

A *Guide* **to Effective**
Grassroots
Advocacy
for California's Healthcare
Districts





Together **We can Make a** **Difference!**

As Health Care Districts, OUR VERY EXISTENCE IS AT THE MERCY OF STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATORS. HEALTH CARE DISTRICTS ARE IMPACTED BY LEGISLATION THAT REGULATES SPECIAL DISTRICTS. FURTHERMORE, FUNDING FOR DISTRICT HOSPITALS AND CLINICS IS BASED ON GOVERNMENT REIMBURSEMENTS FOR HEALTH SERVICES, SUCH AS MEDI-CAL AND MEDICARE.

The only way to ensure that the interests of Health Care Districts are advanced within the legislature is for our Districts to become actively involved in the legislative process. Now is the time for us to engage in an organized grassroots program! The more registered voters we can involve in a given legislative district, the more political influence Health Care Districts can wield in Sacramento. ***There is strength in numbers!***

Collectively, ACHD represents over 25,000 employees, volunteers and physicians – all potential supportive voters on issues of concern to our Districts. In addition, more than 2,000,000 individuals are served by our Health Care Districts annually. Organizing these two groups of potential voters to communicate their support for initiatives that benefit our Districts will definitely get the attention of the 61 State Legislators who have Health Care Districts within their respective Senate/Assembly Districts.

This guide is a quick reference to assist Health Care District representatives in the grassroots advocacy process. Let's get involved in influencing the decisions that establish policy and create laws which will benefit our Health Care Districts.



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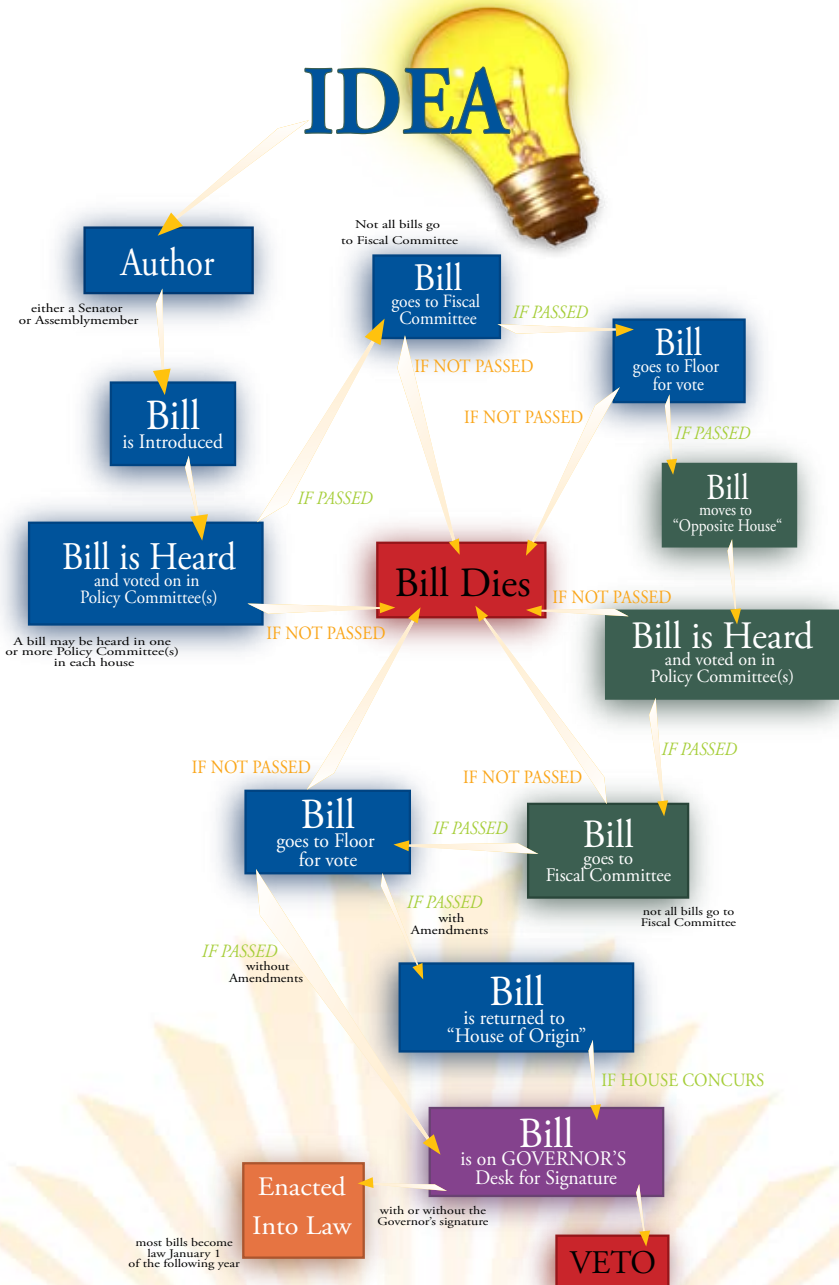
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How a Bill Becomes Law



