

LOBBYING 101 TOOLKIT:

ESSENTIAL SKILLS TO ENGAGE
YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS





WHAT?

WHY?

**GET
STARTED!**

The ACLU of Idaho is proud to present our Lobbying 101 Toolkit. Keep this toolkit handy throughout the year as you engage in the legislative process. You too can impact civil rights policy in Idaho by learning the best ways to communicate and share your story with elected officials.

It's our job to elect our Representatives and Senators, which means it's also our job to hold them accountable to the issues that matter the most to us. Like protecting our gay and transgender neighbors, defending the rights of women to make their own healthcare choices, ensuring that anyone unable to afford a private attorney is assured the right to adequate legal representation in our courtrooms - plus so many other critical civil liberties issues.

Our toolkit includes all the resources you need to start taking action today. Inside you'll find a review of the legislative bill making process, the best ways to communicate with elected officials, and how to share your story with the media. Together we can ensure our lawmakers protect our freedoms and defend our constitutional rights.



HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

A bill is a proposal for the enactment, amendment or repeal of an existing law, or for the appropriation of public money. A bill may originate in either the House or Senate, with the exception of revenue measures, which originate in the House of Representatives.

INTRODUCTION

A bill may be introduced by a legislator, a group of legislators or a standing committee. The draft legislation, called an RS, is then presented in a committee where the legislative sponsor requests the draft be formally introduced. If approved, the RS is presented to the Chief Clerk who assigns the draft a bill number. It is then introduced in either the House or the Senate for “Introduction and First Reading of Bills.”

FIRST READING

The bill is read for the first time in either the House or Senate and is then ordered to be printed. After the bill is printed, it is reported back and referred to a standing committee.

COMMITTEE PROCESS

Once a bill is sent to a committee, the committee chair decides if they’ll hold a public hearing. During the public hearing information will be presented to committee members to help them determine what action to take on a certain bill. Public hearings are open to anyone interested in attending and members of the community can provide testimony. After the public hearing, a bill may be reported out of committee with one of the following recommendations:

- Do pass.
- Without recommendation.
- To be placed on General Orders for Amendment.
- Do not pass.
- Withdrawn with the privilege of introducing another bill.
- Referred to another standing committee.

SECOND READING

When a bill is reported out of committee, it is placed on the second reading calendar and is read again. The following legislative day, the bill is automatically on its third reading unless other action has been taken.

THIRD READING

It is at third reading that the bill is ready for debate and the final vote on passage of the bill is taken. The “floor sponsor” of the bill opens and closes debate in favor of passage of the bill. After debate has closed, lawmakers cast either an “aye” or “nay” vote. A bill is passed by a majority of those present. If the bill is passed, it is sent to the Senate where it goes through a similar process.

NEXT STEPS

After the final action by the Senate on a House bill, or the House on a Senate bill, it is returned to the originating body. If no final changes need to be made to the bill (such as adopting amendments recommended by one body of the legislature) the bill is signed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate and sent to the Governor for their action.

GOVERNOR’S ACTION

After receiving a bill passed by both the House and Senate, the Governor can do three things:

- Approve the bill by signing it.
- Allow the bill to become law without their approval by not signing it within five days of receiving the bill.
- Veto the bill.

A bill can still become law over the Governor’s veto if both the House and Senate vote to override the veto by a two-thirds majority vote.

When a bill is approved, it is sent to the Secretary of State to be assigned a chapter number in the Idaho Session Laws. Most bills become law on July 1. The final step is the addition of new laws to the Idaho Code, which contains all Idaho law.



WAYS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR LAWMAKER



There are several ways to connect with your elected Representative or Senator throughout the year, not just during the legislative session.

- Contact them. You can do this through email, letters, phone calls, or in-person meetings.
- Meet with them in their districts throughout the year or at their office during the legislative session.
- Testify during a committee's public hearing.
- Write letters to the editor or opinion-editorials in your local newspapers.
- Share your story on social media.
- Attend or coordinate town halls and other public forums.
- Start a petition.

ESSENTIAL PREPERATION

STEP 1

KNOW YOUR LEGISLATOR

Be sure that you know your legislators. What committees do they serve on? What is their professional background? Do you have any shared common interests? All of this information can be helpful in building a relationship with your lawmaker and talking to them about issues that matter most to you.

