



Legislative Advocacy Tips



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Tips for Face to Face Meetings with Elected Officials

Step 1: Do your homework

Meeting with an elected official doesn't have to be a painful or difficult process. Knowing a few things about the official, his/her political beliefs, and your goals for the meeting can make a visit fulfilling and productive.

Politics Matter

Familiarize yourself with the political realities and atmosphere in Columbus or Washington, D.C. Republicans control state departments, statewide offices (Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer of State, and Auditor of State), the Ohio House of Representatives, the Ohio Senate, and six of seven Ohio Supreme Court Justices. Democrats control no statewide offices or legislative bodies and only have one member of the Ohio Supreme Court. In Washington, D.C., the U.S. House of Representatives and the US Senate is controlled by Republicans. President Obama is also a Democrat, meaning that federal agencies are led by Democratic appointees.

Meet with members of both the House and Senate while in Columbus. Try to meet with members of both political parties, and know which legislators you meet with can no longer run for the same office due to term limits. State Representatives are limited to four two-year terms, and State Senators are limited to two four-year terms. Statewide officeholders are limited to two four-year terms in the same office.

Know Your Audience

Legislative advocacy is often more about the establishment of long-term relationships than it is about the day-to-day activity of policymaking. While important issues come up from time to time that require everyone's immediate attention, it is important to have a good relationship with your elected official all the time - you shouldn't just show up when you want something.

Be aware of their committee assignments and other official duties. If they have sponsored legislation, acquaint yourself with one or more of their bills - if you indicate you are interested in something they care about, they will likely be more interested in something you care about.

Step 2: Establish your objective before you meet

What do you want to accomplish in your meeting? Do you want to educate them about a particular topic, or do you want them to vote a certain way on an issue before the legislature? Decide this before you walk in the room - otherwise, you may end up wasting what could be your only shot at speaking with them for some time.

Step 3: Get to know your elected official's staff members

Legislative staff members are the gatekeepers to their elected bosses. They can make the decision whether to put you on the schedule in a week or in six months - if you treat them with respect and build a rapport with them early on, you are likely to be treated with the same respect in return when it is time to get what you need.

Step 4: Meet with Your Legislator or Elected Official

Meeting in Columbus

Typically, legislators are only in their Columbus offices when they have official meetings (such as committee meetings or voting sessions). If you would like to meet with your legislator in Columbus, try to do so on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays, as these are the days when committees and voting sessions take place. Legislative staff members will be able to help you find a time during one of these three days when a legislator is free from his/her official responsibilities to meet with you.

Meeting in the District

You don't have to meet with your legislator or elected official at the Statehouse to be effective. Unless they represent the entire state, they live where you live - meeting somewhere nearby that is convenient for both of you (like a coffee shop, public library, or other similar venue) is a great way to have an informal conversation without the hassle of traveling to their Columbus office. Meeting locally also opens up a greater number of potential meeting times, increasing your chances of sitting down with your elected official earlier than if you were to wait and meet in their official office. Legislative staff can also help you schedule a visit in the district - all you have to do is ask!

Be organized

Only bring guests who can speak to your arguments or who have a local connection to the elected official. Having a large group of people in your meeting doesn't prove anything and can actually be counterproductive if an official does not feel comfortable having an open conversation about a particular issue. Remember to introduce yourself and your guests first and outline the goals of the meeting up front. If you are speaking about specific legislation, make sure you have the bill number.

Write down facts that support your argument. Charts, graphs, news stories, and other evidence can strengthen your case by providing third-party verification of your points. When appropriate, specify what action you would like the official to take on a particular issue. Simply educating the official may not be enough if you have a specific goal in mind - be absolutely clear about your position!

Be Professional

Dress appropriately so your appearance doesn't distract from your message. Do not mislead an official by arranging a meeting to discuss one topic and then switch to another when it's time to meet. They may not agree to additional meetings if this happens.

Prepare for the possibility that the elected official may not agree with you. If that happens, maintain a civil and professional tone at all times. Nobody likes to be yelled at, insulted, or threatened – you will only burn bridges and ruin any chance of getting what you want at a later date.

Step 5: Follow Up

Leave your Contact Information. Too many times, advocates will have a great legislative meeting and forget to leave their contact information. Don't assume that because you worked with his staff to schedule the meeting your information will automatically be kept on file. Every office has a different system for tracking visitors, and you don't want your name to get lost in the shuffle or accidentally misplaced. If you are printing and leaving your own materials, make sure your contact information is included within the document itself. Telephone number and e-mail are the most frequently used methods of communication by modern government offices.

Answer their Questions

Your legislator or elected official may have questions about your issues during and after the meeting that you are unable to answer. Don't worry! You have raised his/her interest – following up quickly and professionally with the information they requested shows that you are a person who deserves their respect and attention.

