



**Friends Committee on
Legislation of California**

BRING YOUR VOICE!

**FCLCA'S GUIDE TO
GRASSROOTS LOBBYING
AND THE
CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE**

*Bring Your Voice! FCLCA's Guide to Grassroots Lobbying
and the California Legislature*

A Project of the FCL Education Fund
Christopher Yager, Writer
Kevan Insko, Editor
Jim Lindburg, Editor

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*Friends Committee on Legislation of California
1225 8th Street, Suite 220
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 443-3734
website: www.fclca.org
email: fcladmin@fclca.org*

Welcome!

So you're interested in how the California State Legislature works and how you can affect the outcome of that process. Maybe you want the Legislature to write a new law or change an old one to address a problem in your community, or maybe you are concerned about a bill that would negatively affect you or your community. Either way, understanding how the legislative process works in California and how you can organize strategically to bring your voice to that process will help you bring about the change you want to see.

With this guide, we would like to share with you the experience and expertise our lobbyists and activists have developed over 60 years of public interest lobbying in Sacramento. From our very beginning in 1952, FCLCA has focused on grassroots advocacy and trained our members on how to lobby their legislators. In 1953, we published our first widely distributed "how-to" pamphlet that sounds as relevant today as it did then.

"The point of most effective action comes when the bill is before committee.
Much of the most important work of the Legislature is done in committee."

-A Guide to Action on State Legislation

Friends Committee on Legislation of California, 1952

You'll find those very words echoed in this guidebook today. The times may change, the issues may change, the bills we lobby on will definitely change. But what will never change is the importance of people like you who care -- who speak up and bring their voice to the cause of justice. Thank you for your activism! We hope you'll find this information helpful as you work to better your neighborhood, community and state. Happy lobbying!

Friends Committee on Legislation of California, September 2015

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Sample Letters

- Support: Senate Bill 334 (Leyva, 2015)
- Oppose: Senate Bill 171 (Gaines, 2015)
- Floor Alert: Senate Bill 334 (Leyva, 2015)



A. The California Legislature

A1. Overview

Let's start with a brief overview of the Legislature itself. The Legislature is one of California's three branches of government: legislative, which crafts laws and the state budget; judicial (the courts); and executive (the governor, state agencies, and departments).

The California State Legislature comprises two houses: the Assembly and the Senate. The Assembly has 80 members, each representing separate districts and elected for two-year terms. The Senate has 40 senators who serve four-year terms and who each represent twice as many people as the assembly members. Senate districts overlay the Assembly districts so that everyone is represented by both an assembly member and a senator.

Legislators are elected to represent their constituents – the people who live in

FIND OUT WHO REPRESENTS YOU

The first step to getting involved with the Legislature is to find out who your representatives are. Contacting your representatives as a constituent is an easy way to have an impact.

Knowing who represents you is also key information when you go to talk to other legislators. You want to be perceived as an informed and active participant in the political system as well as an advocate for your particular issue.

You can look up who your elected representatives are at FCLCA's web site:

www.fclca.org

the districts they represent – people like you and me. Part of their job is to listen to the views of the people they represent and bring their concerns and interests to the State Capitol. Part of our job as constituents is to make sure that the legislators hear our voice – so when we weigh in on bills, far from inconveniencing legislators and their staff, we are actually fulfilling our civic duty. By bringing your voice you are helping the system work the way it is supposed to work.

Because of term limits originally enacted in the 1990s, for many years the membership of the Legislature turned over fairly quickly. Assembly members could serve only three two-year terms (a total of six years), and senators only two four-year terms (a total of eight years). Individuals could serve for a maximum of fourteen years in the Legislature. In 2012, the voters revised term limits so that legislators are now allowed to serve twelve years of combined time in either house. Many hope this change will retain more institutional knowledge and expertise amongst the legislators.

Each legislator has an office with staff in the State Capitol as well as one or more offices in their district. Because of the large number of bills introduced each year, no one could possibly become an expert on all of the subjects the bills address. So the legislators usually assign different policy areas to various members of their staffs, who then manage legislation in that policy area for the legislator. These staff members research the bills and advise the assembly member or senator on the issues, making recommendations on how to vote on the bills.

The Legislature makes laws and sets the state budget. This guidebook focuses on the lawmaking aspect of the Legislature. The budget process has significant differences and is not covered in this guidebook. The

Legislature can make laws by creating statutes (created by bills that are passed by the Legislature and approved by the governor), can place constitutional amendments or referendums on the ballot to be approved by voters, or pass non-binding resolutions. The Legislature is limited only by the State Constitution and the Constitution of the United States, and by laws passed directly by voters through the ballot initiative or referendum processes.

A2. The life cycle of a bill

To become law, a bill must be passed by a majority vote of each house and then be approved by the governor. Some bills require a two-thirds vote from each house, such as bills that would raise taxes or urgency measures that take effect immediately instead of on January 1 of the following year. However, most bills only require a simple majority.

The legislative process is governed by a series of deadlines for bills to achieve certain benchmarks in order to be able to proceed in the process. The dates change from year to year, so be sure to check with the legislative calendar published each year by the Legislature. The legislative calendar is available on the Assembly and Senate websites (assembly.ca.gov or senate.ca.gov) as well as in both houses' *Daily File*. It is important to keep these deadlines in mind as you work to support or oppose individual bills.

A BRIEF TIMELINE

- A bill is submitted by a legislator to the Office of Legislative Counsel which drafts it into legal language and provides a brief summary of the bill.
- The bill is assigned a bill number.
- The bill is introduced and “read” for the first time on the floor of the house of origin.
- The bill is sent to the printer to be published.
- The Committee on Rules assigns the bill to the appropriate policy committee(s).
- At least 30 days after the bill is introduced, the policy committee hears the bill and votes on it.
- If the bill is referred to the Appropriations Committee, the bill is heard there and either passed or held in committee.
- The bill is “read” a second time on the floor and the house votes on whether to approve any amendments made during the committee process.
- The bill is “read” a third time on the floor and then is voted on by the full house.
- The bill repeats the process in the second house and then is sent to the governor for his or her signature or veto.

WHEN A BILL DIES (SOMETIMES IT DOESN'T)

If a bill fails a vote, either in committee or on the floor, it is generally considered “dead” and goes no further. However, you should be aware that the bill could come back to life, and it is important to remain vigilant.

If a bill fails a committee or floor vote, it will often be granted “reconsideration.” This means that the author may bring it back for another vote. Usually this involves amending the bill to remove opposition or otherwise persuading additional legislators to vote for it.

Bills that do not make it through both houses in the first year of the two-year legislative session are commonly referred to as “two-year bills.” Bills introduced in the first year of the two-year session must pass their house of origin by January 31st of the second year, though there are exceptions for constitutional amendments and resolutions. Bills introduced in the second year must pass through both houses that year.

Bills that have stalled may also go through a process

[continued on next page]

A2.1 Introduction of a bill

This process starts with the idea for a bill being submitted by a legislator to the Office of Legislative Counsel, which drafts the idea into legal language and writes a short summary of the bill called the “Legislative Counsel’s Digest.” This digest very briefly explains the current law and the ways that the bill would change the law. The legislator who introduced the bill is known as the “author” of the bill (regardless of who may have actually written the language of the bill).

The bill is assigned a bill number (based on the order the bills are introduced and which house it is introduced in.) It is then submitted by the legislator to the Chief Clerk, introduced on the floor, read for the first time and sent to the printer to be published.

No bill (other than the budget or urgency measures) can be acted on for at least 30 days after it receives its first reading and is published. This is to give everyone time to study the bills before they can be acted on.

A2.2 The policy committees

Both the Assembly and Senate have policy committees that specialize in various policy areas and hold hearings on bills that are related to those policy areas. This allows each of the hundreds of bills to be carefully scrutinized before it comes before the whole house. Each of these committees is made up of a number of legislators and are usually chaired by a member of the majority party. The committees are staffed by people with specific subject expertise who will write up analyses of the bills that come before the committee. This helps the committee members understand the intricacies and potential implications of the bills before them.

The Committee on Rules assigns all bills to the policy committee (or committees) that are appropriate to the bill's subject matter. If the bill contains an appropriation to spend money or would otherwise have fiscal implications for the state or local governments, the bill is also referred to the Appropriations Committee, which hears the bill if it passes the policy committees. **See the sidebar *What are Fiscal Impacts?*, p.35.**

Bills are often amended as they wend their way through the committees. These amendments are intended to remove opposition to the bills and improve them so that they better achieve their goals if and when they are eventually enacted into law.

Because bills must pass through the appropriate committees prior to a vote by the full house, the policy committee process is a critical time for groups to weigh in on legislation and affect the outcome.

A2.3 On the floor

If a bill was passed by the committees it was assigned to and is passed by a floor vote (a vote of the entire house) in its house of origin, then it is sent to the other house to repeat the whole process. If it makes it through the process in the second house and is approved by a floor vote, the first house must vote to approve any amendments made by the second house. This is called a "concurrency vote." If the bill passes both houses of the Legislature, it is sent to the governor. If at any point in the process the bill fails a vote in committee or on the floor of one of the houses, it generally does not proceed further. **See our sidebar *When bills die (Sometimes they don't)* for more on the possible fate of bills that don't pass.**

WHEN A BILL DIES (SOMETIMES IT DOESN'T)

[continued]

referred to as a "gut and amend" where the bill's original content is removed and replaced by completely new language on a different subject.

After the bill is gutted and amended, it then picks back up wherever it was in the process and continues to move forward. (The Rules Committees will decide which policy committees to assign the bill to.)

"Gut and amend" has been criticized as a way to enable controversial legislation to fly under the radar or to bypass a policy committee that is hostile to the bill. Sometimes the procedure is necessary, such as when it used in response to a notorious event that demands swift legislative action after bill deadlines have expired.

READ THREE TIMES

Each bill has to be “read” three times on the floor of the house before it can be voted on.

The bill receives its First Reading when it is introduced. The bill receives its Second Reading when the house hears and approves the amendments made during the committee process. The bill receives its Third Reading right before the bill is voted on.

The version of the bill to be voted on has to have been in print for at least one day before it can be voted on. But the author (or floor manager, if it is in the second house) might not bring it up right away. He or she might wait until all members are present, or until he or she has had time to talk to other members and thinks it is ready for a vote.



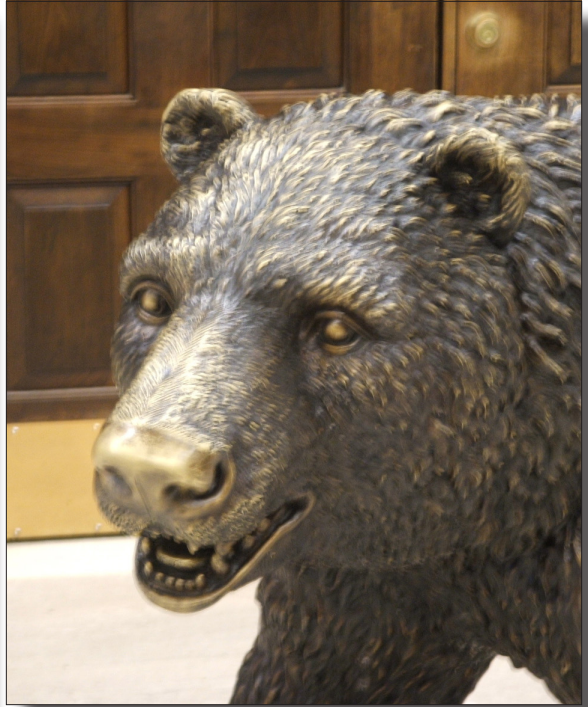
The Assembly in Floor Session

A2.4 The governor’s desk

Finally, the governor either approves a bill and signs it, in which case it becomes law, or vetoes it and returns it to the Legislature with a message explaining his or her reasons for vetoing the bill. The Legislature can overturn a governor’s veto by a two thirds majority vote in each house, but, for various reasons, this almost never happens. If a bill is vetoed and the veto is not overturned, then the bill does not become law. If a governor neither signs the bill nor vetoes it after twelve days of having received it, the bill becomes law without his or her signature. The only exception to the twelve-day deadline for the governor to act on legislation is at the end of the session. For bills that are still in the governor’s possession at the end of the annual session, the governor has 30 days to act on the bill or let it become law without his or her signature. **See *Lobby the governor*, p.38 for more information.**

A2.5 The bill becomes law

After being approved by the governor the bill goes to the Secretary of State's office. The Secretary of State will assign a chapter number to the bill. These chaptered bills become part of the California Codes (**see the sidebar *Definitions: Code*, p.12**) in the appropriate section of the law, and the new laws will then take effect on January 1 of the following year. The only exception is for bills that have an urgency clause stating that the bill will take effect immediately upon being approved by the governor. These bills require a super-majority vote (2/3 of both houses voting "aye") to pass the Legislature.



B. How You Can Have an Impact

Throughout a bill's journey through the legislative process, you have many opportunities to have an impact, whether you want to see the bill succeed, want to amend the bill, or want to stop the bill from becoming law. Here's an overview of the steps you can take:

1) Become an expert on your bill

- Read your bill thoroughly and understand it
- Read the analyses prepared by committee staff
- Find out who supports and who opposes the bill and why
- Keep track of your bill – know where it is throughout the process and keep informed about amendments

2) Work with others to maximize your impact

- Meet and work with the bill's author
- Work with allies who share your position on the bill

3) Lobby strategically as the bill moves through the process:

- Develop your position and talking points
- Write a letter of support or opposition to submit to the policy committees
- Visit the legislators who sit on the policy committees hearing your bill
- Testify at committee hearings
- Count votes and tailor your lobbying to specific legislators
- Organize a delegation to meet with legislators
- Distribute floor alerts for floor votes
- Conduct a media campaign/write letters to the editor
- Visit legislators in their districts
- Lobby the governor

B1. Become an expert on your bill

B1.1 Understand your bill

Knowing everything that is in your bill is essential if you want to convince legislators to support your position. The first thing you need to do when you hear about a bill is to read it and understand it.

Start by reading your bill at leginfo.legislature.ca.gov. The Legislative Counsel's Digest, which is at the beginning of the bill, will explain the current law on the

subject and what the bill will do. However, the Legislative Counsel's Digest is usually not very detailed, so it's best to read the actual text of the bill yourself and make sure you understand what it says. **See *Exploring leginfo.legislature.ca.gov* below.**

It is also a good idea to contact the bill author's office, and ask them for any fact sheets or other information they have on the bill. This information can be very helpful in understanding the bill and in crafting your arguments. The bill author's office is also a good place to turn if you have questions about a bill.

