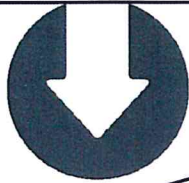


IAPD Website Advocacy Tools

← → ↻ 🌳 ilparks.org



Legislative & Legal Updates

The IAPD is determined to take action on a regular basis to move the interests of our members forward and advocate on behalf of park districts, forest preserves, conservation, municipal park and recreation, and special recreation agencies.

[Read More](#)



Did You Know?

The status of all bills IAPD tracks each session and other important legislative information is available through the Advocacy section of IAPD's website which is continually updated.

Visit the website today and take advantage of this valuable resource!

ILparks.org

Access IAPD's Extensive Research



IAPD is continually performing research and collecting data to give you the best resources to keep your agency thriving. At ILparks.org, we have a collection of IAPD-led and other research that you will find helpful when tackling the day-to-day challenges of leading your agency. You can also order copies of our latest brochure "Parks Provide Excellent Value to Illinois Residents" in the IAPD Store at ILparks.org. These brochures contain the information displayed on pages 36-39 in this publication.

Legislative Advocacy Tips

HOW TO SUCCEED IN LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

1. KNOW THY LEGISLATOR.
2. Listen to your legislator.
3. Keep your legislator aware of issues.
4. Be persistent.
5. Understand the legislative process.
6. Cultivate friends in key staff positions.
7. Remember the sphere of influence strategy.
8. Build grass root support.
9. Know your subject matter.
10. Document your position.
11. Be brief, succinct, sincere.
12. Be considerate.
13. Ask for your legislator's support or response.
14. Gain media support.
15. Follow through on commitments.
16. Remember "timing is of the essence."
17. Recognize legislators for their efforts.
18. Support your legislator at election time.
19. Don't threaten or burn bridges.
20. Keep a positive attitude.

REMEMBER – YOUR LEGISLATOR REPRESENTS YOU!

TIPS ON MEETING WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

The following tips were written for communicating with Senators and Representatives, but they are helpful guidelines to remember when you are meeting with anyone you hope to persuade or inform.

- Present your case. Explain what you want your Legislator to do and why.
- Give examples of the impact proposed legislation will have on your home state or district.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, offer to find out and send information back to the office. Make yourself available as a resource person.
- Don't expect members of the State Legislature to be specialists; their schedule and work load make them generalists—open, we hope, to listening.
- Don't confront, threaten, pressure or beg.
- Keep control of the visit. Don't be put off by smokescreens or long-winded answers. Your appointment time is limited.
- Don't make promises you can't deliver.
- Find out if your Legislator has heard opposing views. If so, find out what the arguments are and

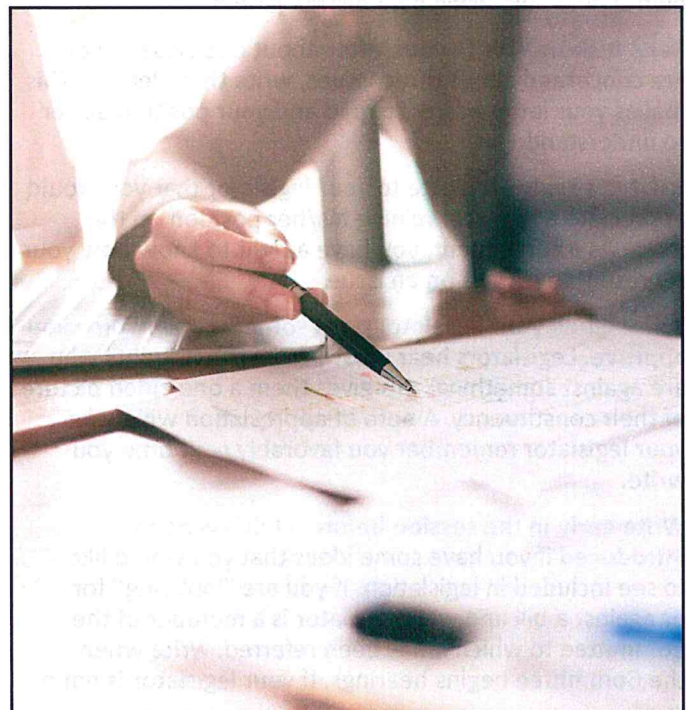
what groups are involved. Find out if there are other key Representatives or Senators you should contact. Ask for your Legislator's assistance in accomplishing your goals.

- Spend time with your Legislator even if his or her position is different than yours. Sometimes you can lessen the intensity of opposition.
- Leave a brief position paper or fact sheet in the office when you leave.
- Follow up every visit with a thank you note and share your reflections on what you felt about the meeting.
- Evaluate the meeting: What went well, what happened and what didn't happen.