Say "Thank you!"

Always say thank you prior to leaving your meeting. Even if you have not achieved your goals, remaining polite will help to make sure your elected official remains open to further meetings on the subject in the future.

Also, don't forget to thank their staff members (if available) who helped you schedule your meeting. That person is your best connection to the elected official (other than the elected official themselves), and you want to have a good relationship with them. If they are unavailable, follow up by phone or e-mail when you get home.

Say "Thank you!" again

Once you are back at home or work, write thankyou notes to the legislator and their staff members for meeting. This will remind them again of your meeting and help to further imprint your discussion into their minds.

Send copies of your correspondence to NAMI Ohio!

If you end up writing or e-mailing back and forth with your elected official, or if you prepare materials for your meeting that are left with the official, send them to us! We are always more than happy to provide input for your next effort as well as share your successful messages with other advocates. This also helps us ensure that our message is carefully coordinated - it is important that everyone say the same thing to have the greatest effect!



Tips for Letters and Emails to Legislators

Think Before You Write

If you are printing and leaving your own materials, make sure your contact information is included within the document itself. Telephone number and e-mail are the most frequently used methods of communication by modern government offices. Remember – your letter becomes a public record the moment it is received by your legislator. Don't write anything you wouldn't want any other legislative staffer, reporter, or member of the public to read.

Timing is Everything

Consider when you want the elected official to receive your letter. Send it at the appropriate time during the legislative or decision-making process – letters sent too early or too late do not effectively impact the public dialog on an issue.

Keep it Local

Always make sure you send your letter to the legislator who represents you – your status as a constituent means that your opinion matters. However, you should not hesitate to write a legislator who is taking a leadership role on an issue that affects you - for example, a committee chair, primary bill sponsor, etc. - even if they are not your elected representative.

Identify Yourself

Clearly state your name and address – anonymous letters carry no weight and wastes the time of both the sender and legislator. If you are writing on behalf of an organization, include the name of the organization and your affiliation.

Keep it Short and Simple

Be brief and succinct (keep your letter to 1 -1 ½ pages long) in order to be effective and demonstrate respect for your legislator's time. Write about only one subject. Be aware that, generally, your letter will be tallied one of three ways: "support," "oppose" or "interested party."

Keep it Personal

Do not send a form letter – you can use information from a sample letter as a guide, but do your best to make your letter personal. Explaining how the issue impacts you personally makes your letter more compelling and effective. Photos have a lot of impact with legislators. Write your letter with the likely reader in mind – legislators probably know less about the issue on which

you are writing than you do. If you make references to highly technical terms or use obscure acronyms, your letter will lose its impact.

Be nice

Urge your legislator to act, but do not make demands. Making demands often burns bridges, and you may need future support from this very legislator on a future issue. Would you want to help someone who threatened you before they even met you?

Request a follow-up response

If you are writing about a particular piece of legislation, ask the legislator to explain his/her position on the bill in a response. If you are asking for their help with a constituent services issue, include case numbers and other pertinent data. You should NOT send personally identifiable information (such as Social Security numbers and medical records) to a legislator's office. This information will not help them assist you and could put you or your loved one at risk of identity theft if lost or otherwise mishandled.

Be specific about legislation

If referencing a bill, be sure to identify the bill by number. Legislators have to consider hundreds of bills over the course of a 2-year legislative session. Bill numbers are a quick and easy way to make sure everyone is on the same page - especially if there are multiple pieces of legislation that deal with the same topic. If you are writing about a specific provision of state law, make sure you accurately reference the impacted section of the Ohio Revised Code or the United States Code. Offer Additional Help If you are willing to have a more extensive conversation or provide additional information to the legislator or his/her staff, make the offer in your letter and include contact information. Don't enclose lengthy supporting documentation unless they request it.

Tips for Testifying Before a State Legislative Committee

What to do before you testify

Testifying in committee can be stressful for first time witnesses. Most (if not all) of that stress can be eliminated with adequate preparation prior to the day of the committee meeting.

Schedule your Testimony

Witnesses are only permitted to testify in a committee if they have scheduled a time with the chair's office in advance of the committee date. The further in advance you schedule your testimony, the better the chances are that you will be afforded time to make your voice heard. Legislative staff members are responsible for handling the administrative duties of committees. Remember to be patient with them as they try to accommodate your request to testify, as they are responsible for handling dozens of requests on any number of bills at any given time. They will do their best to make sure you are given adequate notice of committee hearings and that you are given the opportunity to testify in the time most convenient for you. However, they cannot control when lawmakers decide to schedule (or reschedule) committee hearings - try to keep this in mind as you work with them!

