

What follows is information prepared by our lobbyist, John Shullenberger, on meeting with legislators at the statehouse.

## STATE HOUSE PROTOCOL

### Finding Your Legislator

1. Check to see if the House or Senate is "on the floor" (meeting). Both of the House and Senate chambers are on the second floor of the Statehouse. The doors to the chambers are usually kept closed to keep out noise. Unless a vote is in progress, it is perfectly OK to open the door and go in, and to take a seat in the spectator's gallery along the rear wall. You can also take a seat in the balcony at any time. Check to see if your legislator is there by using the seating chart.
2. If the House or Senate is not on the floor, check your legislator's committee room(s). Again, a closed committee room door is only for noise control. It is perfectly OK to open the door and go in. You can take any available seat against the wall. Some committee rooms are very small and there will not be a place for you to sit. It is perfectly OK to stand.
3. When meetings are in progress, communication by note is acceptable. In the House or Senate chamber, give a note addressed to your legislator to one of the Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms and he/she will give it to a page to deliver. In a committee room, hand it to your legislator or write your legislator's name on it and ask anyone to pass it along.
4. If you *can't find your legislator*, you can always send them a note telling them that you'd like to meet with them, and where you are in the building. You can send it through the Sergeant-at-Arms office, which is located in the big entrance hall on the first floor, or through a legislative page.

### **Locating Committee Rooms.**

1. Senate Committee rooms are all on the first floor of the Statehouse.
2. House committee rooms are located in the second and third floors of the Statehouse.
3. You can print out a map of the State House from the Legislative Council's website at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/sthouse/locate.htm>. Ask anyone for help if you can't find the committee room you are looking for, or stop at the Sergeant-at-Arms office in the first floor lobby and ask there.

### **Written materials.**

1. Committee schedules for the week are generally posted on the door of each committee room by Tuesday morning at the latest. You can obtain a packet of the entire week's committee schedules at the Legislative Council office on the first floor of the Statehouse.
2. Copies of bills are available outside of the legislator's lounge on the first floor of the Statehouse. Just take a copy of whatever bills you want. If there are no copies available of the bill you want, ask at the Legislative Council office.

3. The computers outside of the legislator's lounge are for public use. You can use them to check schedules, status of bills, etc. [The Legislative Council's website](#) provides a wealth of information, including weekly committee schedules, copies of bills, bill status, etc.

## MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

### General Tips

1. Plan ahead - make an appointment.
2. Do your homework and prepare your comments.
3. Arrive on time.
4. Establish common ground.
5. State your case concisely.
6. Listen - figure out what concerns/fears need to be addressed.
7. Make sure any information you give is accurate.
8. Offer your assistance if more information is needed.
9. Thank them for their time and consideration.
10. Follow through with any promise you make to provide more information.

Meeting with legislators in the "off season" is a good idea. They have more time to meet with you, and may not be as distracted by other things. This is a particularly good idea if you are looking for support for a program or service, rather than lobbying on a particular bill. If appropriate, have the meeting at the agency or office that provides the program or service.

Group meetings are often more effective than individual meetings. A group of people from different areas who are interested in the same issue can set up a meeting with a key legislator, or a group of people from the same area can set up a meeting with all of their representatives and senators. It depends on the issue.

If you decided to come to the Statehouse to meet with your legislator(s) during the session, early morning (8:00-9:30), lunch time (12-1:30), or late afternoon (after 4:00) are the best possibilities. But be prepared for last minute changes in the legislative schedule that might prevent legislator(s) from meeting with you on time.