USING THIS TRAINING MANUAL

Former Speaker of the U.S. House Tip O’Neill famously said “All politics is local,” and as an IREM chapter legislative contact, you have the most critical position in all of IREM’s Government Affairs efforts. The local level is where members will most directly and immediately feel the impact of policy decisions, both positive and negative. Consequently, it is also where we can most effectively communicate, advocate, and build relationships with policy-makers.

As an IREM chapter legislative contact, you have two objectives:

- To provide members with relevant, updated, and comprehensive information on state and local policy issues, and how they will impact members (monitor policy issues)
- To effectively build relationships and IREM brand recognition with legislators and officials, with the goal of leveraging these to influence policies favorable to the real estate management industry

The IREM Government Affairs Training Manual will assist you in completing these objectives. This manual will equip you with the information necessary to develop a legislative presence, and to teach members how to effectively influence policy makers.

Engagement is the driving force of advocacy, and with information, motivation, then effort you can make a positive difference for our industry!

Updated: November, 2016
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PART I: Introduction

Public Policy, Property Management, and Political Realities

Any national association, even if represented at the regional or local level by chapters or through a federated structure must continuously monitor the pulse of state and local government. Relegating state government affairs to a secondary tier of interest could create problems that cannot be undone at the federal level.

Local chapters must make their voices heard in state legislatures and city halls across the country. IREM’s chapter structure is an effective means of organizing advocacy efforts at the state and local level.

When it comes to the world of politics, there are a few basic points to remember:

- Political decisions produce winners and losers
- Changes in the political environment alter the outcome of legislative decisions
- Politics is inherently competitive

There is some truth to the old saying, “If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.” However, advocacy is centered on effective relationship-building with policy makers. Think of these relationships as investments which can be built up, and drawn upon in the future when a critical policy decision will be made. Building a relationship over time between a policy maker and IREM is the most basic and useful means of advocacy, and as opposed to aggressive last-minute demands, allows IREM to be integrated into the policy-making process.

As a practitioner, expert, and constituent, you have a lot to offer a policy maker. Most legislators do not have your specific knowledge gained from years of hands-on experience when it comes to what works and what doesn’t in the property management world. Leverage this knowledge gap. Policy makers depend on the best information available, and it is often imperfect. When property management issues arise in legislation, it is your job to ensure any policy decision is informed with sound information.

Finally, as their constituent, you have the ultimate power over their decisions: a vote!

Importance of Government Affairs to the Property Management Industry

You’re an IREM member, so chances are you care deeply about the property management industry. Legislation and regulations have the potential for enormous impacts on the industry, both positive and negative. One of the best ways to ensure the continued health and prosperity of the industry is to get involved in the legislative process. Your expertise and knowledge put you in a unique position in that you can offer advice and insight from professional experience on how specific legislation will affect the property management industry.

Do not discount the impact your advocacy efforts have on the property management industry. Whereas the US Congress tackles macro issues the implementation of which will likely be highly
complex and time consuming, **state-level policy consistently has a more immediate and noticeable impact on the industry.**

**IREM as a Resource**

Providing members and chapters with timely, concise information is one of the most valuable services IREM government affairs staff in Chicago and Washington D.C. can deliver. Information on hundreds of issues that affect property management can be obtained through IREM Headquarters:

**Bill tracking** – The IREM Bill Tracker is continually curated by IREM Government Affairs staff. Members are able to use this member-only service to review legislation pertinent to property owners and managers. The IREM Bill Tracker allows members to easily monitor legislation introduced at the state and federal level.

To access the database, follow the following steps:

1. Go to the following webpage OR go to [www.irem.org](http://www.irem.org), and go the Public Policy section of the web site, and then click on “IREM State Legislative Database.”
2. You must be logged in to your IREM account to access the database. If you do not know your used ID or password, call IREM Customer Relations at 800-837-0706.
3. You will see a map of the United States and search options on the upper left side of the page.
4. Begin your search! If you have questions, call IREM government affairs staff at 800-837-0706, ext. 6021.

**Government Affairs Staff** – IREM can assist members and chapters by helping to analyze a proposed bill for its impact on the property management industry. IREM government affairs staff can assist local chapters and members with the following: legislative and regulatory issues commonly visited by state and local governments, model legislative language, issue briefs, supporting data, sample testimony, and techniques for rebutting anticipated arguments.

