



Legislative Advocacy Toolkit

The resources needed to
advocate for public education

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Welcome



Dear Pennsylvania School Board Members:

Welcome! Thank you for joining the Pennsylvania School Boards Association's advocacy efforts for a unified voice on public education!

PSBA, through its Government Affairs team, actively represents you and school boards across the state on matters regarding public education and the students we serve. The Government Affairs team is your voice in Harrisburg on a wide array of issues affecting public policy, legislation, regulation and other areas.

Building and maintaining relationships is critical, and the team has a continuing presence with the Governor's Office, General Assembly, the State Board of Education and other state agencies. Regular one-on-one interaction with state policymakers, staff and stakeholders is an important part of the negotiations process as proposals are considered, and PSBA's Government Affairs team is at the table. The team's efforts also include drafting legislative proposals and amendments to bills and regulations, offering written comments and formal testimony on pending issues, and developing data to support membership positions. In addition, the team provides you with weekly legislative updates, special reports and a variety of information and resources on the issues that you need to know now.

PSBA invites you to make a powerful impact on public education through your advocacy work. We urge you to develop and maintain contact with your legislators on important issues and to communicate these messages to your communities. We also offer you numerous opportunities to become more involved. This includes serving on various specific issue task forces and committees, presenting testimony and offering valuable feedback on key topics. Legislators want to hear about the impact of an issue that touches the public schools and the constituents in their own district.

The PSBA Government Affairs Team offers this publication as a resource to your advocacy process; however we always promote our services directly. Please feel free to ask questions and for updates as they relate to your advocacy efforts. PSBA is committed to active, effective and successful advocacy – working to best represent you, your public schools and the students we serve. Together we can make a difference for our public education system in Pennsylvania!

Thank you for your commitment to advocate on behalf of Pennsylvania's schoolchildren. Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Frerichs".

Richard Frerichs
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan Mains".

Nathan Mains
Executive Director



The Importance of Advocating

Purpose of Advocating

The purpose of advocating is to promote a change in policy, program or legislation. Advocacy aims at winning support from others and creating a supportive environment. The mission of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association is “We empower elected school board members to succeed by providing vital tools, superior training and powerful advocacy. We promote high quality, locally driven public education for all Pennsylvania students.”

At PSBA, we believe advocacy is important because it can produce change. School boards create a shared vision for the district, develop a structure to support that vision, establish accountability, and advocate for students and schools. School board members can make a difference and understand the responsibility of advocating for a strong public education.

Why Advocate?

When you bring your issues to the local level, you increase your chances for public support. Issues become relevant to community members when they are close to home. Some ways to really bring issues home to people in your area include using statistics for the issue gathered locally, or presenting the issues in a certain way to help community members understand how they will be affected. Constituents are in an excellent position to inform and influence legislators and others on public education issues.

For these reasons, PSBA invites you to become an influential advocate for public education and the children you serve. Together, we can make a difference.

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Section II



Become an Advocate

School Board Members' Role as Advocates

Although we represent you, PSBA's influence only carries so much weight. The most important element of a successful advocacy strategy is YOU. Legislators are more likely to act on problems that affect their constituents. Relationships with legislators are cultivated over time. If you do not already have a relationship with your legislators, it is not too late. However, it is important to initiate and maintain a positive relationship with your legislators. Again, to find your legislator's contact information, you may visit the General Assembly's website at www.legis.state.pa.us.

Communicating with Legislators

When communicating with your legislator, it is important to do your homework. Here are examples of doing your homework:

- Every time a bill gets amended, it receives a new printer's number, so be sure to know the content of the most current printer's number of a bill (see www.legis.state.pa.us).
- Know where your legislator stands on legislation and ask if you do not know. If you already know you have his/her support, thank them to help firm up their position.
- Be prepared to know how the issue would affect your school district financially and academically.
- Know what your legislators' committee assignments are. All legislators, except those in leadership, typically have two to four different committee assignments. Even if your legislator is on the Education Committee, chances are that he or she has not read all the bills that have been referred to that committee. You will need to outline the bill, as well as its effect on your school district when speaking to him or her. Your legislators' committee assignments can be found on the General Assembly's website (www.legis.state.pa.us).
- Know their voting record. Once PSBA sends a position paper to legislators, it tracks how legislators vote on the bill(s) in the

- Legislative Action Center on PSBA's website.
- Get to know your legislators' staff members.

Advocating by Personal Visit

Make an appointment or contact Angela Garcia to schedule a group appointment for your board to meet with your legislator at the Capitol. Be specific about the issue and your position. Stick to one or two issues per visit. PSBA suggests that you take a bulleted one-page summary, outlining your position, and a brief, statistical summary sheet of your school district's academic successes, enrollment information and general budget data, with you when you meet with your legislators. Remember to thank the legislator for his or her time, then follow-up with a handwritten thank you note.

Advocating by Phone

Have your talking points prepared ahead of time. If the legislature is in session, call the Harrisburg phone number listed on their website. If they are not in session, call the district office. When you reach your legislator, identify yourself and your position. If the legislator is unavailable, ask to

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speak to the chief of staff or legislative director. Briefly state the issue or bill number and your position and ask the legislator's position. Finally, thank the legislator/aide for his or her time.

Advocating by Letter or Email

PSBA Legislative Alerts usually include sample emails or talking points that can be tailored for emailing or mailing to your legislators. Add your personal information, school district data and preferred personal style.

Build a Coalition

When working in the political arena, it always is easier to get things done within a group. Coalition building with people in your community, as well as with other school districts, can be an effective lobbying tool for issues that have broad appeal. The more people involved, the louder your voice will be.

School Board Members' Role as Advocates

You are the best advocates for public education, because you are actually in the trenches making decisions and seeing what does or does not work in the classrooms. While education is important for the majority of people, as well as the majority of legislators, it is not always the top priority in Harrisburg. The numbers show that school board members can be extremely powerful advocates. There are more than 4500 school board members statewide, so compared to 253 state legislators, the ratio is definitely favorable. In order to be a good advocate, it is necessary to have an understanding of the General Assembly, its members and the process by which a bill becomes law.

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Section III



How can a board get involved in advocacy?

Working together as advocates

The General Assembly

There are 50 members of the Senate and 203 members of the House of Representatives. It is important that you know who your legislators are and that you communicate with him or her regularly on legislative issues that affect your school district. To find your legislators' contact information, you may visit the General Assembly's website at www.legis.state.pa.us

Where Does Education Stand Within Pennsylvania's Political Framework?

The interests of school boards involve a variety of subdivisions: labor relations, local government, the School Code, taxation, transportation. Committees that PSBA monitors for bills affecting schools include: House/Senate Education, House/Senate Finance, House/Senate Appropriations, House/Senate Labor Relations, House/Senate Local Government. Check to see if your legislators serve on any of these committees.

The Regulatory Review Process

A regulation is an official interpretation of a statute, detailing the steps to be taken in its administration and enforcement. State agencies use regulations to implement federal or state law.

As part of Pennsylvania's regulatory review process, the State Board of Education (see www.pde.state.pa.us) refers education regulations to the House and Senate Education Committees, as well as the Independent Regulatory Review Commission for recommendations and approval (see www.irrc.state.pa.us).

PSBA's Government Affairs

PSBA provides members with current information on the events taking place in Harrisburg through:

- Legislative Action Program
 - Legislative Action Center on PSBA's

website (www.psba.org). This section is member protected, so you will need to enter your email address and a password.

- Spring and fall meetings scheduled in the regions. These meetings are typically held in IUs, CTCs or schools and local legislators, superintendents, business managers and school board members are invited. A member of PSBA staff presents a legislative update and often facilitates the discussion.
- Legislative Reports and Legislative Alerts. All members with email addresses will receive these automatically. Contact our office if you are not receiving them.
- Website and social media such as Twitter and Facebook. The website contains articles, position papers, and research on the top issues.

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- Federal Relations Network
 - We recruit an average of 7 board members in each congressional district to represent the interests of Pennsylvania on the federal level as part of the National School Boards Association’s Federal Relations Network (www.nsba.org).
- Registered lobbyists
 - We have four registered lobbyists within PSBA who are continually representing your interests on the hill.

PSBA’s Legislative Action Program: Your Opportunities for Advocacy Involvement

PSBA’s Government Affairs maintains a continuing presence with the General Assembly, the State Board of Education, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (www.pde.state.pa.us), and other state agencies. In addition, the association has established an effective grassroots advocacy program that brings you and other school directors together to adopt the legislative platform. PSBA’s legislative platform is drafted and approved by school directors, serves as PSBA’s official record of positions on legislative issues and is the guide for the association’s advocacy efforts.

The recommendations of the Platform Committee are brought before the Delegate Assembly for a final vote immediately prior to the annual conference in the fall. Representatives from every PSBA member entity may serve as voting delegates to the Delegate Assembly. The assembly makes the final determination on which recommended proposals will be incorporated into PSBA’s legislative platform for the coming year. The current platform is posted on PSBA’s website.

How to Become Involved in the Legislative Action Program

There are many opportunities and varying levels of involvement for all school officials. Some of the key positions in the program include:

- **PSBA liaison** – Each school board appoints one of its members to be the PSBA liaison. The PSBA liaison serves as the link between PSBA and the local board and the first step is to become

engaged at the regional level. Liaisons are responsible for duties such as ensuring that their school entity is represented at the Legislative Policy Council; attending legislative meetings and region meetings; responding to Legislative Alerts by contacting legislators; and keeping their boards informed on legislative issues and other PSBA services. Liaisons are members of the Regional Director’s Cabinet and vote for the Regional Director, Assistant Regional Director, Legislative Coordinator and other governance related issues in the region.