- Go to www.legislature.idaho.gov to access their contact information and bios.
- Focus on the legislators that represent your legislative district, or who sit on committees that pertain to issues you care most about.
- Find them on social media or visit their campaign websites. These are great tools you can use to learn more about your legislators' priorities.
- Check out our 2017 ACLU of Idaho Legislative Scorecard to see how your lawmaker voted on civil liberties during the last legislative session. You can find it online at www.acluidaho.org.

STEP 2

KNOW WHAT TO SAY

Before you reach out to your legislator on a particular issue – whether by phone, at an in-person meeting, or at a public hearing, make sure you do your homework and know your content.

- The ACLU of Idaho generates talking points on legislation that we support and oppose. Visit our website throughout the session as we identify bills we are working on.
- Familiarize yourself with our talking points or prepare a script before contacting your elected official. The more you know, the more your legislator can learn too!
- Share your personal story and how a particular issue may impact (or may have impacted) you or a loved one. Check out our “Handy Guide to Crafting your Message.”

3rd Finger

- This is important to me because _____

4th Finger

- This is an important issue in our state because _____

5th Finger

- Will you support \$ _____ in funding for family planning in the budget?
- Can we count on you to support Bill # _____?

2nd Finger

- I'm here to talk to you about _____

1st Finger

- Name _____
- Where you live _____
- I'm a constituent!

Personal Story

Introduce yourself.

What is my issue?

Why I care.

Why the Legislator should care.

Make the ask.

HANDY GUIDE TO CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE

ESSENTIAL PREPERATION

REMEMBER- LEGISLATORS
WORK FOR YOU



STEP 3

CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR

Now that you've done your research, it's time to connect with your legislator. You can do it any number of ways!

- Email, write a letter, call, visit them in-person or testify in front of a committee.
- Don't hesitate to contact them multiple times through a variety of methods. We want to make sure they know exactly how their constituents want them to vote on a particular issue.
- Be persistent! Lawmakers are very busy during the legislative session and can't always immediately respond. If it's been a few days since you sent an email and haven't received a response, follow up with a phone call. If you haven't been able to schedule a meeting with them, swing by the Statehouse and meet with them as they walk to their next meeting.

STEP 4

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Remember – Legislators work for YOU!
- Always be professional.
- Be sure to use a pleasant and positive tone. Remember to thank them for their time and for listening to you.
- Follow up afterwards if you're able to meet with them in person. Send them a thank you letter, either through email or snail mail.
- Let us know about your meeting. Reach out to our office and let us know how your conversation with your lawmaker went. Your conversations can be critical in helping the ACLU move forward our legislative agenda.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

ORGANIZING A LOBBY VISIT



REQUESTING YOUR MEETING

- Make your request in writing and follow up with a call to the Appointment Secretary/Scheduler.
 - Suggest specific times and dates for your meeting.
 - Let them know what issue and legislation (by bill number, if it has one) you wish to discuss.
 - Make sure they know that you are a constituent.
- Bring up any personal, professional or political connections to the elected official that you may have. Start the meeting by introducing yourselves and thanking the legislator for any votes he or she has made in support of your issues, and for taking the time to meet with you.
 - Stick to your talking points. Stay on topic, and support them with no more than five pages of materials that you can leave with your elected official.

PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING

- Decide who will attend the meeting. Bringing more than four or five people can be hard to manage. Keep it small, but bring people who represent different groups that have an interest in the legislation like doctors, veterans, religious leaders, school board members, etc.
 - Agree on talking points. It's tough to make a strong case for your position when you are disagreeing in the meeting! If a point is causing tension in the group, leave it out.
 - Plan your meeting. People can get nervous in a meeting, and time is limited. Be sure that you plan out the meeting in advance, including who will start the conversation.
 - Decide what you want to achieve. What is it you want your elected official to do - vote for or against the bill? Make a commitment to introduce or co-sponsor legislation? Asking your legislator or his or her staff member to do something specific will help you know how successful your visit has been!
- Provide personal and local examples of the impact of the legislation. This is the most important thing you can do in a lobby visit.
 - Saying "I don't know" can be a smart political move. You need not be an expert on the topic you are discussing. If you don't know the answer to a question, it is fine to tell your legislator that you will get that information for him or her. This gives you the chance to put your strongest arguments into their files, and allows you to contact them again about the issue. Never make up an answer to a question - giving wrong or inaccurate information can seriously damage your credibility.
 - Set deadlines for a response. Often, if an elected official hasn't taken a position on legislation, they will not commit to one in the middle of a meeting. If he or she has to think about it, or if you are meeting with a staff member, ask when you should check back to find out what your legislator intends to do about your request.

