

**Make
your
voice
heard.**



Legislative Leaders Institute of San Antonio

2006 Course Resource Manual

Compiled by State Representative Mike Villarreal

Table of Contents

The Texas Leg

Overview of the Texas Legislature	5
Committees of the Texas Legislature	6
Legislative Calendar	6
Diagram of the Legislative Process	7
Unofficial Rules for Passing Legislation	8

Make Your Voice Heard

Develop a Relationship with a Legislator	9
Make an Effective Phone Call	10
Write an Effective Letter	10
Visit the Capitol	11
Build Good Will	11
How to Talk with Legislators	12
Working with Legislative Staff	12

Strategy

Targeting Legislators	14
10 Commandments of Lobbying	15
Planning a Strategic Advocacy Campaign	15

Money and Politics

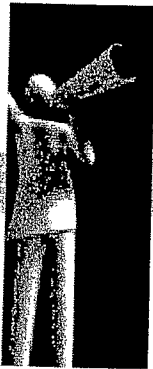
Texas Campaign Finance Basics	19
Political Action Committees	21
Money Earning in Texas	22

Resources

A: <i>The Changing Nature of Interest Group Politics</i> , Loomis and Ciglar ..	25
B: <i>Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies</i> , John Kingdon	26
C: Legislative Vocabulary	30
D: Helpful Websites	31
E: Helpful Phone Numbers	32

Appendix

A: Sample Thank You Letter	34
B: Legislator Phone Script	35
C: Model Legislative Letter	36
D: Salutation Guide	37
E: How to Introduce a Legislator	38
F: Sample Invitation Letter	39
G: Sample Agenda	40
H: Conversation Helpers	41
Legislative Leaders Institute: Spring 2006 Evaluation	42



The Texas Leg

Overview of the Texas Legislature

The Legislature is the state's lawmaking body. It enacts laws that cover a variety of subjects such as health care, economic development, welfare, education and the environment.

Like most states, Texas relies on a bicameral system: two separate chambers that include the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate. State senators and representatives are elected from single-member districts.

The Legislature meets for a regular legislative session in Austin every two years for 140 days. The Texas Constitution allows the governor to call additional sessions, referred to as "special" or "called" sessions. During a special session, which cannot exceed 30 days, the Legislature can only consider proposals related to the issues specified by the governor.

Texas House of Representatives

- 150 members
- Serve two-year terms
- Led by the speaker of the House (a legislator elected by House members)

Texas Senate

- 31 members
- Serve four-year staggered terms
- Led by the lieutenant governor (Texas voters elect to a four-year term)

Texas Legislative Staff

- The Texas House and Senate were staffed by 2,268 staff members during the 2003 session, according to a National Conference of State Legislatures (an organization representing state legislators and their staffs) report.
- About 523 of those staffers worked only during the legislative session.

Committees and the Texas Legislature

The Legislature's size, work load and time constraints make it impossible for the entire legislative body to consider every proposed bill by members. Last session, legislators filed 9,338 bills (4,961 passed) and 2,852 amendments. Therefore, committees in the House and Senate conduct most of the basic business of the Texas Legislature. At this stage, bills are deliberated more thoughtfully and the public has chance to weigh in. Most bills never make it out of committee.

Texas House

- The Texas Constitution requires committees to consider, vote to approve and file a report before the House membership can take up a bill.
- Each committee has jurisdiction over specific subject matter.
- Currently, there are 42 standing committees in the House and an additional six subcommittees.
- House committee membership is determined by seniority and by the speaker of the House.
- Each representative serves on at least one committee; most serve on two or three.
- The speaker assigns bill proposals to committees — a powerful tool in influencing policy.

Texas Senate

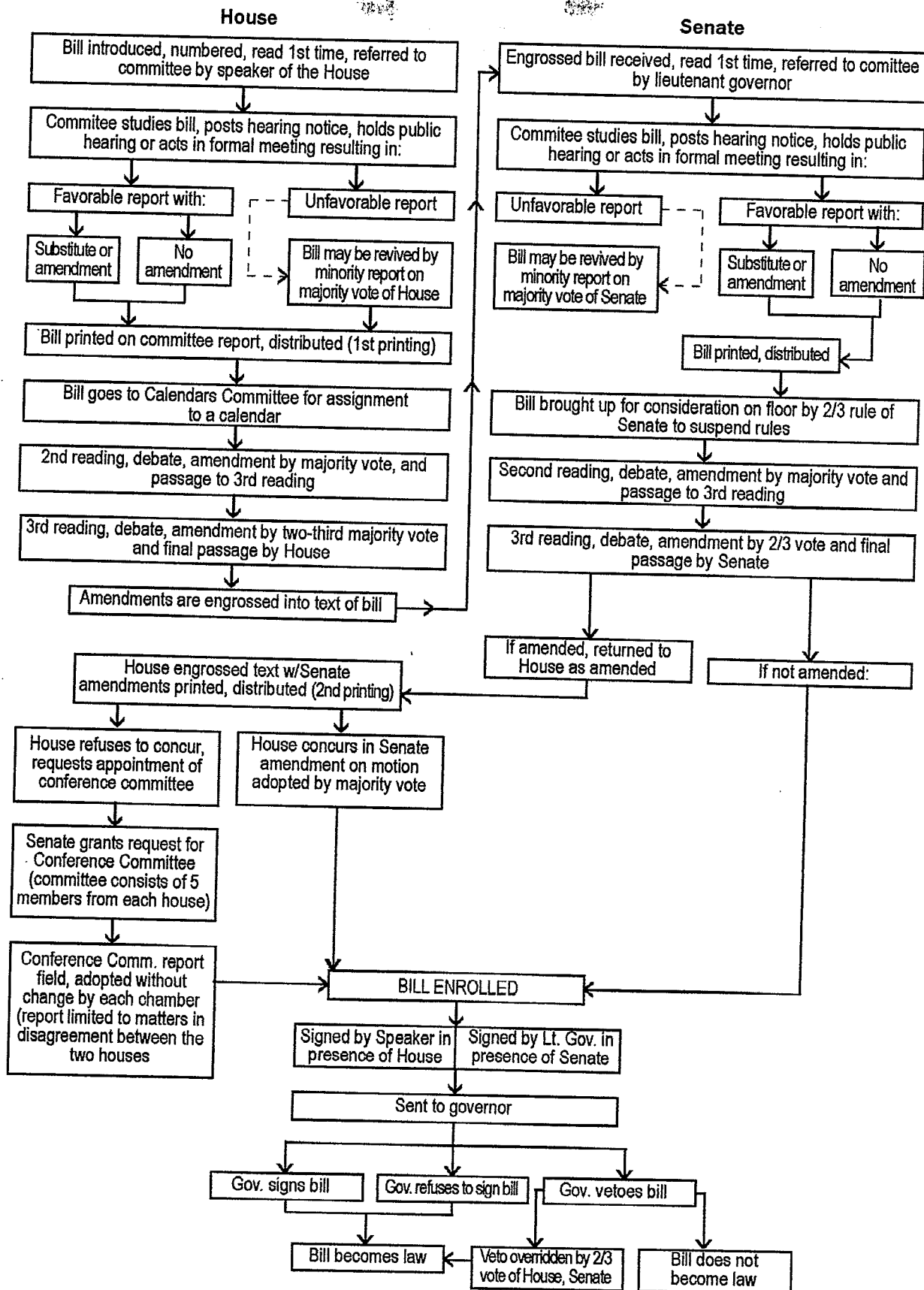
- The lieutenant governor determines committee membership.
- While the Senate does require subject matter jurisdiction for its committees and the lieutenant governor has the authority to refer legislation to any Senate standing committee, unofficial jurisdiction is usually followed to prevent duplication of effort by committees.
- Senators typically sit on three or four committees each.
- Currently, there are 16 Senate committees, and five subcommittees.