- **Legislative coordinator** – The role of the legislative coordinator is important to the success of PSBA’s Legislative Advocacy Program. The legislative coordinator represents the school entities in the county, area or other grouping as determined individually under the Regional Activity Plan for each of the 15 PSBA regions. The legislative coordinator communicates frequently with legislators and provides them with PSBA’s positions on various proposals. The legislative coordinator organizes the spring and fall legislative meetings in the region.
- **Platform Committee** – This standing committee consists of PSBA officers and representatives of the association’s 15 state regions and five organizational departments.
- **Grassroots Key Contact Program** – In order to build PSBA’s advocacy impact in Harrisburg, PSBA recruits members who have personal or professional relationships with their state legislators to commit to contacting their legislators when key legislation is moving in Harrisburg.
- **Parent Advisory Network**
- **Editorial Group**
- **Legislative Advisory Committee**

Drafting and Adopting PSBA’s Legislative Platform

PSBA’s legislative platform, which is drafted and approved by school directors, serves as PSBA’s official record of positions on legislative issues and is the guide for the association’s advocacy efforts. This means that PSBA staff will support or oppose pending legislation that aligns with platform positions and also will draft legislation that corresponds with platform statements.

The adoption process formally begins during the spring and summer when PSBA invites school

boards to submit their proposals to be considered for the association's legislative platform for the coming year. All proposals must be formally approved by a majority of the school board and verified by the board secretary prior to submission.

Boards may submit new proposals as well as revisions to the current platform and include a brief statement of rationale for each proposal submitted. The rationale includes a summary of the reasons the board believes this issue should be addressed in the platform, any specific problems the district has encountered and how the board believes the problem could be resolved. In addition, boards are encouraged to submit any data related to the issue as it affects the district or any draft language that could be crafted into proposed legislation. This information is shared with the PSBA Platform Committee and is helpful to the association's Government Affairs staff in its advocacy efforts.

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Advocacy and Your Legislator

“How-To” Tips for Effective Legislative Advocacy

PSBA’s Government Affairs offers a wide variety of useful resources and tips to help you become informed and effective advocates for public education. While the Government Affairs staff actively represents the interests of its membership before the General Assembly and state agencies, it is imperative for school board members to get involved in advocating for their schools. We know that it’s your voice at the local level that has the greatest impact on decisions made in Harrisburg. Participation in local advocacy for public education is a year-round process. Here are some tips to help you:

1. Stay informed - Before you begin your advocacy work, it’s important to have a basic understanding of the issues. In addition to staying informed of education happenings in the news, PSBA provides many resources to help you stay on top of the public education issues so you will have the tools you need to be effective advocates. Among the resources are the following:

- **PSBA publications** such as the *Daily Edition*, the *Bulletin*, position papers, issue briefs, research papers and handbooks on important issues.
- **PSBA website**, at www.pdba.org, which provides the latest news and many of our publications.
- The **Legislative Action Center** is where you can join PSBA’s Action E-list, a system that provides legislative reports on a weekly basis and legislative alerts so you will have the latest information needed before contacting your legislators about proposals under consideration in Harrisburg.
- **PSBA Testimony** on bills pending in Harrisburg. Explain PSBA’s position in a paragraph or two that anyone can use to explain or advocate our position.
- **PSBA staff** is available anytime to provide additional information on legislative matters. The staff presents legislative updates at spring and fall legislative meetings in the counties, at PSBA conferences, and other meetings upon request.

2. Get to know your legislators - You can identify your senator and representative online through the Legislative Action Center on PSBA’s website by typing in your zip code. Another place to check is the General Assembly’s website at www.legis.state.pa.us. Your legislators’ job is to listen to constituents and then make informed decisions based on these conversations. As an education leader, you have the firsthand understanding of what is needed to ensure the best education for our public schoolchildren. Here are some tips:

- Attend the annual PSBA legislative meetings held in your county.
- Introduce yourself to elected officials at public events in the community.
- Keep ongoing communications. Invite your legislators to events in your schools. Familiar faces are more persuasive than unfamiliar ones.
- Learn more about your elected state officials by doing research on his/her political party,

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the legislative committees he/she serves, any leadership positions they might serve, their voting record and any personal facts such as civic work in the community.

3. Meet with your legislators -As important legislative issues arise that will impact your school district, a face-to-face meeting with your legislators is the most effective way to make your views known and influence legislation. Keep in mind that they have very busy schedules and often cannot meet with constituents who request a meeting on a given day. Additionally, a meeting that the legislator planned to attend might be interrupted or cancelled by an unscheduled vote. As a result, legislators rely heavily upon their staff members. “Staffers” have a great deal of influence and can be instrumental in conveying the significance of an issue to the legislator. Here are some tips:

- To schedule a meeting, call their local district office. Depending on the issue, invite other school directors, educators, community or parent advocates to join you to demonstrate broad support for your position. The staff person or scheduler will ask what you'd like to discuss and who will be attending.
- To prepare for your meeting, go to www.psba.org to download some key points on the education issue(s) you plan to discuss. You may use the materials that PSBA provides to have a few concise facts or statistics ready, but personal stories/experiences are always best when you are speaking as a constituent. The most important component is to have a clear “ask.”
- Hold a pre-meeting with everyone who will be present for the meeting and make sure all agree on your position.
- Select a primary spokesperson and decide who will discuss what points so everyone may contribute to the conversation. The spokesperson should begin the discussion and be prepared to highlight the main issues that the group members want to discuss.
- Be punctual. If you end up speaking with staff, just proceed as you normally would because the staff person will report back to the legislator. Check the sidebar for a few tips to consider during your meeting.
- Emphasize local concerns. One of your biggest assets is that you understand how pro-

grams and funding are working at the local level and legislators and their staffs are eager to hear from the constituents. Lobbying with real-life experiences is your most persuasive tool.

- Ask directly for your legislator's support. If your legislator is supportive, ask him or her to lobby leadership and other members of the General Assembly to support your position. If your legislator disagrees with your position, hear him or her out politely, express respectful disappointment, and rebut his or her argument if you have the facts to do so. Be courteous; you'll have other issues to take up in the future.
- Distribute minimal paperwork. Always bring along some information and your position on the issue that you can leave behind after your meeting is over. PSBA can assist you in preparing information to leave with the legislator or staffer.
- Know how to handle a difficult question. If during the meeting you are asked a question and you do not know the answer, inform the member or staffer that you will need to look into that issue and that you would be happy to get back in touch with the requested information. Be certain to get a business card so that you can contact the person with the information as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to contact PSBA staff for further information if necessary.
- Always say thank you and be polite, even if you disagree with your elected official's position on the issues. Be direct and always respectful.
- Before ending the meeting, invite your legislator(s) to visit your schools. Ask for the name of the person who handles scheduling requests for the member so that you can follow up with a formal invitation.
- Write a follow-up letter. Send the member and/ or staffer a follow-up letter to thank them for meeting with you. This is an excellent opportunity to reiterate the issues that were discussed during the meeting and enclose additional supporting information. Thank them for any important commitments they may have made.

4. Write to your legislators - Contacting a legislator by letter provides an opportunity for you

to state a position and rationale on an issue in a format that can easily be retained and shared by others. As you begin your letter, here are a few important guidelines to follow:

- Be certain the letter is correctly addressed. Use “The Honorable (first name, last name)” for both senators and representatives. The salutations should be “Dear Senator Last name)” or “Dear Representative Last name).”
- Communications sent to members of the General Assembly should be addressed to their House P.O. or Senate P.O. box in the Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120, not to their specific room number. If you are not sure of the box number, check www.legis.state.pa.us.
- Write your letter in a polite, personal style; never use a threatening or insulting tone.
- Focus on one issue or bill per letter and identify the bill by name and number.
- Express your point of view and why your legislator should be supportive. Be brief and courteous.
- Make your points by explaining the issue as it would affect your local school district. Presenting a real cause-effect example of what would happen if the bill were passed captures the legislator’s attention and enhances the school director’s credibility.
- Supporting material and statistics should be attached so that the letter can be passed on to the legislator’s staff or to others who may want to read it.
- Ask for a response from your legislator.
- Use your signature and personal letterhead and state that you are a school board member when writing an individual letter. If it is a collective letter written by the board, have the president of the board sign it and put it on the board’s letterhead.

5. Email your legislators - Using email is fast and efficient, and is an especially good way to communicate when there is not enough time to reach a legislator prior to an important vote. If you use email to communicate with your legislator, you should do so in the context of an ongoing relationship in which you use other methods as the foundation of your communication.

Most legislators have individual websites and email addresses that you can access through the

General Assembly’s website at www.legis.state.pa.us. Some legislators also have electronic forms you can fill out on their websites to facilitate communicating with them and to make it easier for you to weigh in on an issue. Here is some brief advice to consider when using email:

- In the subject line, let the legislator know that you are a constituent writing about a specific issue. For example: XYZ School Board Supports Amendment to HB 730. Most legislators have their staff sort and respond to their email, and this strategy will increase the likelihood that your message is read quickly.