DURING THE MEETING

- Be prompt and patient. Elected officials run on very tight schedules. Be sure to show up on time for your appointment, and be patient - it is not uncommon for legislators to be late or to have your meeting interrupted by other business.
- Keep it short and focused. You will have twenty minutes or less with a staff person, and as little as ten minutes if you meet with your elected official.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Right after the meeting, compare notes with everyone in your group to compare what the elected official committed to do and what follow up information you committed to send.
- Each person who took part in the meeting should promptly send a personal thank you letter to the elected official.
- Follow up in a timely fashion with any requested materials and information.
- If the elected official or staff member doesn't meet the deadline for action you agreed to during the meeting, ask him or her to set another deadline. Be persistent and flexible!

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

TESTIFYING BEFORE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES



Idaho has an open legislative process. All committee action on bills and amendments are conducted in open sessions and community members are welcome to provide testimony during public committee hearings. If you're interested in testifying before a committee, follow these guidelines for a successful lawmaker visit.

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE MEETING

- Find out when and where your bill(s) will be heard. You may do so by checking with Senate and House committee staff and by looking on the internet for daily committee agendas when the Legislature is in session. You can find agendas online by visiting www.legislature.idaho.gov.
- Plan your testimony. You will be more effective getting your message across if you have prepared your testimony in writing for distribution to committee members. You can then orally summarize your remarks to conserve time.

AT THE COMMITTEE MEETING

- Be on time. Find out when and where the meeting is to be held, which can be found on committee agendas.
- Be sure to sign your name when you arrive and indicate whether you intend to testify. Sign-up sheets are available at all meetings.
- Wait your turn. The Chair will announce when a particular bill is coming before the committee for discussion. The bill's sponsor is usually the first to speak. After their testimony, the Chair then may ask for testimony from proponents and opponents.
- All testimony and all committee discussion must be addressed through the Chair.
- Begin your testimony by addressing the Chair and committee members. State your name, where you live, and why you are there. For example: "Mr. (or Madam) Chair, members of the Committee, my name is Pat Q. Public and I'm from Emmett. I am/am not in favor of this bill because...."

- Be courteous and brief in your language and address. Try not to repeat testimony offered by previous witnesses. Be prepared to answer questions. Respond to the questions as best you can. Do not be embarrassed if you do not have a specific answer.
- Do not be nervous as there is no right or wrong way to testify. Legislators are your friends and neighbors elected to represent you -- they want to hear what you have to say.
- Demonstrations, applause, or addressing committee members or other witnesses in the audience are prohibited.
- Do not be offended if legislators come and go during a meeting. They have other commitments, including the need at times to present information in other meetings occurring simultaneously.

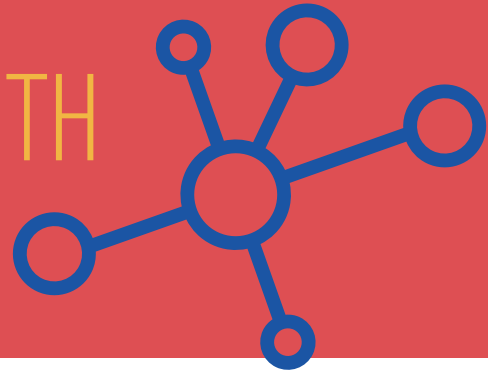
AFTER YOU TESTIFY

- Do not expect immediate committee action. The bill may be held until another day. You are welcome to stay after the discussion on your bill and listen until the end of the committee meeting.
- If the vote on your bill is postponed, and the Chair does not announce a date for further consideration, check back with committee staff about future scheduling.