HOW TO WRITE YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR

Power of a letter - Letters from home have become a legislator's primary form of contact with the voters back home - and, as a result, the main source for assessing the views of his or her constituency. Your letter can and should be part of that input.

Don't hesitate to write your legislator if you have something to say that you think should be called to his or her attention.



Legislative Advocacy Tips

Every legislator is sensitive to grass-roots opinion. He/she keeps in touch as closely as possible with voters in his/her district. Letters from constituents, which arrive every day at his/her home or in Springfield are one of the best indications of what those constituents are thinking about.

State your position - Explain how a bill would affect you, your family, your business, or even your state or community.

Thoughtful, sincere letters on issues that directly affect the writer get the most attention. Such letters are often quoted in committee hearings or in debate.

Be brief and to the point; discuss only one issue in each letter; identify a bill by number and title if possible.

Use facts - Arguments that can't be substantiated are dismissed. Be sure of your facts, but don't overload the letter with them. Facts tend to validate your letter and illustrate that you have given a lot of thought to your position.

Use your own words and your own stationery. If you are writing as the representative of a group, use the organization's stationery.

Be reasonable - Don't ask for the impossible. Don't tell a legislator to vote your way "or else." Do be firm, confident and positive about your position.

Use human terms - Make it your own letter: write in your own style. Avoid using park district jargon.

Keep it short - Write your letter about one issue. If you are concerned about three issues, write three letters. This makes your letter easier to read and your position easier to understand.

Ask for a reply - Indicate to your legislator that you would appreciate a reply containing his/her position on the issue. As a constituent, you have a right to know how your representative feels on an issue.

Write when your legislator does something of which you approve. Legislators hear mostly from constituents who are against something; this gives them a one-sided picture of their constituency. A note of appreciation will make your legislator remember you favorably next time you write.

Write early in the session before a bill has been introduced if you have some ideas that you would like to see included in legislation. If you are "lobbying" for or against a bill and your legislator is a member of the Committee to which it has been referred, write when the Committee begins hearings. If your legislator is not a

member of the Committee handling the bill, write him/her just before the bill is to come to the floor for debate and vote.

Write the Chairman or members of a Committee holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested if you want. However, remember that you have more influence with legislators from your own district than with any others.

Write the Governor after the bill is passed by both houses if you want to influence his/her decision to sign the bill or not.



KNOW YOUR LEGISLATORS

- Study, Study, Study.
- Know your legislator's party, expertise, geographical area served, and committee assignments.
- Take time to get to know your legislators personally.
- Be aware of political ideologies. It helps to research legislators' past votes and the positions taken on issues.
- Remember, legislators try to represent all of their constituents.
- Recognize the fact that there are legitimate differences of opinion which will require legislators to compromise, contradict or oppose your position on occasion.
- Remember, locally, you are the most effective legislative advocate.
- Make sure you are the best advertisement for your industry. Be professional.
- Become a name, personally and as a district to your legislator.

Legislative Advocacy Tips

- Make sure the legislative district office receives all your PR.
- Get to know the legislator's district staff.
- Use the district office so they think of you when they are seeking information or they need a favor.
- Invite your legislator to tour your facilities and areas.
- Extend invitations to your legislators to take part in anniversary celebrations, dedications, community festivals, parades, Arbor Day tree plantings and other noteworthy events. Issue additional invitations to legislative candidates during campaign years. They are especially willing to accept invitations to events that offer good exposure.
- Arrange to have your legislator join you in a golf game, tennis game or other activity using your local park and recreation facilities.
- Invite your legislator to lunch.
- Send legislators your agency's seasonal brochure and include them in your VIP mailing list.
- Provide recognition and publicity for a legislator or county board member who assists your district in working toward a goal.
- Provide your legislator with a calendar of your agency's meeting dates and extend an open invitation to attend any meeting. Follow up with a courtesy reminder call about the meeting each month.
- Work for candidates who support legislation favorable to your industry or profession. No greater connection to your legislators and municipal or county politicians can be created than through helping with their elections. Donate money. Donate time. Organize activities, stuff envelopes, ring door bells, etc. Give legislators opportunities — both during the campaign season and the off-season — to be present at park district functions and events.
- Invite your legislators to an Annual Legislative Conference, the Legislative Reception, a Legislative Breakfast, and Annual Legislative Awareness Picnic.
- Make sure that your district is a good advertisement for parks and recreation. If your legislators believe that their local parks merit support, the odds are better that they will support local and statewide park district issues. If your legislator thinks the park district is just

another example of "what is wrong with government," you won't get the support you want and need.