State your message concisely and provide some brief rationale. If you wish, you can attach supporting documents or even a formal letter on your school district stationery that is lengthier.

Make sure you provide your email and regular mail addresses, as well as a telephone number, where a response can be sent.

Follow up your email with a phone call or visit to make sure that your views were heard and to obtain a response if you have not received one.

6. Call your legislators - Phone calls are an effective and fast way to communicate with your legis-

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lator, especially when a critical vote is expected to occur. Consider setting up a conference call with your legislator and other education advocates. Sometimes you may be able to talk directly with your member or their education staffers and have a substantive conversation. Other times, your calls may be tallied by the receptionist who will inform the legislator of given counts of constituents for and against a particular issue. When phoning your legislator, keep the following in mind:

- Think about what you want to say before placing the call. Make notes for your reference, such as the bill number, status of the bill, your position and points you want to make in support of that position.
- Identify yourself by name, position and school district - don't assume that the legislator remembers you.
- If the legislator is unavailable, ask to speak to the staff person working on the issue.
- Briefly state the purpose of your call, using the bill number.
- Briefly explain your position and be prepared to provide more information if asked. Be prepared to give a locally based rationale for your position.
- Ask for your legislator's view on the bill or issue and how he or she will vote.
- Be polite and recognize that there will be times when a legislator does not agree with your position. If he or she has made a decision to oppose your position, don't engage in a debate. You'll be asking the same legislator for support on other issues in the future, so don't alienate him or her now.
- Thank the legislator for his or her time and follow through with a short thank-you note that restates the reason for your call.

7. Invite your legislator to an event in your school district - During the year, numerous recesses are scheduled so that legislators can visit their districts. Plan to take advantage of this opportunity and invite your member to events such as back-to-school nights, graduations or award ceremonies. Present your legislator(s) with a plaque for certificate of recognition for a "job well done" for public education. Here are some tips:

- Plan ahead. Legislators have very busy schedules and their calendars fill up quickly. Send your invitation several months in advance of the event.

- Contact the right person. Call your member's office to find out the proper procedure for sending an invitation. Most legislators have staff that is responsible for scheduling requests. Invitations generally are requested to be in writing. This will expedite the process. You also should send a copy of the letter to the member's district office. The Harrisburg and district offices usually coordinate when the member is traveling in the state.
- Be flexible. If at all possible, note in the invitation that you are willing to accommodate the member's schedule.
- You may want to also speak with the member's communications director to help get the media to cover the event.

8. Encourage other school board members to stay informed and involved - The keys to ensuring that school boards can have an impact on the legislative process are knowledge of the issues and ability to take quick action. PSBA sends legislative reports and alerts to all its members and it often is necessary to take immediate steps to ensure the result we want. Toward that end, it is essential that:

- All school directors should plan to attend the legislative meetings organized by PSBA in the county.
- School directors are apprised of the latest legislative activity. Remember, a bill can be amended a dozen times before it receives a final vote. PSBA legislative updates and alerts sent via email and posted on the website will give you the latest information. The *Legislative Update* will give you more in-depth reporting of the news in Harrisburg.
- Every board meeting should include on the agenda a time to review legislative happenings. The board should decide what action it wants to take and follow through. Sample resolutions on top issues that your board should consider passing can be found on the PSBA website at www.psba.org under "Issues and Advocacy."
- Be sure your school board participates in PSBA's legislative platform adoption process. Boards submit items for the platform and appoint delegates to vote at the Delegate Assembly meeting.
- Most importantly, school board members need to establish and maintain a good work-

ing relationship with their legislators and staff. Such relationships are developed over time and should be nurtured carefully. Legislators quickly learn which constituents contact them only in times of need and which ones never say thanks for a job well-done.

9. Use the media to communicate with legislators - The press can help shape public opinion and can be one of the most influential advocacy tools. When seeking effective media strategies, keep the following in mind:

- Keep it focused. Stick to one issue at a time. Don't assume the reporter or the audience is familiar with the issue; explain it fully and without educational jargon. In TV or radio interviews, be concise. Use key words and phrases that capture the essence of the issue. Say what the consequences, good or bad, will be if this issue continues. Think about the potential impact of your words before you speak or write. Don't exaggerate or become emotional.
- Clip and send your good press. A good article can have a long life. Make sure to send press clippings to your legislator.
- Don't forget your own media outlets. Take advantage of school district newsletters, websites, publications, radio and cable programs to educate and get others involved in your advocacy campaigns.
- Give just the facts. Stick to what you know and never exaggerate. You can always get back to reporters after finding the right answer.
- Don't just say it - show it. A demonstration or real-life testimonial goes a long way to illustrate your point and make it more colorful.
- Build media relationships. Get to know the education reporters and take the time to meet with editorial boards.
- Put media relations in your advocacy policy. Media relations should be a year-round function.
- Appoint a press spokesperson for your school board. This contact person must be fully informed about your advocacy agenda to know what to tell and what not to tell reporters.
- Take advantage of all the media outlets. Legislative offices may read newspapers most often, but radio and television have a powerful impact on public opinion and should not be overlooked.

10. Write letters to the editor & opinion editorials - Letters to the editor and opinion editorials (called op-eds) written by readers are useful ways to speak out on an issue, respond to an article or editorial or express your position in your own words. They often are read by legislators and can be an effective lobbying tool. When writing a letter to the editor or op-ed, keep in mind the following:

- Be brief and focus on one issue. If the article is too long, the newspaper may edit out some important facts. To get an idea of how long is too long, take a look at your newspaper's opinions page and count the words in the average letter to the editor. The average op-ed is usually longer than a letter to the editor and is between 500 and 750 words.
- For a letter to the editor, refer to a recent event or an article which has appeared in the newspaper and include the article's date and title.
- When applicable, close your letter or op-ed by asking readers to contact their members of the General Assembly or other policymakers about the issue.
- Give your address, school district and phone number so that the newspapers can verify authorship.

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- Clip your published letter to the editor or op-ed and mail or fax it to your legislators.

11. Meet with editorial boards - There is nothing more powerful than a newspaper carrying a positive lead editorial that supports your cause. Meeting with editorial boards in advance to explain your views can be the catalyst for a favorable editorial that will help address the issue at home as well as in Harrisburg. To facilitate a successful meeting, keep the following in mind:

- Request a formal meeting by writing a letter to the editorial page editor or by calling the editorial office. Briefly explain the issue you would like to discuss and who will be with you at the meeting.
- Go to the meeting prepared to lay the facts, as well as your background materials, on the table.

If possible, bring the president of your school board and other leaders from a coalition, if one exists, to lend weight to the meeting.

- Although a face-to-face meeting is more effective, you also can write to the editorial page editor, send your background material and follow up by phone.
- When preparing the background material, try to include both the local and broader implications of the issue so the editor can see that it hits home and is of wider concern.
- Once you have made contact with members of the editorial board, keep those relationships going. Send a thank-you note for the meeting and another note if they run a favorable editorial.

“Dos” And “Don’ts” Of Effective Advocacy

DOS

- Do learn legislators’ committee assignments and where their specialties lie.
- Do present the need for what you’re asking the legislator to do. Use data or cases you know.
- Do relate situations in his or her home state or district.
- Do learn the legislators’ position and ask why they take that position.
- Do—in case of voting records—ask why he or she voted a particular way.
- Do show openness to the knowledge of counterarguments and respond to them.
- Do admit you don’t know. Offer to try to find out the answer and send information back to the office.
- Do spend time with legislators whose position is opposite ours. You can decrease the intensity of the opposition and perhaps change it.
- Do spend time in developing relationships with the legislative staff.
- Do thank the staff for stands the member has taken, which you support.

DON'TS

- Don’t overload a legislative visit with too many issues.
- Don’t confront, threaten, pressure, or beg.
- Don’t be argumentative. Speak with calmness and commitment so as not to put the legislator on the defensive.
- Don’t overstate the case. Members are very busy and you are apt to lose their attention if you are too wordy.
- Don’t expect members of Congress to be specialists. Their schedules and workloads tend to make them generalists.
- Don’t be put off by smokescreens or longwinded answers. Bring the legislator back to the point. Maintain control of the meetings.
- Don’t make promises you can’t deliver.
- Don’t be afraid to take a stand on the issues.
- Don’t shy away from meetings with legislators with known views opposite your own.
- Don’t be offended if a legislator is unable to meet and requests that you meet with his or her staff.

Section V



Background of Pennsylvania Government

The Pennsylvania General Assembly

In 1776, the Pennsylvania Legislature was established as a lawmaking body by the first state constitution. Originally unicameral, the General Assembly became bicameral under the second constitution of 1790 and since that time has been comprised of a House of Representatives and a Senate. The General Assembly meets in two-year sessions.

House and Senate legislative districts are reapportioned every 10 years after the federal census is taken. Reapportionment following the 2000 census created state House districts of approximately 59,000 people and Senate districts of about 240,000 people.

There are 203 members in the House of Representatives; a number established when the state's constitution was revised in 1967. A representative must be at least 21 years of age, a resident of the commonwealth for four years and a resident of the district for at least one year. The term of office for a member of the House is two years, with all seats up for re-election at the same time.

When the Senate was first established in 1790, there were only 18 senators.

Following the 1874 Constitutional Convention, that number was increased to 50, where it remains today. A senator must be at least 25 years of age with the same residency requirements as members of the House. Senate terms are four years, with odd- and even-numbered district seats contested on a rotating basis.