**Policy Positions** – IREM legislative staff has drafted more than 120 policy positions on various issues impacting the real estate management industry. These positions act as guidance for IREM members when existing or pending legislation exists. Members can use these as a guideline to help lobby for or against policy.

**Legislative White Papers** – Detailed discussions of issues affecting the real estate industry are available in the form of legislative white papers and reports. Briefing papers may be viewed and downloaded from the IREM website. [View the white papers.](#)
PART II: The Chapter Legislative Committee

Chapter Legislative Committee Responsibilities

The principal goal of the chapter legislative committee is to assemble the talent and information necessary to establish positions and communicate with a unified voice for the purpose of promoting and advocating favorable legislation and regulations, and analyzing public policy issues that affect the property management community.

The Committee should also:

- Establish legislative priorities and provide direction for the group's lobbying efforts. A chapter's lobbying power resides in the number of members that the committee can mobilize to support its actions.
- Coordinate all communications with state and local policy makers from the IREM chapter in order to ensure a unified message.
- Broaden legislative committee involvement to as many chapter members as possible in order to increase its visibility and effectiveness.
- Establish a system to regularly monitor federal, state, and local legislative and regulatory actions that affect the property management industry. Staying abreast of federal issues is important, however, prioritize state-level issues. The IREM Legislative Database on the IREM homepage can assist you.
- Decide which legislation might have an impact on the property management industry, and use IREM’s policy positions as a guide for developing an official position on a piece of legislation.
- Provide regular communication of legislative and regulatory developments to IREM chapter members and to IREM government affairs staff in Chicago.
- Promote better understanding of property management public policy issues among IREM members and public officials.

Chapter Legislative Chairperson's Responsibilities

The chapter legislative chairperson will serve as the liaison between IREM national government affairs staff and the local chapter. Frequent contact will ensure that IREM’s policies reflect member and industry concerns.

As chapter legislative chair, your most important responsibility is to:
- Develop and maintain relationships with elected officials at all levels of government.

Other responsibilities include:

- Have interest in, and some knowledge of, the basics of how the legislative process works.
- Serve as the liaison between IREM Headquarters Government Affairs staff and your chapter.
- Provide communication and information to chapter members on pertinent local, state, and sometimes federal legislation and policy.
- Develop chapter legislative agendas – collect information on issues pertinent to that region.
• Encourage chapter member participation in legislative activities.
• Responsible for leading discussions of issues and actions during the chapter legislative committee meetings.
• Develop and maintain relationships with other industry groups (to assist in lobbying efforts).
• Monitor pertinent state-wide legislative issues and report back to chapter when necessary.
• Issue and encourage participation in legislative or regulatory “Calls-for-Action,” requests for involvement from IREM Headquarters, and coordinating legislative needs within the chapter.
• Coordinate and implement an “IREM Day at Statehouse” program to establish relationships between chapter members and state legislators, position IREM as an available resource, and discuss pertinent policy issues if necessary.
• Coordinate and implement the “IREM Congressional In-District” program to meet Members of Congress in their districts (not Washington, D.C.).
• Complete training to be familiarized with website and resources, and participate in follow-up training and educational sessions when available.

Developing a Legislative Agenda

As you already know, the real estate industry is an enormous component of the economy, and IREM members manage nearly $2 trillion in assets. As such, there are thousands of bills introduced nationwide that can potentially impact the property management industry, and in order to address the issues that come up in every session, you’ll need to create a legislative agenda.

First, prioritize and outline current or impending property management issues to be monitored or acted upon and collect information on these issues. There are a number of ways to go about doing this:

• Contact IREM headquarters Government Affairs Staff
• Consult local sources such as chapter members or the local or state REALTOR®
  Government Affairs Director
• Visit the IREM Bill Tracker at the IREM website to see a list of bills currently pending in your state
• Reach out to local officials
• Read local news (be cautious of online sources)

Building relationships with lawmakers and their staff who can be relied upon to inform chapters of impending legislative proposals is extremely valuable. Let your elected official know that you are an interested constituent and want to be a voice on behalf of your industry.