Legislative Calendar

REGULAR SESSION Convenes on the second Tuesday in January of odd-numbered years and remains in session 140 days (usually end of May).

SPECIAL The governor can call the Legislature for additional service in 30-day increments. There is no limit to how many special sessions may be called, but the Legislature may only consider legislation directly related to the governor's call.

INTERIM Time in which the Legislature is not in Session at the State Capitol; normally the interim period begins in early June of odd-numbered years, after the Regular Session adjourns, and continues through December of the following even-numbered year. Legislators usually can be reached in their district offices during the interim.



Unofficial Rules for Passing Legislation

1. Make friends, keep in touch and appreciate the likes and dislikes of the:

- Governor, lieutenant governor, speaker, committee chairs, legislators and their staffs.
- Bureaucracies, civil servants, lobbyists and interest groups.

2. Acquire power through knowledge.

- Know the rules.
- Know the issues.
- Know the personalities.
- Know the relationships.

3. Start early and place lots of boats into the river if you want to get a bill through.

- Don't wait to file a bill until it is perfect — it will never pass.
- File multiple vehicles for your idea: bills, amendments, big /little boats, Trojan horses, clear/obscure language.

4. Stay awake while others are sleeping.

- Be prepared for committee presentations.
- Be prepared for floor debate.
- Be prepared to amend your bill on germane bills.
- Track all your legislative vehicles.

5. It is better to give than to receive.

- Stockpile favors given; know when to cash in your favors.
- Help people with their legislation, in their elections or with their constituents.

6. You've got to go along to get along.

- Compromise builds good will and trust, the twin engines of legislative productivity.
- Before going into negotiations know what your bottom line is.
- When negotiating, first concentrate on the bill. Then, move on to the subject and general topic of the bill. If you still have not made progress, stop negotiating.

7. Count your votes:

- In committee.
- On House floor.
- In conference committees.

8. Work the floor.

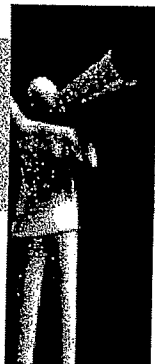
- Be prepared to reframe your arguments to better fit the worldview of your audience.
- Hand deliver brief, written summaries of your legislation (try to keep them to one page).
- Close the deal with each person.

9. Disagree without being disagreeable.

- Stand strong on principles; negotiate solutions.
- Don't take things personally.
- Attack the problem, not the people.

10. Money and Grassroots – the most dangerous combination.

- Votes.
- Campaign funds.



"There is no way I can read everything that comes into my office. If I know a member of an organization personally, and I know he/she offers fair, honest, important information on the subject, then I am sure to read the written communications from him/her. But person-to-person contact must come first."

— Jerry Donaldson, Former Texas legislator

Make Your Voice Heard

Advocates educate elected officials and the public on specific issues or causes. They come in many different forms, from individuals to organizations, and nonprofit groups to independent agencies. They work multiple angles making sure others understand their interest area and asking lawmakers to vote yes or no on a particular piece of policy.

Getting time with a state lawmaker is difficult. As you've already learned, Texas legislators only meet for 140 days every two years. Most of them must work another full-time job to support their families. A variety of interests compete for their attention. To be an effective advocate, you must be prepared to make the most of the limited time you have with a lawmaker.

Develop a Relationship With a Legislator

Legislators are people, just like you. Invest in the relationship, because legislators and their staffs can do a lot to help you, such as: sponsor bills helpful to your cause; draft proclamations commending your organization; provide information on legislation; appoint you to legislative study committees or State Board commissions; speak at key events in your community.

Tips for developing a relationship

- Schedule an appointment to introduce yourself to legislators in their local offices or businesses. Remember a Texas legislator is a citizen legislator who lives and works in the community. Follow-up with a "thank you for the visit" letter. (Sample thank you letter, **Appendix A**.)
- Put your legislator on your mailing list, and send /her copies of all items of interest, publications, brochures, and pamphlets. Always attach your business card. Let him/her know about any contributions that your organization is making to the community. Do not be afraid to tell your story. It is a good one and bears repeating to decision makers.
- Invite your legislator to your facility, office, neighborhood meeting or other pertinent location when appropriate.
- Introduce them to voters in your office.

- Do your homework. Know as much as you can about his/her: priorities, committees, awards and honors, history with your issue (it's especially important to know if the legislator already has taken a position on your issue), family makeup, business dealings, etc.
- Ask for something specific.
- Offer to help and follow through. You can: volunteer in a campaign, provide resource material, testify on legislation, hold a reception in honor of the legislator, bring diplomatic members of your board or sympathetic allied groups to key events.
- Visit your legislator at the Capitol. Sign the guest book and ask to see the legislator. Do not ignore the staff. In fact, make every effort to befriend and nurture key staff.
- Never stop trying to develop a positive relationship with your legislator. If he/she is defeated, immediately start all over again with the newly elected legislator.



Photo by Jana Birchum

A little preparation can help you make the most of a visit to a legislator. These 2004 Legislative Institute students took a tour of the Texas State Capitol building.

Make an Effective Phone Call

- Identify yourself as a constituent (someone who lives or works in the legislator's district).
- Identify your professional position in the community.
- Briefly describe how your organization, business or profession stands out in the community.
- Explain why you are calling. Be specific in helping your legislator understand why you or your organization are trusted sources on your issue. (Sample phone script, **Appendix B**).
- Send a personal thank you note as a follow-up to your phone call, as well as to reaffirm your position and your request of the legislator. (Sample thank you letter, **Appendix A**).