Chamber and caucus leadership

The principal officers of the state Senate are the president pro tempore, the secretary and the chief clerk, all of whom are elected by the Senate. As a constitutional officer, the president pro tempore is the only one who is also a senator. The secretary and chief clerk are statutory officers.

The presiding officer of the Senate is the lieutenant governor. However, he or she is not a member of the Senate and has no vote unless

the Senate is equally divided. In this case, the lieutenant governor may cast a tie-breaking vote on any question except the final passage of a bill or joint resolution, the adoption of a conference report or the concurrence in amendments made by the House. In his or her absence, the president pro tempore presides.

The principal officers in the House are the speaker, the chief clerk, the parliamentarian and the comptroller. Except for the parliamentarian, all are elected by the House, but the speaker is the only officer who is a member of that body.

The House of Representatives elects one of its own as speaker. This presiding officer, being a member, may vote on all questions.

A caucus is a closed meeting of all members of the same political party in one chamber of the legislature. Following the general election and prior to the beginning of the two-year term, the political parties of each chamber meet in caucus to select their leaders.

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Within the two chambers, the majority and minority caucuses each choose their leaders, who develop policy and strategies for the support of or opposition to proposed legislation. In both the House and Senate, then, there are two caucus officers (majority and minority) for each of the following positions:

Floor leader - This person is the official spokesperson for his or her caucus and is responsible for the fiscal affairs and overall management of the caucus staff. The majority floor leader also schedules the legislative calendar that lists the bills to be considered on a given day.

Whip - The assistant leader, or whip, assists the floor leader in carrying out party policy concerning legislation and acts as the intermediary between leadership and individual members.

Caucus chairman - This officer conducts meetings of the caucus and is responsible for informing caucus members of the session schedule. The caucus chairman also ensures that all legislation scheduled for a vote is brought before the caucus for discussion. His or her job also includes obtaining a count of the expected “ayes” and “nays” of members of the caucus on pending issues and seeking to bring members of the party into line on critical votes.

Caucus secretary -The caucus secretary records all business conducted at caucus meetings, serves as correspondent for the caucus and assists at caucus meetings.

Policy chairman - This officer initiates and promotes the goals and policies of the party.

Caucus administrator - Duties of the administrator include members’ office and parking assignments, renovations, telephone and furniture requests.

Appropriations chairman - In 1987, the majority and minority chairmen of the Appropriations committees were made caucus officers. The Appropriations committees are responsible for preparing budget legislation for commonwealth expenditures and monitoring expenditures by commonwealth agencies throughout the fiscal year.

Standing committees - All bills introduced in the House and Senate are assigned to a standing committee for first consideration. The number of committees is determined by each chamber, and there are more than 20 standing committees each in both the House and Senate. Some

House committees divide into subcommittees, but there are no subcommittees in the Senate.

Often a legislator is appointed to a particular committee because of qualifications in certain areas. Expertise becomes an asset to the makeup of the committee and also may affect the quality of legislation passing through the committee’s hands.

The majority party in each chamber controls all committees, with their members as chairpersons and vice chairpersons. The minority leader in each chamber selects his or her party’s minority chairperson for each committee. The president pro tempore is an ex-officio member with a vote in all, but never chairperson of any, Senate committees.

The House speaker and majority and minority floor leaders are ex-officio members of all committees in that chamber without the right to vote.

In addition to considering legislation, the Senate Rules Committee is charged with deliberating nominations made by the governor. Confirmation of important appointed officials is a constitutional responsibility reserved only to the Senate.

The Legislative

The General Assembly is a continuing body during each two-year session, with the legislative year beginning on the first Tuesday of January of each odd-numbered year as required by the constitution. Traditionally, the Legislature recesses for the summer months after the state budget is adopted in late June or early July and reconvenes in mid-September. The two-year sessions expire on Nov. 30 of the even-numbered year, unless adjourned earlier.

The normal legislative work week is Monday through Wednesday, although a two day week or a five-day week may be scheduled depending upon the amount of business that needs to be accomplished. Legislative committee meetings usually are held on session days or later in the week when “floor votes” no longer are being conducted. (Committees also may meet when no session days are scheduled, such as during the summer or during other recesses.) The generally abbreviated work week in the Capitol is designed to allow legislators to spend time in their home districts.

From bill to law: The road to enactment

Proposed new laws or amendments to existing laws are introduced by individual members in the House and Senate in the form of bills, as required by the constitution. The first step toward introduction of a bill is developing an idea. The idea could be initiated by a legislator or come from school board members, other local officials, labor unions, professional associations or concerned individuals. Ideas for laws also can be sparked by federal government regulations or a ruling of the courts. Regardless of the origin of the idea, the legislator sets in motion the gears of the legislative process. How does this occur?

Any bill in a legislative session has 253 chances of being introduced, because each legislator has the power of singly sponsoring a piece of legislation. In most cases, a bill is more likely to be considered if it has more than one sponsor, particularly of members of the majority party or of members of both caucuses.

Introduction of a bill

To have a bill introduced, a legislator sponsoring an idea will send the proposal to the Legislative Reference Bureau where it is written in the proper format by legal experts, copied and placed in blue folders known as "bluebacks." The legislator then signs the bill alone or acts as its chief sponsor and solicits the signatures of other members of the House or Senate interested in the intent of the bill, who then become its cosponsors. It generally is desirable to attain bipartisan sponsorship to assure a bill's acceptance by both political parties, should the measure reach the point of final passage.

The sponsors sign the folders and send them to the chief clerk who names the proposal by giving it a number. House bills are numbered in the sequence in which they are presented to the chief clerk over a two-year term. The bills are delivered to the speaker of the House and assigned to an appropriate standing committee.

A senator introduces a bill by announcing it during a Senate session, then giving it to the president of the Senate, who assigns the bill to a standing Senate committee.

All House and Senate bills are given a num-

ber, printed and distributed to General Assembly members and made available to the public. The bill also is entered into the Legislative Data Processing computer network. They later are identified by both the bill number and printer's number. It is important when following passage of a bill to note the current printer's number of the bill. Each time a bill is amended, it is reprinted and given a new printer's number. The latest version of the bill is the one that will receive further consideration and could vary greatly from prior versions.

During the two-year session of the Legislature, approximately 5,000 bills representing a wide range of subjects are introduced in the House and Senate. There is no limit to the number of bills that may be introduced. Obviously, many of those bills never receive consideration and remain in committee during the entire two-year session. Once the session ends, these bills expire and must be reintroduced in the next session if they are to be considered.

The number of bills introduced each session is far too many to be considered by all 203 members of the House. Instead, a variety of committees were formed to manage the work-

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load relating to screening, studying, debating and resolving differences over bills.

Sometimes this requires holding committee meetings and public hearings where experts and the public at large can present their viewpoints. In a two-year session, the House averages 700 committee meetings and hearings that are open to the public.

Work of the committees

Once a bill is in a committee, that panel has full power over it. Therefore, the role of the standing committees is a vital one.

Standing committees are like guards at a crucial checkpoint. Thousands of bills are sent their way for initial screening, but many are stopped in committee. In fact, roughly 75% of the bills received in standing committee are never considered because they are identified as irrelevant, too similar to other bills, poor policy, too narrow in focus or a distraction from more vital issues.

Before deciding the fate of a bill, standing committees do one or more of the following:

- Convene committee meetings, which are open to the public, to discuss the matter.
- Hold a public hearing anywhere in Pennsylvania, inviting comment from members of the general public who want the legislators to pass or defeat the bill.
- Refer the bill to a subcommittee for further study. When it is ready to vote, a standing committee can:
- Table, or set aside, the bill to make it inactive.
- Change, or amend, the bill.
- Defeat the bill.
- Approve the bill.

A committee has no established time schedule for reporting bills back to the house in which they were introduced; however, there are certain components that can affect decisions concerning committee action, such as influence from the governor, majority leadership, the concern of lobbying groups or perhaps the political future of the prime sponsor.

From committee to the floor

After the bill has been reported out by a committee, it moves to the next step in consideration, and the bill takes a brief but traditional

detour into the Caucus Room for a round of review. Votes generally are not taken on the floor until each political party has had the opportunity to privately discuss, or caucus, the bill with its members. On major or controversial bills, the caucus attempts to muster full party support or opposition. On issues of conscience, or where the needs of a member's constituents differ from caucus policy, individual legislators may vote against party lines. If the caucus holds, however, it can make or break a bill.

The discussions normally occur at the beginning of each week. But a caucus still can be called once a bill is on the floor if new developments or controversial amendments are introduced. In fact, majority and minority floor leaders can request a recess to discuss these events with their members at any point after a bill reaches the floor until a final vote is taken.

The passage of a bill

Finally, the bill leaves the caucus room and moves to the floor of the chamber. The state constitution requires the full chamber to consider each bill three times, on three separate days, before taking a vote on final passage. The authors of our constitution included this requirement to slow down the legislative process, making sure that the public would have sufficient time to contact their representatives and voice their objections or support of bills under consideration. "Consideration" of a bill takes a different form on each of the three days. A legislative day refers to a calendar day during which the House or Senate is in session. Legislative days are not necessarily consecutive because the House or Senate recesses from weekends, holidays and on days when members perform legislative business away from the House or Senate floor.