Chapter vary widely in the resources available to devote to state and local government affairs. The level of resources needed depends on the level of member’s involvement on the legislative affairs committee.

Once you have a list of policy priorities, you will need to monitor them. Federal legislation can be monitored through the Library of Congress website at [http://thomas.loc.gov/](http://thomas.loc.gov/) and each state has a website with links to the legislative branch of their government (e.g. [www.state.il.us](http://www.state.il.us) for
Illinois). The local and state REALTORS Government Affairs Directors (“GADs”) can also be resources for information on monitoring legislation. IREM Legislative Staff can also assist you and your chapter in developing methods to monitor federal and state legislation that is of interest.

In addition to reacting to legislative items under consideration, local IREM chapters may wish to initiate legislation of their own, specifically relating to the property management industry. If the legislature is considering several major issues during the current session, it may be wise to delay pushing your legislation until a later session. However, local chapters must determine, along with the legislation's sponsor, the most opportune time for seeking passage of your legislation.

Most critically, use your advocacy efforts as a way of gaining recognition among legislators and public officials. An effective government affairs program is the result of many long-term investments, and every handshake, call-to-action, or any interaction with a legislator or staff will pay dividends down the line.

**PART III: Executing the Legislative Agenda**

**Educating and Mobilizing IREM Members**

*Strength in numbers!* Lobbying power comes from well-informed members who recognize the value of encouraging legislators to support their legislative agenda. IREM members are an important force by virtue of both their quality and their quantity. The key question is how to communicate with members so that they will be motivated to contact their legislators on behalf of the chapter's concerns.

Include legislative issues on the agenda for chapter meetings. Take a few minutes to discuss an issue on your chapter’s legislative agenda with the membership. An excellent way to inform members is to plan a legislative luncheon or breakfast meeting and inviting a legislator or state REALTOR Government Affairs Director to attend and to increase the visibility of the chapter’s legislative agenda and presence. You can also extend an invitation to your federal, state, or local elected official to come to your chapter meeting.

As always, chapters can contact IREM for assistance in developing information to educate and to mobilize members on legislative issues.

**Working with Coalitions**

Legislation is often influenced through the combined efforts of a number of groups working in a coalition, rather than through the efforts of a single organization. Coalitions focus and coordinate the resources of many groups that have a common policy interest.

At the national level, IREM has been involved in legislative coalitions with such other real estate industry groups as the National Association of REALTORS®, the CCIM Institute, and the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), the Chamber of Commerce, and the Real Estate Roundtable to name a few.

While coalitions have the potential to garner tremendous legislative strength, they are always
vulnerable to the danger that some members may become dissatisfied with the direction being taken and attempt to arrange a legislative compromise not supported by the majority. Despite this inherent weakness, the risk is worth taking to gain the strength that comes from a broad base. With the use of a coalition comes compromise. Therefore, chapters may not always find support from coalition partners on all the positions it has taken.

It is especially important to provide coalition members with accurate, timely, brief and clear information on which to take action because, in many instances, the goals of the coalition may differ somewhat from an organization's individual, long-range agenda. Coalition members must be consistent in their presentations to legislators. Their message must be focused and concise.

**Political Action Committees**

Due to our affiliate status with the National Association of REALTORS®, Institute Headquarters and individual chapters are not allowed to form political action committees (PACs) separate from the REALTORS® PAC (RPAC).

IREM® members are encouraged to become involved with and contribute to RPAC and/or the political action committees of their state or local Associations of REALTORS®. RPAC funds are used for direct contributions to federal candidates’ campaigns, and in some cases for other activities such as advertising or polling in support of federal candidates. Information on becoming involved in RPAC can be found in the Public Policy Section of the Institute’s website at [www.irem.org/public-policy/realtors-political-action-committee-rpac](http://www.irem.org/public-policy/realtors-political-action-committee-rpac).

IREM® members are eligible for membership on state or local REALTOR® political affairs committees. Involvement in those committees is quite advantageous, as an IREM® member can promote support of issues unique to the property management industry. For information about how you can become involved in politics through NAR at the state or local level, contact the Government Affairs Director of your state or local Association of REALTORS®.