- Communicate during the off-season.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEGISLATORS

- Ground breakings.
- Video newsletters to legislators.
- Develop relationships with aides/staff.
- Contact them on issues they may not normally associate with you or your organization.
- Sponsor forum for legislators running for office.
- Guest column in newsletter or publication from legislators.
- Highlight positive items of support from legislators in publications.
- Send copies of photo opportunities back to legislators.
- Seek them out at social functions.
- Write and congratulate them on their legislative successes and election victory.
- Honor.
- Invite to grand openings and declarations.
- Personal visits.
- Send holiday/birthday cards.
- Invite them to dinner/breakfast.
- Campaign contributions - circulate flyers, walk precinct, etc.
- Let them announce a grant.
- Send copies of your local brochures/magazine.
- Send pins, magnets, trinkets.
- Student Day at the Capitol.
- Legislative awards.
- Legislative Day at Capitol.
- Legislative Platform to all legislators.
- Position papers.
- Coalition building.
- Invitation to conference - banquet/keynote speakers.

Legislative Advocacy Tips

- Put state legislators on state association and local agency mailing lists for publications, seasonal brochures, etc.
- Joint ventures with neighbor departments to involve legislators (candidate breakfasts, issue briefings, recognition ceremonies).

DO'S & DON'TS OF ADVOCACY

DO look for friends in unusual places. In politics, a friend is someone who works with you on a particular issue - whether a Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative - even if that person or group opposes you on every other issue.

DON'T promise anything you cannot deliver. Your word is your bond.

DO know the legislative calendar and its constraints. Far too often, officials meet with their lawmakers to request legislation to alleviate some problem within their communities — only to find out they have missed the deadline for new legislation. Lawmakers will respect your opinions more if it is obvious you understand the legislative process and its constraints.

DON'T lie or mislead a legislator about the relative importance of an issue, the opposition's position or strength, or any other matter.

DO know when to contact your legislators. Never assume that your opinion will not matter on a piece of legislation. Lawmakers need your input. Never forget that your constituents are also their constituents. To be an effective advocate for your community, you need open lines of communication with your lawmakers.

DON'T cut off anybody from contact. Do not let a legislator consider you a bitter enemy because you disagree; today's opponent may be tomorrow's ally.

DO know when "not" to contact your legislators. Every effective lobbyist knows not to "go to the well" too often. Not every piece of legislation will devastate your community. It is essential for your lawmakers to recognize that when you call, it is important. Never bother them with trivial matters.

DON'T get mad. "When you are crossed politically, don't get mad. Get even." (Bobby Kennedy) The power of the ballot box is yours.

DO provide lawmakers with accurate and factual information. Never use incomplete, outdated or simply inaccurate information when presenting your case. If your lawmakers do not believe your information is credible,

your pleas will fall on deaf ears.

DON'T threaten your lawmakers—either implicitly or explicitly. You do not like to be threatened, neither do they. Never imply public reprisals from "back home" if a lawmaker does not support your position. No tactic can permanently close lines of communication faster.

DO make certain you communicate a unified position. If your lawmaker has reason to believe that your position does not represent a unified position within your community, your efforts will carry little weight. Convince your lawmakers your position represents as many groups and organizations as possible.

DON'T waste time on opponents who are publicly committed to their position. It is more productive to shore up known allies and to lobby legislators who are least committed or who claim to be neutral or keeping an open mind.

DO understand your lawmakers. If a lawmaker disagrees with your viewpoint on certain legislation, do not be quick to criticize. Remember that lawmakers must represent all of the constituents within your area, not just you. Many lobbyists have found out too late that burned bridges, stay burned. Successful lobbyists build bridges, not burn them.

DON'T gossip. Knowing legislators' peculiarities and peccadilloes is one thing; talking about them is another. Remember that discretion is the better part of valor.

DO share the spotlight. No lawmaker appreciates doing most of the work to correct some problem in your community, without sharing in the credit.

DO provide lawmakers with alternatives. Remember that it is common for thousands of bills to be introduced in a legislative session. It is not enough to merely explain why a bill is bad; offer suggestions on ways to improve it. Remember that the legislation you are concerned with is only one of hundreds of bills your lawmaker must consider. Do not hesitate to suggest language which might improve the legislation.

DON'T forget to notice and thank anyone who has helped you. The "good ole boy/good ole girl" system is alive and well.

DON'T grab credit. "Nothing is impossible if it does not matter who gets the credit."

DO carry a rabbit's foot. In lobbying you can know your opponent; you can develop imaginative and reasonable compromises; you can burn the midnight oil to digest all the arguments; but it can all go right down the drain if you don't have a little luck.