CONNECTING WITH THE MEDIA

WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Letters to the editor are a great way to share your thoughts on an issue that is important to you and to respond to breaking news coming out of the Idaho Legislature. Keep the letter short and focused on one issue. This way the letter has a better chance of being published and capturing the reader's interest.

GENERAL TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR BEST LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

- Make sure to sign your full name, and include your address and phone number. Newspapers will not print anonymous letters.
- Include the problem, the solution, and the action that you want taken.
- Use verified facts. ACLU talking points are a great resource for writing letters to the editor.
- Point people to a source for more information.
- Speak in the language and to the literacy level of that publication's readers. Do not use jargon or acronyms.
- Do not overstate or exaggerate your points.
- Maintain respect for both sides of each issue and do not insult your opponents.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR ON THE IDAHO HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Dear Editor,

I have lived in Idaho for over 20 years; this is home for me and my family. As a person who cares deeply for my neighbors, I am saddened to know that in Idaho gay, lesbian and transgender individuals can be discriminated against, fired from their job, or turned away from a business simply because of who they are or who they love. This is wrong and it must be changed.

I have been following the campaign to include the words sexual orientation and gender identity to the Idaho Human Rights Act for over ten years. I believe time is way past due to pass these crucial protections for the LGBTQ community. This simple change is needed to ensure we have protections for members of our community who want to make Idaho their home and work to provide for their family.

Today, I urge the Idaho Legislature to take action and amend the Idaho Human Rights Act. Legislators should stop postponing taking action on this very important issue that the majority of Idahoans already support. It's the right thing to do for our state.

Sincerely
Your Name
Your Address
Your Phone Number

CONNECTING WITH THE MEDIA

WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ADDRESSES

Letters to the editor should be limited to 150-200 words. Guest opinions can be up to 500 words. Please refer to your local paper for specifics. Remember to include your name, address, and daytime phone number so the newspaper staff can call to confirm your letter.

If you do not see your local newspaper included on this list, contact them to get information on how you can submit a letter to the editor.



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CONNECTING ONLINE

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENGAGE WITH LAWMAKERS

Social media is a great way to magnify support for the ACLU's legislative priorities and to share your thoughts on actions being taken by your elected officials.

Thank lawmakers for protecting your civil liberties, tell your friends about your lobby visits, and share your photos, on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

GENERAL TIPS FOR CRAFTING YOUR BEST ONLINE MESSAGE:

Be Visual

- Share a photo or infographic in order to increase likelihood of having your post seen.

Be a Positive Contributor

- You won't get much attention if you are extremely negative. Be polite and say thank you. Show your personality so you are more relatable. Also, make clear in your message that you are a constituent. Lawmakers are more likely to respond or take action if that is the case.

Use Hashtags

- Make sure to tweet to existing conversations or campaigns. Popular legislative hashtags are #idleg (for the Idaho Legislature) and #idpol (for Idaho politics). Don't forget to tag @acluidaho too!

Retweet and Comment

- Don't just send out your own posts. Retweet posts from your legislator's office and comment thoughtfully.

SAMPLE POSTS:

"I'm at #idleg in Boise to protect immigrant rights, fix our broken criminal justice system, and support reproductive justice!"

"Thank you [@legislator] for meeting with me about #AddtheWords! #idleg"

".@legislator – Please vote 'NO' on #HB150 and protect access to early voting. #votingrights #idleg"



WHAT'S NEXT?

CONGRATULATIONS!



**You made it through
our Lobbying 101
Toolkit and are ready
to take action in the
legislative process.**

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS YOU CAN GET STARTED RIGHT AWAY DEFENDING CIVIL LIBERTIES IN IDAHO:

- Sign up to receive ACLU e-alerts where you can learn about opportunities to provide public testimony, attend a rally, or make phone calls to lawmakers.
- Volunteer to support our legislative priorities.
- Be an engaged community lobbyist and share our toolkit with your friends and neighbors.
- Follow the ACLU online – Make sure to like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter and Instagram.
- Report back – If you do connect with your lawmaker, let us know how your conversation went. The information you share with us helps us formulate our legislative strategy.

To learn more about the ACLU's legislative work, and to stay up to date on the Idaho Legislature, visit our website at www.acluidaho.org.



ACLU OF IDAHO
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