Getting "bumped"

While committee schedules tend to remain in place throughout the legislative calendar, they are sometimes modified on short notice. If this occurs, you may be asked to show up at a completely different day and/or time to give your testimony. You may also find that committee has run longer than expected on previous topic and your scheduled time is delayed. Getting "bumped" to another day or time is the only solution available if you still want to testify. To prevent yourself from becoming aggravated. If this occurs, accept the fact that this is one possibility as you go into the process. It is nothing personal and happens all the time!

Research your Audience

Once you have a date scheduled, get a committee roster and familiarize yourself with the background of the committee members. All lawmakers have biographies posted on their member's official Web site - look them up to possibly find ways to relate your stories to their personal backgrounds.

Additionally, some committee members may have made public statements about the subject you are testifying about in which they state their position. Knowing where some members may already stand on the issue can offer helpful guidance when writing your testimony and prepare for their questions during the hearing.

Research your Subject Matter

Try to learn as much as you can about the subject matter of your testimony while you are preparing it. While you may not (and should not) include every facet of an issue you are testifying about in your prepared statements, knowing more about an issue will help you answer questions from legislators with confidence - showing that you are a trusted source of information that should be taken seriously.



Tips for Writing your Testimony

There is no correct or incorrect way to write your committee testimony. Depending on the issue, you may be ahead to stick to the facts and present a very logical case for or against a particular piece of legislation. You may also be ahead in some cases to have an emotional appeal to committee members - it all depends on the subject matter at hand. With this in mind, here are a few tips for making your testimony as effective as possible - no matter what your strategy!

- It is common practice and protocol to begin your testimony by thanking the committee members, including the chair by name, for allowing you the opportunity to testify before them. This is not a requirement, but will be quickly noticed if you do not include it and is a silly way to distract from your message.
- Keep it simple - you probably know more and care more about the subject of the legislation than most of the committee members. Don't speak in acronyms or use complex terms - think of it as if you were explaining the issue to a close friend or family member who has no background in the subject area.
- Be solution-oriented; your role is to help educate and persuade committee members. Presenting only problems is unlikely to generate positive action from committee members.
- Keep it short and to the point (2-3 pages maximum). Committees can sometimes last for hours on end - everyone will appreciate your clear and concise message as a breath of fresh air!
- Make sure any facts and figures you cite are accurate and can be easily verified with source information attached.
- Visual aids (charts, graphs, photographs, and the like) are good when used effectively but should only be included if they will truly enhance your testimony. Poorly conceived visual aids can lessen your effectiveness and too many visual aids can be distracting. If you do decide to use visual aids, make sure all lawmakers have a copy attached to their written testimony - posters and other similar aids are not effective because they cannot be given to each lawmaker after committee has ended.
- If you are asking for specific portions of legislation to be added, modified, or taken out of the bill, say so! Being direct in your testimony will help them to know what needs to stay and what needs to go if they agree with your points.

- When you're approaching the end of your testimony, try not to re-hash the testimony you've just given. A strong finishing sentence outlining your goals is helpful - repeating all the points you've already made is not.
- Before you finish, be sure to thank committee members again for their time. Including this in your prepared written testimony will guarantee you don't forget when the spotlight is on you.
- It is common practice for lawmakers to ask questions of witnesses pertaining to the testimony they've just given. You should welcome the opportunity at the end of your remarks by stating something to the effect of: "I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have about my testimony today."



**DON'T BE
SILENT**

Tips for Presenting Testimony

Arrive early and be flexible

Try to arrive before committee begins so you do not interrupt proceedings with your arrival. If a committee will be handling multiple issues in that day's hearing, the chair's staff can often provide you with a more accurate estimate of when you should arrive. Know that you may be asked to present your testimony before or after this time if necessary.

Fill out a witness form or sign-in sheet

Make sure you sign-in immediately upon arrival – most committees have a short “witness form” to complete, and you cannot testify without filling it out. Witness forms generally ask for your name and contact information, your organizational affiliation, and which bill on which you wish to testify. The form will also generally ask your position on the bill (proponent/support, opponent/ oppose, or interested party). This is commonplace and does not have any bearing on whether or not you will be able to testify (unless a day has been restricted to one type of witness, i.e., opponent). Staff members are more than willing to help you fill out this form.

Presenting Testimony

When called to testify by the committee chair, acknowledge that you've heard your name by standing and making your way to the witness podium. You will face the committee to give your testimony with your back the audience (or gallery). Committee members are likely to already have a copy of your testimony. Give them a moment to locate it before you begin speaking. When the chair indicates you should begin, read your testimony (or a summary) in a clear voice and directly into the podium microphone. Make sure everyone in the room can hear and understand you.