Write an Effective Letter

- Be brief — keep your letter to one page. Remember, you are trying to grab their attention. If they want more information, the staff or legislator will ask you for it. (Sample legislative letter, **Appendix C**).
- Be factual.
- Be specific in your request, and state it clearly in the first paragraph of your letter.
- Use company or personal letterhead. Type the letter unless it is a personal note.

- Proof read for mistakes. Try and get a second pair of eyes to proof read it for you.
- Make certain you have the correct salutation and name spelling. (List of official salutations, **Appendix D**).

Visit the Capitol

- Remember, the Capitol is *your* Capitol. Don't let the massive granite building intimidate you.
- The best time to visit the State Capitol in Austin is early during a legislative session.
- Make appointments. Let legislators know you are coming specifically to see them.
- Take a tour of the Capitol so you will feel comfortable.
- Take concise written information with you to leave with your legislators (preferably a one-page sheet). Staple your business card to the information sheet.
- Be patient. Many people pull legislators in many different directions.
- Visit and develop a rapport with legislative staff.
- Observe the legislative proceedings from the House and Senate galleries.
- If you're on a roll, introduce yourself to the staff of committees covering your interest area.

Build Good Will

Legislators appreciate publicity for themselves and their issues. Think creatively about how to involve them in promoting your issues or the legislators themselves.

Show appreciation

Host an event

- Honor your legislator at an event sponsored by your organization. (Sample introduction of a legislator/candidate, **Appendix E**.)
- Prepare a written invitation to the reception from your board members or key employees.
- Invite local elected officials, such as the mayor, city council members, chamber of commerce president, etc. Let your legislator know that other elected officials are expected to attend.
- Bestow on the legislator a title like "Champion for Affordable, Quality, Cancer Care."
- Have a photographer there to take pictures.
- Ask the legislator to deliver a brief speech about state issues or subjects important to him/her. (Sample invitation letter, **Appendix F**).
- Drum up a crowd. Warm bodies make for warm feelings.
- Write an article about the event for the company newsletter (including pictures). Send a copy to the legislator.
- Invite the local media and write a letter to the editor crowning the event's success and thanking the legislator and other key attendees and hosts.

Other simple ways to show appreciation

- Ask the legislator to give a presentation to your staff or organization on how bills are passed.
- Always have a well-organized agenda. (Sample agenda, **Appendix G.**)

Schedule a "Candidate Night"

- Host a "Meet the Candidate" event for local candidates running for legislative office (works especially well around July 4th or right before a primary or general election date).

Get involved in the Community

- Support a community service that interests your legislator such as a food bank drive or some other feel-good effort.



Photo by Jana Birchum

How to Talk with Legislators

To help the conversation flow smoothly with your legislator, consider the following:

- Involve other key advocates.
- Include the legislator's staff and/or family in your conversation.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, be honest. Say, "I don't know the answer to that, but I will check on it and get back with you as soon as possible."
- Ask legislators open-ended questions that will elicit more lengthy responses than merely yes or no. (Sample questions, **Appendix H.**)
- Ask for a commitment.

Talking with your state legislator does not have to be intimidating. Learning your legislator's issues and history as well as studying your own issue can make your time together productive.

Working With Legislative Staff

One of the primary keys to being a successful legislative advocate is building relationships with the members of your legislators' staffs. Legislators often delegate major areas of responsibility to staff members, so get to know the staff well.

Some guidelines

- Get to know the entire staff by name — everyone is important. The secretary can get you in to see the legislator, and the aides who deal with your issues can help you as well.
- Go by and see the staff on a routine basis and offer to help provide information on your issues. Offer yourself as an expert resource. Visit both the Capitol staff and the staff in the

legislator's district office.

- Offer to be a resource for people who call the legislator asking for information on your issues.
- Always leave your business card with the staff, no matter how many times you visit.
- Discuss legislative issues with the legislator and his/her legislative aides who deal with your issues. You can feel that you have accomplished something whenever you have had an in-depth conversation with a key legislative staff member (even if you did not get to talk with the legislator).
- Make sure the staff has information on file about your group.
- Invite the staff to special events.



Strategy & Planning

Targeting Legislators

Lobbying legislators is about persuading them to do what you want. There are five main categories of legislators to think about, each requiring its own special strategy.

1. Champions

Your issues need a group of lawmakers dedicated to being tireless, committed advocates who can make your case to their colleagues, help develop a strong “inside” strategy, and be public spokespersons. They need good information and visible support outside the Capitol.

2. Allies

Another group of legislators will be on your side but can be pushed to do more — to speak up in party caucuses or on the floor.

3. Fence Sitters

Some legislators will be uncommitted on the issues, potentially able to vote either way. These are your key targets and lobbying strategy is about putting together the right mix on “inside” persuasion and “outside” pressure to sway them your way.

4. Mellow Opponents

Another group of legislators will be clear votes against you, but who are not inclined to be active on the issue. With this group what’s key is to keep them from becoming more active, lobbying them enough to give them pause but not to make them angry.

5. Hard Core Opponents

Finally, there are those lawmakers who are leading your opposition. What is important here is to isolate them, to highlight the extremes of their positions, rhetoric and alliances and to give other lawmakers pause about joining with them.

There is more than one way to categorize legislators. Some advocates start with their own state legislators. Others start with those who are sitting on the committee relevant to their agendas. However you break down your list, developing a plan will strengthen your effort.

Ten Commandments of Lobbying

- I Never lie or mislead an elected official about the importance of an issue, the opposition's position or strength, or any other matter.
- II Look for friends in unusual places. In politics, a friend is someone who works with you on a particular issue — whether Democrat, Republican, liberal or conservative — even if that person or group opposes you on every other issue.
- III No permanent friends, no permanent enemies. Do not let an elected official consider you a bitter enemy because you disagree; today's opponent may be tomorrow's ally.
- IV Do not grab credit. Nothing is impossible if it does not matter who gets the credit.
- V Your word is your bond. Never promise anything you cannot deliver.
- VI Do not waste time on opponents who are publicly committed to their positions. It is more productive to shore up known allies and to lobby elected officials who are least committed, or who claim to be neutral or keeping an open mind.
- VII Never forget to notice and thank someone who has helped you.
- VIII Do not gossip about elected officials or political friends and opponents. Remember that discretion is the better part of valor.
- IX When you are crossed politically, don't get mad. Get Even — at the ballot box!
- X In lobbying you can know your opponent; you can develop compromises; you can study all the arguments; *but it can all go right down the drain if you don't have a little luck!*

"Ten Commandments of Lobbying," Common Cause.

