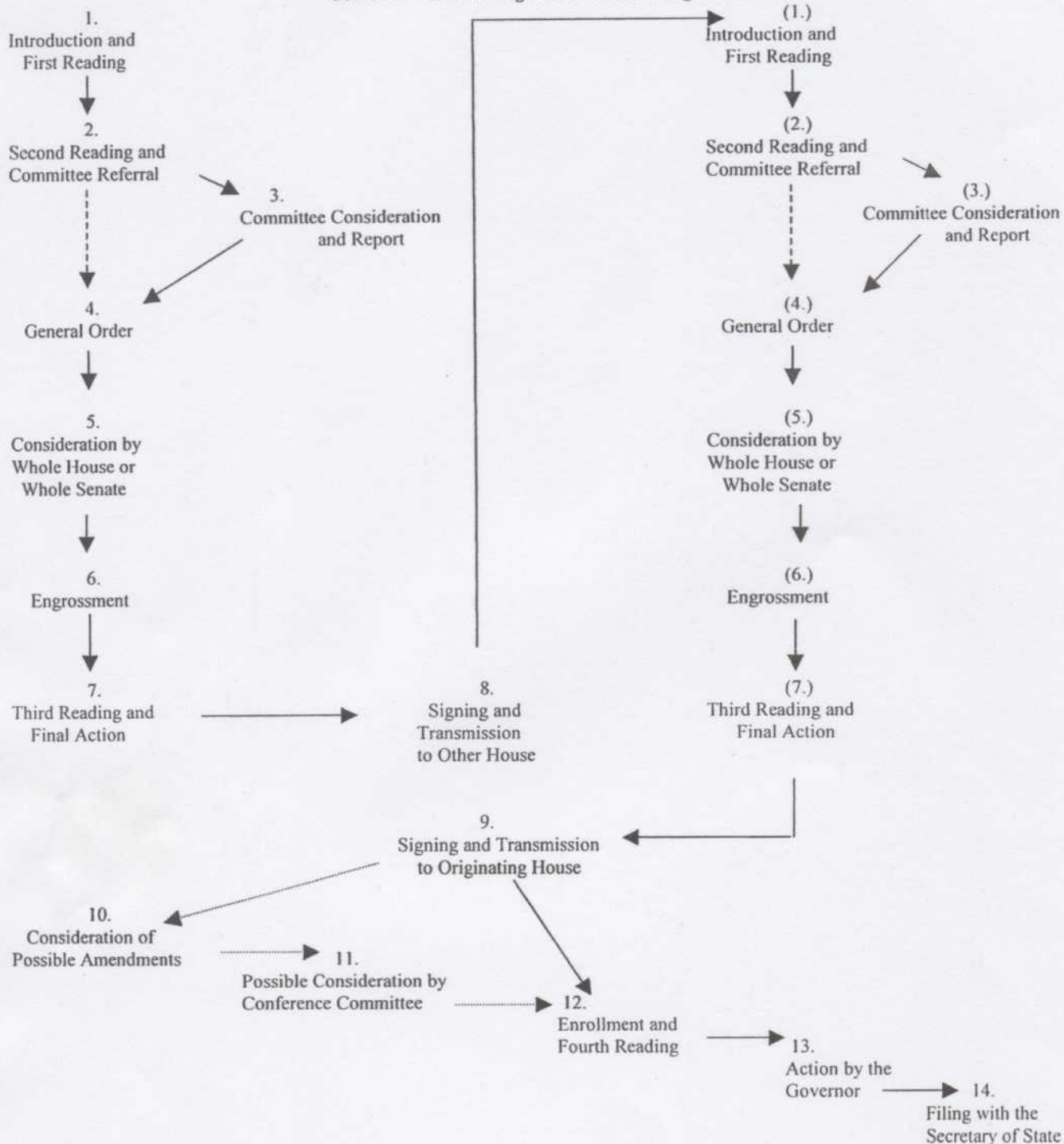


Course of a Bill Through the Oklahoma Legislature



Also check these websites:  
[http://www.lsb.state.ok.us/house/idea\\_to\\_law.htm](http://www.lsb.state.ok.us/house/idea_to_law.htm)  
<http://www.lsb.state.ok.us/>

your association with certain members of the coalition who do not agree with you on other issues. A solution to both problems is to keep in close contact with other coalition members and to be prepared to withdraw from the coalition if necessary.