As a rule, you should try to keep your testimony to no more than 5-10 minutes. If the written version is longer than that, prepare an outline or summary for your oral testimony that allows you to hit the main points. If many of your points have already been made by individuals who have testified before you, it is acceptable (and often appreciated) to summarize your testimony rather than repeat earlier testimony. When you've finished, be sure to thank the panel for their time and indicate that you are ready to answer their questions. If there are questions, be sure to follow the proper protocol.

Proper Protocol

Unless the chair decides otherwise prior to the question and answer period, proper protocol must be followed during questions and answers. Specifically, committee members must ask permission of the chair to ask questions, and witnesses must address the chair before responding to an individual committee member's question.

Example question from the committee:

Representative Smith: "Mr. Chairman?"

Chairman Jones: "Representative Smith."

Representative Smith: "Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What color is a stop sign?"

Example response from the witness:

Witness: "Mr. Chairman, Representative Smith, stop signs are red."

It is often easy to forget this protocol in a lively question and answer session. While you should try your best to stick to the script, don't worry if the chairman has to remind you to follow protocol members are very forgiving to witnesses who are making a good faith effort to follow the rules (and may even joke with witnesses in a goodhearted manner to ease the tension). Unruly witnesses who repeatedly refuse to follow the rules may be asked to end their testimony early.

Most members are very helpful and supportive of individuals who are testifying on their own behalf. Protocol is most strictly enforced with professional lobbyists and agency leaders. However, most members are very helpful and supportive of individuals who are testifying on their own behalf. Protocol is most strictly enforced with professional lobbyists and agency leaders.

Committee Follow-up

Sometimes witnesses are asked for additional information that was not provided during testimony. If this happens, make sure you follow up as soon as possible by delivering the requested information to both the requesting member as well as the office of the committee chair. If you provide additional information, be sure to clearly identify the bill number and refer to the date of your testimony.

Glossary of Legislative Terms

Administrative Rule / Administrative Code ●○

Any agency directive, standard, regulation or statement of general applicability that implements, interprets or prescribes law or policy, or describes the procedure or practice requirements of any agency. These rules are submitted to and ratified by the Joint Commission on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) and are codified in the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC).

Act ●○

A bill that has been made law by passing both houses of the Legislature, and which either has been signed by the Governor, filed without the Governor's signature, or passed by both houses of the Legislature over the Governor's veto.

Amendment ●○

An alteration made or proposed to be made to a measure. Measures may be amended more than once.

Appropriation ●○

A sum of money designated for a particular purpose by an Act. For example: an appropriations bill funds a state agency over the upcoming biennium.

Biennial / Biennium ●○

Occurring every two years / a two-year period. The General Assembly meets biennially. The 131st Ohio General Assembly was elected in November 2014 and began serving in January 2015. State budgets cover a biennium.

Bill ●○

A measure that creates new law, amends or repeals existing law, appropriates money, prescribes fees, transfers functions from one agency to another, provides penalties, or takes other action.

Bill Analysis ●

A summary of a bill, prepared by the non-partisan Legislative Service Commission (LSC), that is updated as the bill moves through the legislative process.

Capital ●○

Refers to the capital city of the state or country: Columbus is the capital of Ohio and Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States.

Capitol ●○

The Statehouse, or Capitol Building. Ohio's capitol includes ceremonial offices for all statewide offices, chambers for both the House and Senate, and committee hearing rooms. The building is located at the intersection of Broad and High streets in Columbus. The city block that encompasses the Statehouse and Senate Office Building is known as Capitol Square. The building that houses the Congress in Washington, D.C. is named the U.S. Capitol.

Caucus ●○

"Caucus" is used as both a noun and a verb. A caucus (noun) is a group of people who share something in common (e.g. they are members of the same political party, such as the Senate Republican Caucus or the House Democratic Caucus). When these people caucus (verb) they meet to address their group's policy questions and to select political candidates for office, or political party leaders.

Chair / Chairperson ●○

The legislator appointed by the Speaker of the House or the President of the Senate to preside over an individual committee; for example: the Chair of the Ways and Means Committee.

Clerk of House/Clerk of Senate ●○

The chief administrative officers of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Clerks are elected by all the members of the House and Senate, and are responsible for keeping records of the proceedings of each, supervising employees, acting as parliamentarian of official proceedings and advising members on parliamentary procedures.

“Christmas Tree” Bill ●○

A “Christmas Tree” bill is generally passed late in a legislative session and contains funding for particular projects. It gains its name from the legislative “ornaments” that are attached to attract votes.

Committee Report ●○

A summary report made to the Speaker of the House or the President of the Senate by a standing, special, or conference committee, which recommends further action on a measure, or reports the measure without recommendation.

Concurrent Resolution ●○

A measure affecting actions or procedures of both houses of the Legislature or Congress. A concurrent resolution is generally used to express sympathy, commendation, commemorate the dead, or declare an “official” symbol of Ohio (e.g. Ohio’s State Fossil).

