Since every bill must be approved by a committee at some point, the committee chairpersons play an important part in determining the fate of bills.

### **When to Lobby**

Each General Assembly consists of two years. The Iowa Constitution requires the legislative sessions of each General Assembly to convene yearly on the second Monday in January. Even though the session can more or less, per diem expenses extend up to 110 calendar days during the first year of the General Assembly (even-numbered years) and up to 100 calendar days during second year of the General Assembly (odd-numbered years).

To have a bill introduced, contact legislators in the summer or fall to see if one or more of them may wish to be a sponsor. In Iowa, only legislators or legislative committees can introduce and/or sponsor bills.

To lobby for the passage, defeat, or modification of a bill that's already been introduced, track the bill's progress carefully during the session and contact legislators as the bill moves through each stage of the process. *Session Timetable*, available from the LIO (and on the Iowa General Assembly web site), will list the important deadlines that have been set for the session.

### **Committees**

All of the formal decision making prior to debate in the Iowa Legislature takes place in committees. Interim study committees and standing committees study and may debate bills and then decide whether or not to recommend the bills for passage. Conference committees resolve differences when the Senate and House cannot agree on the final version of a bill they've both passed. An idea may go through several committees and take several years before it is finally passed by the Legislature.

When the Legislature is in session, a tentative daily listing of committee meetings and agendas is published by the LIO, both in hardcopy form and on the Iowa General Assembly web site. Automatic e-mail delivery through *Listserv* is provided during the legislative session for those who sign up to receive it. The LIO publication, *Today in the Senate/House*, can also be automatically delivered during session at no cost by e-mail subscribers. Daily schedules during session (and meetings throughout the interim) are available in audio format using the *OnCell* system on any cellular phone: 515-802-3004 (press stop number 85). For more advance notice of meetings, consult the weekly schedules published by the Senate and House, also available on the web site.

Attending committee meetings not only allows insight into the legislative process, but also a comprehension of the views and positions of the various legislators on legislation discussed. All committee meetings are open to the public.

In some cases, a committee may schedule a public hearing on a particular bill or issue and invite the public to testify. Such a hearing provides an opportunity for the public's viewpoint and supplies information to legislators. If a public hearing is scheduled, contact the chairperson of the committee for information, or in some cases, the sponsor of the bill. Legislators may also be contacted.

Not all bills introduced in the Iowa Legislature make it past the committee stage. However, even if a bill is not voted out of the committee, it can become an amendment to another bill.

### **Floor Action**

If a bill is approved by a committee, it may be amended on the floor in such a way that the original outcome is changed.

All bills reported out of committee in a chamber are placed on that chamber's regular calendar. Published each day of the session, and available on the Iowa General Assembly web site, the regular calendar lists the number, title, and floor manager for every bill.

The floor manager is the legislator responsible for the bill during debate. The floor manager speaks for or against amendments and other actions relating to the bill. Usually, the floor manager is the chairperson of the subcommittee to which the bill was referred by the standing committee.

Bills are called up for debate by the chamber's Majority Leader. Each day, the Majority Leader's office issues a debate calendar listing all the bills scheduled for debate. These calendars are available on the Iowa General Assembly web site. As with committee schedules and agendas, debate schedules change frequently on short notice.

Both the Senate and House chambers maintain public galleries where citizens can watch and listen to the proceedings. The galleries are accessible from the third floor of the Capitol. During session, live floor debates are provided on the home page of Iowa General Assembly web site.

### **Contact Legislators**

There are four main options for contacting legislators—visiting in person, calling on the telephone, writing, or e-mailing.

During session, legislators usually split their time between the State Capitol in Des Moines and their home districts. With occasional exceptions, legislators will be in Des Moines Monday through Thursday, for legislative business, returning to their home districts for the weekend.

During the interim, legislators spend their time in their home districts, as many have jobs outside the Legislature.