Bills can create entirely new laws, make changes to existing laws or both. For the first kind of bill, the text will indicate where in the law the bill will create new sections of

SENATE BILL **No. 759**

**Introduced by Senators Anderson and Hancock
(Coauthors: Senators Leno and Mitchell)
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Jones-Sawyer)**

February 27, 2015

An act to add Article 7 (commencing with Section 2696) to Chapter 4 of Title 1 of Part 3 of the Penal Code, relating to prisoners.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 759, as introduced, Anderson. Prisoners: Secured Housing Units: reports.

Existing law establishes the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to oversee the state prison system. Existing law authorizes Security Housing Units for segregation of certain prisoners for disciplinary or security purposes, and because of gang membership or association.

The bill would require the department, commencing July 1, 2016, to collect specified data regarding inmates subject to a term in a Security Housing Unit. The bill would require the Inspector General, commencing January 1, 2018, and biennially thereafter, to use the data to prepare reports for the Legislature on specified criteria pertaining to inmates in a Security Housing Unit and a Psychiatric Services Unit.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Article 7 (commencing with Section 2696) is
2 added to Chapter 4 of Title 1 of Part 3 of the Penal Code, to read:

99

Text of a bill with the Legislative Counsel's Digest highlighted

code and the new language that will make up that section. The second kind of bill will include the existing code sections that are being amended along with the new changes being made to that existing language.

When you are reading a bill that has not been amended, any new language that is being inserted into current code will appear in italic typeface, and language that is being removed from the code will appear in strikethrough typeface. However, after the bill is amended, the italic and strikethrough will only indicate changes to the bill from the last version. When you are reading a bill that has been amended, the Compare Versions and the Today's Law as Amended tabs of the leginfo.legislature.ca.gov page can be useful. You can compare any two versions of the bill and see what has changed or see how the bill's current version changes the law. These still use the italic and strikethrough text to indicate changes between the newer version and the older one. **See below for more information about leginfo.legislature.ca.gov.**

Some bills, especially the annual budget bills, can be very complicated and difficult to understand. However, most bills are much simpler and only deal with one aspect of law.

To understand a bill, you have to determine what the author is trying to accomplish. If you agree with the bill, this can be relatively easy. But you don't have to agree with the author about whether or not that need exists or whether their proposed solution is a good one. You just want to understand the author's intent so you can more effectively advocate for your position.

Once you understand the author's intent, you should ask yourself how the bill proposes to achieve that end. After reading the Legislative Counsel Digest and the

A NOTE ON BILL LANGUAGE

There are two words in particular that often cause confusion when reading bills: "shall" and "may." In normal spoken English, both words have similar meanings. In legal jargon they are very distinct.

"Shall" makes an action mandatory. The person or entity so instructed **MUST** take the action the law prescribes. This term is used to **REQUIRE** someone to do something.

"May" makes an action optional. The person or entity has the discretion to decide whether or not to take the action provided in the law. This term is used either to provide multiple options or to soften a bill's impact.

"Shall" is much stronger language than "may."

DEFINITIONS: CODE

California Law consists of 29 codes, covering various subject areas:

Business and Professions Code
Civil Code
Code of Civil Procedure
Commercial Code
Corporations Code
Education Code
Elections Code
Evidence Code
Family Code
Financial Code
Fish and Game Code
Food and Agricultural Code
Government Code
Harbors and Navigation Code
Health and Safety Code
Insurance Code
Labor Code
Military and Veterans Code
Penal Code
Probate Code
Public Contract Code
Public Resources Code
Public Utilities Code
Revenue and Taxation Code
Streets and Highways Code
Unemployment Insurance Code
Vehicle Code
Water Code
Welfare and Institutions Code

For example, most of the laws that deal with crimes, sentences for crimes, and the operations of prisons or supervised release will be found in the Penal Code and most of the laws having to do with students, schools, or education are in the Education Code.

bill itself, make a quick outline of the steps the bill would take and any limits or requirements they set.

Next, you will determine whether the measures proposed in the bill will be effective at achieving the bill's intended goals. Of course the answer to this question is very much subject to debate, but whether you support or oppose the bill, your arguments will be shaped by how well the bill will actually achieve its stated goals. Also, consider whether the bill will have any unintended consequences.

After examining how well the bill achieves its ends, be sure to note any concerns you have about how the bill is written. If you support the goal of the bill, this will take the form of what needs to be changed in the bill to better achieve those goals. If you oppose the bill, note what changes would be required to remove your opposition.

B1.2 Track your bill through the legislative process

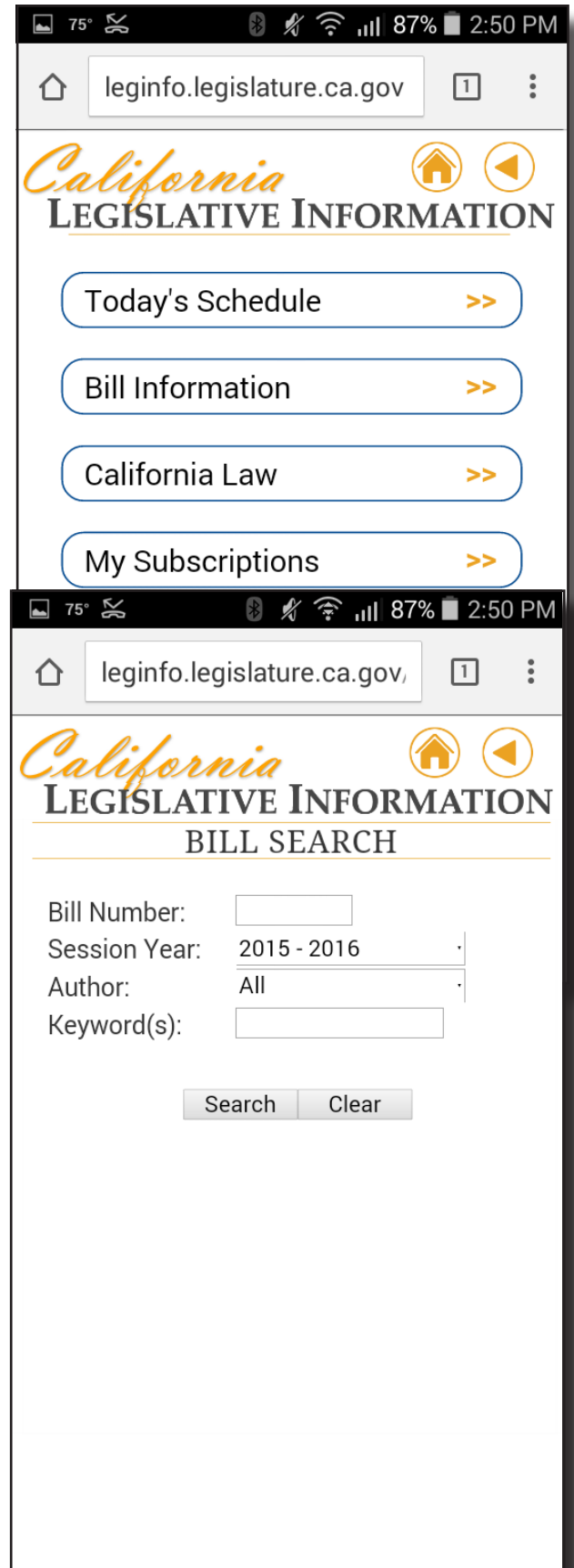
All of the information you need to track your bill is publicly available online. The website leginfo.legislature.ca.gov has everything you need to follow the progress of the bill you are interested in.

You can find out when your bill was introduced (which will tell you the earliest it can be acted on in committee), what committee(s) your bill has been referred to and when it will be heard by the committee. You can also subscribe to receive updates on bills whenever they are changed or move forward.

To see what is coming up on a specific day, a print publication called *The Daily File* is invaluable. It is published and updated each day of the legislative session by both the Assembly and Senate and is available in the Bill Room in the basement of the Capitol. Sometimes legislators' offices will also have extra copies.

It contains all of the schedules and deadlines for legislation, committee schedules and agendas, floor sessions, the Third Reading File (the list of all of the bills that are ready to be voted on upon the floor of the house). That way you can know when to get involved in the process. It is an invaluable resource and reference for everything that is going on at the Capitol.

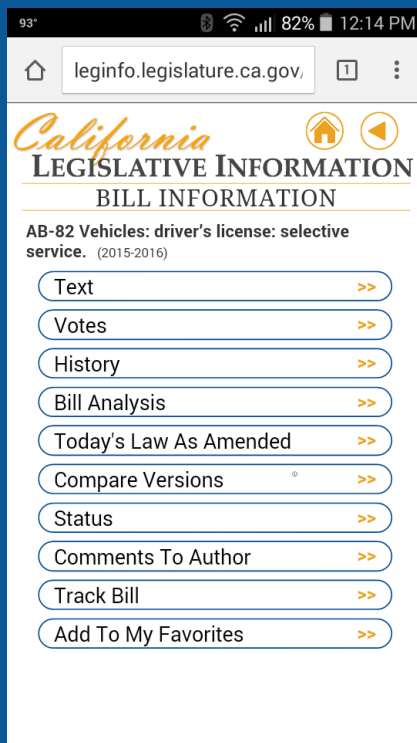
You can find it published online at www.leginfo.ca.gov, under Legislative Publications. (Note that this webpage is different from leginfo.legislature.ca.gov.)



TRACKING YOUR BILL

Once a bill has been introduced, you can track its status and progress online. The Legislature's official website: leginfo.legislature.ca.gov has all the information you need.

Follow the link for "Bill Information" and enter your bill's number or search by author or keyword. Then select your bill from the list and you will see links to all of the official information about the bill.



Explore leginfo.legislature.ca.gov

Click on the "**Bill Information**" link and enter your bill's number. If you don't know the number, you can search by author or by keywords or phrases, e.g., "solitary confinement." When you load your bill's page on leginfo.legislature.ca.gov, you will see a number of links.

The **Text** section gives you the full text of the bill in its current form, starting with the Legislative Counsel's Digest explanation of the bill and existing law.

The **Votes** section has links to records of all of the committee and floor votes on the bill with vote counts and a roll call list of how each legislator voted on the bill.

The **History** link will give you a timeline of what has happened with the bill as it makes its way through the legislative process. If you are taking action on a bill later in the process or just checking in on what's been going on with your bill lately, the History section will be helpful. It shows which committees the bill has passed through and with what outcomes, as well as when any amendments were made to the bill.

The **Bill Analysis section** has links to all of the analyses written by the committee staff to prepare committee members for hearings on the bill in the policy and fiscal committees.

The committee analyses and floor analyses are some of the best sources of information on bills. The committee staff are experts in the field who examine the potential impact of proposed legislation. The analyses are intended to give the members of the committee a thorough explanation of the intent and possible effects of the bill. They give an in-depth picture of current law regarding the subject of the bill and any relevant

previous legislation (both successful and unsuccessful bills). The analysis will also have arguments for and against the bill (often drawn from position letters sent in by supporters or opponents of the bill) and a list of organizations and individuals that have taken an official position on the bill. The analysis is usually published the day that the bill is heard in committee. However, each committee does things differently, some release their analyses a day or two before the hearing. Unfortunately, publishing the analyses early is the exception rather than the rule. This means that there are no analyses available for most bills before they are heard in committee for the first time. If you don't see an analysis of your bill on leginfo.legislature.ca.gov, feel free to contact the committee's office to find out when they publish their bill analyses.

The **Today's Law as Amended** link will show you how the relevant sections of the current law will be changed by the bill. Anything new will be in italics and anything removed from the law is in strikethrough typeface. This is a great way to figure out what bottom line changes the bill (as currently written) will make to the law.

The **Compare Versions** link allows you to compare different versions of the bill as it has been amended. This feature is very useful for determining what has changed in the bill since it was introduced. This feature will show changes from the earlier version with italics for new language and strikethrough for language that has been removed from the bill. This makes it easy to determine whether the sections of the bill that you supported or opposed are still in the bill.

The **Status** link will give you information on the bill's vote requirements and whether it is keyed fiscal (referred to be heard by the Appropriations Committee),

PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR BILL

Check the "Status" section of the "Bill Information" page to answer these questions:

1) Does your bill require a simple majority vote or a 2/3 majority to pass (how many "Aye" votes are required to pass the bill)?

Majority	Super-Majority
1/2 (+1)	2/3
ASM 41 Ayes	ASM 54 Ayes
SEN 21 Ayes	SEN 27 Ayes

2) What policy committee(s) has your bill been referred to?

3) Is your bill keyed fiscal (will it be referred to the Appropriations Committee)?

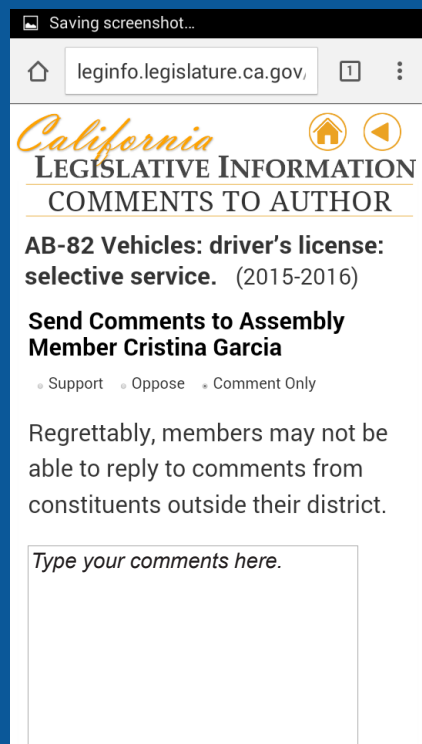
4) Does your bill impose a state-mandated program on local government (that the state would have to pay for)?

SEND YOUR COMMENTS TO THE BILL'S AUTHOR

A new feature on the leginfo.legislature.ca.gov website is the **Comments To Author** link.

This link allows you to send your comments on a bill to the bill's author. Because it is a new service, it is still unclear how much of an impact it makes. Legislators will usually only see comments sent from their constituents.

If you are not a constituent, you must send a physical letter to the legislator if you want them to be able to receive and consider your position.



as well as the bill's current location and the last action taken on the bill.

You will need to look at the Status section to answer a few questions that will shape your strategy and tactics as you lobby. Different types of bills have different procedural hurdles to overcome in the Legislature.

You can sign up to receive email updates about your bill by clicking the **Track Bill** link at the bottom of the bill documents page. You can also save bills so that you can quickly refer back to them later by clicking **Add to My Favorites**.

Check back regularly to see what's going on with your bill

As bills go through the legislative process, they will often be amended. Sometimes the changes are minor clarifications. But sometimes the changes are significant.

This means you need to check back regularly to see if the bill has changed at all. You can also subscribe to receive email updates on bills using the leginfo.legislature.ca.gov website. Every time your bill is amended you should reevaluate whether the amendments change your position. For example: if you are opposing a bill, and the section of the bill that you objected to is removed, then you should consider removing your opposition to the bill. If you do change your position, make sure to notify the author's office of your change of position.