**Public & Community Relations**

An indirect form of lobbying is through the media. Legislators pay particular attention to the media and, therefore, it plays an important role in shaping public policy. Effective public and media relations can be an important means of building support for your legislative issue.

Chapters can present information to the media in a number of different ways that will draw more attention to your issue and increase the interest of the legislature.

**Press Releases** – A press release can be used to promote a legislative initiative or take a stand on action by the legislature. The information contained in the press release should be both important and new. The press release should answer the “five w's” – who, what, where, when, and why.

**Letters to the Editor** – Letters to the editor can significantly increase awareness of an issue. Sometimes letters are used to respond to negative editorials. Letters should be tightly composed and include specific examples to make your points.
**Press Conferences** – Unless the issue is particularly timely and important, it may be difficult to get good attendance at your press conference. Have a well-written press statement and background materials available as handouts. Keep the press conference short and leave plenty of time for a question-and-answer session.

**Social Media Outreach**

Social media has become the fastest and most convenient way to communicate. Communication via social media has an immediacy that is unmatched by other forms of outreach, and as such, is a critical tool for your advocacy efforts. While social media does not replace other forms of outreach, it is a very effective tool at your disposal. In order to get your advocacy program up and running some essential and incredibly easy steps to take are:

- Posting to your chapter’s Facebook page legislative updates, information on pending bills, meeting times, and chapter schedules
- Use Twitter to quickly get messages out to members, such as notifying them of a call to action, bill votes, last minute meetings, or live updates of meetings or events
- Use LinkedIn for more professional and formal communications; you can also create groups to share important industry information or reach out to other networks and members
PART IV: Lobbying Techniques

Be Prepared

Perhaps the most important thing you need to know when lobbying, is the issue itself.
- What is the substance of the legislation? Why is it important?
- What are the consequences if it passes, fails?
- What are the financial implications of the legislation?
- What will be the impact of the legislation on the legislator's constituents?

It is helpful to give an illustration or two of how the problem will affect the legislator's district. Be sure of the facts and build communication around them.

It helps to know a little about the legislator you are lobbying.
- On which committees does he/she serve?
- What are his/her pet issues?
- How has he/she voted on similar legislation in the past?

Much of this information can be obtained from state legislative rosters that are available in every state. However, don't let a lack of detailed knowledge about a legislator stand in your way. Legislators pay attention to well-presented positions by constituents, regardless of their knowledge of personal details.

Using Calls-to-Action

One method to effectively mobilize members to communicate a message this is by using a legislative alert or "Call-to-Action." (See "Call-to-Action" in the Appendix.) Institute Headquarters uses Calls-to-Action at the federal level to alert members that the time has come to personally contact a member of Congress or a regulatory agency, urging them to support a particular legislative position or to influence the writing of certain regulations. Calls-to-Action issued by Institute Headquarters can be duplicated at the chapter level to involve even more members and strengthen our effectiveness and can be distributed to chapter members via email or fax. Send your alert soon enough for your members to contact their legislators, but not before their efforts will be effective in influencing the issue. Timing is key.

If your chapter is interested in distributing a call to action be sure to contact IREM Government Affairs staff. We are able to create a campaign for your issue, tailored specifically to the relevant jurisdiction. The campaign can be customized to include any relevant information, target specific officials, and use Facebook, twitter, and/or email. Once the campaign is created you will be provided with a link to put on your chapter website, and distribute in any way you see fit.

Making Phone Calls/Sending Email

In every legislative effort there comes a time when it is crucial to have immediate member contact. Often there are less than twenty-four hours before a key vote comes up in committee or even before final vote in a legislature. Having a procedure for generating personal phone calls or emails from members to legislators before a key vote is essential. Several calls or emails to a
legislator's office just before a vote can be persuasive, especially if the legislator has not taken a definite stand on the issue.

Chapter members should be provided with a legislative roster including the legislators' telephone numbers and email addresses for either their district or capitol office. If it is not possible to speak directly with the legislator, ask to speak with his or her legislative aide or leave a detailed message – be sure to include the bill number and the action you would like the legislator to take, i.e. “Support” or “Oppose”. Legislative offices keep count of pro and con phone calls on particular issues.

Provide copies of your letters, emails and any replies received to the Chapter Legislative Chairperson and the Chapter President.