Despite the problems, working in coalition is effective. It can become a broadening experience for your organization by expanding your knowledge of your community and providing valuable contacts in the future. Coalitions work.

## LOBBYING TIPS

### Lobbying In Person

Meet in the legislator's office or somewhere in the home district. If possible, introduce yourself and your organization immediately after the legislator's election. This would probably be done in the home district before the Legislature convenes. Explain your group's legislative interests. Interview your legislator on her/his positions. Try to have a person living in the legislator's district be present or, better yet, have that person conduct the interview. Succeeding contacts may be made in the home district again or at the Capitol.

- **Make appointments, if possible.** Keep them. Be prompt. Some legislators prefer that you drop in on their Capitol office rather than make appointments. If such is the case and you drop in and cannot make contact with your legislator, deliver your message to the secretary or research assistant assigned to her/him.
- **Go in groups of two or three.** You can give each other support and provide an effective way to train new lobbyists.
- **At the interview:**
  - Identify yourself and your organization.
  - Explain briefly why you are there.
  - Be sure to have a hand-out to leave behind -- research on the issue and a one- or two-page summary of your position and reasons why.
- **Be brief** and to the point as you outline your position. Considerations that led to your group's position add a great deal to your rationale because they let legislators know what people are thinking and how. Don't give personal opinions which might be misunderstood as that of your organization.

- **Listen** to your legislator's views -- not only so that you can politely combat the arguments, but just as important, so that your group can develop insight into the rationale of your opposition! Know where the opposition is.
- **Be friendly, earnest and down to earth.** If a legislator disagrees with you, don't become aggressive, defensive, or over-intellectual. The legislator is listening to constituents too, and the lobbyist should respect that. You may have to agree to disagree on a certain bill, but keep your friendliness intact so that you can start fresh on another bill on another day!
- **If you don't know, say so.** You can find out answers to questions asked of you and get them to the legislator later. **Be sure to follow up.**
- **Leave the way open for further conversations on the issue.** Even if you will never agree on the issue under discussion, you may want this person's support on other legislation.
- **Follow up your visit with a letter.** Thank the legislator for support if support was indicated or for the opportunity to present your views. Also, send any additional information which may have been requested about your issue or your organization. If you had been unable to answer a question during the visit, look up the answer and include it in your letter.
- **Thank you.** Saying thank you is important at all stages of lobbying. We often take our supporters for granted and woo the "undecided" or "opposition." **Supporters need strokes, too.** Don't wait until an issue is settled before you say thank you.

## How To Get The Most Out Of Committee Meetings

- **Learn regular committee schedules.** Committee schedules are printed at the beginning of the session. The standing committees usually meet on a regular basis at their scheduled times. The sub-committees are scheduled by the sub-committee chairs; a schedule of these meetings may be obtained from the Chair's Executive Assistant.
- **Check the committee schedule at the information desk** outside the House or Senate chambers when you arrive at the Capitol or online at [www.lsb.state.ok.us](http://www.lsb.state.ok.us) than click on Meeting Notices.
- **Secure a copy of the bill.** If you don't have one already, get a copy of the bill or bills to be heard. It can be downloaded at [www.lsb.state.ok.us](http://www.lsb.state.ok.us). (See Lobbyist Information, Page 36.)

- **Be sure you have the latest version of the bill.** A committee substitute may be used at the meeting and is sometimes available.
- **Arrive early** enough at the meeting so that you can:
  - Identify committee members as they take their places;
  - Identify other persons who will testify;

To know who's who on committees, pick up a picture copy of members of the Legislature; it is available at the information desks. If you go to enough hearings held by the same committee, you will get to recognize not only the legislators but other lobbyists and interested persons.

- **Take notes** if you can on who said what, and try to get the gist of arguments (pro and con), questions that committee members ask, and the tenor of committee reaction. Notice if a legislator is following party line (or leadership) or acts independently.
- **Pick up copies of any material available**, such as testimony, reports, etc.
- **Know procedures.** In legislative committees, the most frequent motions on bills are "report progress" and "do pass." A "report progress" motion indicates that the committee has decided against the bill and retains control of it. A "do pass" motion means that the bill moves out of the committee and is passed on to the floor.