The Compare Versions section of the leginfo website makes it easy to see how a bill has changed between any two versions of the bill. This is a convenient shortcut compared to having to print out and read all of the versions of the bill to track the changes.

Sometimes the entire bill is changed to a totally different subject. This is called a Gut and Amend. This often happens later in the session after the deadline for introduction of new bills. **See the sidebar *When bills die (Sometimes they don't)*, p.4.**

B2. Work with others to maximize your impact

B2.1 Work with the bill's author

An important way that you can affect a bill is to work with the legislator who authored the bill. This is true all the way through the process: from the beginning when the bill is first being conceived up until the final floor vote. You can work with authors to improve bills you support or to change the parts of bills you oppose. This is a part of the process that often doesn't get enough attention but which is important to avail yourself of.

At the very start of the legislative process, you can go to a legislator and try to convince them to introduce a bill on your behalf. After a bill is introduced but before it is heard in committee, you can visit the office of the author of a bill and try to convince them to change the bill to either add things in or take things out or otherwise address your concerns.

After the bill makes it through the policy committee process it is much harder to get bills amended. So it pays to try to work with the bill's author before that point to try to make any changes to the bill that you would like to see.

B2.2 Visit the bill's author

TO PREPARE FOR YOUR VISIT

- Find out where the author's office is and which staffer is working that bill for them. For legislator's office numbers see www.fclca.org.
- Read the bill and make sure you understand it as best you can (sometimes bills are unclear or may use legal terms that are unfamiliar to the layperson.) If you have any questions about the bill it is perfectly okay to ask the author's office for clarification.
- Write down any questions you have about the bill.
- Write down anything you would like to see changed in the bill, so you can suggest it during your meeting.

If you support a bill, the author's office is the natural place to turn to. They often help coordinate support for their bills and will have lots of information in support of the bill. They are often open to hearing suggestions from supporters who want to improve the bill.

If you think you might be opposing the bill, the protocol is to first contact the author directly before addressing your opposition to other legislators. You should make them aware of any concerns you have and give them an opportunity to address them. Even if it becomes evident there is little or no chance of bringing the author around to your side, it is important to be able to show other members of the Legislature that you have tried to work with the author of the bill. This can translate into other legislators being more willing to listen to your arguments against the bill and vote your way, so it is worth the effort.

Whether you support or oppose the bill you will likely have questions about the bill. The bill's author's office is a good first place to turn to for answers about what is in the bill. Often times the language in bills can be unclear or use obscure terms and jargon that can be confusing to someone who isn't an expert in the bill's subject. The author can sometimes help you with this. Before going to meet with the author, make sure you read the bill thoroughly and make a list of questions you may have about the bill to bring to your meeting.

In addition to any other questions you have about the content of the bill, you will want to remember to ask the author's office these questions as well:

- What is their intent in introducing the bill?
- Who is supporting or opposing the bill and why?
- Do they have any fact sheets supporting the bill?

These questions will help you better understand the bill and who is pushing for it and why. Who is supporting the bill can be key information either to help you network with other supporters if you support the bill or to know who your opponents are if you oppose the bill.

B2.3 Work with other groups

Coordinating your efforts with other like-minded groups and individuals can really help to magnify your effectiveness in the Capitol. Try to find out who else is working on the bill that you are interested in. Coordinating your efforts among different organizations will allow you to cover more ground. It allows you to break up the workload, but it also helps to have lots of different groups visiting the same offices because it reinforces your message while not wearing out your welcome with the legislative staff you want to influence.

If you are supporting a bill, often the author's office will try to coordinate support for their bill and can direct you to other groups that have come out in support. Many bills are officially sponsored by organizations whom you can contact and coordinate with. The author's office will have their contact info or you can find them listed in the committee analysis prepared by policy committee staff, published online at leginfo.ca.gov.

It can be tougher for opposition groups to organize, but it is important to try to make connections with others who agree with your position as early in the process as you can to organize effective opposition. You can also



Interfaith coalition to support SB 9 in 2011.

FACE TO FACE CULTURE IN THE CAPITOL

The Capitol is an incredibly physical place. The culture there is all about face to face interaction.

This is true not only of meeting with legislators and their staff but also of working with potential allies you meet there as well.

There are constant impromptu meetings in the corridors of the Capitol among advocates who have just met in a committee hearing. You'll see plenty of people huddling in small groups conferring on legislative strategy and going over and dividing lists of legislators that they need to visit.

There are always new allies to be made and new people to connect with at committee hearings. Take advantage of this and talk to other people who came to the hearing to testify.

QUESTIONS TO ASK TO HELP DETERMINE YOUR POSITION

If you support what the bill is intending to do, you will need to answer these questions:

- What is the need for this bill?
- How does this bill intend to address the problem?
- What evidence supports the bill's approach?

If you are opposed to what the bill is intending to do, you will be answering:

- Why would this bill be harmful? To whom?
- What is wrong with the approach the bill takes to solving the problem it addresses? Or has the bill incorrectly identified the problem?
- What evidence is there that this approach does not work or causes some kind of harm?

connect with other advocates at committee hearings. If you are opposing a bill, committee hearings are an especially good place to make connections with other groups and individuals who also oppose the bill that you had not previously reached out to. You can also find names of organizations that oppose legislation in the committee analyses.

B3. Lobby strategically as the bill moves through the process

B3.1 What's your position?

From the very beginning of the legislative process, you will need to determine what your position is on your bill. Your position may change as the bill is amended in committees or on the floor. So every time the bill is amended, you will need to run through this process again. Your position is the reason you are lobbying on your bill. Do you want the bill to pass or do you want it to fail?

Start by asking yourself a few questions. The two sets of questions are the same, but rephrased depending on how you feel about the bill.

The first question is “why is this bill needed?” or “why would it be harmful?”

The second question is what specifically about this bill will solve the problem or cause harm to someone.

The third question is what evidence backs up your argument for or against the bill. This can be government or independent research, personal experiences, legislative analysis, etc. The more evidence you have the better, even if you choose to only emphasize some of it when discussing the bill.

See *Worksheet 2: Determining Your Position.*

B3.2 Develop your “talking points”

Once you know what your position is on your bill, you will want to write up some talking points. Talking points are the main ideas you want to get across to anyone when you are discussing your bill: what your position is on the bill, why you hold that position, and the most important pieces of evidence that support your position.

It is best to write them out and have them with you whenever you are talking about the bill. Your talking points are there to keep you on message and maintain your focus, and to make sure you don't end up wondering what to say next.

Your talking points should be in bullet point form so you can quickly refer back to them while you are meeting with legislators, their staff, reporters, or anyone else. This will make it easier to use your talking points as a checklist to make sure you say everything you need to say as you talk with people.

Your first bullet point will be why this bill is needed or why it would be harmful. The second bullet point will explain what about the specific approach of this bill will address the problem or will be harmful. The rest of your bullet points will be the evidence you feel backs up your position.

You want to build an argument for your position that will be clear and compelling. Start with your main reasons for your position and then back them up with evidence. Emphasize the impacts the bill will have on real people and explain the context and data that support your position. You want to make your position sound like the obvious and reasonable conclusion anyone would come to. Personal stories can be particularly effective at helping your audience connect emotionally with your position, so try to incorporate your personal experiences (or those of someone you know or are close to) into your argument.

See Worksheet 4: Developing Your Talking Points.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING POINTS

Talking points make it easier to stay on message and unify a group of people who support or oppose a bill. If you find yourself getting too far away from your talking points, you know you need to get back on message.

Talking points are also there to make sure you don't forget to mention any of the points you decided were essential to making your case.

Remember to bring your talking points and have them in front of you anytime you talk about the bill.

You can divide up your talking points amongst the group of people you are going with. If possible, match your talking points to the people best able to talk to that point. For example, people with personal experience can address that part, or someone who knows a lot about the subject can give context and talk about what the experts in the field think.

If you are part of a group and

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THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING POINTS

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have been assigned responsibility for making specific points, use a highlighter to mark your points. This will help you know when it is your turn to speak and make your points.

When you talk with legislators or their staff, you want to make sure you are having a two-way conversation and are not just giving them a prepared speech with no room for them to tell you their thoughts and feelings on the bill. This means your talking points may come out in somewhat different order depending on how the conversation develops. Relax and go with it. If you have talking points, you know you won't forget to say something important.

B3.3 Write a position letter

At almost every step of the process you will need to have a position letter. You will send it to legislators and committees to explain your position and urge them to vote your way, you will update it and use it for lobbying ahead of a floor vote, and even to urge the governor to approve or veto the bill you are interested in.

The thinking you put into shaping your position letter will also be helpful when you are deciding what to say when you meet with legislators and committees or their staffs in person.

It may seem like a daunting task to write an official letter to urge the government to shape its policy the way you want it to, but it's actually pretty easy. You just need to clearly state your position and the reasons for that position. You want to keep it short and to the point. It is best if you can keep the letter to one page, but it can go to two pages if you really need the space to explain your position.

1) Start with the date, the addressee's title and name and mailing address. Check the sidebar for whom to address your letter to at each point in the process. Follow the address with a subject line indicating which bill you are writing about and your position, e.g., Senate Bill 759 – Support.

2) Start the first paragraph with a one sentence explanation of who you are. i.e.: name of the group or individual, and what the group does or why you are concerned with the legislation based on personal experience or having a stake in the issue. Then state whether you support or oppose the specific bill number and the overarching reason why.

3) Give your arguments for your supporting or opposing the bill. These can be basic facts, moral principles, academic studies, anecdotes, personal experiences, or anything else that supports your position. If you have developed talking points on your bill, you should refer back to them as you are writing your letter.

4) Wrap up your letter with a summarizing paragraph that concludes with you asking for a specific action by the recipient. For example, “For these reasons we urge you to vote Aye on Senate Bill 261,” or “For these reasons we urge you to veto Assembly Bill 82.”

5) Close the letter with “Sincerely yours” or a similar closing, and sign it. Beneath the signature type your name, and your title or official position within the group. The signature is very important, like signing a contract. If the letter is from more than one person then multiple people can sign the letter.

6) Have someone who did not write the letter proofread it to make sure that it is clear and easy to understand and free of typos.

7) Hand deliver your letter or fax it to the appropriate legislator’s office or committee office. Try to get your letter in at least a week before the policy committee hearing or floor vote so that it can be considered in the analysis prepared for the hearing or vote. You can mail your letter, but it is unlikely to reach the committee staff in time for it to be included in their analyses. This is because all mail sent to the Capitol has to go through extensive safety checks, which can delay the delivery of your letter by days or even weeks.

See *Worksheet 5: Writing a Position Letter* and the sample letters included at the end of this book.

ADDRESSING YOUR LETTER

Go to www.fclca.org to find committee membership information and the mailing addresses and fax numbers for legislators’ Capitol offices and committee offices.

In policy committee:

If you support the bill, address your letter to the committee chair at the committee office (rather than their personal office) and copy the author. If you are lobbying individual committee members you should also address copies of the letter to those members.

If you oppose the bill you should address your opposition letter to the author, and copy the committee chair. This is a courtesy to the author, giving them an opportunity to address your concerns.

If the bill goes to the Appropriations Committee you will address your letter to the chair of that committee, as well as copying any other committee members you are specifically targeting with your lobbying.

When your bill is on the floor you can address your letter to any member whose vote you are specifically trying to affect.

Address floor alerts to the entire house (i.e. “All Senators” or “All Members of the Assembly” and hand deliver the alert to each office. You need to hand deliver floor alerts in order to ensure that you get them to the legislators’ offices in the short time you have between when a bill is scheduled for a floor vote and when it is actually voted on.

If the bill is sent to the governor, address your letter to the governor. Remember, you have a

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ADDRESSING YOUR LETTER

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limited time period from when the governor receives a bill and when he or she has to act on it (the general rule is 12 days but for bills that are still in the governor's possession when the Legislature adjourns for the year, the governor has 30 days to sign or veto the bill), so fax or hand deliver your letters to make sure they are received in time to be considered by the governor's staff. See our section on lobbying the governor for more details.

Even though you won't be physically mailing your letter, you need to format it and address it in the standard business letter style:

[Date]

[Addressee's Title and Full Name]

[Committee Name, if applicable]

State Capitol [or 1020 N Street for some committees]– Room ####

Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: [Bill Number] – [SUPPORT/OPPOSE]

Dear [Addressee's Title and Last Name]:



B3.3 Organize your activists

During the legislative process you will want to organize people to help you do the work of grassroots lobbying. Talk with other people you know who care about the issue or are directly affected by your bill and urge them to join you in asking the Legislature to act on your concerns. The more people you can organize to speak together, the louder your voice will be.

Please see our section on *Lobbying in Person at the Capitol and in the District* (p.41) which covers many aspects of organizing delegations and what it's like to lobby at the Capitol and at home.

B3.4 Understand strategy: Vote counting

An important part of lobbying is keeping track of how legislators have indicated that they will vote on your bill, and counting how many votes you have going your way. This will help you target your efforts and not spend a lot of time preaching to the choir or trying to convince those who are unalterably opposed. Focus your efforts instead on those who are undecided. You will get a sense of how legislators will vote from visiting their offices and talking with their staff. The staff make recommendations to their bosses on how to vote, so they usually have a sense of how their boss will vote on your bill. You may also want to research how legislators have voted on other similar issues.

You will want to count your votes both when the bill is being heard by committees and when it is coming up for a vote on the floor. Sometimes you won't be able to come up with a good count on how the legislators will vote. Perhaps legislators aren't sure how they are going to vote when you ask them (or occasionally not be willing to say): politics around the bill may be difficult or legislators are still hearing from people in their districts and other interested parties about the issue.

In committee

After you have visited all of the committee members' offices (*see **Weigh in during the policy committee process below***) and have a sense of how their staff is recommending that they vote, you can target your efforts to focus on those members you think you can shift to your position. For those legislators who are on your side, once you know their position on the bill you generally needn't continue to try to convince them. Just focus on the undecided members. However, if it seems like the vote will be close, you can make a final round of visits before the vote to try to convince the undecided committee members to vote your way and to shore up support among those who have already said they support your position.

MAKING A LIST AND CHECKING IT TWICE

Throughout the legislative process, you will be constantly asking staff how they expect their bosses to vote on your bill. You will want to keep track of how everyone is going to vote.

Committees are generally small enough to easily make a list of the members and how they will vote. Check www.fclca.org or the Assembly or Senate web pages to find a list of who is on the committee that will be hearing your bill.

When your bill reaches the floor, you will need to make a list of all of the legislators in that house. You can find rosters for both houses on their webpages.