First Day of Consideration -The first day of consideration is a simple debut. Essentially, it is used to announce that the bill has been reported from committee that same day. The clerk reads the number and title of the bill. There is no debate, no amendments are offered and no vote is taken. Then the bill is automatically tabled, making it inactive for no more than 15 legislative days. Faster action can be taken on the bill if the Rules Committee recommends that it come off the table sooner or if a representa-

tive moves to take it off the table and a majority of members agree.

Second Day of Consideration - During the second consideration, the bill's number and title are read again. The entire chamber screens the bill and determines if it has enough information to discuss it. At this stage, members do not debate the merits of the bill itself or vote on its passage. They can add amendments to the bill at this time but seldom do.

Third Consideration - This is the true day of reckoning for a bill - a full debate, including the opportunity to suggest amendments and vote on passage, up or down, by all members. The system has allowed enough time for all interested parties to offer their opinions and for all members to prepare for debate.

Debate over a controversial bill can go on into the evening, filling the chamber with high drama as legislators state their positions with eloquence and emotion. At the close of debate, members vote from their desks. In the House, votes are taken electronically. The Senate uses oral roll call votes. Legislators cannot abstain - each bill requires a "yea" or "nay" vote from every member present. To pass, the bill must receive a constitutional majority.

A "constitutional majority" is composed of more than half of those elected to the House or the Senate, regardless of how many members are present when a vote is taken. In the House of Representatives, with 203 members, 102 votes make up a constitutional majority. In the Senate, with 50 members, 26 votes are a constitutional majority.

A "simple majority" is equal to more than half of those who are present when a vote is taken. A simple majority requires a quorum of members to be present and is a majority of that group. A simple majority is enough to carry any proposition unless otherwise specified by constitution, statute or rule. Therefore, the smallest legal vote in the Senate could be 14 to 12; while the smallest vote in the House could be 52 to 50.

Certain appropriations bills require a two-thirds majority. In the House, 136 votes are needed; in the Senate, 34 votes are needed when a two-thirds vote is required.

Once passed by one chamber of the General Assembly, the legislation immediately is sent to the other chamber, where it follows the

same pattern of action - committee work and three session days' calendar consideration. If a bill is passed by the House, sent to the Senate and amended there, it must be returned to the House for concurrence. The same procedure is followed if the House amends a Senate bill.

If the originating chamber insists on its version of the bill and refuses to accept changes by the other chamber, two things may happen. Either the amending chamber may agree to remove its amendments, or a conference committee may be appointed.

The conference committee is made up of three members from each chamber. The task of this group is to attempt to reach a compromise, if possible, which then is presented to both houses in the form of a conference committee report on the bill. (However, the committee is not required to issue a report and is under no specific timeframe to complete its work.) Both the House and Senate must adopt the report in order for the legislation to be passed.

Enactment into law

After final passage by the General Assembly, the bill is signed by the speaker of the House

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and the president of the Senate. The bill then goes to the governor's desk.

The governor has three courses of action when considering the future of a piece of legislation. The bill can be signed within 10 days (30 days at the end of a two-year session) and it becomes law. The bill can be vetoed and returned to the chamber of origin, together with the reasons for the veto. The General Assembly, by a two-thirds vote of both houses, may override the veto, and the bill would become law without the governor's approval. If the governor does not act upon a bill within 10 (or 30) calendar days after it has been received, the legislation automatically becomes law.

Once a bill is approved, it is transmitted by the governor's office to the Department of State for certification, assignment of an act number and filing. The copy then is transmitted to the Legislative Reference Bureau to clean up any possible typographical or technical errors for preparation for the printing of the new law.

The Anatomy of a Bill

How to Read a Bill

- [Light-face brackets] are used only in bills amending an existing law. They indicate that anything enclosed thereby appears in the existing law, but that it is proposed to omit it from the law as amended. The brackets and anything enclosed by them are carried along into the pamphlet law version of the bill, if the bill is finally enacted; thus, the reader of the pamphlet law can tell the exact date that the bracketed material was removed from Pennsylvania law.
- Underscoring is used only in bills amending an existing law. It indicates that the underscored matter does not appear in the existing law, but that it is proposed to insert it in the law as amended. The underscored matter will be carried into the law if the bill is finally enacted.
- Ellipses (* * *) are used only in bills amending an existing law. They indicate omitted law which is not proposed to be changed in the bill.
- [Dark-face brackets] are used only in bills that have been amended, either in committee or on the floor of either House.

They indicate brackets inserted by such amendment and have the same effect as light-face brackets.

- Strike out type is used only in bills that have been amended either in committee or on the floor of either House. They indicate that anything so printed appeared in a previous print of the bill but is to be deleted and will not appear in the text of the law if the bill is finally enacted .
- CAPITAL LETTERS are used only in bills that have been amended, either in committee or on the floor of either House. They indicate that the matter in capital letters did not appear in the original print of the bill but was inserted into the bill by amendment in either House. The matter in capital letters will be carried into the law, if the bill is finally enacted in ordinary print, unless it is also underscored, in which case it will be printed in italics.
- Strike out type and CAPITAL LETTERS indicate only the amendments made to the bill at the last previous state of passage. All prior strike out amendments are dropped entirely from the new print, and all insert amendments previously shown in CAPITAL LETTERS are reset in lower-case type. The one exception to this rule is that a House bill amended more than once in the Senate or a Senate bill amended more than once in the House will, on the second and subsequent printings, cumulate all amendments made in the latter House, so that all amendments in which concurrence by the House of origin is required will stand out.
- The line immediately preceding the title of the bill shows the stage of passage at which the amendments appearing on that print were made. All preceding printer's numbers of each bill are shown in consecutive order in a line at the top of the first page of each bill.

This information was obtained from the Website of the Pennsylvania General Assembly at www.legis.state.pa.us

The State Board of Education

Most regulations and policies affecting education are created and/or reviewed by the State

Board of Education. The State Board is a state agency created by an act of the General Assembly in 1965. There are a total of 21 members of the board: 17 nominated by the governor and confirmed by the Senate for six-year terms; the remaining four the majority and minority chairpersons of the Senate and House Education Committees or their designees. The legislators serve as ex-officio members with full voting privileges and may continue to serve on the board for as long as they hold their respective positions. In addition, the chairperson of the Professional Standards and Practices Commission is an ex-officio member of the State Board without voting privileges. (The PSPC is the legal adjudicatory body in the state for administering professional employee discipline, including the revocation and suspension of certificates, and certificate reinstatement. The commission also makes recommendations to the State Board concerning teacher preparation and certification issues.)

The members of the State Board of Education also are the members of the State Board of Vocational Education. The two boards, although having identical members, sit and transact business as separate agencies.

Members of the State Board receive no salary for their service. They meet six times a year and are headquartered in the Department of Education building in Harrisburg. A small administrative staff oversees the daily operations of the board.

The powers and duties of the State Board of Education are defined by the General Assembly. Prior to 1991, the General Assembly was required under the “Sunset Law” to periodically re-establish through legislation the existence of the State Board and certain other state agencies. However, the “Sunset Law” expired in 1991 and has not been renewed. Act 43 of 1988 was the most recent review of the State Board of Education, and those provisions guide the operations of the board today.

Powers and duties of the State Board

As the state education policymakers, some of the general duties of the board are to promulgate and adopt rules, regulations and standards governing educational programs of the public

schools of the commonwealth. The board also establishes regulations and policies regarding certain private schools and institutions of higher learning. The State Board adopts, every five years, master plans for basic and higher education. These plans provide guidance in areas such as school program approval, personnel training and certification, curriculum development, student testing and assessment, school governance, school finance, buildings and facilities, transportation, technical services to schools and projected long-range needs of the public school system.

Basic and Higher Education councils

The board is divided into two distinct branches: the Council of Basic Education, which deals with matters pertaining to elementary and secondary education, and the Council of Higher Education, which serves the area of postsecondary education. There are 10 members on each council, and the board chairperson is a member of both councils.

As regulations are being created or revised, the preliminary research and writing is done

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at the council level. A committee of council members will be appointed to lead the project. The committee will conduct any necessary research on the issue and then draft preliminary language of the new regulations. The proposal then is presented to the full council for further refinement. The council continues to work on the proposal and finally votes to recommend intention to adopt the new language. The draft then is presented to the full State Board for approval. Public hearings frequently are held by the councils or the full board so that suggestions or objections to draft proposals can be heard early in the process. The board may amend the document before it formally grants its initial approval of the proposal. Once the full board votes its “intent to adopt” the new rules, the proposal is published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*, and the regulatory review process begins. The new regulations are published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* again when they receive final approval through the process.

The State Board and the Department of Education

What relationship does the State Board have with the Pennsylvania Department of Education? The department is an administrative agency created by the General Assembly with primary responsibility to carry out the educational laws of the state and policies of the State Board. The department does not make policy but is authorized to adopt rules, directives and guidelines as may be necessary to carry out legislative mandates and State Board policies.

The secretary of education is not restricted in the method of providing such guidance to school districts. One option is for the secretary to create a standard, which is a formal, written document that is codified and has the force and effect of law. It is created by the secretary and presented to the State Board for its approval. Although the board does not have the authority to amend the language of a standard, it may recommend changes to the secretary. The responsibility of the board is only to approve or disapprove what is presented to it. A standard, like a regulation, is a formal document that also must go through the regulatory review process for final approval.