For our voice to be heard, HEALTH CARE DISTRICTS MUST BUILD AN EXTENSIVE, STATEWIDE GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY NETWORK. WE MUST ORGANIZE, MOTIVATE AND MOBILIZE AS MANY INDIVIDUALS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL AS POSSIBLE WHO ARE WILLING TO BECOME INVOLVED IN GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY ON OUR BEHALF.

Grassroots advocacy is effective for a very simple reason: **Lawmakers' top priority is re-election, or election to higher office.** This tends to make them very responsive to the perceived needs and concerns of their constituents. Once elected officials understand that a significant number of their constituents share the concerns of Health Care Districts, our concerns will become top of mind concerns for them as well.

Former California Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh once said, "Money is the mother's milk of politics." While this is largely true, it only tells part of the story.

In truth, there is one thing more important to elected officials than money:

VOTER SUPPORT.



Building *Community* Support

Organize a Town Hall Meeting

ONE OF THE MOST ‘UNDERUTILIZED’ WAYS TO COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS IS TO ORGANIZE A TOWN HALL MEETING! A TOWN HALL MEETING IS A LARGE PUBLIC FORUM WHERE CONSTITUENTS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS GATHER TO VOICE THEIR VIEWS ON POSITIONS AND MATTERS THAT AFFECT THEIR COMMUNITY.

GET ON YOUR MARK:

- Identify your topic and get your spokesperson/moderator onboard.
- Reserve your space (Veteran’s hall, a school, a private home)
- Prepare your agenda, opening and closing remarks

GET READY:

- Send invitations to community residents and businesses two to three weeks prior to your event
- Market your meeting in advance. Prepare a press release or media advisory (Refer to ‘Media’ section of this guide or visit ACHD’s website at www.achd.org)
- Place flyers and posters in high foot traffic establishments in your community.



Top **4** Qualities in Searching for a Spokesperson/ Moderator

1. Professional at all times
2. Well versed on the topic of discussion
3. Consistently calm in the face of controversy
4. Keeps the agenda moving forward with all due respect!

GET SET:

- Stage your location and arrange seating with clear view of speaker(s)
- Place your signage appropriately at the entrance and at the speaker(s) table/podium
- Setup registration table and sign-up sheet
- Have any packets or hand-outs available at check-in
- Introduce yourself in advance to elected official, staff members and media members

GO!

- State your issue clearly
- When possible, ‘tell a personal story’ with which your audience can identify
- Provide numbers and statistics. Large numbers get the attention of local and state officials
- Always remain respectful, polite and professional
- Ask questions
- Follow-up will be placed in the forefront with Legislator’s staff members

Information Booths

One way to get information to the community about a particular issue is to set up an information booth in a **public place**. Contact ACHD for a Legislative Team member to be available for your event.

- Target health fairs, community fairs and festivals, and lobbies of District Hospitals and medical facilities
- Get approval from event sponsors or facility managers
- Notify your local public media outlets (see section on ‘Media’ regarding a *media advisory* and *press release*)
- Provide information kits (see section on ‘Information Kits’)
- Recruit and sign up new grassroots volunteers:
 - ▶ encourage them to visit ACHD’s website to register
 - ▶ have them fill out a volunteer recruitment form
 - ▶ forward copies of the volunteer recruitment form to ACHD (forms are available on ACHD’s website)

Networking Local Government, Businesses and Other Organizations

Passion, visibility and numbers get attention – and action! When Legislators receive hundreds of letters from registered voters in their community, and from major organizations in their districts in support of an issue, they **MUST** respond! This kind of focused, passionate support has a significant influence on how legislators vote on an issue. Ideally, these letters should come from a variety of sources within your communities.