THE RESULTS OF A VOTE

When you attend a committee hearing, you will usually get to see the committee members vote and know the result.

Sometimes though, especially as legislative deadlines loom, legislators are too busy to be everywhere they need to be. Often, committee members may need to be in other committee hearings presenting their own bills. This means the committees might not have a voting quorum present at any one time. When this happens the bills are put “on call,” which means missing members can return to the committee and vote on the bill.

The results of votes are officially released the following day on leginfo.legislature.ca.gov. This can be frustrating (especially when you are waiting on a close vote on a bill that you’ve put a lot of effort into), but it is a normal part of the legislative process and nothing to worry about. Sometimes you just have to wait until the votes are posted to know what happened. If you can’t wait, you can also call the author’s office to find out if the bill passed or not.

You can find the records of votes on leginfo.legislature.ca.gov in the “Bill Information” section. Committee votes are typically published the following day. These will show how each legislator voted.

For floor votes, in the Assembly you can request a printout right away at the Assembly Clerk’s office on the 3rd floor. For the Senate, you can get a printout from the Sergeant at Arms in front of the third floor entrance to the Senate Chambers.

WARNING! If a bill fails a vote, it is often granted “reconsideration” by a unanimous vote. So if you see two votes posted for a bill on one date, the second vote is likely the reconsideration vote. Carefully read the heading on the voting record to make sure you are looking at the vote on whether to pass the bill and not the vote granting reconsideration.

On the floor

Vote counting in preparation for a floor vote is a bit more daunting than trying to figure out how a half dozen to a dozen committee members will vote on your bill. If your bill makes it this far, you should try to work with other groups that share your position on the bill. You can split up the list of legislators into manageable sections, with each group taking a portion of the legislators to follow up with.

Other than the scale of having to reach so many more people, preparing for a floor vote is not so different from making visits to policy committee members before a vote in committee. You want to visit each office and try to get a sense of how the legislator will vote, and then urge those that haven’t made up their minds to vote with you.

B3.5 Weigh in during the policy committee process

Overview

One of the most important times to weigh in on legislation is during the committee process. The policy committee process is especially important to groups with limited resources. There are fewer legislators that you need to reach and convince to vote for your position. You also know when the bill will be heard so you can organize effectively before the bill comes up before the committee.

Both the Assembly and Senate have policy committees that specialize in various policy areas and hold hearings on bills that are related to those policy areas. This allows each of the hundreds of bills to be carefully scrutinized before it comes before the whole house. Each of the policy committees is made up of a number of legislators and is usually chaired by a member of the majority party. The committees are staffed by people with specific subject expertise who will write up analyses of the bills that come before the committee. This helps the committee members understand the intricacies and potential implications of the bills before them.

When policy hearings are being held, the Legislature is looking for outside comment on the legislation before it. This may be the time when you can have the most impact – because legislators are willing to listen to you and your concerns with specific bills. Before the hearing, the committee staff are studying the bill to provide an analysis for the committee. You can publicly go on record in support or in opposition to legislation by sending in a position letter to the committee. This will then be noted in the official analysis of the bill alongside the positions of other groups. You can offer testimony at the committee hearing when the bill is heard, and try to convince the committee to vote your way on the bill or to amend it in such a way as to make it acceptable to you.

The policy committee then votes on the bill. If it pass-

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMITTEE

The policy committees are a point in the process when the number of legislators you have to sway is much smaller. This is because there are only a handful of members on any given committee. You may need to only convince four people to vote your way, instead of as many as 41.

Because of this, the policy committee process is a good place for groups and individuals with limited resources to focus their efforts. This is often the time when grassroots activists will have the most influence on a bill.

A NOTE ON ETIQUETTE

If you are opposing a bill, it is considered common courtesy to address your objections to a bill to its author and to copy the policy committee chair.

They are potentially able to amend the bill to remove objectionable parts. So, you are expected to try to work with them to address your concerns with the bill first. This is part of the Capitol's culture of collegiality, and shows that you are willing to work constructively even with people you disagree with.

It is important to other legislators to see that you have tried to work with the author to resolve your concerns with the bill, and this can translate into their being more willing to vote your way on the bill.

es it goes on to the next step in the process. If your bill is determined to have any fiscal impacts, it will be referred to the Appropriations Committee. If your bill is not keyed fiscal, it will instead move directly to be voted on by the entire house.

Send in your position letter

Writing a position letter and sending it to the committee is a relatively easy first step to getting involved with the legislative process. It will also help you prepare for visiting committee members' offices and for testifying before the committee.

In your position letter you will clearly state your position and the reasons why you support or oppose the bill. Try to keep it short, only one to two pages, and to the point. **See *Write a position letter*, p.22.**

You can fax the letter in or hand deliver it to the committee office. You can also mail it in, but mail sent to the Capitol has to go through extensive safety checks, so letters that are mailed in often arrive too late to be included in the analysis. You can find the committees' mailing and fax information on FCLCA's website (www.fclca.org) or the Assembly or Senate websites. You should try to get your letter submitted to the committee at least a week before the committee hearing to make sure it is included in the committee staff's analysis of the bill. Remember, the earlier you can get it in, the better.

Your position letter will be useful at just about every point in the legislative process as your bill moves forward. You will just update the letter to reflect any changes to the bill and re-address it to the appropriate recipient. **See the sidebar *Addressing Your Letter*, p. 23, for guidance in who to address your letter to at each step in the legislative process.**

Visit the committee members' offices

After being introduced your bill will be assigned to one or more of the policy committees for a public hearing. Which committee is determined by the Rules Com-

mittee based on the subject matter of the bill. Some bills that cross subject areas will be heard by multiple policy committees.

In the weeks leading up to the committee hearing it is a good idea to visit the offices of all of the committee members to try to find out if they already have a position on your bill, and if not, to convince them to vote your way.

One of the biggest impacts you can have on the process is making legislators aware of the real impact that the bill will have on people in your community. This



A delegation visiting a legislator's office

helps put a face on the issue. Hearing from someone “This is my experience...” makes the theoretical impacts of the bill real for the legislator or staffer you are talking with and can really have an effect on how the legislator votes. Staffers are often very busy with limited time for research, so when people come and educate lawmakers about a specific bill, it makes a big impact on their view of that bill. We have found that when real people come in and explain their real life experiences, the legislators and their staff genuinely do listen. It doesn't always change their minds, but it has more impact on their decision making than any academic study or set of statistics.

A common misconception is that you are supposed to contact only the legislators who represent you. While it is true that your representative is supposed to represent the interests of people in your district, there is

A NOTE ON LEGISLATIVE STAFF

When you are visiting legislators' offices, you probably won't get to talk to the legislators themselves. However, it is their staff who are doing most of the work of making sure the assembly member or senator understands the bill. The staff also make recommendations to the legislator on how to vote on the bill, although legislators do not always vote in accordance with their staff's recommendations.

This is how things get done in a state with 39 million people and only 120 legislators. The legislators can't possibly meet with all of the people, or do all of the necessary research, to know all of the things one would need to know in order to make informed decisions about all of the bills before them. So they hire staff to do all of those things for them. Senior staff members may have worked in the Capitol for a long time and be well-versed in both the issues and the legislative process.

WHO TO VISIT AND WHEN

The first step is to find out what committee your bill has been referred to. You will find this in the Status section of your bill's page at leginfo.legislature.ca.gov.

You will then look up that committee to find out who the members of that committee are.

You can find committee rosters at www.fclca.org or at the Assembly and Senate webpages. These pages will have both the address for the committee office and the room numbers of the members' Capitol offices. They will also list where and when the committee meets.

When a bill is scheduled to be heard by the policy committee, the hearing date will be posted in the Status section of the bill's leginfo.legislature.ca.gov page.

no rule excluding you from lobbying other representatives. In fact, if you want to make the Legislature as a whole aware of the importance of your issue then you **NEED** to talk to every legislator who will be voting on your bill. This is especially true in the policy committee process. As committee members the legislators are serving as representatives of their entire house, so on the committee they represent everyone in the state and not just the people who live in their legislative district.

It is also very important to take your message to the members of the committee before the committee hears your bill because you might not get the chance to make your full argument at the hearing. Often in committee hearings, especially if there is particularly controversial bill bring heard and lots of people want to offer testimony, the committee chair will limit public testimony to 30 seconds or less. **See the sidebar "Me Too" Testimony" (p. 34) for more on limits on offering testimony at hearings.**

When you visit the committee members' offices, you will likely be speaking with one of the legislator's staff, not the legislators themselves. Don't be discouraged by this. The staff do all of the leg work of researching bills that the member will have to vote on, so they can be very influential on how their boss votes on your bill. Members usually assign staffers to cover different subject areas. So you will need to find out who in that office will be handling your bill for the member. Just ask the scheduler (the person at the front desk in the office) who in the office handles bills that are before the same policy committee that your bill has been referred to. You can also call the office ahead of time and ask the person who answers the phone.

When you arrive, introduce yourself and your organization, and explain your position to them. This is where having your talking points and having practiced the presentation will help you. Afterwards, remember to find out if they have any questions and do your best to answer them. Listen carefully to staff members' concerns. If they have any questions you can't answer, you should find the information after the meeting and provide it to the staffer promptly. (Don't forget to ask

for the staff member's business card and email address.)

You can also ask the staffer if there is anyone lobbying for the other side and what their arguments are so that you can better prepare yourself to answer those arguments.

It is very important to make sure that your meeting with the legislator or their staffer is a two-way conversation and doesn't turn into you lecturing them on how they should vote. To be effective, you need to make a personal connection with them and get them to understand your position. This means listening to them and what they have to say, and making the effort to reach out to them and to understand their position, even if they are inclined to vote the other way. Talk with them about your own experience and how the bill would affect people like you, and make connections between that and the life experiences of the person you are talking with. This kind of storytelling by real people talking about their own experiences is more powerful than quoting statistics. It makes the impact of the bill real and helps people empathize with your position.

When you visit a legislative office, it is best to keep to a small delegation. We recommend no more than three people, because it is hard to make personal connections with the person you are speaking to if there are more than three people in your group. Larger groups necessarily result in more formal interactions among people because there is not the space or time for more personal interaction. Sometimes, for various reasons, you will end up with more people in your group when you go to visit a legislative office. Remember that the number of people in the group can become a distraction instead of reinforcing your message. We recommend breaking into smaller groups or having part of the group wait outside whenever possible to maximize your impact. **See *Organizing a delegation*, p.41, for more information.**

CAPITOL OFFICE VISIT CHECKLIST

Things to bring:

- Talking Points
- Position letter or summary of your points
- Fact Sheet (optional)
- Other Information (optional)
- Business Cards (optional)

Information you'll need:

- Name of Legislator
- Committee the bill is before
- The name of the staff member you will be talking to
- Office room number
- The bill's hearing date

AN OUTLINE OF A LEGISLATIVE OFFICE VISIT

Introduce yourself and your organization.

Introduce the bill.

Ask if they are familiar with the bill and whether the staff has made a recommendation to the legislator on how to vote.

State your position on the bill and give them your position letter or talking points and ask them to vote for your position.

Explain your reasons for your position:

Personal experiences (yours or that of someone you know) that give the person you are talking to something to personally connect with.

Evidence and data that support your position (give them copies of any information you have: reports, fact sheets, letters of support from experts in the field, etc.)

Ask them if they have any questions about your position. Listen to staff and make note of their concerns.

If they still don't know what the staff recommendation will be, ask them if you can check back after they have briefed the legislator.

Thank them for their time and leave.

Review your notes and debrief with fellow advocates.

Remember to follow-up on anything you said you would get to them and check back later if you said you would do so.

Testify at the committee hearing

Another way to make sure that the committee is aware of your position is to attend the bill's hearing before the policy committee and offer testimony. Committee hearings are open to the public, and they almost always accept testimony from the public on the bills before them.

This is a chance to show the committee that there are people who are watching and who care about the bill. If you can organize a group of people to come to the Capitol on the day your bill is being heard, it can have an impact on the committee members. Having people turn out for a bill shows the rest of the legislators that the bill is important enough to people for them to come to the Capitol.

The policy committee hearings follow a basic format. The bill's author presents briefly on the need for the bill and how it would meet that need, followed by two to five witnesses offering in-depth testimony in support of the bill. Then the committee chair will ask for testimony from the public, and everyone who wants to testify will line up to speak. After supporters testify in favor of the bill, opponents are given a similar opportunity to offer testimony with several main witnesses and any other groups or members of the public offering testimony.

The main witnesses are often

people affected by the issue, policy experts, academics, or representatives of stakeholders that the bill would affect. Their testimony is directed towards making the committee aware of the impacts the bill would have on them and their organizations or members. Witnesses supporting the bill are usually selected and invited by the bill's author to present the bill in the light that they feel will be most effective.

Opposition to a bill often comes from various places and for different reasons, which can make it harder to organize than for supporters of a bill. The opponents



Supporters of ending solitary confinement attended a hearing to show their support for their position in 2014

of a bill should attempt to confer beforehand to decide who will be the main witnesses, though depending on how many people or organizations oppose the legislation, it may just be whoever shows up or who gets in line to testify first.

If time is short in the hearing, the committee chair will ask everyone who lines up to testify after the main witnesses to keep their testimony to under a minute or even under 30 seconds. This is because sometimes large numbers of people want to testify on a bill and there simply isn't time for all of them to say everything they would like to say. Sometimes you will have

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHOWING UP

It is important to show the committee members that you care enough to come and testify. In fact, it can be quite powerful to have lots of people show up to support or oppose a bill. It not only helps committee members who want to vote the way you are asking them to vote, but it also shows the rest of the Legislature the level of public support for your position.

CHECKLIST FOR TESTIFYING AT YOUR BILL'S HEARING

Make sure you bring:

- Your talking points
- Position Letter
- Committee Analysis (usually a printed version is available by the entry to the hearing room)
- Paper and pen for taking notes
- Location of hearing (see the Daily File or the committee's web page)

“ME TOO” TESTIMONY

REMEMBER- it is very important to respect the committee and any restrictions they put on testimony. They are not trying to silence you, just trying to get through all of the testimony they have to listen to in the limited time available.

If the chair does impose a time limit on public testimony, you will have to do a “me too” testimony. This means that you will ONLY have time to state your name, any group affiliation, your position on the bill, and how you are urging the committee to vote.

Even if you only get to do a “me too” testimony, it is still important to get up and state your position on the record. It demonstrates how much you care about the issue, and gives support to legislators that are leaning towards your position. The importance of showing the legislators that you care about the bill cannot be overstated, and this is the last chance to show them that the bill is important before they vote.

enough time to go through all of your talking points, but more often you will be restricted to a short “me too” testimony, where you only get to state your name and what group you are affiliated with (if any) and whether you support or oppose the bill. If you are fast, you can maybe get in the most basic reason for your position (reduced to a single sentence). This is why it is important to visit the committee members and make them aware of your position and arguments BEFORE the hearing. Come prepared to present your full position but also prepared to only have 30 seconds to state your position. It is also important to let the committee members know if and how you would like the bill to be amended because it gives the committee leverage in trying to convince the author to accept those amendments.

