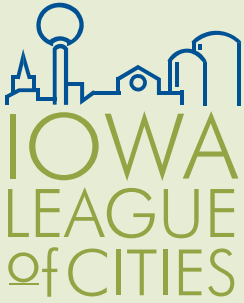


LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

About the League



The Iowa League of Cities serves as the unified voice of cities, providing advocacy, training and guidance to strengthen Iowa's communities. We recognize the need for strong leadership in our mission and in each of our values. These values represent the shared principles that guide all of our efforts and decisions.

What We Do

The League's advocacy work is led by the members of the governmental affairs team, but relies heavily on the grassroots support from the League membership. The League represents and advocates for Iowa's cities year round:

- We have lobbyists at the Capitol throughout session speaking to legislators, keeping our members informed, and registering on proposed bills as For, Against, or Undecided.
- We convene a Legislative Policy Committee of city leaders to talk through proposed bills and determine strategy.
- The League helps cities tell their stories and navigate the legislative process.
- We host the annual Local Leaders Day at the Capitol in March to rally city leaders and connect them with their legislators.



What We Stand For

Our values when approaching legislation remain the same each year. **We advocate for:**

LOCAL CONTROL:

Local decisions should be made by locally elected government.

FINANCIAL STABILITY:

Cities need predictability and consistency to plan for their community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Maintaining flexible economic development tools is essential to cities of all sizes.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Cities need the resources to meet infrastructure, technology, and human needs.

PUBLIC SAFETY:

Cities must have the tools and resources to provide essential public safety services for their communities.

The League's 2025 Legislative Priorities



Police Officers Recruitment, Training and Retention

Collaborate with state policy makers and others to address challenges and ensure all cities have access to trained and qualified police officers.



Sidewalk Maintenance & Liability

Return to allowing local governments to assign the care and maintenance of sidewalks to the adjacent property owner, like they can with snow and ice removal.



Public Notice Timing Disparity

Pursue uniformity in required publication dates to *Code of Iowa* Chapter 362.3.

■ Legislative Basics

The Iowa Legislature

There are 150 legislators in Iowa split between two chambers. There are 100 members in the Iowa House of Representatives, or the “Iowa House.” There are also 50 members of the Iowa Senate. Every individual has one Representative and one Senator who represents them at the Iowa Capitol. Republicans currently control the Iowa House by 14 votes and the Iowa Senate by 9 votes.

The Legislative Session

Session runs from January to late spring each year, where the House and Senate work from the Capitol on legislation. There are a few key dates for session. The first funnel is the last day a bill can be voted out of committee. The second funnel is the last day a bill can be voted out of one chamber and out of committee in the opposite chamber. These two funnels narrow down the number of bills in play and are especially active times in session. One exception to the funnels are bills that spend money, such as appropriations or tax bills. The funnels do not apply to these bills. Finally, legislators are given a per diem to help with the expenses of living away from home. This per diem ends on the 110th day of session. Session typically ends very soon after per diem ends.