Concurrence ●○

Formal means by which one house of the legislature signifies agreement with changes to a bill after it has been passed by the other.

Conference Committee ●○

A committee usually consisting of two or three members of each house, appointed by their respective presiding officers. A conference committee is appointed when one house refuses to concur with amendments to a measure adopted by the other house. Its goal is to prepare a version of the measure acceptable to both houses.

Constituent ●○

A citizen residing within the district of a legislator (or other elected official). Elected officials are sworn to uphold the interests of their constituents by casting votes, making decisions, or speaking on their behalf in state government.

District ●○

A geographical area designated for representation by a Senator and/or Representative. Legislative districts are drawn to ensure that a nearly equal number of constituents reside in each legislator’s district, and are re-drawn by a specially-appointed Legislative committee (Apportionment Board) every ten years after the U.S. Census to accurately reflect changes in population.

Effective Date ●

Unless the Act contains special provisions, such as an emergency clause or a special (delayed) effective date, most bills become effective 90 days after the Governor’s signature. Separate sections of the same bill may have different effective dates.

Emergency Clause ●○

A statement added to the end of a measure which causes the Act to become effective before the accustomed date (generally 90 days after signed by the Governor). An emergency clause either sets a specific date or is effective immediately, which means that the measure will take effect on the date of its signature.

Enact ●○

To establish by law.

First Consideration ●

The formal recitation on the chamber floor of the bill number, title, and sponsor by the Clerk upon introduction of a measure in either house. After the first consideration, the measure is referred to committee by the Speaker or President. According to legislative rules, a bill must go to a relevant substantive committee.

Fiscal Impact Statement / Fiscal Note ●

A statement that estimates future costs resulting from the passage of a bill.

Floor ●

The area in both the House and Senate Chambers reserved for legislators and certain legislative staff members.

Gallery ●

The area in either the House or Senate Chambers available for members of the public. All sessions of the Ohio General Assembly are open to the public.

General Assembly ●

A term describing the Ohio House and Senate collectively. Each General Assembly meets for a biennium and is numbered – the 128th General Assembly begins meeting in January 2009.

Hearing ●

A public meeting of a legislative committee held for the purpose of taking testimony concerning proposed legislation. There is no limit on the number of hearings a bill may receive or how many times it may be amended through that process.

House of Representatives ●○

The legislative body of 99 members, called Representatives, each of which represents a district of approximately 115,000 Ohio citizens. Representatives are elected for 2-year terms. In Congress, there are 435 Representatives, each of which represents a district of approximately 700,000 U.S. citizens (though that number can vary greatly by state).

Joint Committee ●○

A legislative committee composed of members of the House and Senate.

Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) ●

A legislative body made up of both House and Senate members that reviews and approves administrative rules drafted to implement Ohio

statutes. Approved rules are codified in the OAC, which is organized to correspond with the related sections of the OHIO REVISED CODE (ORC).

Joint Resolution ●○

A measure used for proposing constitutional amendments, creating interim committees, giving direction to a state agency, expressing legislative approval of action taken by someone else, or authorizing a kind of temporary action to be taken.

Journal ●○

The edited record of all the proceedings on the floors of both houses, published the day after each legislative session.

Leadership ●○

The presiding elected officers of each house: the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. They are elected by all the members of each chamber when the body organizes for a legislative session following a general election. “Leadership” can also refer to the Majority and Minority Leaders, elected by their caucuses.

Legislative Service Commission ●○

A non-partisan state agency responsible for writing all bills and amendments for changes to the Ohio Revised Code (ORC). Lawmakers do not write their own bills.

Lobbyist ●○

A person who is employed by an organization, association, industry group, or corporation to represent its interests before the Legislature. Lobbyists and their employers must register and file periodic reports with the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee.

Majority Leader ●○

A legislator elected by his or her peers to lead the party having the majority in his or her house. The majority leader is responsible for the development and implementation of the caucus agenda.

Minority Leader ●○

A legislator elected by his or her peers to lead the party in the minority in his or her house. The minority leader is responsible for the development and implementation of the caucus agenda.

Minutes ●○

A written record of the proceedings of a legislative committee or other meeting that serves as the official documentation of discussions and decisions made. These are often voted upon at the following meeting of the group to confirm that everyone agrees with the account as written.

Motion ●○

The formal way of directing debate on the floor. It is the way, for example, that a member introduces a measure for debate on the floor.

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) or (RC) ●

The codified laws of the State of Ohio. The current ORC is available on-line through the State of Ohio website (www.ohio.gov).

Page ●

A person who works on the chamber floors, and occasionally in committees, to distribute materials, open doors, pass notes, and generally facilitate the legislative work flow.

Point of Order ●

A motion from the floor or from a committee member calling attention to a breach of order or rules.