Build a contact list of the major organizations in your area (a “Google” search can help you build this list). Focus on organizations that may have a common interest in the issues of concern to your District. You will then need to make contact with the leadership of these organizations to enlist their support. Include the following:

- Auxiliaries, Non-profit Groups, Community Volunteers, Foundations
- District Employees
- Local Elected Officials (City Councils and County Supervisors)
- Chamber of Commerce
- Schools and PTAs
- Local Media Resources (radio, newspaper, local TV stations)
- Fire and Police Departments – Public Service Entities
- Neighborhood Businesses and Retailers (real estate, homebuilders, auto and mechanic shops, grocery outlets, post office, drug stores etc.)
- Religious Community Leaders
- Medical and Dental Associations - Including Board Members

Media

Print and broadcast media are excellent forums to alert the local public of an event or cause within your District. Many journalists would be very responsive to your stories, if they had access to the information. It is important to establish a relationship with as many of the people in the local media as possible – before you need them! If you keep them informed and treat them right, then your stories will get the attention they deserve.

- Develop relationships with your local newspaper, radio, TV, cable and College or University media outlets
- Present your event as compelling or “newsworthy.” Include a local human aspect to it – i.e., impact on the community, involve prominent figures, involve individuals with personal stories of struggle, triumph or justice
- Prepare a Media Advisory to alert the media of an upcoming event. Fax this one week prior to the event
- Prepare a Press Release, which is more detailed than a Media Advisory. It is usually sent out the morning of the event
- Call the assignment desk at TV stations or on-air radio reporters who will be sympathetic or understanding to your cause (this is where your contacts come in handy!)
- If you happen to get an interview, remember:
 - ▶ Repeat your message frequently
 - ▶ Stay focused on your issue, don’t ramble
 - ▶ Don’t preach
 - ▶ Watch your language, keep profanity at bay
 - ▶ State the truth
 - ▶ Don’t bluff – If you don’t know the answer, say so
 - ▶ Be civilized to the journalist
 - ▶ Address your opponent’s arguments, **NOT** his/her character
 - ▶ Be professional

Tip:

For details on preparing a Media Advisory or Press Release, visit our website at www.achd.org



Writing Letters to the Local Newspaper/Editor

Letters to your local newspaper AND/OR EDITOR
CAN SERVE AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL IN GAINING VISIBILITY FOR
YOUR ISSUES.

- Be concise – apply the ‘one point’ OR ‘one issue’ rule
- Build compassion and interest
- Make it easy to read (less than 200 words)
- Describe the effect on the community and/or readers
- Provide possible solutions
- Check with the local newspaper for its preferred method of delivery
- Provide your printed name, address and phone number
- Proofread and invite others to review your letter



Information Kits

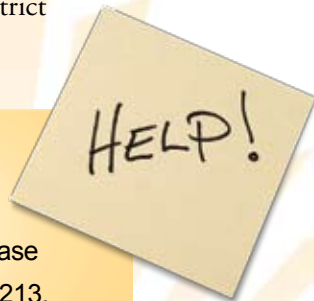
Provide your target audience WITH INFORMATION KITS THAT ARE WELL ORGANIZED AND DETAILED. A CLEAR AND CONCISE MESSAGE IS CRITICAL IN GAINING SUPPORT FOR YOUR ISSUE. THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE SHOULD ALLOW FOR AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE RATIONALE BEHIND YOUR POSITION AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF NOT ADDRESSING THE ISSUE AS YOU SUGGEST. AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE, COMMUNICATE THE ISSUE IN THE CONTEXT OF PEOPLE. PEOPLE ARE VOTES AND LEGISLATORS RELATE WELL TO THAT.

ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR INFORMATION KITS:

- Press releases (if any)
- Fact Sheets
- Information relative to local impact
- Talking Points
- Question & Answer Sheets
- Copies of the legislation (if any)
- Related legislative analyses
- Relevant research and statistical analysis
- Copies of press clippings (from newspaper or magazine)
- Letters of support and endorsement from local government in and around the Legislator's District
- Contact information for your District
- Contact information for ACHD

For
assistance

in compiling this material, please
contact ACHD at (916) 266-5213.



Successful legislative advocacy IS BUILT UPON THE RELATIONSHIPS YOU CULTIVATE WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS. FIRST IMPRESSIONS CAN GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS BUILDING A SOLID, PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP. AS WITH MOST IMPORTANT PROCESSES, THERE ARE A FEW RULES TO KEEP IN MIND BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

Do's & Don'ts of Advocacy

Do's:

- Be fully prepared
- Know and understand the legislative process
- Use a single spokesperson whenever possible
- Bring in technical expertise when needed
- Discuss one issue at a time
- Present your case clearly and concisely
- Try to speak from personal experience
- Build personal relationships
- Think long term
- Be a gracious winner and a good loser
- Be available as a resource to the Legislator at all times
- Keep information flowing



Don'ts:

- Take things personally
- Stereotype your Legislator
- Take support for granted
- Be a pest
- Always have your hand out
- EVER argue with an elected official
- EVER threaten an elected official



The process of advocacy IS RELATIVELY SIMPLE:

HAVE AN HONEST CONVERSATION WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS REGARDING ISSUES YOU CARE ABOUT AND FORM AN ON-GOING RELATIONSHIP WITH THOSE LEGISLATORS. THREE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS YOU CAN COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS ARE BY TELEPHONE, WRITTEN LETTERS AND IN PERSON MEETINGS.

Telephone

Initial contact may begin with a phone call to the Legislator's scheduler to request an opportunity to meet with the Legislator or the staff member assigned to the topic you wish to address. If you haven't heard back from the scheduler after five business days of requesting a meeting, you may want to follow-up with a telephone call.

When calling your Legislator (or staff) to state a position on a bill:

- Identify yourself by name and that you are a constituent (you will be asked for your address to verify that you are a constituent)
- Identify the bill by its number and author
- Ask (be tactful) for the Legislator's view or position
- Briefly state your position and the action you wish the Legislator to take ("vote yes" or "vote no")
- Tell them how many people your District represents
- If speaking with staff, ask that your message be relayed to the Legislator
- Give ACHD's Legislative Team a call at (916) 266-5213 regarding the call and outcome

Your Legislator's office number is available on his/her home page at

www.leginfo.ca.gov

You may want to fill-in your Legislator's information on page 19 of this guide.

Write On!

One of the most effective ways to get the attention of Legislators is to write them a letter. It not only lets them know about public support, but also what action their constituents or interested parties would like them to take. **WRITE OFTEN to your Legislators! DO THIS EACH AND EVERY TIME A BILL IS SIGNIFICANTLY AMENDED OR MOVES TO A NEW COMMITTEE OR HOUSE!**

- Use personal or business letterhead with a return address on both letter and envelope
- Address the Legislators properly (Assemblymember or Senator)
- Identify any piece of legislation by bill number and author
- Each letter should be about a single issue or piece of legislation. Include a brief summary of the issue
- Customize your letters and use personal examples

Tip:

ALWAYS fax a copy of your letter before you mail it to ensure that it is received prior to a committee hearing



- Try to keep your letter to one page
- Always send a copy of your letter(s) to policy committee staff, and the staff of the Committee Vice Chair
- Send your letter to committee staff no less than seven days prior to the hearing
- Encourage the community to write letters to their Legislators
- A personalized, handwritten (and legible) letter is also effective
- Send a copy of your letter and any response to ACHD's Legislative Department at 2969 Prospect Park Drive, Suite 260, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

A Sample Letter

(Your Personal or Business Letterhead)

(Date)

The Honorable *(Legislator's Name)*
California State *(Senate / Assembly)*
State Capitol, Room *(Number)*
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: *(Senate / Assembly)* Bill XXX *(Legislator's last name)* –
(SUPPORT/OPPOSE)

Dear *(Senator / Assemblymember)* *(Last Name)*:

I am writing to urge you to vote (“yes” / “no”) on SB/AB
XXX when it comes before the *(Senate / Assembly)* *(Name of
Committee)* on *(date)*.