In other instances, the secretary or commissioner for elementary and secondary education may issue a Basic Education Circular. These BECs provide advice, guidance and specific instruction to local school administrators but do not have the binding force of laws, regulations or standards. They are not formally adopted and are not subject to the regulatory review process.

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Section VI



Congress and the Federal Legislative Process

Laws affecting public education and the operations of Pennsylvania's local school boards also are generated on the federal level by the United States Congress.

The Congress is comprised of a House of Representatives and a Senate. There are 435 members of the House who are elected every two years (in even-numbered years) from among the 50 states. The total number of representatives is established in law, with the number per state apportioned according to population. Reapportionment is done by each state legislature following the federal census to determine its congressional district boundaries.

There are 100 members of the Senate, two from each state, without regard to population. Senators are elected for six years, their terms staggered so that approximately one-third of the seats are contested in any general election. The terms of senators from one state may not end in the same year.

Both representatives and senators must be residents of their states at the time of their election. In addition, a senator must be at least 30 years of age and have been a United States citizen for at least nine years. Representatives must be at least 25 years old and a U.S. resident for seven years or more.

Congress meets from Jan. 3 following the general elections until final adjournment in September or October two years later, with breaks and recesses. Strictly speaking, Congress as such does not adjourn; the separate houses do so. Each Congress is divided into two sessions, roughly corresponding to calendar years. Congresses have been numbered in sequence since the first Congress; sessions are designated as the first or second. Thus, congressional documents are numbered by Congress and session; for example, 1071h Congress, 1st Session might appear on a report. Public laws are numbered by the Congress in which they are enacted, plus a sequential number such as P.L. 107-334, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The 2007-08 session is the 110th Congress.

Moving bills through Congress

As with the procedures for creating Pennsylvania law, the process for moving federal legislation can take months or even years with no assurances that a bill will pass. And as with the state process, many more bills are introduced than are ever considered. It has been estimated that more than 20,000 bills are introduced during each two-year term, and that fewer than 5% of them become law. Bills not considered in a two-year term expire and must be reintroduced during the next term.

The process for moving federal proposals begins when a bill is introduced and assigned to a committee for initial consideration. There are 16 Senate and 20 House standing committees, with most committees each having a number of subcommittees. Once a bill is assigned to a committee, it usually is referred by the chairperson to a subcommittee for study, hearings and possible revisions. The subcommittee actually is where the bill is likely to receive its most thorough consideration.

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If approved by the subcommittee, the bill then goes back to the full committee where more discussion and possible revision take place. Once the bill has been marked up by both the subcommittee and the full committee and approved by a majority vote, it is ready for action before the full chamber.

A bill on the floor may be debated and amended. If passed, it goes to the other chamber and follows the same process. However, in most instances, the other chamber has its own related bill that it prefers to consider. Once each chamber passes its bill, both versions go to an appointed conference committee to work out a compromise. The committee writes a conference report, and final passage occurs when approval is given by both the Senate and House. The report is not subject to floor amendment.

Once both sides agree, the bill goes to the White House for the president's signature.

The president has three choices: signing the bill into law; delaying action for 10 days while Congress is in session, thereby allowing the bill to become law without his approval; or vetoing the bill or using a pocket veto if Congress has adjourned at the end of its second session.

If the bill has been vetoed, it goes back to the chamber in which it originated. The legislators may either redraft the bill to accommodate the president's objections or attempt to override the veto. To override the president's veto, the bill once again must pass both chambers, this time with a two-thirds majority. If the veto stands, the bill does not become law and the process must begin anew.

Appropriations and Authorizations

All federal programs that involve funding have to go through two distinct processes - authorization and appropriation.

An authorization bill establishes the details of the program, its reporting requirements, its duration and the maximum amount of money that is allowed to be spent on the program. Typically, programs are authorized for many years and only need to be re-examined when the authorization expires.

A separate appropriation bill actually provides the annual funds for a program.

An appropriation must be passed every year that a program is authorized. It is essentially like

writing an annual check for the program. The amount of money appropriated must be within the parameters set out by the authorization. For instance, if a program's authorized level is \$2 million, any given year's appropriation could be between \$0 and \$2 million.

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees have a difficult task. When they decide appropriations for specific programs, they must take into account the budget parameters for federal programs agreed upon by the annual budget resolution that, in recent years, has been designed to lower the deficit. In other words, they do not have unlimited resources and must pick and choose carefully among different programs.

The following outlines the path that federal legislation follows on its way to becoming law:

Introduction of bill - A member of Congress introduces a new piece of legislation or bill. It can be introduced in either the House of Representatives or Senate or both, except that all appropriations or funding bills start in the House. A bill number is assigned (S 1, for instance, for the first Senate bill introduced; or HR 50 for the 50th bill introduced in the House).

Committee consideration - The bill then goes to the appropriate committee, based on the issue addressed, for consideration. That committee refers the bill to a specific subcommittee, where a hearing often is held and interested parties can testify for and against the bill. After the hearing, a mark-up occurs where amendments are debated and voted on to revise the original bill. The bill then is voted out of the subcommittee to the full committee, where more hearings and another mark-up may take place. The committee votes to decide if the bill will be "reported out" of the committee for consideration by the entire legislative body.

Floor action - Once the bill is reported out of the committee, the process differs somewhat in the House and Senate. In the House, the bill goes to the Rules Committee, where rules are given to the legislation that regulate time limits for debate and determine whether all members of the House can offer amendments. In the Sen-

ate, the bill moves from committee passage to floor debate.

Debate - The speaker of the house and the Senate majority leader hold great power due to their responsibility for scheduling floor debate. A common tactic for “killing” a bill is to delay scheduling of the bill so that it may not be voted on. After the bill is scheduled, floor debate occurs and amendments may be offered (if allowed by the rule in the House). The bill then is voted on for final passage. If it passes, the same process occurs in the other chamber.

Conference - The legislation passed individually by the House and Senate usually differs due to the amendments offered in the committees and on the floor. Each chamber’s version must go to a conference committee made up of members from both chambers in order to work out the differences. A conference report is issued which contains the bill with all agreed-upon compromises. Both the full House and the Senate then must vote on the conference report. If the conference report passes ...

The bill becomes law or is vetoed - The bill then is sent to the president for signature so that the bill can become a law. If the president does not agree with the bill, he or she can veto it and return it to Congress. The bill dies unless the required two thirds majority in both the House and Senate overrides the veto.

The information in Chapter 6 was obtained from the National School Boards Association.

Notes:



Advocacy and your community

Make issues local and relevant

When you bring your issues to the local level, you increase your chances for public support. Issues become relevant to community members when they are close to home. Some ways to really bring issues home to people in your area include using statistics for the issue gathered locally, using such local role models as businesses or volunteers, or presenting the issues in a certain way to help community members understand how they will be affected.

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is an ongoing, collaborative process where the school district works with the public to build understanding, guidance, and active involvement in education. It's not public relations or the shaping of public opinion.

Perhaps the most important goal of community engagement should be the development of a community-based strategic plan for raising student achievement. If a school board believes that the achievement of high academic standards by all students cannot be accomplished by the school district acting alone, it needs to ask whether it is operating as though it were doing so.

For some school districts, establishing a truly meaningful role for the public may stand in stark contrast to a long-held view within the school system and the community, that, in a professionally run public agency, school officials alone should determine the vision, goals and services needed to educate children.

The question that focuses the concept of community engagement make sense, is this one: "How can you, the school board, focus the community on answering the question, what must this community be like in order for all students to succeed?" This question focuses on the community -- and inherent in this question are two assumptions -- first that the success of students in a community is inextricably linked to the conditions in that community. The second assumption is that if only SOME students succeed, something missing -- the goal is that the community supports the success of ALL students.

Key Elements of Community Engagement

- Two-way communication aimed at listening to community perspectives.
- Goal of mutual understanding, developing common meaning and vision.
- Use of the "dispersed knowledge" of community for guidance.
- Use of community volunteerism: parents, civic organizations.
- Aimed at educational results, not just a "feel-good" process.
- Not about public relations, defending the system or public ratification of predetermined plans.

(Source: *Communities Count: A School Board Guide to Public Engagement* by Michael A. Resnick, National School Boards Association.)

Building Community Support

In embracing community engagement around student achievement, school boards have an opportunity to build a partnership with the public that will contribute significantly to the vitality and success of their school system. Beyond having a constructive impact on learning within the schools, community engagement around student achievement also may be the most important leadership step a local school board can take to elevate the public's commitment to children and their education. As a secondary benefit, when done properly, a school board's public engagement initiatives can provide greater value, definition and visibility to the function of the school board in the public's eye.

For all these important reasons, the successful engagement of the community will require well-thought-out strategies and expectations for each phase of the process.

However, engaging the community should not be viewed simply as one of the school system's projects but as a way of doing business. School board members should consider the broader implications of community engagement. For example, community engagement may require that the school board think differently about the

roles of the school district and the community, as well as its own governance role, including how each relates to the other and how each can help the other.

Challenges in Community Engagement

While school boards should listen to the communities they serve, members should be clear – and members of their communities should be clear – that the role of the school board is to make policy, and is not to give orders to teachers or administrators respecting classroom activities or student-discipline. School boards should make it a point to discuss this division of responsibilities within their own ranks periodically, and should make every attempt to communicate this important fact to members of the community, as well.

