

Advocacy Tips: Navigating at the Capitol

Be Organized & Ready

- ◆ Use the interim to connect with legislators & build a relationship with their staff
- ◆ Request bill and resolution drafts early
- ◆ Coordinate with allies to share the workload
- ◆ If meeting with legislators as a group, designate a key spokesperson
- ◆ Consider leaving behind an information sheet that emphasizes your key points
- ◆ Have a plan of action

Be Aware Of

- The legislative calendar
 - Identify bills early
 - Know your deadlines
 - Deadlines vary depending on the number of committee referrals
 - Committees have their own schedules (48 or 72 hour notice for hearings)
 - Keep your eye on issues, not just bills
- The process
 - Who has power over your bills?
 - Committee Chairs – they decide if a bill will be scheduled for a hearing
 - Leadership sometimes weighs in
 - Potential allies and opponents
 - Don't worry if \$ is blanked out or a "defective" date appears – this is common practice

Be Prepared & Informed

- * Sign up for Hearing Notices and create Measure Tracking Lists
 - Use the capitol.hawaii.gov website to find bills, sign up for Hearing Notices, and set up Measure Tracking Lists
 - Visit our website (lrb.hawaii.gov/par) and go to "[Engagement 101](#)" to learn how
 - Monitor subject matter committees
 - Someone in your coalition should be receiving hearing notices for subject matter committees
- * Prepare draft testimony before it is scheduled for a hearing
- * Know committee hearing schedules - perhaps make note on your calendar
- * Monitor media to keep a larger focus
- * Sign up to receive PAR's emails – you'll be advised of important developments at the legislature, find new resources, and get helpful tips on advocacy

Be Knowledgeable

- ✧ Know your issue
- ✧ Be a trusted source of information for your bills
- ✧ Know what you don't know...and don't be afraid to say so
- ✧ Know your opposition
 - Who are the other stakeholders and what are they saying? Give the legislator a heads up on expected criticism so they won't be caught off guard
- ✧ Don't be afraid to tell a personal story (but keep it short)
 - How does this legislation affect your family, clients, business, neighbors, etc.?
 - How does this legislation affect you?

Be Engaged & Proactive

- ☆ Schedule visits with legislators
- ☆ Clearly communicate your “ask” and follow up!
- ☆ Get others involved to testify, offer support, and track bills
- ☆ Use media and social media to publicize the issue
- ☆ Testify in person or by Zoom
- ☆ Make use of advocacy groups and their resources
- ☆ Use the interim to check in – keep the issue fresh on the mind of legislators and their staff
- ☆ Be ready to communicate your vision

Be Flexible & Open to Compromise

- ❖ Work with legislators’ schedules and don’t dismiss working with their staff
 - They may become an internal advocate for your issue
- ❖ Be prepared to negotiate
- ❖ Attempt to bring solutions
- ❖ Be constructive with criticism
- ❖ Have a backup plan
- ❖ Sometimes having “something” is better than “nothing” (sometimes, not)
- ❖ Listen to those you disagree with – they may be your best teachers
 - Consider meeting with your opposition to discuss your common ground/differences
 - Can you turn opponents into allies by finding “win-win” alternatives?

Be Persistent

- ▶ Marathon, not a sprint
- ▶ May take years – do not give up!
- ▶ Resolutions can be used to further an issue
- ▶ Be ready to ask for another hearing, offer more testimony, or schedule another meeting
- ▶ Continue to communicate with legislators and stakeholders, and keep looking for solutions
- ▶ Network – you don’t have to do it alone!
- ▶ Debrief after session – use notes to sketch a new game plan

Remember...you’ve got an office at the Capitol:

Public Access Room

Room 401

(808) 587-0478

par@capitol.hawaii.gov

lrb.hawaii.gov/par