Point of Personal Privilege ●

A way in which a legislator can get the attention of the presiding officer on the floor of either chamber. It is used, for example, when a legislator wants to introduce a guest or acknowledge someone.

President of the Senate ●

In Ohio, the presiding officer of the Senate is a member of the majority party elected by all members of the Senate when the Senate organizes for a regular Legislative session. In the Congress, the President of the Senate is the Vice President of the United States.

President Pro Tempore ●

President “for a time”: a Senator elected to serve as the temporary President in the absence of the President of the Senate.

Quorum ●○

The number of members required to be present before business can be transacted in the House, Senate, or a committee. In the House, 50 members must be present; in the Senate, 17 members; and in committees a constitutional majority constitutes a quorum.

Reconsideration ●

Taking a second vote on a measure after a motion to do so, following defeat of the measure.

Refer ●○

To direct a bill (after introduction and First Consideration) to a committee: “HB 25 was referred to the Ways and Means Committee.” Bill referrals (also called “Second Consideration”) are made by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House through each chamber’s Reference Committee.

Report/Report Out ●○

To return a measure from a committee to the full Senate or House for consideration.

Resolution ●○

A measure used by the House or the Senate (a measure passed by both would be a joint resolution) to take an action that would affect only its own members, such as appointing a committee of its members, or expressing in opinion or sentiment on a matter of public interest.

Roll Call ●○

A recitation by the Clerk of each legislator's name for the purposes of identifying those present and voting on a legislative issue. Votes are recorded through electronic means in the Ohio General Assembly.

Rules ●○

The guidelines by which the Senate, the House of Representatives, or a committee governs its meetings. Rules are formally adopted at the first convening of the Legislative Assembly or of a committee, and require a vote (with at least a quorum of members present) for official adoption.

Rules Committee ●

The legislative body chaired by the President in the Senate and the Speaker in the House that determines when bills reported out of committee are presented to the full House or Senate for a floor vote. Many bills reported out of committee are not presented to the full House or Senate for vote.

Second Consideration ●

The second consideration of a bill occurs in the committee of each respective chamber in the legislature. When reported from the committee to the full chamber, it is said to have received its second consideration.

Senate ●○

In Ohio, the legislative body of 33 members, called Senators, each of which represents a district of approximately 345,000 Ohio citizens that fully encompasses three Ohio House districts. In the Congress, there are 100 Senators (2 per state) in accordance with the U.S. Constitution. Population does not factor into a state's representation in the United States Senate.

Sergeant at Arms ●○

A non-legislator appointed by each house to maintain order within that chamber.

Session ●○

The period of time during which either or both houses of the General Assembly or the United States Congress Officially Convenes.

Single Subject Rule ●

The constitutional requirement that each bill passed by the General Assembly address on a "single subject." This rule is routinely ignored or interpreted in the most liberal manner possible, especially near the end of a legislative session.

Speaker of the House ●○

The presiding officer of the Ohio House of Representatives and the U.S. House of Representatives, elected by all members when it convenes at the beginning of a biennial legislative session.

Speaker Pro Tempore ●○

Speaker "for a time": a Representative elected to serve as the temporary Speaker in the absence of the Speaker of the House.

Sponsor ●○

The legislator(s) who introduces a measure. The name of this person or committee is printed at the top of the measure. The sponsor is responsible for moving the measure through the legislative process. Co-sponsors can be added up to when a bill is passed.

Statute ●○

A codified law. (NOTE: "Codify" means "to arrange laws systematically." A codified law is one that has been incorporated into that section of the ORC or the United States Code [USC] that it amends, modifies, or accompanies.)

Subcommittee ●○

A subordinate committee composed of members appointed by the Chair (or by House or Senate leadership) from the full committee. A subcommittee will consider a narrower range of topics than the full committee, and generally is authorized only to make recommendations to the full committee.

Sunset Clause ●○

A statement added to the end of a measure that causes the act to “sunset,” or become ineffective, after a certain date.

Task Force ●○

A legislative committee authorized by legislative Leadership to study a specific subject for a specified period of time. A task force may contain lay members, and is different from a committee in that it typically considers a narrow subject within a broader topic area.

Third Consideration ●

The final consideration of a bill by either house (following reporting of the bill by a committee), usually done before a final vote.

Veto ●○

An action of the Governor or the President in disapproval of a measure that has passed both houses of the respective legislatures. After a veto, the bill is returned to its house of origin with written objections. A veto may be reconsidered by both houses, and if it is again passed by two-thirds of the members present, it is considered overridden and becomes law.

Line Item Veto ●

The Governor in Ohio has “line item veto” authority, permitting him to veto certain parts of an appropriations bill without having to veto the entire measure. The President has no such authority in items passed by the Congress.