**Letters**
Written campaigns are an effective way to persuade legislators to support a position. Remember that competition is stiff - legislators receive an enormous amount of mail each session. (See "Sample Letters" in the Appendix.) It is important that all letters be different. Form letters are tallied and discarded, but individualized letters have a much greater impact upon the representatives and staff who read them.

**Personal Visits**

Personal visits are critical in establishing your chapter’s footprint in the local public policy environment. As constituent, your local legislators have a responsibility to listen to your concerns, and as a property management professional, you are unique in your specialized knowledge of the industry, and the impacts certain bills can have on the industry.

With regard to Congressional members, meeting in the district office can be beneficial because legislators are usually less harried when they are home on weekends or during recess. Don't hesitate to meet with staff if the legislator is unavailable. Staff people wield considerable power and are often able to give more time and attention to issues than legislators can.

If you know that you are going to be in Washington, D.C. or your state’s capital while your legislature is in session, schedule a time to meet with your representatives. These appointments should be made well in advance of your arrival and should BE FLEXIBLE – legislators’ schedules change on an hourly basis while they are in session. You can also plan a Day at the Statehouse with your chapter or region. See this section below.

As stated earlier, you are in a unique position to inform your legislators about a particular bill’s impact as it relates to property management. The chances are you know more than your legislator does, so be sure to include anecdotes and illustrations which describe the impact certain legislation will have in the legislator’s constituency. Not only will this assist the legislator in the process of making policy, but also establish IREM in the minds of legislators as the first stop to make when a bill pertinent to our industry arises.

There will nearly always be opponents to certain policies, so it is crucial that you thoroughly research the issue as well as any political considerations that may be affecting the issue. All
legislators are faced with difficult decisions every day, so acknowledge the arguments of your opposition, and explain why your position is the best. Provide information both orally and in the form of a fact sheet that you can leave with the legislator. Be certain that it includes a brief description of the issue, why it is important, and the action that you want the legislator to take. Key statistics that illustrate the importance and impact of the legislation are particularly helpful.

Again, follow-up is important. A thank you letter restating the issue and position should be sent immediately after the visit. Copy any staff member that might have participated in the meeting as well.

In all communications, whether by phone, letter, email or personal meeting, it is important to be accurate, brief, clear and timely. Never become angry or argumentative with the legislator about his or her failure to support your position. Most legislators have long memories and if you have strained your relationship by getting angry -- no matter how much you may have been justified in doing so -- chances are that you will not be given access to that legislator in the future. Remember, the most important goal is to leave the legislator viewing IREM as a crucial partner in the policy-making process.

**IREM® Congressional In-District Program**

In the day in age where technology has taken over many aspects of life and business, it’s critical to maintain professional relationships with people. When you meet face-to-face with your Member of Congress (MoC) they learn about your industry and what policies impact your day-to-day business life and your financial bottom line. Meeting with your MoC in their district is an excellent way to establish and nurture these important relationships. It is also a cost-effective way to meet with your legislators.

IREM urges all U.S. IREM Chapters to meet with their Member of Congress; these legislators work on policy at the federal level. An in-district meeting is an effective way to establish important relationships with your MoC and to help them know that YOU are the expert to turn to when they have a question about a certain bill or amendment.

Members of Congress also tend to have more availability to spend with their constituents when they’re back in their home district. They spend ample time with constituents and community leaders to really dig into certain policy issues. You can catch them in a more relaxed environment, where you and your legislators can sit down and have a conversation about issues that impact your bottom line.

And remember, the IREM Congressional In-District Visit program can be as big or small as you want it to be! It can be a simple meeting with your Member of Congress in a coffee shop with four of your IREM Chapter Members; or it can be a chapter meeting with 75 chapter members and a few Members of Congress. It’s really up to you how you want to organize the meeting. All that matters is that you meet face-to-face with your Member of Congress and let them know that YOU are the property management expert.

*For more information on how to plan your visit, please see the IREM In-District Planning Checklist.*
IREM® Day at the Statehouse
As an IREM Member and a real estate management and commercial real estate practitioner, you are an expert in your industry. As a constituent and an industry expert, only you can discuss personal experiences and how certain laws impact you and your business. Although professional lobbyists are a valuable part of the policy-making process, you bring the critical and unique piece of the advocacy puzzle when you develop and foster relationships with your state legislators.