Plan a Strategic Advocacy Campaign

Issue Focus

What is the main issue focus of your campaign? What specific problem are you seeking to address?

Goals

What do you want to achieve in the long run? By establishing goals, you can stay on track. Your goal statement should be broad and ambitious. It should describe what you hope to accomplish with your campaign.

- Issue Goals

What are the long-term goals of your campaign? What exactly do you want the public to demand and the decision-makers to deliver? What constitutes a victory?

- Organizational Goals

What are the organizational goals of your campaign? How will this campaign help strengthen your organization? How will this campaign recruit and develop new activists? Strengthen ties between your organization and other organizations or communities?

Objectives

What do you want in the short/medium term? Objectives can be “issue objectives” or “organizational objectives.” Within these two areas, you will need to have “impact objectives” (a specific, measurable, and reasonable outcome or impact of your campaign that is short or medium term; e.g., that a particular piece of legislation in Texas is passed into law by June 2005) and “process objectives” (a specific, reasonable, short-term activity conducted by the campaigning team that is crucial to the accomplishment of one or more impact objectives; e.g., how many letters or emails you generated, or how many mentions of the issue appeared in the press).

- Use S.M.A.R.T. objectives

S = Specific (Does it outline exactly what we hope to achieve?).

M = Measurable (How will we know/measure if the objective is achieved?).

A = Achievable (Is it realistic, is it within our power to do this?).

R = Relevant (Does it contribute to a broader strategy or plan?).

T = Time-bound (Does it specify a date/time by which we want to achieve the objective?)

- Issue Objectives

Impact: What are the short and medium term human rights impact objectives of your campaign? What exactly do you want the public to demand and the decision-makers to deliver? What constitutes a victory? How will you quantify your success?

Process: What are the key campaigning accomplishments by your team that will help move you towards realizing your desired impact objectives?

- Organizational Objectives

Impact: What are the short/medium term organizational objectives of your campaign? How will this campaign strengthen your section or group? How will this campaign recruit and develop new activists? Strengthen ties between your organization and other organizations or communities? How will you quantify your success?

Process: What are the key campaigning accomplishments by your team that will help move you towards realizing your desired organizational impact objectives? (How many new activists have you recruited? With how many legislators has your organization cultivated relationships?)

Organizational strengths and resources

What resources do you have? What are the strengths you bring to the campaign? Think in terms of

people, money, time and connections. What are the current weaknesses or organizational needs of your group as you launch this campaign?

Constituents, Allies and Opponents

It is important to know who will help/hurt you in this campaign. What groups or individuals may share your concerns – within your organization or coalition (constituents) and outside your organization (allies)? How are they organized? What resources can they bring? Who may oppose you? What are their strengths and weaknesses? How can you neutralize their opposition?

Targets

Who can give you what you want? Be specific. Decision-makers will be your primary target.

- Secondary-targets

What prominent individuals in your community can help you influence your target? Who has power over your target and how can you get them to help?

- Public audiences

Who among the general public, outside your membership, are you attempting to reach with your message through this campaign? Who are your most likely supporters among the community at large? Who will help you create demand for this victory? Think in terms of geography (town, state, neighborhoods), demography (women 25-40, African Americans), and constituencies (health professionals, teachers).

Tactics

What are you going to do to get the targets to give you what you want? What specific activities will you undertake? What will you do to ensure the media covers your issue?

Timeline

When will you launch your campaign? Will it be tied to the release of a report or an important date to your country or issue? How long do you have to campaign? What tactics will you employ and when?

Communication

What are you saying? Establishing clear points to communicate will keep you on message and will attract more attention.

- Message/Slogan

What is the central message you plan to deliver through this campaign? Draft one clear, concise, and compelling phrase that will be repeated throughout your campaign communication to summarize your message.

- Story

What is the story you will tell to communicate with your targets? Who is the victim, villain or hero? What is the problem? What is your proposed resolution? In just a few compelling sentences, tell the story of the campaign.

- Media outlets

Which specific media outlets will be most effective in communicating your message and story to your targets and to the public audience(s)?

Resource Management

Creating a financial plan can help you make the most of your resources.

- **Campaign Budget**

How much will all this cost? Compare your resources with the cost of implementing your tactics.

- **Fundraising**

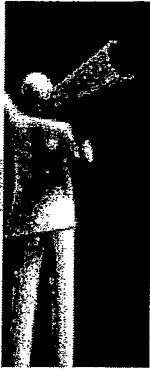
If your expenses are greater than your resources, ask yourself whether you need to pare back your campaign or how you intend to raise the additional money needed.

- **Volunteer Recruitment**

Reviewing your tactics and timeline, how many volunteers will you need to execute this campaign? What are your plans for recruiting, training and supervising your volunteers? Remember: Ask. Thank. Inform. Involve.

Evaluation

How will you evaluate whether you achieved your campaign objectives? Who will you share the evaluation with?



Money and Politics

Texas Campaign Finance Basics

Texas lobby law defines lobbying as **direct communications** with **members of the legislative or executive branch of state government** to influence legislation or administrative action.* It deals with those trying to influence legislation (a matter that is or may be the subject of action by either house of the legislature or by a legislative committee) or administrative action (any matter that may be the subject of action by a state agency).

Direct communication means to contact in person, by telephone or by letter a member of the legislative or executive branch of state government. For example, an organization that publishes a newsletter for its members is not "communicating directly" with members of the legislature, even if a legislator may read the newsletter.

A **member of the legislative or executive branch of state government** includes a member, member-elect, candidate for, or officer of the legislature, the executive branch or legislative committee. It also includes employees of the legislature or any state agency, department, or executive branch office.

It is important to note that communication does not have to include a discussion of specific legislation or administrative action to be considered lobbying. If the communication is intended to generate or maintain goodwill for the purpose of influencing potential future legislation or administrative action, the communication is a lobby communication.

Do You Have to Register as a Lobbyist?

A person, corporation, partnership, association or other type of business is required to register with the Texas Ethics Commission as lobbyist if it meets either one of two thresholds: the **compensation and reimbursement threshold** or the **expenditure threshold**.

A. Compensation and Reimbursement Threshold

A person who receives more than \$1,000 in a calendar quarter as compensation or reimbursement to lobby must register as a lobbyist. Personal expenses such as food and lodging, and certain office expenses do not count as compensation.

* This law does not apply to the judicial branch or local government officials such as a county, city, school district, or other local government or special district. These may be regulated by other laws.