After all of the testimony is heard, the committee will vote on the bill. If the bill passes the committee vote, it moves on either to the next committee it has been assigned to or to the floor for its second and third readings and then a floor vote. If a bill fails in committee, it will often be granted reconsideration, allowing the author to bring the bill up for another vote. This gives the author a chance to amend the bill in a way that will allow it to pass or to persuade other committee members to support the bill.

Committee hearings can be a great place to network with other people and groups that share your position on your bill. Make sure to take advantage of this and make connections with these potential allies so you can work together and increase your effectiveness.

If your bill is referred to the Appropriations Committee, the process is much the same. The big difference is that the Appropriations Committee focuses on the fiscal impacts of the bill rather than on policy. So you need to adjust your arguments accordingly. Show that your position is a better deal for the state when you weigh the costs against the benefits that would result.

The Appropriations Committees

The Appropriations Committees (there is one in the Senate and one in the Assembly) weigh all of the bills

that have a fiscal impact for the state and make decisions about which of those bills will proceed. Any bill that affects how the state spends or collects money or how state or local agencies or programs use resources is referred to the Appropriations Committee. This means about 80 percent of bills introduced in the Legislature are heard by the Appropriations Committees. (The hearings of the Appropriations Committees are supposed to focus on the fiscal aspects of bills rather than the policy aspects. However, hotly contested policy debates may spill over to Appropriations.) The big difference between the Appropriation Committees and the policy committees is the way they approve bills.

Bills often die or are amended during the appropriations process, so it can be an important time to try to affect the outcome. However it is also a time when there is less transparency about what is happening with your bill. The Appropriations Committee is one of the most opaque and mysterious steps in the legislative process. This is because not much information is available about what goes on behind the scenes between the author and the Appropriations Committee as bills are amended to reduce their fiscal impacts on the state.

When the bill is heard, the committee votes to either approve it or put the bill on what is called the suspense file. Bills that are put on suspense must be amended to sufficiently reduce the fiscal impact for the state before they can move forward. This amendment process takes place between the Committee chair, the leadership of the house considering the bill, and the author of the bill. After that, the Committee chair decides which bills will move forward and which will die on the suspense file.

WHAT ARE FISCAL IMPACTS?

Any bill that has fiscal impacts for the state is also referred to the Appropriations Committee in addition to any other policy committees assigned to hear the bill.

This is defined as any bill which: “appropriates money; imposes new responsibilities or duties on the state; liberalizes any state function, program or responsibility; or results in substantial loss of revenue or reduction of state expenditures.”

These criteria mean that about 80 percent of all bills are referred to the Appropriations Committees.

FLOOR VOTES

When your bill is on the Third Reading File, it is eligible for a floor vote. It will be posted in the Daily File of the house that the bill is before. You can plan to be present to watch from the gallery during the vote. However, the author (or the legislator who is floor manager of the bill in the second house) can hold off on the vote to wait for missing legislators to be present or if they need to convince a few more legislators to vote for their bill.

Watching the floor sessions is like watching baseball: it is very slow paced but has brief bursts of frenetic activity, and it is not very interesting if you don't follow the sport or if your team isn't playing. That said, if your bill is coming up for a vote it can be very exciting (or nerve wracking).

If you can't make it to the floor session, you can check the results of the vote the next day at www.leginfo.legislature.ca.gov.

You can also watch live streaming video (or archived video recordings afterwards) of floor sessions and committee hearings at calchannel.com.

B3.7 Floor alerts and lobbying ahead of a floor vote

When your bill has passed the committee process it will be headed for the floor of whichever house it is in (the Assembly or the Senate). This is the biggest hurdle to overcome, because a bill needs to get at least 21 senators or 41 assembly members to vote "Aye" to pass.

As legislative deadlines approach, things can start moving really fast and unpredictably. But there are still things you can do.

Because of the sheer number of bills that the Legislature has to vote on, staffers often won't even brief their boss on bills until the week or day of the vote. The staffers themselves usually don't even have a chance to start looking at the bills until the bills are on the Third Reading File. This means that they won't know how they will be recommending that the legislator vote on the bill until the vote is just a few days away. Because of this, the time frame can be a bit more compressed than during the committee process.

Once you get a sense of how the legislators will vote, you will know whether the bill is likely to pass or not, and whether you should make a final push right before the vote. If the bill is close, you should lobby those legislators still on the fence and any legislators you think you might be able to convince to come over to your side. You also want to lobby any legislators whose support is wavering.

If the bill is controversial, you may need to reach many legislators. This is a point in the process where it is particularly important to work with allies. It breaks up the work into manageable amounts, so that each of you only have to visit a portion of the legislators. It's important for legislators to hear from many groups and individuals, but after you've met with an office, be wary of wearing out your welcome. This just means you need to try to

get your allies to all weigh in with legislators so that the Legislature hears the same message from lots of different people.

Another tactic is to issue a “floor alert” a day or two before the vote on your bill to remind legislators to be there to vote and support your position. These floor alerts need to be hand delivered, so you need someone in Sacramento who can deliver them around the Capitol for you for an hour or so. Check with your allies to find out if any of them are already planning on issuing a floor alert and whether it makes sense to sign on to a joint communication from multiple organizations.

When a bill is scheduled for a floor vote, it is also a good time to start making constituent visits and phone calls to legislators’ offices in the Capitol and their districts. Urge everyone you know to contact their legislators to urge them to vote your way on the bill. **See *District visits and constituent visits at the Capitol: Meeting with YOUR legislator*, p.50, for more ideas of what you can do.**

B3.8 Repeat your steps in the second house

After passing through the house of origin, your bill will then go through the whole process again in the other house. It will repeat the committee process and then come up for a floor vote. This means you will be repeating all of the steps outlined above. If your bill passes the second house, it returns to the house of origin for approval of any amendments made in the second house. This is called a “concurrence vote.”

Be aware of amendments to the bill or outside events that could cause members in the first house to change their position. You may need to re-contact legislators in the first house prior to the concurrence vote, especially if the vote is looking like it might be close.

FLOOR ALERTS

When your bill is placed on the Third Reading File, you should send out a floor alert to all of the legislators in the house your bill is before.

A floor alert is a briefer version of your position letter. It is intended to remind legislators that your bill is coming up for a vote in the near future and reminding them to be present and how you want them to vote. It can even be in the form of three or four bullet points.

You don’t have to individually address floor alerts. Just address it to “All Members of the Assembly” or “All Senators,” as appropriate.

Because of the extremely time sensitive nature of floor alerts you need to hand deliver them to legislative offices.

THE ACTION NETWORK – FCLCA’S ACTION ALERTS

When FCLCA is working on a bill, either supporting or opposing it, we often issue an “Action Alert” asking our supporters to send a message to their legislators to vote YES or NO on the bill. You may want to sign up for our Action Network to receive our Action Alerts during the legislative session.

Sign up to join our action network at www.fclca.org

B3.9 Lobby the governor

After passing both houses, a bill then is sent to the governor’s desk. The governor then has twelve days to act on the bill. The governor can either sign it into law, veto it, or let it become law without his signature. If the governor vetoes a bill, technically the veto can be overridden by a two-thirds super majority vote of both houses, but overrides are rare. The last time a veto was overridden by the California Legislature was in 1979.

The governor must sign or veto legislation within 12 days of the day of receiving it or it becomes law without his or her signature. However, if the 12th day is a Sunday or a holiday, the governor has until the next working day to act. During the first year of the two year session, the governor has 30 days to act on any bills that are still in his or her possession when the Legislature adjourns for the year. During the second year of the session, the governor has until September



The entrance to the governor’s office in the State Capitol

30 to sign or veto legislation in his or her possession on the day the Legislature adjourns (usually August 31), or it becomes law without being signed. Although the constitution states that the general rule is that the governor has 12 days to act on a bill after he or she receives it, most bills are passed in the final days of the legislative session and therefore fall under the “exceptions” to the 12 day rule.

As with all steps of the process, you should send a position letter to the governor’s office. You can invite your supporters to call or email the governor’s office – you may want to prepare a message for them to deliver. You can try to meet with governor’s staff to make sure they are aware of the importance of your bill.

B3.10 Reach the wider public and opinion leaders

Beyond the scope of this guidebook, but a very important part of advocating for your position, is reaching the opinion leaders and the wider public. Legislators and their staffs will be reading the newspapers from their district and newspapers that are influential statewide such as the Los Angeles Times. One key way to advocate for your position is to have letters to the editor and op-eds published in California’s newspapers. If you mention your legislator’s name in your letter it will help it to get noticed by the legislator’s office. For more tips on writing effective letters to the editor, see the “TAKE ACTION/Toolkit for Activists” section at www.fclca.org.

BRING YOUR VOICE!



C. Lobbying in Person at the Capitol and in YOUR District

Now that you know how and when to get involved with the legislative process, this section will explain the nuts and bolts of organizing a delegation and how to present yourself and your organization so that you can be effective advocates for your position. Remember, you don't have to be experts on anything, you just have to care about the outcome for your bill.

C1. Organizing a delegation

You can maximize the effectiveness of your visit with a legislator by considering the mix of people who will make up your delegation. You can select people who are representative of the various stakeholders in the issue or of various demographics in the legislator's district. You might include experts in the field who can explain the issue to the legislator or their staff and give context to your position. Including people who have relevant experience with the bill's subject matter is also important because stories told by people with direct experience can be very powerful persuasive arguments. Who you include in your delegation is dependent on exactly what message you want to get across, but also who is available to come with you.

You don't have to select the members of your delegation based on their being an ideal medium for your message. Just thinking about what you want your delegation to get across can help you assign roles to the people in your group. Even if you are simply going to the meeting with just a few people you have been able to convince to come along, it is still useful to assign roles to the members of the delegation so that you can make sure everything you want to say gets said.

You can include community leaders, clergy, public officials, affected citizens, or academics, anyone whose voice adds to the weight of your message. Their role

THINK ABOUT ROLES THAT CAN MAKE YOUR MESSAGE MORE POWERFUL

These are a few basic roles that can help you think about how to convey your position to the legislator you are visiting. Don't be limited by them or feel you have to have each of these roles in your delegation.

The potential variation and combination of roles each person can play and what they can each contribute is nearly infinite. The important thing is to think about why each person is there and how they add to your message.

The directly affected- these are people who will be directly affected by your bill. Their role is to put a real person's face on your position. They will focus their comments on their personal experiences and how the policy proposed in your bill would affect them or people like them.

The expert- These are people who have experience in or are knowledgeable about the field that your bill is in. Their role is to explain the

[continued on next page]

THINK ABOUT ROLES THAT CAN MAKE YOUR MESSAGE MORE POWERFUL

[continued from previous page]

data and evidence supporting your position. They will focus their comments on any data that backs up your position as well as filling in the context for your position on the bill. Don't be discouraged if you don't have an expert in your group. What matters is that you care about the bill and explaining why you feel that way, not the credentials of who presents that information.

Demographic representatives—These are people who are able to speak to the specific experiences of their group. Their role is similar to the directly affected, but they are specifically highlighting the impact of the bill on their group. They will focus their comments on the collective group experiences that back up your position. It can be particularly effective to include a representative of groups that have a strong presence in the targeted legislator's district.

will depend on their connection to the issue and their role in the community.

When the members in the delegation can speak from their own experience or knowledge, in addition to voicing their opinion, your message will feel more authentic and therefore more powerful.

You generally should give your position a real person's face, show that it is backed up by evidence and experts' opinions, and also show the electoral or moral value to legislators of supporting your position. Think about your message and how best to clearly communicate it to the legislator or their staff in a way that makes your position resonate with them.

Remember, when you are at the Capitol, you don't have to be a constituent of the legislator you are going to visit. Anyone can urge any legislator to vote for bills that they feel are important. This is especially true while a bill is being considered by committees. During the policy committee process, the members of the committee represent their entire house of the Legislature, which means that they are not just there to represent their own district. The committees and the legislative staff of the committee members want to hear from everyone who has an interest in a certain bill while that bill is being considered. So do not feel shy if no one in your group is from the district of the legislator you are visiting.

However, if you are a constituent, you can use that to your advantage. The legislators and their staff may be more willing to make time for you, and they will sometimes also listen more closely to what you have to say because you are a constituent. It is also especially powerful when constituents come a long way to Sacramento because it impresses on the legislators how much you care about the issue.

Don't be intimidated by the prospect of approaching powerful people to ask them to support your position on a bill. They are just people, after all, and it is their job to listen to what the public wants. Your voice matters, but it will only be heard if you show up and support your position.

C2. Planning your presentation

Once you know who will be going with you to your meeting with a legislator or staffer, you need to plan how you will present your position. It is important to plan so that you can be sure to say everything that you need to say. This will allow you to prepare and practice running through your presentation beforehand. This makes it much easier to remember everything and to be relaxed when you are in the meeting.

Start with the list of talking points you made earlier. Usually it will already be in a good order, but you can always change things around if you feel it will help make your presentation more clear. Make sure each point builds on the last one, with main points followed by the points that support them.

If your group has a leader or someone who has more experience with the Capitol than the rest, then you should make them your facilitator. Their job is to introduce the group, briefly explain the bill you are lobbying on, and then make sure each member of the group says their part.

Now divide up your talking points amongst the members of your delegation. The *Organizing a Delegation* section above can give you some ideas on how to divide up the speaking roles in your group, but you can also just give each person a few of your talking points to be responsible for. (It's ideal if each person can have a role, but even if the group is large and not everyone gets to talk, their presence is still important.)

Assign everyone their talking points. Then highlight or mark on your copy of the talking points the points that you are personally responsible for. Note which points will come

HOW MANY PEOPLE TO BRING

In selecting/recruiting your delegation, remember to think of the spaces you will have available to meet in and what you are trying to accomplish during your visit.

Staffers' offices in the Capitol are generally small, and can fit four people in a pinch. Because of the personal influence legislative staffers have with their bosses, you will also want to try to make a personal connection with the staffer you are talking to, and large groups make that difficult. So try to keep your group to no more than three people when visiting offices in the Capitol.

However, visits to district offices can have more people. This is because when you are visiting a district office, your goal is more to demonstrate support for a policy within your legislator's own district than to make personal connections with the person you are speaking with. The staffers you meet with in the district are less involved with the policy making process and therefore have less personal influence on how the legislator votes. Their job is to keep the legislator in touch with what their constituents want.