## How To Write Testimony

Opportunities for giving testimony are actually infrequent and at the discretion of the Committee Chair or the bill's sponsor. Normally, there is just not time. Occasionally, there are public hearings on major bills which afford opportunity for formal testimony. In most instances, opportunities for speaking at committee meetings are limited to a few minutes of informal comments; therefore, it is important to talk with committee members individually before the bill comes to the committee. Be prepared to discuss the fiscal (financial) impact of your bill.

- **Identify yourself** (the person presenting the testimony) in the first paragraph. If testifying as an individual, give name and address. If representing a group, give your name and the name of the group and number of people you represent.
- **Give the reason for your interest** in the subject of the hearing or committee meeting.
  - If testifying as an individual, explain why the bill, administrative rules, or proposed action by a governing body would affect you.

- If representing a group, explain the group's interest and how you know that other members of the group share the opinions expressed in the testimony.
- **Outline the problems** as you see them.
- **Give solutions** you think would be acceptable, and alternatives to proposed solutions with which you do not agree.
- **Be sure to emphasize the good things you see in the bill.** If you are testifying against a bill or proposed action but do agree with some of it, be sure to mention those parts you do support.
- **Summarize your testimony in one paragraph.** Hand out written lengthy statements to the committee. Brevity makes a better impression.
- **State your position clearly** whether you support or oppose the subject under consideration.
- **Thank** the committee or governing body for the opportunity to express your opinions.
- **Prepare enough copies** of your statement for all members and staff of the committee and the press.

## Presenting Testimony

During the presentation, look pleasant and speak up, but don't shout. Speak as clearly and forcefully as possible, being sure to introduce yourself as representing your organization. Speak informally whenever possible. This presentation is generally accompanied by a written statement of position and concerns in more formal language. If time is obviously a factor, briefly summarize and refer to the written copy that has been handed out. Don't overemphasize your position and risk losing a bill if it is clear that the committee favors it.

- **Courtesy:** Thank the committee for its attention or for the opportunity to give your statement when you have finished.
- **Questions:** When you're finished, be prepared for questions. Be ready with latest figures on your organization's membership, how you arrive at a position, and any facts gleaned during your study that will further bear out your position. If you don't have a position on a particular aspect, say so. Don't extrapolate your group's position! If you don't know the answer to a question, SAY SO and promise to find out and to get the information to the committee chair. Often the question-and-answer period is the most fruitful part of the hearing!

- **Further Information:** Be looking for ways in which your organization can be of further service. If more information is obviously needed, alert the appropriate organization chair who will take care of it.
- **Media:** Get acquainted with the media. Learn to recognize them on sight. If you have extra copies of your statement, offer them to news correspondents or leave them in the Press Room (Room 430).
- **Follow-up:** Don't relax yet. The committee is only one of the early stages of the legislative process. The committee votes, the House votes, the Senate votes, and anywhere along the line the bill may be substantially amended or killed before it gets to the Governor for final action. **Follow through!**

## How To Write Legislators

- Spell the legislator's name correctly and use the proper address. All correspondence with legislators should be sent to their address at the Capitol. If the Legislature is not in session, their mail will be forwarded to them at their home address.
- Describe the bill by popular name and by number.
- Know if your legislator is one of the authors and acknowledge it.
- Be brief and clear. In your first sentence, state the issue and how you want your elected official to vote. Give a short, well-prepared statement of your reasons. Longer letters are appreciated if you have some new information on a subject.
- Do not express anger; you will want to have future contact with the legislator.
- Be polite in your requests for support and give reasons why. Never demand. Never threaten defeat at the next election.
- Include your name and address.
- Use your own words. Do not use form letters or postcards.
- Write about only one issue in a letter.
- Be constructive. When speaking in opposition, explain an alternative or better solution to the problem.

- Write legibly or type.
- Send a note of appreciation when your elected official supports your issue.
- When you sign your name, make sure your officials can tell how you wish to be addressed if they should reply.

## How To Address Your Elected Official

### PRESIDENT

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President \_\_\_\_\_

### GOVERNOR

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
Governor of the State of Oklahoma  
State Capitol Building  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Governor \_\_\_\_\_

### SENATOR (U.S.)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_

### SENATOR (STATE)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
Oklahoma State Senate  
State Capitol Building  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_

### CONGRESSMAN (U.S.)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman \_\_\_\_\_

### REPRESENTATIVE (STATE)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
Oklahoma House of Representatives  
State Capitol Building  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_