2025 Session Timeline

January 13 First Day of Session

March 7 First Funnel

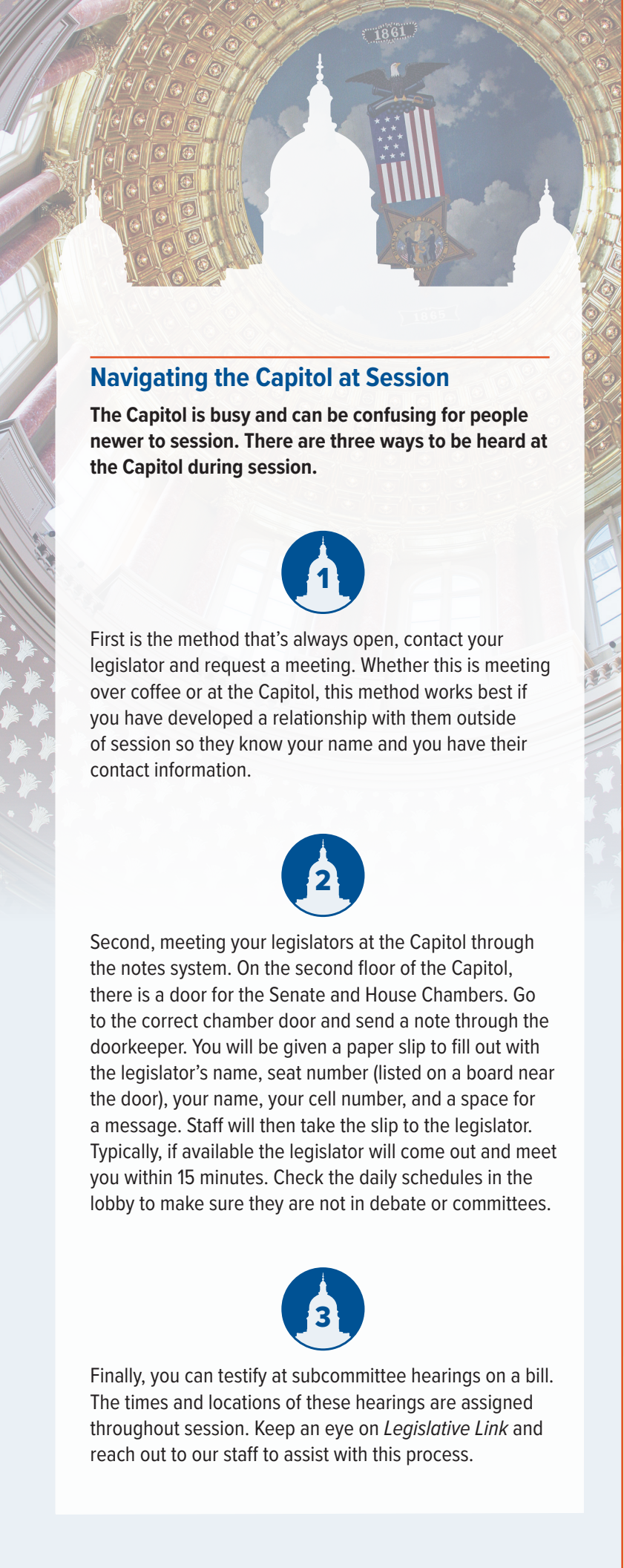
April 4 Second Funnel

May 2 Per Diem Ends

The Legislative Process

- 1. A bill is introduced**
Legislators, the Governor, or a state agency can introduce a bill to either chamber.
- 2. The bill is referred to committee**
The bill is assigned to a standing committee in that chamber by either the House Majority Leader or the President of the Senate.
- 3. The bill is assigned to a subcommittee review**
The committee chair assigns the bill to a subcommittee, which holds an open meeting where the public and lobbyists can express their views and ask for changes.
- 4. The committee takes action**
If the majority of the subcommittee approves, the committee will then pass, amend or take no action on the bill. If no action, the bill dies in committee.
- 5. Debate**
Once a bill passes out of committee, it heads to the floor where it is debated by the chamber.
- 6. Referral to the other chamber**
If the bill passes in one chamber, it is then referred to the other chamber for approval.
- 7. Governor’s approval**
Once an identical bill passes in both chambers, it goes to the Governor for approval. When the Governor signs a bill, it becomes law.





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Navigating the Capitol at Session

The Capitol is busy and can be confusing for people newer to session. There are three ways to be heard at the Capitol during session.



First is the method that's always open, contact your legislator and request a meeting. Whether this is meeting over coffee or at the Capitol, this method works best if you have developed a relationship with them outside of session so they know your name and you have their contact information.



Second, meeting your legislators at the Capitol through the notes system. On the second floor of the Capitol, there is a door for the Senate and House Chambers. Go to the correct chamber door and send a note through the doorkeeper. You will be given a paper slip to fill out with the legislator's name, seat number (listed on a board near the door), your name, your cell number, and a space for a message. Staff will then take the slip to the legislator. Typically, if available the legislator will come out and meet you within 15 minutes. Check the daily schedules in the lobby to make sure they are not in debate or committees.



Finally, you can testify at subcommittee hearings on a bill. The times and locations of these hearings are assigned throughout session. Keep an eye on *Legislative Link* and reach out to our staff to assist with this process.

Advocacy Guide

The Value of Advocacy

- *While the Iowa League of Cities advocates for Iowa's cities, the most effective advocacy comes from a legislator's own district.*
- *Cities represent a significant portion of a legislator's constituency and can have an influential voice.*
- *Many legislators have never served as a local official. They may not know how a bill will impact the cities in their district. It is critical that they hear from you before, during and after session.*

Developing Legislative Relationships

The most important time to develop legislative relationships is in the offseason, when legislators are less busy. Legislators are often happy to meet with city officials in small meetings or larger forums. Once you identify your legislators, you can:

FIND YOUR LEGISLATOR



- Share how the city's tax dollars are spent. A summary of your city's budget and priorities helps give them an understanding of city operations and needs.
- Offer assistance. Starting a conversation by asking "what can I do for you?" can go a long way.
- Provide your legislators with summaries of issues that are important to your city, including facts and data.
- Invite them to address a council meeting, participate in a city-hosted event, or visit project sites.
- Conduct informal meetings with them and local business and community leaders.
- Get their cell phone number. When session kicks up and they're busy, you're competing with everyone else to get their attention. Having a more direct line of communication and an existing relationship helps you be heard amongst the noise.

Tips for Effectively Communicating with Legislators

Like all elected officials, legislators are busy and hearing from many different people and organizations on many different topics. They are also wildly different from each other based on their profession, background, family, and other factors just like all of us. Getting to know them is step one. After that, some communication types include:

- BE CIVIL:** Be professional and courteous, even in disagreements.
- BE SPECIFIC:** Tell your city's story with local data and impacts.
- BE CONCISE:** Know what points you want to make and keep them brief.
- BE ACCURATE:** Double check your facts and data.
- BE CLEAR:** Make a specific ask, such as a yes or no vote.
- BE PERSISTENT:** Stay active and engage. Most things take time and repeated efforts.
- BE TIMELY:** During session, there's a lot on their plate. Gauge when to communicate based on where the bill is in the process.
- FOLLOW UP:** Send a thank you or acknowledgement.
- INVOLVE THE LEAGUE:** Our legislative staff is happy to assist and support you!



Tips for Testifying at Subcommittees

Subcommittee hearings are a crucial way to be heard during session. Many bills can be influenced at this stage and the deciding body is typically three legislators. Keep an eye on *Legislative Link* and reach out to League staff to help stay on top of legislative hearings as they are often scheduled only days in advance.

- Research the committee: Who's on it, does a legislator from your area serve on it, reach out to the members before the hearing.
- Prepare your remarks: You will usually have 1-3 minutes to speak. Be concise and on point.
- Introduce yourself and who you represent.
- Avoid duplication of prior testimony. Offer concrete information and local examples of how the bill will impact your city.
- Be honest. If committee members ask you questions and you don't have the information on hand, offer to find out and follow up with their office.



How You Can Stay Informed

Sign up for *Legislative Link*, every Friday during the Legislative session you will be briefed on issues relevant to cities as well as ways you can participate in the legislative process.