Going to your statehouse with other IREM Chapters in your state educates the legislators about IREM, your industry, your professional needs, and also helps them identify you as an industry expert. When legislation is introduced that impacts property managers, by establishing a relationship with your legislators, they can call on you for your input and expertise.

This program will help build those critical relationships and allow you to protect your business and industry.

For more information on how to plan your visit, please see the IREM Day at the Statehouse Planning Checklist.

Providing Testimony
Legislative and regulatory bodies often call for public hearings. They may be held to inform the public about issues or to get the information they need to draft laws and regulations or to find out whether or not a law or rule is needed. Providing testimony can help to establish a chapter as an authority in the eyes of the body.

The chapter president, legislative chairperson, or a member with expertise on the subject being discussed should deliver the testimony. When testifying, the statement should be brief, but effective. Provide written copies of the testimony to ensure that the main points will be noted in the record. Contact the clerk of the decision-making body holding the hearing for the format requirements for giving testimony.

If it is known which legislators or regulators will be opposed to the position, anticipate the opposing arguments and be prepared for effective rebuttal. Be courteous to those expressing opposing views and follow up your testimony with a letter that deals specifically with the issues he or she raised; it is simply part of the process.

Working with a coalition can be of a great benefit when coordinating and providing testimony. Attempt to get other groups who favor your position to sign on to your testimony if they are not planning to testify separately. Having several other organizations that are well known to legislators sign on to the statement can significantly strengthen the impact of your message.

Other Methods of Communication
There are many other ways to communicate your position to legislators. The following are a few
examples:

- Invite a legislator to visit a member’s property and describe how a specific piece of legislation will affect its management. Such a visit may be the most effective way to illustrate a position.
- Invite a legislator to speak at a chapter meeting. Legislators usually appreciate such opportunities.
- Organize a Day at the Statehouse and invite members to participate. Participants should be well briefed and appointments with legislators should be set in advance (see the section on how to plan a Day at the Statehouse in this guide).

Be certain to publicize any meetings or events the chapter participates in with a legislator to other IREM® members and the local media.

Appendix

Chapter Legislative and Regulatory Activity

Article I, Section 2 of the Institute of Real Estate Management Bylaws outlines the responsibilities and guidelines of legislative and regulatory activity by IREM Chapters.

SECTION 2. CHAPTER LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY ACTION

2.6.1 No chapter shall undertake any program of attempting to influence legislation or regulations by state or local authorities when the outcome of such activity would be contrary to policies or positions taken by the Institute or the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS. When any such program is undertaken, the chapter must limit its position to the parameters set out in the Institute’s Statement of Policy on that issue or any Institute policy that relates, even indirectly, to the issue in question. In the event there is no official Institute policy on the issue in question, lobbying efforts must be confined to the position of the respective local REALTOR® board(s). In the event the local REALTOR® board(s) has adopted no position on the issue in question, the chapter may adopt such policy as it deems appropriate with prior approval of such policy by the Institute. In all cases, the chapter is encouraged to keep Institute headquarters informed of all such activity and seek guidance where appropriate. The Institute shall provide information to a chapter relative to established Institute policies and positions pertaining to legislation and regulations.

2.6.2 Chapters may, as needed, hire consultants, such as lobbyists, to assist in their state and local legislative projects, provided that they take measures to ensure that all state and local laws and regulations concerning lobbying activities are followed.

2.6.3 Chapters must avoid lobbying activities that might have a detrimental tax impact on the Institute and its members. “Grassroots” lobbying, which is defined as attempts to reach the general public rather than just association membership, should also be avoided. Lobbying activities must be directed to the impact that proposed legislation would have on the real estate community. In the event questions arise as to the scope of an issue, the Institute and legal counsel should be consulted.
2.6.4 Chapters may solicit their members for contributions to a legislative action fund.