Another question that can arise on boards faced with issues raised by community groups is the role of the board member as an elected official. Is the board member a “pass-through” for the opinions of the community, or is the board member an individual who, after being elected, is obliged to gather necessary information in order to determine the appropriate policies for the district? Should a director

vote as the voters of the community instruct him to vote, or should a director use independent judgment in making decisions? This is a question that borough councilmen, state legislators, and

Congressmen must decide as well as school directors, and is a good question for the board to discuss at a retreat, frankly and openly.

Members of the community can ask boards to make policy or change policy, but there are many ways to do so. While school boards are made up of elected officials, unlike member of the state legislature or members of Congress, these elected officials have no staff, no office, and no official phone. A member of the public who wishes to lobby a school director must, by necessity, call the director at home or at his or her place of work, or see the director at a social function or while he is on errands in and about the community. It is easy under such circumstances to meld unconsciously the separate roles of parent and board member, or scout leader and board member, or car salesman and board director. But parents, scout leaders, and car salesmen do not have the authority to determine the allocation of resources in local schools, or increase property taxes on friends and neighbors who live within the school district, or make decisions respecting which students should be expelled from school. School directors do.

Our children learn much of how our society works through their experiences with and observations of school life. Balancing local control of education with educationally correct policies and practices is not an easy task. In this sense, volunteer school directors have a huge effect on the children they are pledged to educate.

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Section IX



Media Relations for School Board Members

Who are the media?

So when we use the term “media” we have to ask, who are the media today? First, there are the traditional media -- newspapers, television, and radio. Newspapers are published across the state, and each particular newspaper focuses on a city, town, or region, sometimes a county or several counties. At one time newspapers in Pennsylvania were owned by families; now there is more corporate and out of state control. Radio grew up in a similar way in the state. Television has more or less always been corporate-owned and much of the ownership is out-of-state. Things have changed in the media landscape over the past few years and much of the change relates to the financial pressures many media outlets are experiencing. Taking newspapers as an example, the reporter covering your board meeting may be employed full-time by the newspaper company but increasingly, writes for the newspaper part-time and is paid by the story. Additionally, many reporters write not only for the print edition but also for the online edition and we are seeing that reporters are expected to monitor reader comments and respond to them.

And, to touch here on new media -- Facebook, personal blogs and websites, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Instagram, and others new ones that haven't been invented yet that we'll be talking about six months from now -- these are gaining in popularity and some school boards have used these tools successfully. However, we have probably all typed into a search engine the words “school board,” and ended up on YouTube with some pretty spectacular video of board members behaving badly. (Of course, we're talking about board members from other states.) Such is the power of new media and it also serves as a reminder that citizen journalists are everywhere now. A citizen may set up a video camera at a public board meeting as long as it is not disruptive to proceedings, and later upload the contents to YouTube or a blog, or -- to bring this full circle -- to the local newspaper's or television station's website.

Who speaks for your board?

One question your board can and should wrestle with is, who speaks for your board? And the answer is -- Each board member speaks for him/herself. Any board member or even the entire board may speak to the press as long as they do not disclose confidential information. Your board should consider the advantages of having one consistent voice speaking on behalf of the board to the public. And while you are at it, perhaps also consider the downside of having many board members speak to the media OR the downside of having just one board member speak to the media without the board having decided on a message on which they have come to consensus.

If you decide to have one consistent voice speak for your board, it doesn't mean that just one person speaks at all times for your board. Depending on the topic, your board may have your

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board president; chief negotiator, superintendent; or solicitor speaking for you.

Some school districts have a public relations officer. If your district does, and if it is your policy to refer members of the media to this person, make sure you have their contact information with you.

Dealing with the media

Know which media and reporters typically are covering your meetings. This next piece of advice is from a reporter -- if you want to proactively build a good relationship with a local reporter, invite him or her to talk with you, and ask what he or she is hearing about your district and your board. However, the reporter is not your "friend" -- they cannot be. Remember that the reporter feels he or she must maintain a professional distance from their source. It is the worst thing in the world for a reporter to feel that their source is trying to co-opt them. Also, when a reporter calls your home or cell phone or office, ask their deadline and if you are the board member who has been asked by the board to speak on the board's behalf, make sure you return calls and emails promptly, because the reporter is usually on a deadline.

Take care with speaking "off the record." This means more than just declaring that what you're about to say is off the record, you must obtain the reporter's agreement before speaking off the record that what you're about will in fact, be treated as off the record. Really think about why you're speaking off the record to a reporter in the first place. Going a little further into off the record, some observers feel that "off the record" doesn't even exist anymore, that it's an antiquated notion. All the more reason to be careful with off the record.

If you are unsure of a fact, refer the reporter to a source who has that information. In addition, and this is something you will be working on throughout your service as a board member, stay informed on education issues in general, and your district's issues in particular.

Reporters often will call a district if something happens on the national level, and they'll look for a local angle. Also, the media are always interested in what is happening in your district pertaining to original content like student achievements and special events.

Some school board members tell us that when they read a story for which they have been interviewed, they have been misquoted. One thing you can do in this situation is to contact -- email is best -- the reporter to ask for a correction, if not in the print edition, in the online edition of the story.

Some don'ts to consider

Don't argue with a reporter. Remember the old adage: "Never pick a fight with someone who buys ink by the barrel." (Or in this day and age, buys electrons by the barrel.) Don't assume the reporter knows your issues, or will ask what educational jargon or acronyms mean. Don't ramble when answering a question. Be succinct. Don't convey to the reporter that his/her media outlet exists to cover your story or any of these old negative attitudes. First that the media exist to "sell advertising." Reporters don't control the placement of your school board's story, or even if your story will run. An editor controls whether your story will run, not the reporter. Another don't -- don't convey to a reporter the attitude that the media are not interested in a story unless it involves crime or corruption: "if it bleeds, it leads." And finally, if you want a decent relationship with the media, don't convey to the reporter that you think reporters are lazy or uncomprehending. A spirit of educating the reporter about school board matters in a respectful way is sometimes all that's needed.

We suggest that you do make a follow up call to a reporter who was unable to stay for your whole meeting. Many reporters, especially TV reporters, have an early deadline and can't stay. Follow up so that all sides of the story are told.

Section X



Glossary

of legislative and regulatory terms

A

Act (law, statute) – a bill or proposed legislative measure that has been passed by both houses of the General Assembly and signed by the governor, passed over his veto or allowed to become effective without his signature.

Ad Hoc – established for a particular purpose without reference to wider or permanent applications, such as ad hoc committees.

Adjournment – to end a legislative day.

Adjournment Sine Die – adjournment without naming a day for reconvening, usually refers to the end of a two-year legislative session.

Amendment – changes to specific portions of a proposed law. Amendments may be offered in committee or on the House or Senate floor. Amendments may be introduced at several points and are themselves subject to amendment.

Apportionment – the allocation of legislative seats. Apportionment is readjusted in every decade following the census, with legislative districts drawn based on population.

Appropriation – an act that permits the government to make expenditures and to incur obligations for specific purposes. An appropriation usually is limited in amount for the time covered by the approved budget.

Appropriations Committees – the committees in both the House and Senate that consider all legislation that proposes state expenditures. These two committees also are responsible for analyzing the governor's budget proposal.

Authorization – an act approving a project, program or activity, outlining its purposes and procedures, assigning authority for its administration and, usually, fixing maximum amounts of money to be expended upon it. An appropriation provides the funds.

B

Basic Education Circular (BEC) – printed information consisting of advice, guidance and interpretation of Pennsylvania Department of Education policy to help school officials be in compliance with current laws and practices. However, BECs do not have the binding force of laws, regulations or standards. They are not formally adopted and are not subject to the regulatory review process.

Bill – the draft of a proposed law introduced in either the Senate or House of Representatives. The Legislative Reference Bureau assists legislators in writing bills to ensure that they carry out the intent of their sponsors, avoid conflict with other laws and are in correct legal form. Bills are numbered in each house in the order of their introduction, and they remain in an active status for the duration of a two-year legislative session. Bills also have a printer's number located on the front page; each time a bill is amended, it is reprinted and receives a new printer's number.

Bills Referred to Committee – bills to be introduced are delivered to the speaker of the House or president pro tempore of the Senate. The proposals then are assigned to the appropriate committee for consideration.

Bill History – a listing of all the bills and resolutions introduced in the General Assembly and the actions taken on them by each chamber.

Bluebacks – the name and color the cover for a legislator's proposal in its initial stage. After a blueback is duplicated for distribution to all members, it is known as a bill.

Budget – a complete financial blueprint for a given period, usually one fiscal year that begins on July 1 and ends on June 30. For state government, the budget actually is in the form of appropriations bills, which establish spending levels for authorized programs.

C

Calendar – a list of bills that have been approved by committees and now are to be considered by the full House or Senate. The list serves as an agenda or order of business for a chamber.

Caucus – a private, closed meeting of members of the same political party to discuss positions on legislation and other matters of party strategy.

Chamber – either the Senate or House of Representatives.

Chief Clerk – the chief administrative officer (not a member) of the House of Representatives who is responsible for day-to-day operations of the chamber. The chief clerk also convenes the House to elect the speaker and supervises the printing of all bills and journals. In the Senate, the chief clerk serves as the chamber's chief fiscal officer.

Cloture – a parliamentary device for halting debate and bringing an issue to a vote; used in the U.S. Senate to end filibusters.

