



Tips for Advocating Effectively for Our Lakes with the New Hampshire Legislature

- Build meaningful relationships with your state legislators.
- Introduce yourself! Mention your name, where you live, and if you're a constituent.
- If you do not vote in New Hampshire, your voice still counts. Feel free to introduce yourself to a state legislator as a "property owner in your district."
- Prepare an outline or script for your conversation or testimony.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. You can offer to help find the answer from a reputable source.
- Always be professional and polite.
- Be clear and concise.
- Don't just describe the problem but be ready to propose a solution.
- Offer yourself as a resource of information.
- Make an ask (for example, please support/oppose...).
- Present the facts and stay away from emotional responses.
- New Hampshire state legislators are paid \$100 a year. Their volunteer hours really add up! Always say thank you.
- Everyone is nervous the first time they speak to a state legislator! Practice your conversation, practice your testimony, and proofread your letter with a friend, family member, or a NH LAKES staff person.

Who is my legislator?

1. To find your state senator, go to <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/senate/members/wml.aspx>
 - a. Select your town and you'll be directed to your state senator's online profile.
2. To find your state representatives, go to <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/members/>
 - a. Select your town and you'll be directed to your state representatives (click on their names for more information).
 - b. Need help determining which ward you live in? Go to <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/downloads/2022%20House%20Districts%20All.pdf>

How do I track a bill?

1. Go to <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/>
2. On the left hand side of the page, there are boxes labeled, "Current Bills" and "Bill Text Search."
3. Use the search boxes to input the title of a bill (for example: SB119 or HB1810) or a key word (for example: water).
4. If you want to do a more detailed search, go to http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/legacy/bs2016/

How does a bill become a law in New Hampshire?

1. A sponsor (a state representative or state senator) submits a legislative service request (LSR).
2. Legislative services staff draft the bill language and complete any necessary research.
3. The bill is filed by its sponsor and becomes a House bill or a Senate bill, depending on where the sponsor sits.
4. The bill is assigned to an appropriate committee, usually depending on its content.
5. The committee reviews the bill and holds a public hearing and hears testimony.
6. The committee makes a recommendation on the bill (inexpedient to legislate, ought to pass, or for additional study) for the full House or Senate to consider.
7. The bill goes to the full House or Senate for a vote.
8. If the bill passes, steps 4-7 are repeated in the opposite body. If the bill doesn't pass, it dies.
9. If the bill passes both the House and the Senate, then it goes to the Governor for a signature.
 - a. The Governor can do three things with a bill:
 - i. Sign the bill and make it law.
 - ii. Fail to sign the bill and it becomes law after five days of no action.
 - iii. Veto the bill. The legislature can override a veto with a two-thirds majority vote of both houses.

What is a committee of conference?

If a bill passes a body (House or Senate) with language that makes it different than a version of the same bill passed in the other body, then a bill goes to a committee of conference. This is a special meeting of delegates from each body. Those delegates work together to agree on common language for the bill. If the committee of conference fails to agree on common language, then the bill dies. If they agree, the bill is sent back to both bodies for approval and is subject to step 9 above.

Writing a Letter or an Email to a State Legislator

1. Introduce yourself and explain why you are writing. Be sure to use your own words.
2. If you are writing regarding a specific piece of legislation, include the title of the bill in the subject line. In the first sentence or two, state whether you want them to support or oppose that specific bill.
 - a. For example, "I am writing to ask you to support (House or Senate) bill #..." or "I am writing to ask you to oppose (House or Senate) bill # because..."
2. Consider using a personal story to explain how a piece of legislation would affect you and how you think it will affect your community.
3. It is always good practice to include research or data to support your position. However, be sure to be reasonably concise.
4. Include your contact information (address, phone number, and email) and say thank you!

Calling a State Legislator

1. Write down what you plan to say so you are ready when they (or voicemail) picks up.
2. Introduce yourself and explain the reason you are calling. For example:
 - a. Good morning Representative _____, my name is _____ and I live in your district in the town of _____. I am calling in regard to _____. I would like to you to support/oppose _____ because_____ (include data/facts, personal anecdotes or other relevant information to support your case).
3. State representatives don't have offices or office phones. You are most likely calling them on their home phone or personal cell phone. Don't be surprised if a family member picks up!
4. Always be courteous and professional. Say thank you!

Testifying Before a State Legislative Committee

- Is not as scary as it seems!
- Testifying is a great way to show support when it matters. Legislators take into consideration how many individuals and groups turned out to testify on a bill when voting.

Procedures you should expect:

1. Stay up to date on when public hearings are scheduled by reviewing the Senate and House calendars (www.gencourt.state.nh.us/).
2. If you are testifying, print out a written copy of your testimony (maximum of one page) for each member of the committee (25 copies for the House and 10 for the Senate). Pass these items out prior to the meeting.
3. On the day of the public hearing, arrive at least 15 minutes prior to when the committee meeting is scheduled to begin. Committees don't always stick to schedule and can move faster than expected/shown on the schedule.
4. When you arrive in the committee room, there are sign-in sheets for stating whether you support or oppose a bill, and whether you plan to provide verbal testimony to the committee.
5. The House and Senate committees do this a little differently—just make sure you sign in and indicate your position on the bill. If you plan to testify, be sure to check “wish to speak” and fill out a pink card.
6. Listen to what is being said by other people to the committee so that you can avoid unnecessary redundancy, unless you want to place greater emphasis on something.
7. The committees appreciate conciseness and brevity. Unless you are an expert in a certain subject and are asked to go into great detail, your testimony should not exceed five minutes.
8. The committee chair will call you forward when it is your turn to speak.
9. Address the group by saying:
 - a. Good morning Mr./Madam Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity speak today.
 - b. Introduce yourself. “My name is _____ and I live in _____.”
 - c. Ask the committee to support or oppose the bill.
 - d. Tell a personal story, provide data or other reasoning to support your position.
 - e. End by thanking the committee and say “I would be happy to take any questions.”
 - f. Return to audience seating when there are no further questions.