*SB/AB XXX will (state the single issue and impact the bill will
have on the community or district). (Customize the letter -
use personal examples)*
(Be Brief – Try to keep the letter to one page).

I urge you to *(support / oppose)* (SB/AB XXX).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your Name, Title)
(Your Healthcare District)
(Address)

cc: *(Policy Committee Staff)*
ACHD Government Relations

Fax

The preferred method for setting up legislative meetings is via fax. The scheduler will provide you with the office fax number or you can find a Legislator's fax number on his/her home page at www.leginfo.ca.gov. Make sure you direct all faxed meeting requests to the scheduler's attention.

When faxing a meeting request:

- Keep it brief
- State who you are and what District you're from
- Request the time and day you would like to meet
- State the nature of your meeting
- Identify any bill by number and author
- Give the names of other constituents who will be in attendance.
- Leave plenty of contact information so the scheduler can easily get in touch with you.

Faxing

is also a quick and efficient way to send your letters of support or opposition to Legislators.



U.S. Mail

It is good practice to follow-up your faxed meeting requests, positions on a bill and support / opposition letters by sending them in the U.S. mail. A thank-you card mailed to your Legislator after a meeting is also a nice touch.

A Sample Meeting Request Fax

(Your Personal or Business Letterhead)

FAX

(Date)

To: Honorable *(Legislator's Name)*

ATTN: *(Scheduler's Name, if known)*, Scheduler

Fax: (916) *(Legislator's Fax Number)*

Phone: (916) *(Legislator's Phone Number)*

Re: Request for Appointment on *(Date)*

Pages: **(# of pages)**, including cover

We respectfully request an appointment with you or a member of your staff on *(Day of the Week)*, *(Date)*.

(State the nature of your visit. If the visit involves discussion of a Bill, be sure to identify the Bill and a very brief synopsis). We would be most interested in your thoughts and input on this issue.

We will be happy to work with your office to find a 10-15 minute time block that works best with your schedule. *(Names of the Constituents)* from *(Name)* Healthcare District will be in attendance.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. You may contact *(name of contact person)* at *(phone number)* or by e-mail *(e-mail address)* regarding this request.

Face-to-Face Meetings (with Legislators or Staff)

Now that you HAVE A ONE-ON-ONE MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR (OR STAFF), MAKE THE MOST OF IT. KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU PROBABLY HAVE *NO MORE THAN 15 MINUTES* TO PRESENT YOUR ISSUE AND ENLIST THE LEGISLATOR'S SUPPORT.

- Confirm your meeting with the scheduler
- Whenever possible, include a concerned constituent
- Do your research. Know your Legislator's background
- Do not be offended if you are asked to meet with staff as they are often the eyes and the ears of the Legislator
- Know your issue thoroughly
- Select one spokesperson for the group
- Always open with personal introductions
- State the specific bill number or issue and your position
- Stay focused on your issue
- When questioned, be honest - don't bluff. If you don't know, say so and get back to them with an answer
- Leave something tangible (information kit, business card)
- Follow-up with a brief thank you note

ACHD's Action Alerts

ACHD discourages the use of e-mail to communicate with your Legislators. An email tsunami has impacted the California State Legislature and many offices simply don't have the staff to process it. ACHD utilizes a web-based Action Alert system that allows you to send FAX and postal mail messages to your Legislators quickly and easily.

Visit

www.achd.org
to subscribe to ACHD's
Action Alerts.

My District Legislators

To obtain information FOR YOUR LEGISLATORS,
VISIT WWW.LEGINFO.CA.GOV.

SENATOR _____

District _____

Party Affiliation _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

SCHEDULER _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

ASSEMBLYMEMBER _____

District _____

Party Affiliation _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

SCHEDULER _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

ACHD Legislative Team **Contacts**

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Mission:

Through leadership, education and legislative effectiveness, the mission of ACHD is to foster the success of Health Care Districts in meeting the diverse needs of the communities they serve. Through effective communications and shared information, ACHD seeks to be a resource and networking center for innovative solutions to the common governance and financial challenges facing its Member Districts.