You want to strike a balance between the power of having a range of voices urging the same thing and not letting the number of people in the room distract from the message.

YOUR PRESENTATION

- Introduce yourself and your organization or affiliation.
- Introduce the bill.
- Ask if the staff person is already familiar with the bill. If they are not, explain the bill and its possible impact.
- State your position on the bill and give them your position letter or talking points. Ask them to support your position.
- Explain your reasons for your position:
 - Personal experiences (yours or that of someone you know). Any evidence or data that support your position (give them copies of any information you may have: reports, fact sheets, letters of support from experts in the field, etc.) It is also a good idea to have a one page summary of your position and your talking points prepared to leave with them as well.
- Ask them if they have any further questions about the bill or about your position. Listen attentively to the legislator/staff member's concerns and make note of them. Remember, this is a two-way conversation, not a lecture. Make sure they have the opportunity to explain what the legislator's position on the issue is, if they already have one, and be sure to listen carefully.
- Finally, ask how they think they will advise the legislator to vote on the bill. This is commonly called the "staff recommendation." If they don't yet know, ask them when you should check back to find out.
- Thank them for their time and leave. Remember to get their business card on your way out (the cards for all the staff are usually available at the scheduler's desk by the office entrance).
- Remember to follow-up on anything you said you would get to them and check back later if you said you would do so.
- Send a thank you note to thank the staffer for taking the time to meet with you.
- Debrief with other groups that are also advocating on the bill and compare notes on your visits. If they found out about any additional concerns the legislator/staffer have, address those concerns in your thank you notes, if possible.

before yours so you will know when to say your piece.

Now you will want to run through your presentation briefly a few times, taking turns playing the legislator or staff.

Remember, you will only have ten to twenty minutes to make your case. So make sure that your presentation fits in that time and leaves room for questions and for the legislator or their staff to tell you how they feel about the bill.

No matter how much you try to plan your meeting in advance, meetings often take on a life of their own and go in directions you didn't expect. Don't be discouraged, just follow the discussion wherever it leads and gently bring it back on topic if you get sidetracked. Remember, you want to make personal connections, so let the conversation be relaxed and natural instead of stiff and formal.

C3. How to present yourself

When dealing with the Legislature it is very important to present yourself well. It is like going to a job interview or to court. You want the people you are talking with to have the best possible impression of you. This is because when you are in front of them you are the face of your position. By dressing professionally you are saying that you care enough about your issue to take the time to make sure you make a good impression. It is also a way of showing respect for the institution of the Legislature as a whole. This is important because those are the people whose opinions you are trying to sway towards your position. Dressing professionally doesn't mean you need expensive clothes. Following the standard dress code is more important than the cost of your apparel.

You are going to be speaking to lots of different people with different political opinions, which might be fundamentally at odds with your own. In order for them also to be willing to listen to you, you need to be willing to listen to them and their positions too. It's important to listen carefully to the other person you are talking with and allow the conversation to be a two-way street. Being perceived as courteous and respectful will make your message more effective and make it so that people are willing to work with you.

Sometimes, especially in committee hearings, you will have to listen to people who are going to say things that you feel are disrespectful to you or people you care about. You need to do this without responding to what you perceive as their provocation. If you are perceived as rude or insulting towards your opponents, even if they have blatantly provoked you, your words may be twisted and used to discredit you. This means your position will be more easily disregarded by anyone who doesn't share your strong feelings. However, if you respond calmly and diplomatically, you can sometimes actually change peoples' minds by speaking in a manner that allows them to actually hear what you are saying instead of just writing you off.

HOW TO DRESS FOR THE CAPITOL

The standard dress code for going to visit the Capitol is business dress:

Men should wear the standard suit and tie business uniform. Dress shirt and tie, dress slacks and belt, suit jacket, dress shoes and dress socks.

For women, typical dress includes women's suit jackets, skirts or pants with a blouse, cardigans, comfortable dress shoes (no open toe shoes).

Business casual is also acceptable for the Capitol:

For men this means slacks or dark-washed denim jeans, a dress shirt, nice shoes and dress socks. Women wear dark denim, slacks, professional length skirts or dresses. Comfortable dress shoes.

Remember that you will be walking a lot. So wear shoes that will be comfortable for walking in all day.

ON COMPROMISE

Showing that YOU are willing to listen to and work with the other side goes a long way in the Capitol, and makes it easier for legislators to vote in your favor. If you are inflexible and unwilling to work with people who disagree with you then you will be marginalizing yourself and your issue.

Remember, showing that you will work with your opponents doesn't mean that you have to give away what is really important to you. It means you acknowledge their position and will try to accommodate it as much as you can. This is important because you often need to convince legislators that you have done everything you reasonably can to address other groups' concerns before the legislators will be willing to vote for your position.

You don't have much say on whether or not your bill is amended. You only get to decide whether or not you still support or oppose the bill after the amendments have been made. You can urge the author to accept or reject amendments, but in the end it is their decision.

You have to weigh whether the amended bill would still make at least some improvement on the issue, and not base your decision on whether to continue to support or oppose the legislation entirely on what you wanted to be in the bill or even what has been amended out of the bill.

Don't give up on what is important to you, but don't walk away from the process if you don't get what you really want. Successful legislation often takes years to build enough support to get through the Legislature, with initial attempts resulting in unsatisfactory half-measures. But if those half measures become law, legislators will see that the issue has enough support to pass and will be willing to try again the following year with stronger legislation.

C4. How to present your organization

If you are representing a group, it is good to have a few brief sentences or thirty-second explanation of what the purpose of your groups is, what it does, and who it represents. This is often called an "elevator speech" because the intent is that you can explain your work to someone in an elevator before one of you reaches your floor. It is also good to have business cards (either for individuals or for your organization) to leave with anyone you meet with. Always try to be very clear who you are representing if you are making the visit on behalf of an organization and why you are getting involved.

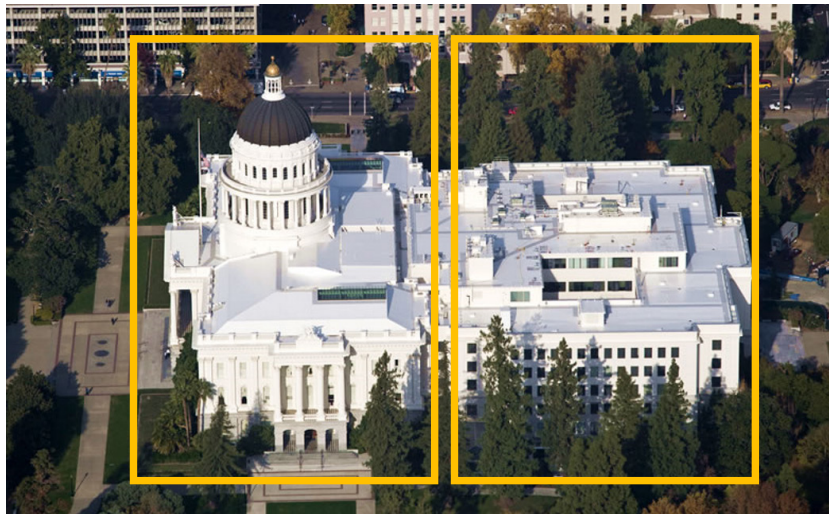
Very Important: Don't present yourself as representing a group UNLESS that group has taken an official position on the bill. Also, if you are representing an organization, be careful to stay on your group's message and not go too far into your own personal opinions.

Everything about how you are trying to present yourself is intended to make your position something that should be taken seriously. So you want to present your ideas in a way that will allow people who may not share your overall political opinions to agree with you. Keep your tone moderate. Try to present your ideas as if they were the obvious conclusion that any reasonable person would come to. Remember that your goal is to convince legislators to vote your way.

C5. Navigating the Capitol

The California State Capitol is a large building and can be a little intimidating at first. Don't worry. It is actually easy to find your way around and there are directories of all of the legislators' offices in the elevators and on each floor outside of the elevator. There are also signs throughout the building telling you which rooms are in which direction.

The Capitol is divided into two parts: the original Capitol building, which is incredibly ornate and built in a grand style, and the new section behind it that is called the "annex." All of the rooms in the annex are designated with four digit numbers (ex: 2035 or 4181) and all of the rooms in the old Capitol are designated with three digit numbers (ex: 201 or 437) to help distinguish between the two parts of the building. The first digit of each number indicates the floor.



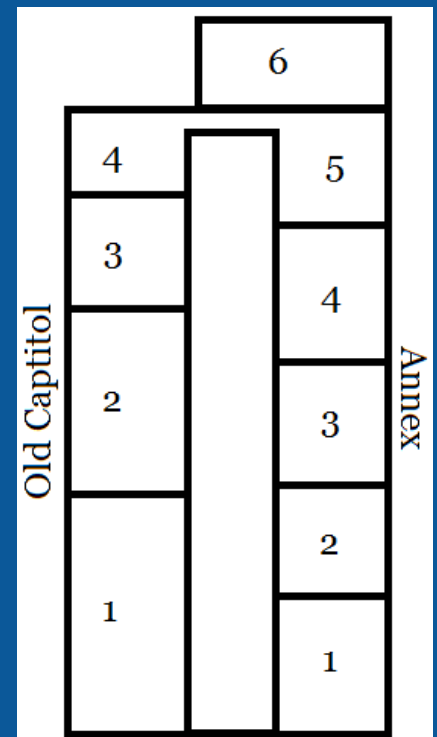
Aerial view of the Capitol showing the Old Capitol on the left and the Annex on the right

The old Capitol houses the Assembly and Senate chambers, where the members deliberate and vote, as well as numerous hearing rooms and the museum parts of the Capitol. On the north half of the old Capitol is the Assembly. The southern half houses the Senate. You can attend the floor sessions of either house and sit in the galleries, which are on the third floor.

The Capitol annex is where most of the legislators' offices are located. On the first floor is the governor's of-

THE UNEVEN FLOORS OF THE CAPITOL

The floors of the old Capitol and the annex do not match up. The old Capitol has high ceilings in the first three floors, and only four floors total compared to six in the annex. This means that to go from the third floor of the old building to the fourth floor in the annex you actually need to go downstairs!



A cross-section of the stairwell between the Old Capitol and the Annex

CAPITOL OFFICE VISIT CHECKLIST (PART 1)

- Find out where the legislator's office is and which staffer is working that bill for them. For legislator's office numbers see www.felca.org
- Read the bill and make sure you understand it as best you can (sometimes bills are unclear and not understanding them isn't your fault, the bill may use legal terms that are not clear to the layperson, or simply it may simply be poorly written and not make sense.) If there are any analyses of the bill available, read them to help you understand the bill better.
- Write down any questions you have about the bill.
- Write down anything you would like to see changed in the bill, so you can suggest it during your meeting.

office and the Department of Finance. On the upper floors there is a central corridor that cuts the Capitol in half, with the assembly members' offices on the north side of the building and the senators' offices on the south. There are also a number of hearing rooms in the annex.

The main elevators are across from the governor's office on the ground floor and open into the central hall on each of the other floors. There are directories of the legislators in the elevators and also in the hall across from the elevators. Always check the directories by the elevators, because legislators will occasionally have to change offices, so the room number you have before arriving may be out of date.

Remember the entrances to the Capitol are all secured and you have to pass through metal detectors and have your bag x-rayed. So make sure not to bring your pocket knife or anything else that security might think is a weapon or drugs.

C6. Preparing for your visit

Once you have identified the legislators you need to visit, you can start preparing for your visits. You will want to gather together all of your information about the bill. Common documents are fact-sheets about the bill or copies of studies on the subject or letters from prominent people who support your position. Bring anything you can use to help convince the staffer that your position is the one their boss should vote for. We have included a checklist to help you make sure you have everything. Also see our sections on *Organizing a Delegation* and *Planning Your Presentation*.

If any of you have personal experience with the issue, that person(s) should address the talking points that their experience speaks to. Sharing how the issue has personally affected you or people you know carries a lot of weight because it makes the issue real to the staffer, who usually has only theoretical knowledge of the issue.

After dividing up your talking points, you will need to do a few practice role plays of your meeting. This will help in a couple of ways. First, it will help you remember what you need to say when you go into the meeting. Second, it will help you feel more comfortable and let you better know what to expect. Third, by seeing both sides of the interaction, you will be better able to understand the person you will be talking with and, therefore, be better able to connect with them and get them to see things your way.

A note on role plays- This is how the pros prepare for big meetings. If you want to be as effective as possible, you need to prepare like you are putting on a show. A few minutes of rehearsal and preparation goes a long way once you get into that office and start talking about your bill.

See *Worksheet 7: Legislative Office Visit Script* to help with your practice roleplays.

CAPITOL OFFICE VISIT CHECKLIST (PART 2)

Things to bring:

- Talking Points
- Position Letter
- Fact Sheet (optional)
- Other Information (optional)
- Business Cards (optional)

Information to bring:

- Name of Legislator
- Committee
- Staff member to talk to
- Office room number
- Hearing Date

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSTITUENT VISITS

Lobbying the whole Legislature and reaching every legislator may seem like the most effective way to influence policy in the State Capitol. However, grassroots organizing of constituents in each legislator's home district is the backbone of support that gives FCLCA legitimacy in Sacramento when we urge legislators to do the right thing.

A legislator's primary responsibility is to their constituents and to represent their district's interests in the Legislature. So making them aware that at least some of their constituents support your position is essential in convincing them to vote your way on your bill.

C7. District visits and constituent visits at the Capitol: Meeting with YOUR legislator

When a bill is coming up for a floor vote is the time to mobilize to contact your own legislator. This means making visits to your own legislator as a constituent who represents likeminded people in that legislator's district. You can organize visits to your legislator's office in the district as well as in Sacramento, and you can organize people to make phone calls to their legislators to urge them to vote your way.

Visiting your legislator's district office is much easier and closer than traveling to Sacramento and is something that more people can actually do. We encourage people to get involved at whatever level of activism works for them. Visiting district offices and getting to know the district staff can be very effective, so don't feel that because you can't make it to Sacramento that there is nothing you can do to affect the legislative process.

We recommend trying to make an appointment for constituent visits, because it makes it much more likely that you will be able to speak directly with your legislator. It also allows you to be well prepared, because you know you will meet with them at a set time and can be fully prepared for the meeting. You might still end up meeting with a staff member, but don't be discouraged. Your voice as a constituent still carries weight.

When you make your appointment with the legislator's scheduler, make sure to make them aware of what bill you want to meet with your legislator about, and how many people will be attending. With a district visit, you can bring more people than when you visit a Capitol office. This is because your main purpose with a district visit is to show support for a policy in the legislator's district. For constituent visits in the Capitol, we still recommend keeping your delegation to three or

less to have the greatest effect. Look at our section on Organizing a Delegation for ideas on how to organize your delegation to visit your legislator in ways that can maximize your impact.