Vice-Chair ●○

A committee member chosen by the Speaker or President to serve as the committee chair in the chair’s absence.

Witness ●○

A person who testifies before a legislative committee.

● Applies in Ohio General Assembly

○ Applies in Congress

Helpful Resources

NAMI Ohio

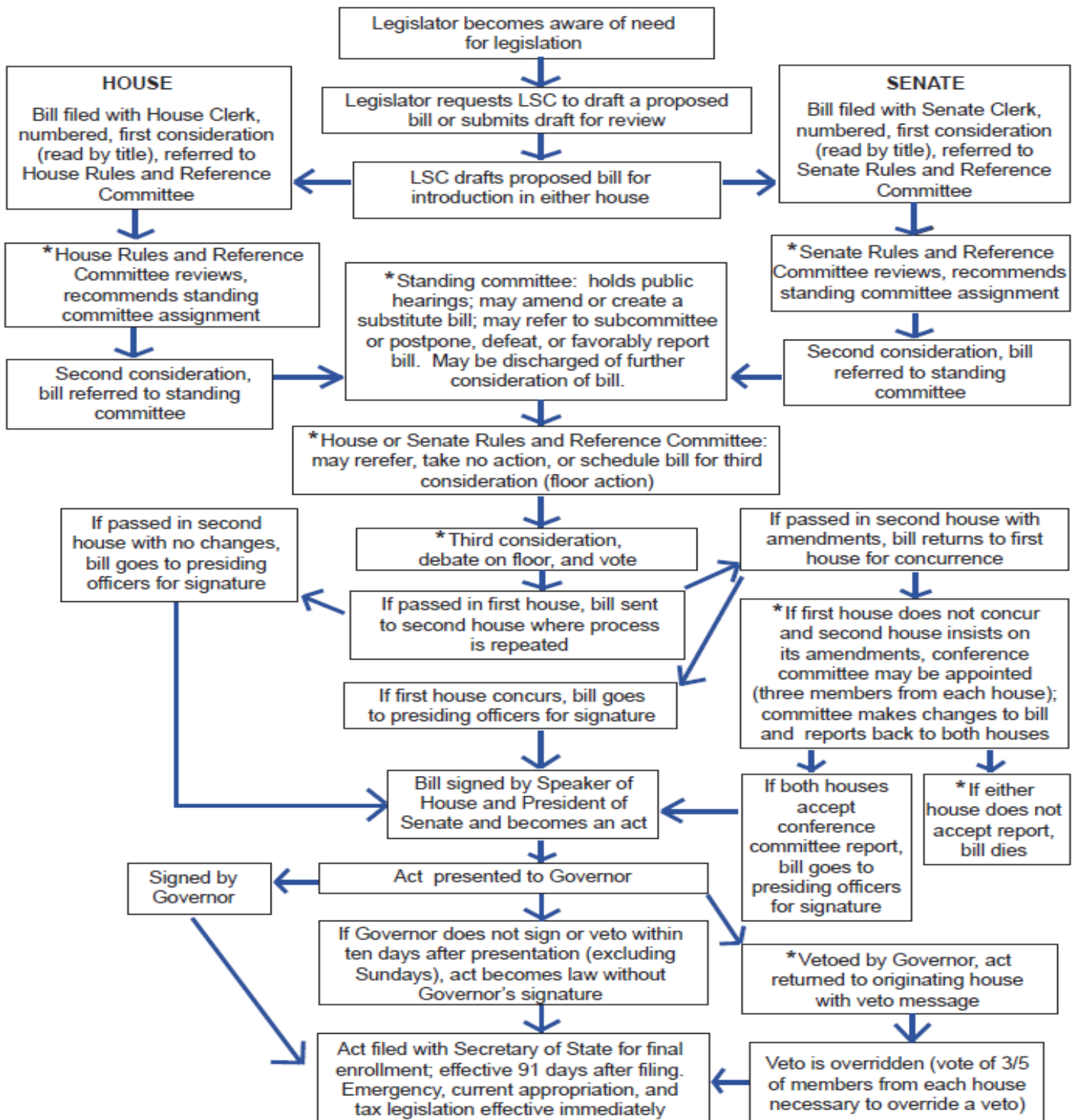
You should feel free to reach out to NAMI Ohio or the Developmental Disabilities Council for more information about mental health policy issues, and for assistance if you plan to testify before a committee or advocate for a particular issue you know NAMI Ohio or the DD Council are engaged with currently.

Ohio Legislative Services Commission (LSC)

The Legislative Service Commission (LSC) is a nonpartisan agency providing drafting, fiscal, research, training, code revision, and other services to the Ohio General Assembly. LSC was created in 1953, primarily to conduct studies of legislative issues during the interim periods between legislative sessions. Other duties were added over the years. Prior to 2000, the General Assembly's nonpartisan fiscal analysis services were provided by the Legislative Budget Office (LBO). But the LSC and LBO staffs were merged that year to provide for better coordination of the drafting and fiscal analysis functions, and now LSC's Budget and Fiscal Analysis section performs the duties of the former LBO.