B. Expenditure Threshold

A person who spends more than \$500 in a calendar quarter for lobbying purposes must register as a lobbyist. An expenditure is a payment, distribution, loan, advance, reimbursement, deposit, or gift of money or anything of value that benefits a state officer, their employees or immediate family and is made to influence legislation or administrative action.

They fall into one of the following six categories: transportation and lodging; food and beverages; entertainment; gifts; awards and mementos; and the attendance of a state officer or employee at a political fundraiser or charity event. Exceptions: Public officials and lobbyist employers/clients.

To register as a lobbyist, check the Texas Ethics Commission's website at www.ethics.state.tx.us.

Lobbying Restrictions

The lobby law contains a number of restrictions to regulate lobbyists. Refer to the Texas Ethics Commission web site at www.ethics.state.tx.us for more details. There are a few restrictions to note:

- A. A lobbyist cannot make a false statement or misrepresent facts to a state officer or employee.
- B. Lobbyists cannot go on to the floor of either house of the legislature while that house is in session unless invited by that house. This makes for a packed entrance to both chambers during session, as lobbyists gather outside the doors to talk to legislators coming and going.
- C. The law provides criminal and civil sanctions for violation of the lobby law or the Penal Code.
- D. Cash contributions exceeding \$100 are prohibited (does not apply to checks).
- E. Contributions are prohibited 30 days before a regular legislative session until final adjournment. These regulations do not apply to special legislative sessions.
- F. Contributions cannot be made in the Capitol building or extension.
- G. No one can make political contributions 30 days before and during a regular legislative session to:
 - (1) A statewide officeholder or officer-elect
 - (2) A member of the legislature or member-elect
 - (3) A specific-purpose committee for supporting, opposing, or assisting a statewide officeholder or officeholder elect or member or member-elect of the legislature.
- H. Contributions can be made and accepted during a special legislative session.
- I. Federal law prohibits contributions from foreign nationals who have not been granted permanent residence in the United States.
- J. Corporations and labor organizations cannot make political contributions to a candidate or office holder.

Political Action Committees

A political committee, commonly referred to as a "PAC," is "a group of persons that has as a principal purpose accepting political contributions or making political expenditures." Simply stated, a political committee is a group of two or more people that accepts political contributions and/or makes political expenditures. A political committee may be a large group such as an organization that collects money to support many different candidates. A political committee may also be a small group such as two people who get together to raise funds for an old friend who is a candidate for a local office.

The rules governing political committees vary depending on whether the political committee is a **general-purpose political committee** or a **specific-purpose political committee**.

General Purpose PAC

A political committee that meets *any* one of the descriptions set out below is a general-purpose political committee.

A. A political committee that supports or opposes two or more candidates who are unidentified or who are seeking offices that are unknown.

B. A political committee that assists two or more officeholders who are unidentified.

D. A political committee that supports or opposes one or more unidentified measures. An unidentified measure is a proposal that is not yet legally required to be submitted to the voters in an election.

A general-purpose committee devoted to a particular point of view does not become a specific-purpose committee because it lends support to a particular candidate in an election.

Specific-Purpose PAC

A specific-purpose political committee is one that *does not* fit any of the descriptions of a general-purpose political committee *but does* fit one of the descriptions set out below. A political committee is a specific-purpose com-

Examples of General-Purpose Committees

Example A:

A political committee that supports candidates who oppose gambling is a general-purpose political committee. The candidates supported by this political committee are "unidentified" because the political committee is devoted to a particular issue or point of view, not to particular candidates.

Example B:

A political committee that supports candidates who are members of a particular political party is a general-purpose political committee. (Some political committees affiliated with political parties are subject to different reporting requirements from other general-purpose committees.)

Example C:

A group that is urging legislators to vote for a proposal to place a constitutional amendment banning gambling on the ballot is supporting an "unidentified measure." This is because the proposal the group is supporting is not legally required to be submitted to the voters. If the legislature takes the action necessary to place the proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot, then the group would be supporting an "identified measure."

mittee if it:

A. Supports or opposes candidates, all of whom are identified and are seeking offices that are known.

B. Supports or opposes one or more identified measures. An identified measure is a proposal submitted to the voters in an election. This includes the circulation and submission of a petition to determine whether a proposal must be submitted to the voters.

C. Assists one or more officeholders, all of whom are identified.

D. Supports or opposes only one candidate who is unidentified or who is seeking an office that is unknown.

Check the Texas Ethics Commission web site for more information about PACs at www.ethics.state.tx.us/guides/PAC.

Money Earning in Texas

Political contributors spent more than \$116 million in the 2004 campaign cycle (most recent cycle in which data is complete). All candidates raised an average of **\$12.46** per voter.

2004 Campaign Cycle

Top 10 Contributors Overall (to candidates and ballot initiatives)

Bob Perry	\$2,153,750
Texans for Lawsuit Reform, Business Associations	\$2,040,305
Texas Trial Lawyers Association/TTLA PAC, Lawyers and Lobbyists	\$1,736,439
Texas Alliance for Patient Access/TAPA, Business Associations	\$1,225,000
Texas Medical Association/TEXPAC, Health Professionals	\$1,201,939
Texas Hospital Association/HOSPAC, Hospitals & Nursing Homes	\$983,050
Texas Association of Realtors/TREPAC	\$795,311
SBC Texas Employee PAC, Telephone Utilities	\$727,062
Physicians Caring for Texas	\$600,000
HillCo PAC	\$599,609

Examples of Specific-Purpose PACs

Example A:

A PAC that supports Mary Smith for governor

Example B:

A PAC that urges voters to vote for a constitutional amendment proposed by the legislature to permit an income tax

Example C:

A PAC that circulates a petition to call a liquor election (a properly executed petition requires the commissioners court to submit a proposal to the voters)

Example D:

A PAC that pledges to support any Republican candidate who runs against a Democratic incumbent in a general election is a specific-purpose political committee. In contrast, a political committee that pledges to support all Democratic candidates for the Texas Senate who run against incumbent Republicans is a general-purpose committee since the committee is supporting more than one unidentified candidate.