Hint: On the phone or in the meeting, be sure to state that you are a constituent; e.g, this is Mary Smith from Arcata and I am a constituent of Senator _____.

When you meet with your legislator or one of their staffers, it is important to always be asking them for something specific. This could be voting a certain way on a bill, or asking them to introduce a bill to address a concern you have that requires a legislative solution. Make sure the scheduler knows what bill or issue you want to talk to the legislator about so that they know what to expect and can be prepared to meet with you.

Meet together before your meeting with your legislator to plan and practice your presentation. Start by either coming up with your talking points or reviewing the talking points you came up with earlier (**see *Develop your talking points, p.21***). Then assign talking points to each of the members of the delegation (**see *Planning your Presentation, p.43***). Run through a role play of your presentation a few times with different people playing the legislator so that you each feel comfortable with your role and can respond to anything that comes up during the meeting. Remember, even though these role plays can seem silly or embarrassing or cringe-inducing, they will make you much better able to perform when it comes to the real thing. **See *Worksheet 7: Legislative Office Visit Script***.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CAPITOL OFFICE AND THE DISTRICT OFFICE

The legislators' Capitol offices are obviously focused on the task of legislating. They deal with policy making and are involved in the decision making process around what legislation to support and oppose.

The district offices exist to keep the legislator in touch with their district. Some districts have multiple offices to better serve their constituents. They offer constituent services such as help with government bureaucracy, getting benefits that have been denied, etc. They are a great resource because they often have more time than the Capitol offices, which are very busy. The down side is that they are somewhat removed from the policy making and communications through them take longer to reach the Capitol office where those policy decisions are made. The information just has further to travel to get to the people who need to hear it.

Because of this, we do urge people to contact their legislator's Capitol office directly (either in-person or by telephone) for urgent issues, such as a bill that will be voted on in the next day or two. This is because sometimes communications with the district office aren't forwarded from the district office to Capitol office in time to reach the legislator before the vote. FCLCA's Action Alert network is a great resource to help you know what bills are coming up for a vote and also how and when to best weigh in with your legislator.

Resources

California state government websites relevant to lobbying:

<http://assembly.ca.gov>

<http://senate.ca.gov>

<http://governor.ca.gov>

<http://www.lao.ca.gov> - The Legislative Analyst's Office, offers bill analysis.

Information about lobbying regulations:

If you represent a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, you may have questions about how much lobbying or what kind of lobbying you are allowed to do. You may want to access these websites for more information:

<https://www.independentsector.org/advocacy>

<http://www.bolderadvocacy.org>

Planning an event at the Capitol:

If you are thinking of planning a rally at the Capitol, visit the California Highway Patrol's website where they issue permits and post the rules and regulations for holding events at the Capitol. Permits are free, but are issued on a first-come-first-served basis, so plan ahead.

<https://capitolpermits.chp.ca.gov>

The University of California Center is a few blocks from the Capitol and offers meeting facilities and rooms for free. You can reserve a space online (the UC Center also operates on first-come-first-served basis, so try to reserve the space as early as you can)

<http://uccs.ucdavis.edu/reserve-a-room>

There are a number of restaurants and caterers in the downtown Sacramento area who provided affordably priced boxed lunches for rallies and similar events.

<http://www.labodelivers.com>

<http://lunchboxexpressonline.com>

California News and Politics:

<http://www.rtumble.com>

<http://www.calitics.com>

<http://calbudgetcenter.org>

<http://capitolweekly.net>

Worksheet 1: Follow Your Bill

House of Origin

Introduction

Bill Number:

Date Bill was Introduced:

First Reading

Date Bill can first be acted on:

Committee Process

Policy Committee #1 :

Hearing Date:

Pass/Fail

Ayes:

Noes:

(If Applicable):

Policy Committee #2:

Hearing Date:

Pass/Fail

Ayes:

Noes:

Appropriations Committee

Keyed Fiscal: Yes/No

If "Yes": Date of Hearing:

Pass/Fail

Ayes:

Noes:

House of Origin

Third Reading

Date placed on Third Reading

File (eligible for a floor vote):

Date of floor vote:

Pass/Fail

Ayes:

Noes:

Notes:

Worksheet 1: Follow Your Bill (cont.)

Second House

First Reading
Date Bill received its first reading:

Date Bill can first be acted on:

Committee Process
Policy Committee #1 :

Hearing Date:

Pass/Fail
Ayes:
Noes:

(If Applicable):
Policy Committee #2:

Hearing Date:

Pass/Fail
Ayes:
Noes:

Appropriations Committee
Keyed Fiscal: Yes/No
If "Yes": Date of Hearing:

Pass/Fail
Ayes:
Noes:

Second House

Third Reading
Date placed on Third Reading
File (eligible for a floor vote):

Date of floor vote:

Pass/Fail
Ayes:
Noes:

Concurrence Vote
(House of Origin)

Date of floor vote:

Pass/Fail
Ayes:
Noes:

The Governor

Date enrolled and sent to governor:

Date the governor must act o:

Approved/Vetoed
Date returned to Legislature:

Date law goes in to effect:

Worksheet 2: Determine Your Position

Bill Number:

What is the bill's intent?

Why is this bill needed? / Why would it be harmful?

What would this bill do to solve the problem? or what is wrong with its approach?

What evidence or experiences back up your argument?

Worksheet 3: Visiting the Bill's Author

Questions about the bill:



Things you would like changed in the bill:



Notes:



Worksheet 4: Develop Your Talking Points

Bill Number:

Your Position:

Use your answers from the *Determine Your Position Worksheet* to shape an argument with three or four talking points

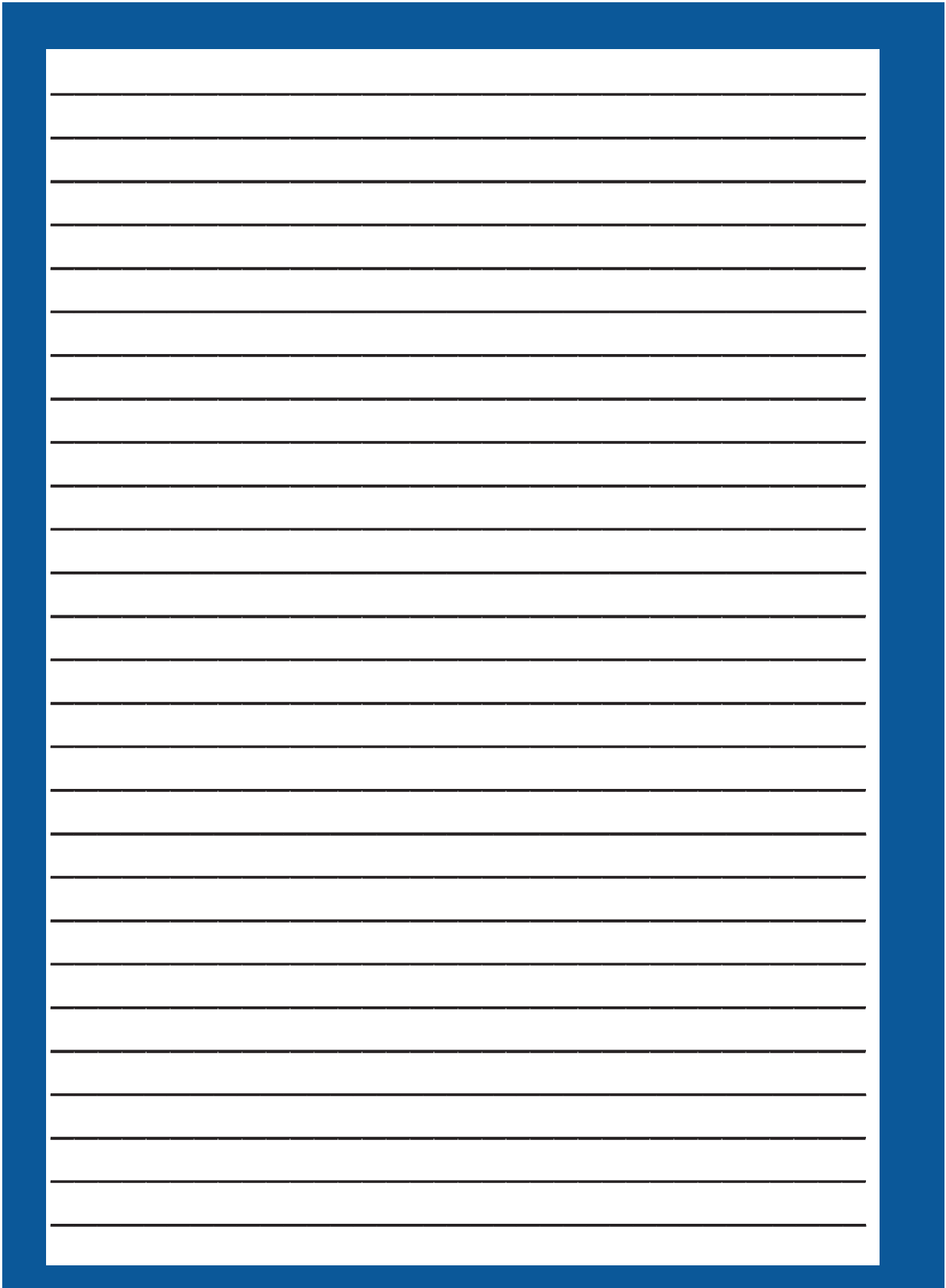
1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Worksheet 4: Develop Your Talking Points

A large rectangular area with a thick blue border. Inside the border, there are 25 horizontal black lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a space for writing.

Worksheet 5: Writing a Position Letter

Date: _____

Assembly Member/Senator _____

Chair, _____ Committee (if applicable)

Room _____

State Capitol (or 1020 N St), – Room _____

Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Assembly/Senate Bill _____ –SUPPORT/OPPOSE

Dear Assembly Member/Senator _____:

We are _____

and we support/oppose Assembly/Senate Bill _____.

(Summarize the intent of bill and why it is needed or why it would be harmful:)

(Additional experience or evidence supporting your position) _____

- Letters that support a bill should be addressed to the committee chair and copied to the bill's author.
- Letters that oppose a bill should be addressed to the bill's author and copied to the committee chair.

Worksheet 5: Writing a Position Letter

For these reasons, we urge your “Aye”/“No” vote on AB/SB_____.

Sincerely,

(Your name)_____

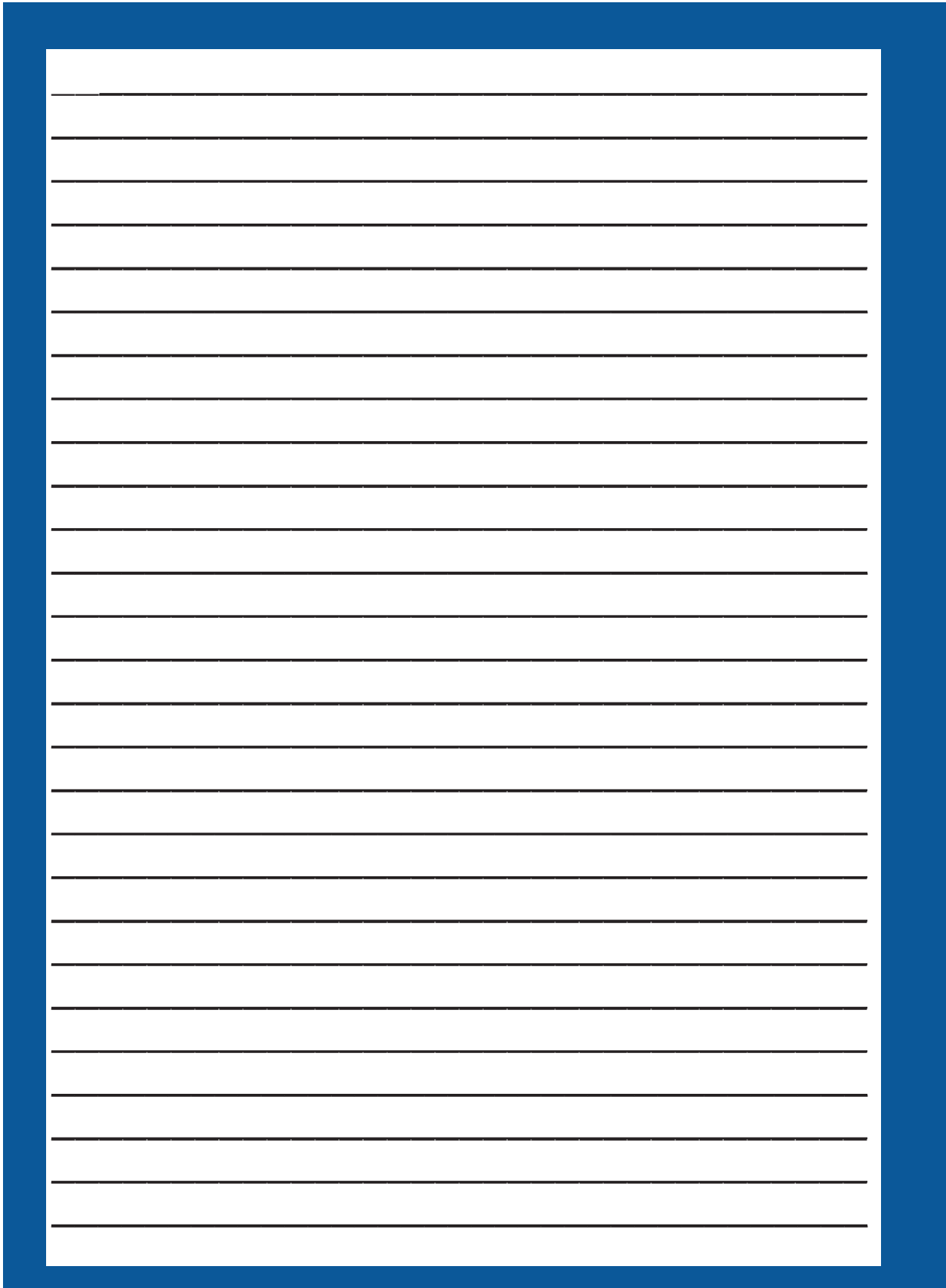
C. (Bill’s author or the committee chair)

Type your letter and hand deliver or fax it to the appropriate office.
Go to FCLCA.ORG to look up legislators’ and committees’ addresses and fax numbers.