Except for leadership and committee chairpersons, legislators do not have individual offices at the State Capitol. During session, their offices are their desks in the chambers and their telephone calls are handled by a switchboard in each chamber. In addition, every legislator has a secretary or clerk at the State Capitol only during the session.

To meet with a legislator at the State Capitol, call ahead for an appointment. To reach a Senator, call the Senate switchboard at 515-281-3371. To reach a Representative, call the House switchboard at 515-281-3221. On weekends, legislators may be contacted at their homes. The Iowa General Assembly web site may list legislators' home phone numbers.

Even without an appointment, it may still be possible to meet with legislators at the State Capitol. During breaks in the daily schedule, many legislators meet with lobbyists and constituents in the rotunda between the Senate and House chambers.

If a legislator is not already available in the rotunda area, go to the entrance of the appropriate chamber and fill out a message slip. The doorkeeper will have a legislative Page deliver the message to the legislator's desk and bring back a response.

It may be possible to meet with legislators in their home districts. Many hold forums on weekends during the session to update constituents on legislative happenings. Check local media for times and places of such forums.

A visit with a legislator during session is likely to be brief. When visiting in person with a legislator, be well prepared. Provide an introduction as a lobbyist and/or constituent, identify the bill or issue, of concern, and briefly detail a viewpoint.

Lobbying by mail can also be effective, as it allows an organization of views and information into a hands-on form that legislators can keep and refer to later. During the session, address letters to individual Senators and Representatives in care of the State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319. Between sessions, write to legislators at their home addresses (may be listed on the Iowa General Assembly web site, or contact the LIO). E-mail is also an option (addresses are on the web site, or contact the LIO).

Legislators receive hundreds of communications each week. Suggestions when writing to legislators:

- Use your own words.
- Be concise.

## **Register if Interested in Becoming a Lobbyist**

In Iowa, lobbyists who are paid compensation for encouraging the passage, defeat, approval, veto, or modification of legislation are required to register with the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives before lobbying. This includes lobbyists who represent an organization which has lobbying as one of its purposes, government employees representing the official positions of their agencies, or persons who expend over \$1,000 during a calendar year to lobby legislators.

Each lobbyist and their clients must fulfill various reporting requirements. These requirements are detailed in the Iowa Code (Chapter 68B). A lobbyist is prohibited from making a contribution to a legislator's campaign fund during the legislative session, offering or making special loans to a legislator, or giving certain kinds of gifts to legislators. All lobbyist forms are available in both the Secretary of the Senate and Chief Clerk of the House offices and on the Iowa General Assembly web site.

## **Information**

*Session Daily* provides daily listings of all legislative actions by both chambers during the previous day while in session. All bill numbers are hyperlinked, so the entire bill can be accessed with just a click. Automatic e-mail delivery through *Listserv* is provided during the legislative session for those who sign up to receive it. *Today in the Senate/House*, can also be automatically delivered during session at no cost by e-mail subscribers. Daily schedules during session (and meetings throughout the interim) are available in audio format using the *OnCell* system on any cellular phone: 515-802-3004 (press stop number 85). In addition, all other LIO informational publications are listed on this site.

The LIO can assist in locating bill numbers, checking bill status, locating amendments, and determining meeting times and places. The office can mail a bill copies to individuals without Internet access. The LIO also provides informational and educational materials regarding the Iowa Legislature to school groups and other interested people. All of this information is also located on the Iowa General Assembly web site. The LIO can assist in site navigation. In addition, the LIO has a computer available for public access to information on the Iowa General Assembly web site.

LIO personnel are available in person, by telephone, mail, and e-mail. The LIO is located in Room G16 of the State Capitol and is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mailing address: Legislative Information Office, Room G16, State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319 – Telephone: 515-281-5129. The e-mail address for the office is:  
***lioinfo@staff.legis.state.ia.us***

*3/06/13*

*Legislative Information Office – Room G16*

*Iowa State Capitol*

*Iowa General Assembly web site: [www.legis.iowa.gov](http://www.legis.iowa.gov)*