Top 10 Contributors to Candidates

Texans for Lawsuit Reform, Business Associations	\$1,739,555
Texans for Insurance Reform, Other/Single Issue Groups	\$1,524,774
Bob J. Perry, Home Builders	\$1,416,250
Texas Medical Association/TEXPAC, Health Professionals	\$845,439
Texas Association of Realtors/TREPAC	\$791,311
SBC Texas Employee PAC, Telephone Utilities	\$727,062
HillCo PAC	\$598,609
Texas Trial Lawyers Association/TTLA PAC, Lawyers and Lobbyists	\$584,606
Stars Over Texas PAC	\$552,785
Texas Dental Association/Tex Den PAC	\$515,509

Top 10 Industry Contributors (gave 34 percent of 2004's contributions)

Lawyers and Lobbyists	\$13,248,555
Real Estate	\$5,207,120
Oil and Gas	\$4,667,677
Health Professionals	\$4,411,116
Home Builders	\$2,144,186
Miscellaneous Finance	\$2,061,467
Insurance	\$2,040,372
Electric Utilities	\$1,969,217
Business Associations	\$1,955,377
Securities and Investment	\$1,738,110

www.followthemoney.org/database/state_overview.phtml?si=200443



Resources

Resource A: "The Changing Nature of Interest Group Politics"

Summary: "The Changing Nature of Interest Group Politics"

by Burdett A. Loomis and Allan J. Cigler

Pluralism and Liberalism

- In the United States, competition among different interests is supposed to create a set of policies "roughly" responsive to public desires; no single set of interests should be able to dominate.

Personal Motivations and Group Formation

- A key to interest group formation is "selective" benefits — rewards that give members things such as travel discounts, informative publications, and cheap insurance; the key to selective benefits is the fact that they go only to paid members of the group.
- Typically groups that offer "selective" benefits start off as non-political organizations, but later move into the policy arena.

Contemporary Interest Group Politics

- Many new kinds of interest groups have popped up in the political realm — individuals, corporations, universities, churches, governmental units, foundations and think tanks .

The Growth of Government

- Groups such as the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) and the AFL-CIO have exploded over the last two decades and are major players in national politics.
- Federal program growth over the last four decades has resulted in huge growth among service delivery groups; these groups mainly consist of professional associations that are able to provide money to candidates and lobby legislators .
- Citizen participation has arisen as an alternative means of monitoring government agencies; since many government agencies do not feel comfortable with a lot of their discretionary power, there is a symbiotic relationship that develops between citizens and the government agencies.
- In many cases though, despite citizen participation in the world of interest group politics, resources can be more important than membership.

Interest Groups and the Modern Campaign

- Since party organizations no longer dominate the political landscape, and with the rise of the candidate-centered campaign, interest groups have become integral in mobilizing voters.
- At the same time, more organized interest groups such as labor unions, environmentalists, anti-abortion rights groups, and corporations have begun working with political parties by donating soft money and by coordinating campaign activity.

Interest Group Impact on Policy and Process

- Studies of interest groups have demonstrated few conclusive links between campaign or lobbying efforts and actual patterns of influence.
- An open interest group system allows legislators to be easily approached with unethical and illegal propositions; however, the price of access is often too high for regular citizens to simply approach their legislator.
- With recent technological advances, special interest groups are able to monitor individual members of Congress.
- It is practically impossible to build the kinds of political coalitions necessary to govern effectively, especially in an area of partisan parity and the unrelenting demands of the permanent campaign, which require continual fund-raising from organized interests.

Resource B: "Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy"

Summary: "Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy"

by John W. Kingdon

This book offers attempts to answer two questions: Why do certain ideas take priority over others? What makes government leaders focus on some subjects and not others?

Concepts and Definitions

- "Agenda" is the list of subjects or problems to which government officials and those close to government pay attention to at a given time.
- "Alternatives" are the solutions offered and considered by government officials to deal with the subjects or problems on the agenda.
- Processes of public policy making
 1. Set the agenda.
 2. Specify alternatives from which a choice is to be made.
 3. Present authoritative choice by legislative vote or presidential decision.
 4. Implement the decision.

What Affects Agenda Setting and Alternative Specification?

- Participants – the president, Congress, and forces outside of government (media, interest groups, political parties, the mood of the general public) are all key players in agenda setting and alternative specification.
- Processes – problems that arise, the accumulation of knowledge and political events all spur agenda setting.

Participants

As a general rule, the agenda is set by the visible participants (the president, Congress, interest groups) while the solutions are offered by the hidden participants (academics, members of the presidential staff).

- President and administration
 1. No individual has the influence to set the political agenda like the president.
 2. When the administration assigns an issue top-priority, other participants must follow; the administration is perhaps the most prominent actor in the government's agenda setting.
 3. The president may be able to dominate agenda-setting, but is unable to exhibit the same control in the alternatives offered and considered, nor the final outcome.
 4. The president controls agenda setting because of veto power, the ability to appoint and

dismiss officials in policy making posts, unitary decision-making authority, and the office's public prominence.

5. The president's ability to control the agenda is largely based on his/her own involvement

6. The presidential staff is not that important in agenda setting because issues are often delegated to specific departments or bureaus, or handled by the president.

7. Presidential appointees are important in agenda setting and offering alternatives because they are working within a specific field.

- Civil servants

1. Civil servants are not heavily influential in agenda setting; they report to the political appointees who they serve.

2. Civil servants appear to have much influence on designing solutions because they are focused on implementation and running programs.

- Capitol Hill

1. Members of Congress are very important in agenda setting and devising solutions.

2. Although lobbyists, the executive branch, and other outside events/people affect the legislative agenda, Congressional members enjoy much control; they have the ability to impact the agenda and control the alternatives offered.

3. Congress is a major agenda-setter because it has been given the legal authority in the Constitution to make, pass, and change laws.

4. Also, Congress is made up of a variety of actors, allowing it to have an expansive knowledge and understanding of agenda issues; Congress is a blend of information.

- Interest groups

1. Interest groups are most involved in issues that have low partisanship and visibility in political campaigns.

2. Types of interest groups include business and industry, public interest, health, labor, and government.

3. Interest groups work to preserve benefits, stop new proposals that may take away benefits, and encourage initiatives by pressuring officials to pay attention to an issue.

4. Once the agenda has been set, interest groups often insert their own solutions.

5. Interest groups have electoral advantages because of their large size, having their members spread throughout congressional districts, and their ability to mobilize members.

6. Interest groups have the ability to speak with one voice and represent the viewpoint of many people.



Photo by Jana Birchum

Individuals may have fewer resources than professional lobbyists, but they can communicate effectively with legislators if they prepare well.

7. Individuals who organize themselves into an interest group tend to get more attention from government than those who do not organize.

- Academics, researchers, and consultants

1. Academics tend to affect the solutions offered over the agenda itself; politicians turn to members of academia (researchers and consultants) for answers to problems.

- Media

1. The media has an affect on the public's opinion of government and on what issues people perceive to be of importance.

2. The media acts as a communicator between participants on the inside and outside of government.

3. The media does not tend to affect agenda setting because it covers what government is currently doing.

4. Also, the media does not have much influence on actual policy making because it does not focus on one item for an extended length of time.

- Elections-Related Participants

1. Campaigners, political parties, and public opinion play a large role in agenda setting because they have the ability to lead a change in who has authority and decision-making power.