Committee – a designated group of people empowered to examine and report on pending legislation or to conduct investigations and studies as directed by the parent body.

Concurrent Resolution – a measure affecting action or procedures of both houses, also used to express sympathy or commendation.

Conference Committee – when the House and Senate cannot agree upon a pending measure, each body appoints members to a conference committee to meet for the purpose of arranging a compromise. Three members from each chamber are appointed to the conference committee, two from the majority party and one from the minority party. The six conferees must confine themselves to the differences that exist between the House and Senate; their report then must be approved by each chamber before it can be presented to the governor for final approval.

Congress – the United States Senate and House of Representatives. The Senate has 100 members, two from each of the 50 states. The House has 435 members, with membership apportioned according to population, except that each state must have at least one representative.

Congressional Session – a Congress extends over two calendar years and each congress is divided into two sessions.

Constitutional Majority – the Pennsylvania Constitution requires a majority vote of members elected to each chamber for final passage of a bill (102 in the House, 26 in the Senate).

Cosponsors – legislators who join in the sponsorship of a bill, thus signifying their support.

D

Debate – consists of arguments by legislators for or against some proposed action. A legislator desiring to debate first must gain recognition from the presiding officer of the chamber.

E

Enabling Legislation – an act that allows a department or governmental subdivision of the commonwealth to carry out some action it otherwise would not have the authority to do.

Enactment, date of – the day in which a bill becomes law.

Executive Order – a rule issued by the governor that interprets a provision of law, relates to the operation of a particular agency or establishes some direction or procedure to be followed. Executive orders are published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* and have the general effect of law.

F

Fiscal Note – a statement of the fiscal impact of a proposed bill.

Fiscal Year – the operational year of the government. For state government and most school districts, it begins July 1 and ends June 30 of the following calendar year. The federal fiscal year is Oct. 1- Sept. 30.

Filibuster – delaying tactic, usually by prolonged speech making, employed on a chamber floor by a legislator seeking to block a vote

or compel a majority to modify its legislative program. This tactic generally is used in the U.S. Congress.

Floor – (1) the area within each chamber reserved for members, as distinguished from the visitor galleries; or (2) an assemblage of the entire body of either house, or a quorum thereof, in its chamber for the purpose of doing legislative business. Hence, such expressions as “floor amendments” and “on the floor.”

G

General Appropriation Bill – a single piece of legislation containing numerous individual appropriations. It contains only appropriations for the executive, legislative and judicial departments for the commonwealth, for the public debt and for public schools. This often is referred to as the “budget bill.” All other appropriations are made by separate bills, each concerning one subject.

Germane – relevant to the subject matter of the bill or issue under consideration.

Grandfather Clause – provision of law exempting certain parties from revised standards of a new law.

H

Hearing – meeting of a legislative committee or other body held to receive oral and written testimony on a particular bill or proposal from specialists, government officials or the public.

House – the House of Representatives or, in lower-case usage, either body or “house” of a bicameral legislature.

I

Identification – bills and resolutions are numbered in the order of introduction. Senate bills are prefixed “SB,” and House bills are designated “HB.” Resolutions are prefixed “HR” or “SR.”

Impeachment – a formal accusation enacted by the House of Representatives in the form of a resolution and transmitted to the Senate to initiate the removal of a civil officer. The impeachment then is tried by the Senate sitting as a court.

Item Veto – the Pennsylvania Constitution empowers the governor to disapprove part or all of any item or items of any bill making appropriations of money. The part or parts of the bill approved become law and the item or items disapproved by the item veto become void.

J

Joint Resolution – a measure used to propose an amendment to the state constitution; it requires action by both the Senate and House and is not sent to the governor.

Joint Session – a meeting of the full General Assembly. The Senate and House meet in a joint session to receive the governor’s budget proposal and other addresses and to convene each new legislative session.

Journal – the official record of the proceedings of the Senate and House.

L

Law – an act that has been signed by the governor or that the General Assembly passes over the governor’s veto.

Legislative Day – a legislative day refers to a calendar day during which the House or Senate is in session. Legislative days are not necessarily consecutive because the House or Senate recesses for the weekends, holidays and days when members perform legislative business away from the House or Senate floor.

Legislative Reference Bureau – the bill-drafting agency of the General Assembly.

Lobbyist – a person who seeks, either as an individual or as an agent, to make legislators aware of the needs and interests of a particular constituency so as to influence the development of legislation. Lobbyists must be registered with the state.

M

Mark-Up of a Bill – the section-by-section review and revision of a bill by committee or subcommittee members. This term usually is used in describing the federal legislative process.

Motion – parliamentary request by a legislator for a substantive or procedural action in committee or on the floor, usually becoming effective upon majority vote or with the approval of the presiding officer.

O

Override a Veto – a veto by the governor is overridden if two-thirds of both houses pass the bill after it is sent back to the house of origin with the governor's objections.

P

Pamphlet Laws – volume published by the Pennsylvania Legislative Reference Bureau that contains the text of acts passed during the past legislative session. (The Pennsylvania School Boards Association reprints and distributes for its members the text of newly enacted state laws that are of interest to school officials.)

Parliamentarian – an officer of the House of Representatives who assists in rendering correct parliamentary decisions and in ensuring that the practices and precedents of the House are conducted according to law. This officer must be well-versed in the rules and precedents of the House in order to render sound decisions at a moment's notice.

Pennsylvania Bulletin – the official gazette of the commonwealth. It is published weekly and contains all proposed and final rules and regulations; governor's executive orders; state contract notices; summaries of enacted statutes; statewide and local court rules; attorney general opinions; and other documents authorized by law. All proposed regulations must be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* before becoming enacted and legally enforceable.

Pennsylvania Code – the official codification of the rules and regulations issued by commonwealth agencies.

Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) – an administrative agency created by the General Assembly with responsibility to carry out the educational laws of the state and policies of the State Board of Education.

Pennsylvania Public School Code – a compilation of the statutes enacted by the General Assembly having direct and pertinent reference to public education, its programs, operations and management. The official statutory reference is 24 P S. 1-100, et seq.

Pocket Veto – if Congress should adjourn during the 10-day period given the president for the consideration of a bill, he may withhold his signature and allow the bill to die, without explanation. If Congress remains in session, or should reconvene before the end of the 10-day period, the bill becomes law if the president does not sign.

Political Subdivision – in Pennsylvania, defined as any county, city, borough, incorporated town, township, school district.

President Pro Tempore – the presiding officer, or "temporary president," of the Senate in the absence of the lieutenant governor. On the federal level, the president pro tempore serves in the absence of the vice president.

Public Laws – federal statutes are referred to as public laws. They are designated by the two-year Congress in which they were passed, plus a sequential number indicating the order of enactment, such as PL.107-334. Enactment refers to the point at which a law is signed by the president or passed by a veto override.

Q

Quorum – minimum number of members required to be present for action to be taken in a legislative or governing body.

R

Readings of Bill – the Pennsylvania Constitution requires that a bill receive consideration on three different days. The first day the legislation is read, but no debate or amendments are permitted from the floor at this stage; on the second day, the bill can be debated and amended if the amendments are germane to the subject of the bill; on the third day, a final vote is taken.

Ranking Minority Member – the senior member, in terms of service, of the minority party of a committee.

Recommit a Bill – a motion made on the floor to send a bill back to the committee reporting it.

Regulation – an official interpretation of a statute, detailing the steps to be taken in its administration and enforcement.

Report a Bill From Committee – the return of a bill from a committee to the desk of the Speaker of the House or Senate president pro tempore.

Resolution – a measure used by a single house to take action affecting its own procedure or expressing an opinion.

Roll-Call Vote – calling the names of members for a recorded vote.

S

Secretary of the Senate – chief administrative officer of the Senate (not a member) responsible for the direction of employees, administration of oaths, registration of lobbyists and other tasks necessary to the operation of the Senate.

Session – the General Assembly meets as a continuing body for a two-year time period known as a legislative session.

Speaker of the House – the presiding officer of the House of Representatives. The speaker rules on questions of order, appoints committee chairpersons, appoints conference and special committees and performs other duties. This position is the first among House leadership.

Special Session – the governor may call a special session whenever, in his opinion, the public interest requires one to resolve some urgent pending issue.

Sponsor – a legislator who introduces a bill or who joins a group of legislators in supporting and introducing a bill.

Standard (education) – a written directive intended to provide further guidance to school districts concerning the implementation of laws and regulations. Standards are formal documents developed by the secretary of education and presented to the State Board of Education for consideration. In addition, standards must go through the regulatory review process for final approval. They are codified and have the force and effect of law.

Standing Committee – a permanent committee that is authorized and named by Senate or House rules. Standing committees serve as the workshops of the Legislature. It is their duty to carefully study all bills referred to them and to prepare bills to be reported with a favorable recommendation to each house.

State Board of Education – a policy-making state education agency created by the General Assembly in 1965. The board has 21 members who serve without pay for six-year terms. Seventeen members are appointed by the governor and must be approved by the Senate, and the remaining four are the majority and minority chairpersons of the Senate and House Education Committees. The board is comprised of two subgroups – the Council of Basic Education and the Council of Higher Education.

V

Veto – the disapproval of a bill by the governor. A veto occurs when the governor refuses to sign a bill and returns it to the house of its origin with written reasons for the refusal stated as the “veto message.”