Legislative Advocacy

Bill Jordan, M.A.
Senior Policy Advisor/Governmental Relations
New Mexico’s Legislature

• Meets for a 60-day session on odd-numbered years to do all business.
• Meets for a 30-day session on even-numbered years for budget issues only, plus whatever the Governor wants.
• Meets between regular sessions for interim committee hearings to hear reports on past actions and to prepare for the next session.
Representation

- Senators represent about 50,000 people (or about 27,500 who vote).
- Representatives represent about 30,000 people (or about 16,500 who vote).
Bills, Memorials and Resolutions

- **Bill** = a change in law or an appropriation.
- **Capital Outlay** request = also a Bill.
- **Memorial** = passed to study an issue and obtain more information or to honor someone.
- **Resolution** = a proposal to amend the constitution by agreeing to take the proposed amendment to the voters.
Why Advocate?

- Your credibility, knowledge, caring.
- Constituents/Voters matter to elected officials.
- Elected officials need and want your expertise.
- You have a vote and a voice, children don’t.
- Policymakers do listen.
- The squeaky wheel gets the oil.
- When you advocate for change, you change.
How?

- Personal or group visits
- Personal letters
- Phone calls
- Emails
- Letters to the editor and op-ed pieces
- Editorial board meetings
- Press conferences, press releases
- Radio talk shows
- Testimony at committee hearings
Who?

- Your own elected officials (and candidates!)
- Committee members
- Committee chairs
- Legislative leadership
- Legislative staff and analysts
- Department officials and analysts
- General public (through the media)
When?

- During a campaign to influence the agenda.
- After the campaign to influence priorities.
- Before a legislative session… because they have time to listen.
- During a legislative session.
- After a legislative session… to thank them or express your disappointment with their votes.
• Be *united* and well *organized*.
• Make an appointment.
• Be quick with gratitude, but slow to criticize.
• Be courteous and respectful.
• Use *both* data and personal stories.
• Keep it simple, be concise and to the point.
• *Ask* for what you want.
• Report back.
Don’ts

• Be late.
• Be argumentative, arrogant, condescending or threatening.
• Exaggerate.
• Overwhelm them with too much data.
• Take more time than you were offered.
• *Never* burn bridges. Leave the door open for further discussion, on this or other issues.
Legislative Advocacy Flowchart

1. Research & analysis
2. Policy development
3. Coalition work
4. Civic engagement
5. Legislature enacted
6. Lobbying
7. Communications
8. Evaluation
Mind Your Message

• Develop your message.
• *You frame* the message, define the debate.
• Stay on message.
• Repeat your sound bite.
• Tell the story the way you want it.
• Hook the issue to a current news story.
• Know what *not* to say.
For Info on Bills and Legislators

www.nmlegis.gov

• To find a legislator, click on Legislators
• To find a bill, click on Legislation
• To find the schedule of committee hearings and the agenda for the Senate and House, click on What’s Happening
• To watch committees or floor sessions, click on Webcast