Processes

- Origins of ideas hard to trace

1. Ideas can come from anywhere and anybody; policies come from a number of different sources.

2. No idea comes from a single source.

- Nobody leads anybody else

1. There are no leaders in public policy-making.

2. Topics do not move around in policy communities in a hierarchy or pattern.

3. When policy topics hit the agenda, they are discussed by all participants simultaneously and equally.

- Combinations and the fertile soil

1. A complex combination of factors is usually responsible for the movement of a policy item onto the agenda; many actors take part in policy discussions and offering solutions.

2. No single actor controls the flow of information in government, and information does not move in a hierarchical manner.

- Comprehensive, rational decision making and incrementalism

1. Policy-making does not proceed in orderly, chronological stages as is often believed.
2. Policy-makers usually make small, gradual adjustments to what they are currently doing when they want to enact a change.
3. Agendas do not tend to change incrementally, but rather abruptly and fully.

A Policy Making Model

- The three processes (Three P's) in federal government policy making are:
 1. Problems: Defining the problem
 2. Policy: Forming and revising solutions
 3. Politics
- Usually independent of each other, these processes come together at critical times.
- Many believe the federal government acts as an organized anarchy in which its members have loosely defined ideas, inconsistent preferences and no clear understanding of their roles.
- A **policy entrepreneur** tracks the Three P's and attempts to bring them together to influence the agenda.

Resource C: Legislative Vocabulary

Amendment: A change to a bill through addition, deletion or substitution. (It can also mean an addition to the Constitution).

Called Session: See "Special Session."

Capital: The city in which the laws are made.

Capitol: The building where the laws are made.

Constituent: Someone who votes in a legislator's district (it usually always means they live in the district).

District: The area represented by a legislator. It can mean a congressional district, a senatorial district or a house district.

Effective Date: The date on which a law takes effect.

HB: A proposed bill that originates in the House.

HCR/SCR: House or Senate Concurrent Resolution. It expresses the intent of the Legislature, but it carries more weight in Texas than a simple House or Senate Resolution in that both the Senate and the House pass it concurrently.

HR: House Resolution. A resolution in Texas does not carry the weight of a bill. It normally does not mandate that someone do something or not do something, but rather expresses the intent of the Legislature (i.e. HR 3 expresses the intent of the Legislature that a certain high school be commended for academic excellence). The House of Representatives passes the House Resolution only.

HJR/SJR: House or Senate Joint Resolution. Unlike a simple S.C.R., H.C.R., H.R., or S.R., a joint resolution is one of great importance to members of the Senate or House. An S.J.R. or H.J.R is usually always reserved for proposing amendments to the Texas Constitution to be voted on by the citizens of the state. (It is seldom used in Washington.)

Incumbent: An elected official who presently holds an office. It usually describes a legislator who is running for re-election to retain his/her legislative seat (as compared to the other candidate who is running against him/her and referred to as the challenger).

Legislator: A generic term that can describe either a national or state elected member of the House of Representatives or Senate; someone who "legislates."

SB: A proposed bill that originates in the Texas Senate.

Special Session: A legislative session called by the governor to address a specific issue(s) at a time other than during a regular session.

Statutes: The compilation of all enacted bills or laws. In Texas usually referred to in a bill by the acronym V.T.C.S., Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes.

Veto: The act of rejecting all or parts of legislation by the Governor.

Resource D: Helpful Websites

Information sites

Texas Legislature Online: www.capitol.tx.us

- Live broadcasts of committee and floor deliberations
- Capitol information, including maps
- Legislative research and reports
- House and Senate information, including contact information

The Quorum Report: www.quorumreport.com

- Daily Buzz: Inside scoop on what's going on in the Legislature and in politics.
- News clips
- Links to political news groups, campaigns and interest groups

Project Vote Smart: www.vote-smart.org

- Conducts a survey of candidates and elected officials and reports results
- Survey includes: bio/contact info; candidate issue positions; voting record; campaign finance records; interest group ratings; voter registration info; resource links

Texas Ethics Commission: www.ethics.state.tx.us

- List of registered lobbyists and who hired them
- Campaign finance reports (who's spending and what on)
- Ethics laws and rules

Texas Records and Information Locator: www2.tsl.state.tx.us/trail

- Searchable database helps public find publications by type and subject
- Contains state agency contacts and links

Watch-dog sites

Texans for Public Justice: www.tpj.org

Provides a news clearinghouse on campaign finance issues, including news reports, court cases and fundraiser information

The Institute on Money and State Politics: www.followthemoney.org

Provides campaign finance data by state, including election breakdowns

Campaigns for People: www.campaignsforpeople.org

Tracks laws that will effect campaign finance rules; notifies readers when there are opportunities to take action to support or protect campaign finance regulations

Resource E: Helpful Phone Numbers

Texas Legislature

Capitol Directory: 512-463-4630

Legislative Hotline: 877-824-7038 (in Texas) or 512-463-2182

Texas Ethics Commission: 800-325-8506 or 512-463-5800

Legislative Library: 512-463-1252

State Rep. Mike Villarreal District Staff: 210-734-8937

Legislative Issues: Gina Amatangelo

Scheduling/Appointments: Lisa Cervantes

Constituent Issues: Albert Eng

State Rep. Mike Villarreal Capitol Staff: 512-463-0532

Community Relations: Jennifer Rodriguez



Appendix

Appendix A: Sample Thank You Letter

Tip:

- Print on official letterhead if you have it.
- Handwritten notes that are very legible and neat, on company thank-you cards are appropriate.
- Always include your business card with your letter or note.

(Date)

The Honorable John Doe
Texas Senate
(Address)
(City, State, Zip Code)

Dear Senator Doe:

On behalf of (organization), please accept my sincerest thanks for your recent visit to our office. We appreciate your continued interest in (your issue) in your district.

(Remind legislator of why your issue is important). We believe in (goals) because (reasons).

Your participation publicly demonstrates your personal concern for issues directly affecting (your interest area). It also gives us an opportunity to show you how (constituents/your group/etc.) feel about (the issue). Please remember that our facility is always open for you and your staff members to visit when you are in the area.

Again, thank you for your visit. I look forward to speaking with you again in the future. Please call on me when I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

(Ranking representative of your group, or your name)
(Title)

Appendix B: Legislator Phone Script

You: Good morning. My name is ____, and [I am a constituent of the Representative/Senator] or [I am a/an (title that explains your interest i.e. homeowner, group member)]. May I please speak to the representative/senator?

Staff: I'm sorry, but he/she is not available at this time. Can someone else help you?