Worksheet 6: Legislative Office Visit Checklist

Bill Number:	Author:	Your Position:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Support / Oppose
Legislator you will be visiting:	Capitol Office Number:	Bill Status:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	1st House
Party:	District:	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduced on date: _____
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1st Reading
Committee your bill is before:	Hearing Date:	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Committee Pass/Fail
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriations Committee Pass/Fail
Staff member who handles bills before that committee:		<input type="checkbox"/> 2nd Reading
<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> 3rd Reading
Things to bring:		<input type="checkbox"/> Floor Vote Pass/Fail
<input type="checkbox"/> Talking Points <input type="checkbox"/> Position letter or summary of your points <input type="checkbox"/> Fact Sheet (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Committee Analyses (if available) <input type="checkbox"/> Other Information (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Business Cards or Contact Information		2nd House
Who else supports/opposes the bill? (see bill analyses):		<input type="checkbox"/> 1st Reading
<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Committee Pass/Fail
		<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriations Committee Pass/Fail
		<input type="checkbox"/> 2nd Reading
		<input type="checkbox"/> 3rd Reading
		<input type="checkbox"/> Floor Vote Pass/Fail
		1st House
		<input type="checkbox"/> Concurrence Vote Pass/Fail
		Governor
		<input type="checkbox"/> Sent to the governor Sign/Veto

Notes from Legislative Office Visit



A large blue-bordered box containing a series of horizontal lines for taking notes. The box is empty and ready for text input.

Worksheet 7: Legislative Office Visit Script

Introduce yourself and your organization or affiliation.

Hi, my name is _____, this is _____,
_____, and _____.

We are here on behalf of _____,
an organization that does _____.

Introduce the bill.

We're here to talk to you about (Bill number) _____, which is a bill
to _____.

Ask the legislator or staffer if they are familiar with the bill. If not, explain the bill.

Are you already familiar with this bill?

Well, it's a bill intended to address the problem of _____,
_____,
by doing _____,
_____.

State your position on the bill and hand them your position letter or talking points. Ask them to support your position.

We (support/oppose) this bill because _____
_____.

We hope you can join us in this cause by voting [for or against] this bill.

Worksheet 7: Legislative Office Visit Script

Explain your reasons for your position.

Talking Points: _____

[Personal experiences, yours or someone you know] _____

[Other evidence, studies, support of other groups or individuals, etc.] _____

Ask them if they have any further questions about the bill or about your position.

So, do you have any questions about the bill or why we're asking you to vote [for or against] it?

[Answer any questions they have, if you don't know offer to get back to them]

Ask how they think they will advise the legislator to vote on the bill.

Do you know what the staff recommendation will be to the legislator will be on this bill? And do you think the legislator will vote accordingly?

[If they don't] When would be a good time to check back to find out what it will be?

Thank them for their time and leave

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us and we hope you are able to support us on this bill.

Make sure to leave them copies of any information you have on the bill and your contact info or business cards.

LOBBYING BEGINS AT HOME

MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS IN YOUR DISTRICT

You don't have to come to Sacramento to lobby your legislators. In fact, there are benefits to lobbying your legislators in your own district: legislators and staff may be more accessible, and it's a great way to establish a relationship with your legislator's office. Here are some steps that will help insure a productive meeting.

Focus the meeting

- Pick an issue or piece of legislation that concerns you and gather like-minded people in a group for the meeting. You may want to gather people from your church, organization or Meeting or a group of diverse people with similar views. About five people is a good number.

Request the meeting

- Fax a written request for a meeting to the legislator's home office and follow up with a phone call. You can find that information by entering your zip code at leginfo.ca.gov under "Your Legislature." Use your organization's letterhead if appropriate. Let the staff know what you would like to discuss.

Prepare for the meeting

- You may want to check with FCLCA staff for information on your legislator and the issue you will be addressing, and specific actions you can ask your legislator to take.
- Review the legislator's website to see his or her biography and press releases and to get a sense of his or her values and priorities. Consider this information when formulating your remarks.
- Set up a face to face meeting with the members of your delegation and determine who will cover which points and who will "chair" the meeting to keep it on topic.
- Summarize the key elements you want the legislator to know with a one-page memo.
- Bring a few pages of relevant materials to leave at the office.

At the meeting

- You may meet with the legislator, but often you will meet with a staffperson. It is very useful to get to know the staff, as they will provide information on critical issues to the legislator.
- Be prepared for a meeting of around 15-30 minutes. When you come to the meeting, all the attendees should introduce themselves and state what group, if any, they represent. State what topic you wish to discuss. Ask for your legislator's view on an issue. Be patient and remain polite even if you don't get the response you want.
- Present your case and be prepared to answer questions. Make a specific request for support of a bill or legislative action. Give several brief points about why the legislator should support or oppose this issue – stay concrete. However, if you are speaking from a religious or spiritual basis, it is fine to discuss the underlying values that motivate you. Legislators need to hear from people of faith.

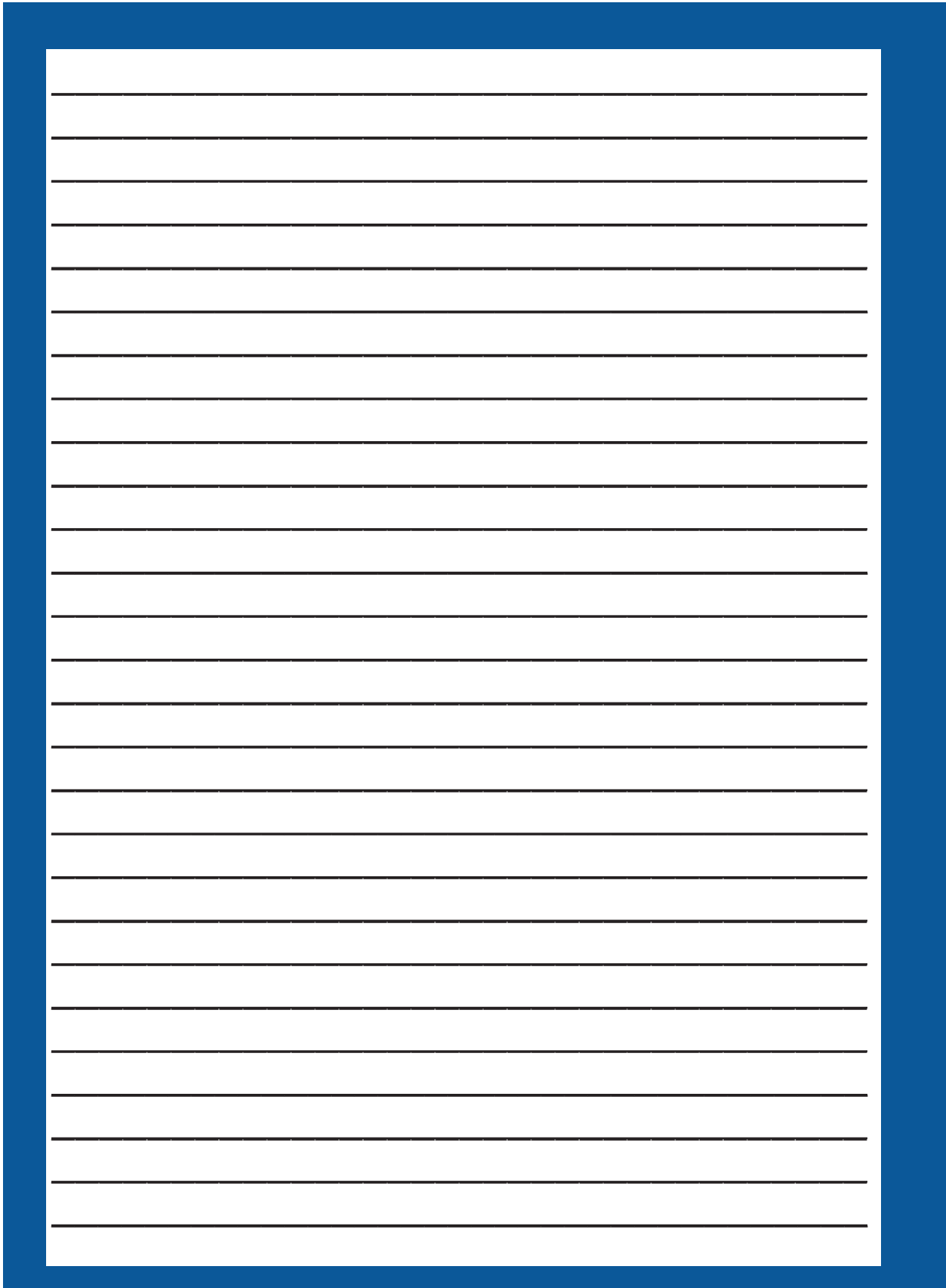
Follow up

- If asked for information you can't provide, offer to follow up with a staff person.
- If a staff person doesn't know much about the issue or the legislator's position, ask for a follow up letter from them. Leave your carefully selected material with the staff person.
- Send a thank you note soon after the meeting, reiterating your request to the legislator and adding any key information you may have overlooked. This will help build a relationship over time, and relationships can have an enormous impact on the political process.

Do it again

- Involve other people. Be sure to schedule visits on issues of importance on a regular basis. Soon the legislative staff may be calling you to ask your opinion! And let FCLCA know about your visits. Remember, legislators are elected by you to serve you – hearing from you is part of their job and makes them more effective in Sacramento. [FCLCA](#)

Notes from District Office Visit



A large rectangular area with a thick blue border, containing 25 horizontal black lines for writing notes.



**Friends Committee on
Legislation of California**

1225 8th Street, Suite 220
Sacramento, CA 95814-4809

May 13, 2015

Senator Ricardo Lara
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol – Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via facsimile @ (916) 651-4933

Re: Senate Bill 334 (Leyva) – SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Lara,

The Friends Committee on Legislation of California (FCLCA), a Quaker-based lobby that advocates for state laws that are compassionate and respectful of the inherent worth of every person, is supporting SB 334. This important legislation will establish that schools must provide free, clean, fresh drinking water during meal times and throughout the school day, requires schools to close access to contaminated water sources, requires the Department of Public Health to test drinking water sources for lead and makes other changes.

Schools have a responsibility to provide clean drinking water. Unfortunately, many schools have not upgraded their infrastructure, which typically includes old piping that contains lead. In addition to a host of health hazards, exposure to lead has been demonstrated to hinder brain development. (In fact, researchers have identified a correlation between reducing lead in the environment and decreasing crime rates in industrialized nations.)

SB 334 will help to identify contaminated water sources so that they can be rectified.

FCLCA strongly urges the Senate Appropriations Committee to pass SB 334 to the full Senate for consideration.

Sincerely yours,


JIM LINDBURG
Legislative Director

C. Senator Connie Leyva



Friends Committee on Legislation of California

1225 8th Street, Suite 220
Sacramento, CA 95814-4809

May 5, 2015

Senator Ted Gaines
State Capitol – Room 3070
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via facsimile@ (916) 651-4901

Re: Senate Bill 171 – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Gaines,

The Friends Committee on Legislation of California (FCLCA), a Quaker-based lobby that advocates for state laws that are compassionate and respectful of the inherent worth of every person, regrets to inform you of our opposition to SB 171. This bill authorizes county sheriffs, with the approval of the county board of supervisors, to contract with any state, county, or private jail or prison in the United States for the purpose of confining prisoners when the county jail is over 80 percent of capacity.

Confining prisoners in facilities that are far removed from their communities will undermine a key component of Realignment, which is to make greater use of community corrections and community supervision so that the incarcerated will be able access services and supports in the community where they will eventually be released so that there is a continuum of supervision and services. This bill also further separates families as people will be incarcerated in locations far away from their families. It is universally accepted among corrections experts that maintaining familial bonds and frequent family contact during the period of incarceration improves the prospects for successful re-entry and reduces recidivism, which makes for better public safety outcomes. SB 171 also authorizes counties to bill the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for the cost of housing and transporting prisoners, which would incentivize these transfers.

There are better ways to safely reduce jail populations such as pre-trial release programs and deferred entry of judgment programs for less serious offenses. Counties can also make greater use of community supervision. Utilizing alternatives to incarceration emphasizes rehabilitation and keeps families together without disrupting employment. In sum, they produce better policy outcomes and are far less expensive than our reflexive reliance on incarceration.

For these reasons, FCLCA respectfully opposes SB 171. Please contact our office if you would like to discuss our position.

Sincerely yours,


JIM LINDBURG
Legislative Director

C. Senator Loni Hancock, Chair, Senate Public Safety Committee



Friends Committee on Legislation of California

1225 8th Street, Suite 220
Sacramento, CA 95814-4809

September 8, 2015

FLOOR ALERT

To: All State Assembly Members

Re: SB 334 (Leyva) – SUPPORT

The Friends Committee on Legislation of California (FCLCA) requests your support of SB 334, by Senator Connie Leyva. This important bill:

- Deletes the provision in state law that authorizes a school district to adopt a resolution that it is unable to provide access to free, safe drinking water during student meal times and **requires school districts to provide water to students that meets the U.S. EPA drinking water standards for lead and other contaminants.**
- Requires school districts which have lead plumbing components to implement a flushing policy in accordance with EPA protocols.
- Requires the California Department of Public Health to provide guidance to school districts for reducing lead in drinking water sources.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there is no safe blood lead level in children, and lead exposure attacks nearly every system in the body. Lead exposure often occurs with no obvious symptoms and often goes unnoticed. Reducing childhood lead exposure has even been correlated to lower violent crime ratesⁱ as lead is known to hinder brain development and has been linked to a permanent damage of the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that controls impulses and aggression.

Help protect our children against unsafe drinking water. FCLCA urges an AYE vote on SB 334.

Sincerely yours,


JIM LINDBURG
Legislative Director

ⁱ“How Lead Caused America’s Violent Crime Epidemic,” by Alex Knapp. Forbes Magazine, January 2013. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/alexknapp/2013/01/03/how-lead-caused-americas-violent-crime-epidemic/>



Friends Committee on Legislation of California

Bring Your Voice! FCLCA's Guide to Grassroots Lobbying and the California Legislature is a step by step guide on how to take action to affect the outcome of the legislative process. It contains instructions for each step you need to take as well as information on how the legislative process works in reality (not just how it is supposed to work).

You can use this guidebook as a roadmap to help plan a successful campaign to support or oppose legislation or as a handy reference to find out how to best advocate your position wherever your bill is in the process.

Whether you are an experienced activist looking to take your cause to the Legislature or a concerned citizen getting involved with politics for the first time, this guide will help you successfully in influencing the legislative process.

Our system of government is based on the idea of a politically involved citizenry willing and able to make their elected representatives aware of their needs and concerns. FCLCA's decades of experience at the Capitol have shown that when people like you get involved, it makes a real difference. So "bring your voice" and together we can build a better California!

Bring Your Voice! FCLCA's Guide to Grassroots Lobbying and the California Legislature is a project of the FCL Education Fund.

Our work is made possible by contributions from individuals like you. We invite you to support FCLCA (for lobbying, not tax-deductible) and the FCL Education Fund (tax-deductible).

You can donate online at www.fcclca.org