

# Legislative Toolbox



## In the Interim

### How to be effective when session has adjourned

**E**ach year, the legislature adjourns in the spring for the duration of the year. Lawmakers head home to their respective districts, and oftentimes to their regular jobs and family responsibilities, as well as to campaign for another term in election years.

A common misconception among the public is this is a time to take a break from legislative activities. After all, if the legislature is not in session making new laws, what work could a citizen or organization possibly do to influence legislative action?

However, this down time is the perfect opportunity to take a step back from the often frenzied pace of the legislative session to reflect on the most recent session and begin the work to get ready for the next session. The work is never done. Before you can begin to look towards the next session, there are a few T's that should be crossed as well as a few I's need to be dotted.

First and foremost, take the time to reach out to legislators and thank them for their work and support on issues this past session. Sending a thank you note also provides you a great opportunity to update them on the latest news regarding your association's related issues. Second, take some time to look back at the session and understand just how any new laws will affect your community or profession and when changes might begin.

Once you have tied up any loose ends remaining from the past session, it is time to look forward to the upcoming session and

begin to think about what needs to be done. Some questions you and your organization may want to consider are:

1. What were your successes during the last session and how can we piggyback off of those?
2. Regarding any unattained legislative goals, which legislators were opposed to our position? What needs to be done to convince them to change their position? Who might you think about adding as a bill sponsor?
3. Which interest groups were opposed to our position and what can be done to either bring them onboard or make them neutral on the issue?
4. Are there any emerging issues that may be detrimental to us? What action can we take to prevent legislative action in this area? What information should we prepare to defend our position if necessary?
5. Are there other routes to achieving our goals rather than a legislative change? Can our concerns be addressed through cooperating with others, or through administrative changes?
6. Should we reach out to other organizations and build coalitions to try to have greater success with our issue at the Capitol?
7. What can be done now to make sure any grassroots support for an issue can be easily energized when needed during session?

Once you or your organization have discussed and answered some of the questions above, it is then time to reach out to legislators and begin discussing issues pertaining to the upcoming session. Just because a legislator is not in St. Paul, that doesn't

*Continued on the next page*

# Legislative **Toolbox**

*Continued from the previous page*

mean they won't meet with you. Think about taking a trip to see them back in their home district. If you don't live in their district but have a member who does, bring them along. Help connect the dots for them on how an issue or issues affects members of their district. Legislators will appreciate this opportunity to get to know their constituents' concerns.

Other ways to interact with your local legislators and to educate them on your position is to:

1. Invite your elected officials to tour your facility or program. Show them in person some of the issues that you are trying to change.
2. If your organization is having a monthly meeting or special event, consider inviting your legislator to speak at the event to listen to your concerns.
3. Attend legislators' town hall meetings, community events, and debates.
4. Volunteer to help on their campaigns and/or attend their fundraising events/caucus events. Also, consider a PAC contribution to their campaign.

By utilizing a few of these tools, you and your organization can be effective year round by getting prepared for upcoming legislative activity and keeping your organization's issues on the minds of legislators.