You: Yes, may I please speak to the legislative aide who covers (your issue area), and could you please tell me his/her name? *(person gets on the line)*. (Repeat opening remarks as appropriate). I am calling today to [introduce (your group)] or [discuss (your issue) with Senator/Representative ____, and to give him/her a better understanding of what [the issue/organization] is all about. We want to [fill in your mission or policy statement here]. Can I schedule a time to come visit Representative/ Senator for 15 minutes to introduce myself and the issues I am concerned with?

If you ask the legislator to take a position on a bill, explain why he/she should and how the bill would benefit/harm his/her constituents.

Staff: Do you know where that bill is located presently? *(Always know the status of the legislation in which you are interested. Updates can be found online at www.capitol.state.tx.us.)*

You: Yes, I believe the bill is pending in the House Committee on ____.

Staff: I will certainly tell the representative/senator that you called.

You: Thank you very much for your help. I will follow-up with a letter to the representative/senator. If he/she wants additional information, he/she is welcome to call me.

Staff: I will certainly tell him/her.

You: Let me also extend a sincere and personal invitation to you and the representative/senator to visit our office. Our staff would love to say hello.

Staff: Thank you very much. I will pass that along, and I appreciate your calling. Goodbye, and thanks again for your help.

Follow-up on the conversation with a letter to the staff member with whom you spoke and include your pertinent phone, fax, and email information.

Appendix C: Model Legislative Letter

Tips:

- Type letter on company letterhead.
- Keep your letter simple, direct and concise. Send attachments with more detailed information (agenda, company fact sheet/business card)

(Date)

The Honorable John Doe
Texas Senate
(Address)
(City, State, Zip)

Dear Senator Doe:

Knowing your ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of your constituents, I wanted to ask you to consider (give specific request.) This issue is of great importance to the (number) residents living or working in (city or interest area).

This (bill or amendment) is important to (interest group) in the following ways:

Points 1, 2, 3, etc.

If the bill is enacted with our language, (fill in appropriate supporting statement).

If I can provide you or your staff with additional information on (number/name of bill), please let me know. We are anxious to hear your position on this issue. Please accept my sincerest thanks for your continued commitment to (interest group or affected population). The doors of (group name) are always open for you to visit. Thank you again for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Signature
Name (printed)
Title
Address

Appendix D: Salutation Guide

Forms of address for legislators, committee chairs, speaker of the House, lieutenant governor and governor

Address the letter to:

The Honorable John Doe
Texas Senate/Texas House of Representatives/Speaker of the House/Office of the Lt. Governor/Office of the Governor
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Senator/Representative/Chairman/Chairwoman/Speaker/Lt. Governor/Governor Doe:

Body of letter.

Sincerely,

Signature
Printed Name
Title
Address

Appendix E: How to Introduce a Legislator

1. Ask the legislator's office for a written biography.
2. Make your introduction brief, positive and upbeat.
3. Some of the things you may want to highlight in your introduction are:
 - How long the legislator has been in office.
 - Whether the legislator is a state representative, senator or appointed official.
 - Key committees on which the legislator serves; indicate if he/she is a chairperson.
 - Key bills (one or two only) the legislator has passed.
 - Family/education background of the legislator.
 - Thank the legislator for his/her commitment to the community.

Sample Introduction

Good morning/afternoon/evening, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of ABC Group, I am extremely pleased today to introduce to you Representative/Senator _____.

(Give brief background information)

Representative/Senator _____, we are very pleased that you could join us today, and we look forward to hearing your remarks. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in giving a warm welcome on behalf of the ABC Group to *(title and name of legislator)*.

Appendix F: Sample Invitation Letter

Tips:

- Type letter on company letterhead.
- Keep your letter simple, direct and concise. Send attachments with more detailed information (agenda, company fact sheet/business card)
- Consider including some personally written invitations from board members.

(Date)

The Honorable John Doe
Texas Senate
(Address)
(City, State, Zip)

Dear Senator Doe:

On behalf of our organization, we invite you to be our special, honored guest on (weekday, month, date, year), at (time, AM or PM) for (name of function).

We have planned this function with you in mind. Our key participants have demonstrated their commitment to the well being of (city) residents, and we feel that this will be an excellent opportunity for you to view first-hand (our group's) commitment. We hope you can arrange your schedule to share some time with us and give us your insight.

I will contact your local office to provide your staff with full details on (name of event). Attached is a suggested agenda. Please feel free to invite members of your staff or others who are interested in issues relating to (your issue), or if you would like, we would be happy to invite whomever you wish.

In order to provide you with background information on our organization, I have enclosed a company fact sheet. Also enclosed is my business card.

Thank you for your consideration of this invitation. The (members of your group) look forward to visiting with you.

Sincerely,

Signature
Title

Appendix G: Sample Agenda

Tip:

- Print on official letterhead if you have it.

Agenda for Senator John Doe's Visit

Name of Event

Location

Date

Time

1. Legislator arrives
2. Introduction to host and key staff
3. Company tour
 - Introduction of board members and company staff
 - Discussion of issues in general terms
 - Take photos along tour
4. Special function
 - Moderator introduces VIPs in attendance and legislator
 - Legislator speaks to attendees on current topics of interest to voters
 - Organization representative presents memento to legislator
 - Photos taken of legislator at facility
5. Private discussion with President of the Board
 - Review one or more issues of importance to your organization
 - Provide printed materials on issues, if available

Appendix H: Conversation helpers

From your legislative perspective, what are the key issues that we face today?

What are your key legislative issues for the upcoming session?

As an (interest group) that is concerned about a variety of issues, what can we do to help you address our legislative concerns?

Do you see the need for more community involvement in the legislative process? If so, what can we do together to help encourage additional involvement and activity?

What changes do you foresee, if any, in the elections process in years to come?

What made you decide to get involved in public service? What is your vision for this district?



Legislative Leaders Institute: Spring 2006 Evaluation

What aspects of this course did you find to be most useful?

Which aspects of the course were least useful? Please share any suggestions that you have for improving the course.

Were the guest speakers helpful in providing insights about the legislative process?

Please rate the written materials provided in this course:

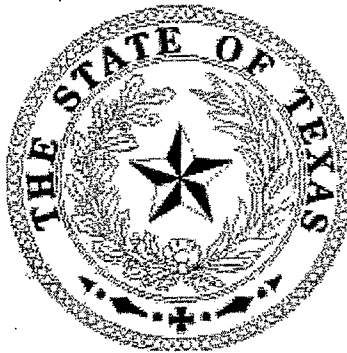
Poor Fair Good Excellent

Please rate the course overall:

Poor Fair Good Excellent

Comments on course materials:

Other suggestions or comments:



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