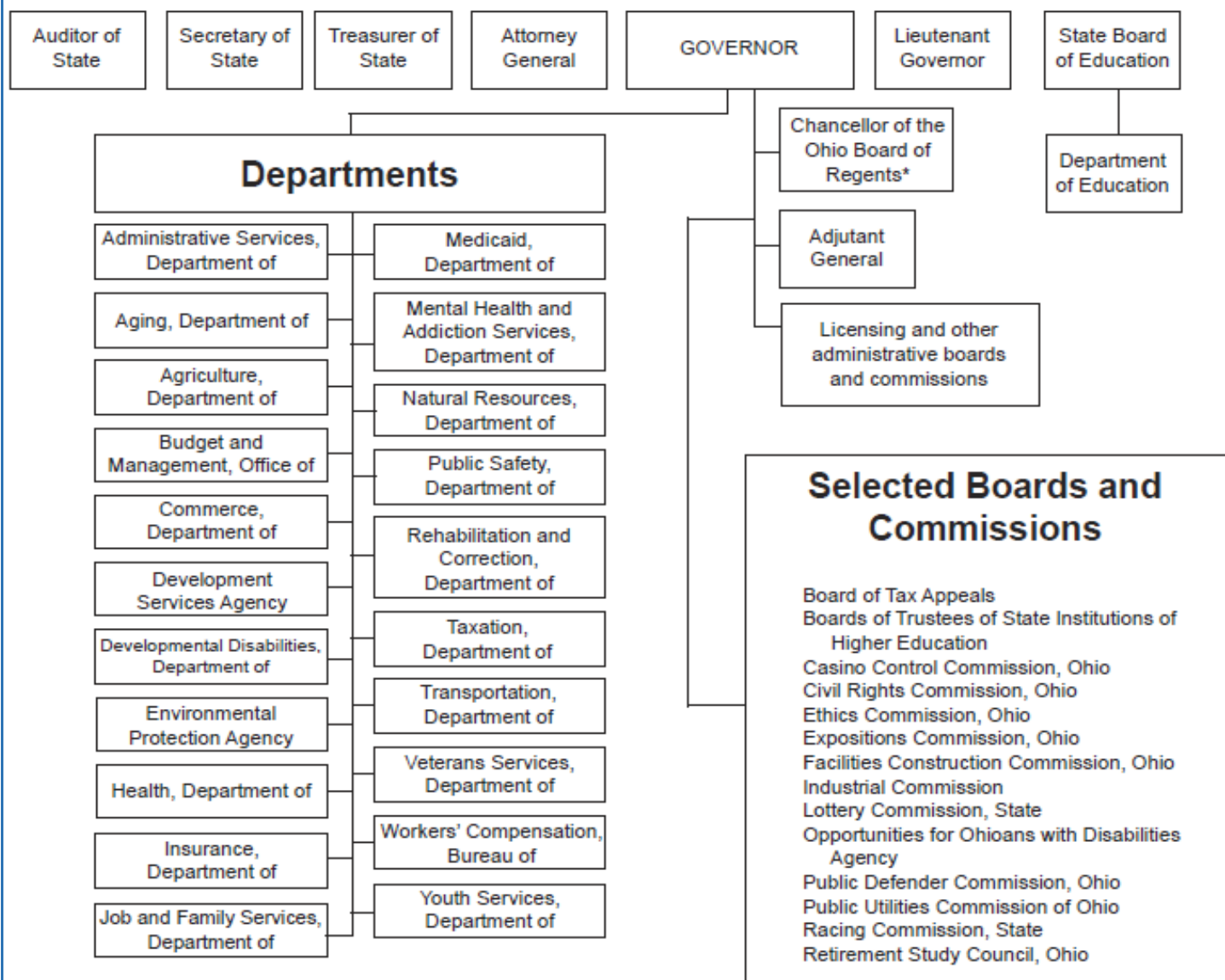
The LSC has an incredible amount of helpful resources for citizens interested in advocacy. Their publications provide individuals with a basic understanding of the legislative process, simplify complex legislation with online bill analyses, and help advocates track issues. Their website is a wonderful, yet underused, resource for the citizens of Ohio.

How a Bill Becomes a Law in Ohio



*Indicates where bill may die

Organizational Chart of the Executive Branch of Ohio State Government



* H.B. 64 of the 131st General Assembly, pending as of April 2015, proposes to make the Chancellor of the Board of Regents the Director of the Department of Higher Education. The organization that the Chancellor oversees would become the Department of Higher Education.