(Current as of January, 2014)
How to Address Letters to Elected Officials

US Senator
The Honorable John Doe
United States Senate
(Use either district office address or Washington D.C address)

Dear Senator Doe:

US Representative
The Honorable John Doe
U.S. House of Representatives
(Use either district office address or Washington D.C address)

Dear Representative Doe:

Governor
The Honorable John Doe
Governor, State of Illinois
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Governor Doe:

State Senator
The Honorable John Doe
Illinois State Senate
(Use either district office address or state capitol address)

Dear Senator Doe:

State Representative
The Honorable John Doe
Illinois House of Representatives
(Use either district office address or state capitol address)

Dear Representative Doe:
Sample Letters and Calls-to-Action to Elected Officials

The following sample letters and calls-to-action demonstrate the format and manner in which correspondence should be addressed to elected officials.

Make letters as personal as possible and be certain to mention that you are affiliated with the Institute and include your credentials. Also, be sure to mention that you are a constituent of the legislator (this is very important!).

Write letters on business letterhead and try to keep them as brief and concise as possible.

In the first paragraph, ask for the action you want the legislator to take, i.e. “Vote for HB235” or “Oppose HB235.” Identify the legislation clearly by name and number if a bill has been introduced in the legislature. Ask the legislator to reply and ask them directly whether or not they support your position. Be as direct as possible while still being courteous.

Be certain your legislator receives the letter before the vote.

You may want to scan the letter and e-mail it as well as send a hard copy.
February 28, 2005

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

As your constituent, I am writing you today to urge your support of S.256, the “Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005.” I am a member of the Institute of Real Estate Management of the National Association of Realtors® (IREM) and in addition to being the operator of a property management company based in Spokane, I am legislative chair for IREM’s Spokane chapter and sit as a member of IREM’s national Legislation and Public Policy Committee.

I have advocated for prior versions of this legislation in visits to your Washington D.C. office. This legislation is of great importance to the real estate industry and the clients that we serve.

The first component of the legislation focuses on single-asset real estate bankruptcies. The Bankruptcy Code provides for properties valued at less than $4 million are subject to an automatic stay from creditors for 90 days. The stay for those properties valued in excess of $4 million is often for 180 days to over one year. S.256 would provide for the 90-day automatic stay to apply to all properties, regardless of value. Debtors demonstrating good cause for extensions beyond the 90-day stay could receive extensions at the end of the first 90 days, if there is merit.

The second issue of relevance to the real estate industry relates to automatic stay provisions in rental housing. State and local landlord tenant laws provide the basis for landlords to terminate residential leases for cause. The current Bankruptcy Code, however, provides debtors who are residential tenants an unnecessary loophole, which, in effect, allows continuing economic and non-economic defaults by renters after issuance of an automatic stay. This defect in the Code needs to be rectified.

A third element of the bill in which I have significant experience deals with bankruptcies by shopping center tenants. Current law allows commercial tenants who file bankruptcy a 60-day period to make a decision to assume a lease and continue the tenancy, or to reject the lease and terminate. Extensions of this period of time are available to debtors who make a showing of good cause for the extension to be granted. Too many debtors are abusing these extensions by piling one extension on top of another, and in some cases, doing so for a period of two or three years, while leaving the commercial landlord with what is, in effect, a month-to-month tenancy that can be terminated by the tenant at-will. This uncertainty negatively impacts the value of shopping centers and the ability of property owners to sell or refinance the asset. S.256 would double the initial
period for a debtor to assume or reject a lease and allow one additional 90-day extension, if requested by the bankruptcy trustee. The total period for the tenant to accept or reject the lease would be capped at 210 days, absent the express consent of the landlord.

Another real estate related issue deals with debtors who own units in homeowners’ and community associations and hold obligations to that association for assessments. S.256 would make homeowners’ association fees and assessments non-dischargeable in bankruptcy.

In closing, I urge your support of S.256 and ask that you not support any amendments that would dilute the above-provisions of this bill or limit its chances for passage this year. This is legislation founded in equity and common sense, and deserves passage.

Sincerely,

TOMLINSON BLACK MANAGEMENT, INC.

[Signature]

John M. Bennett, CPM®
President

jmb/sw
The Honorable Jane Doe  
US House of Representatives  
Address  
Washington DC  20510  

May 5, 1999  

Dear Representative Doe:  

On behalf of the professional property managers of the Institute of Real Estate Management®, we urge the defeat of an amendment to H.R. 833, dealing with single asset real estate. The Institute of Real Estate Management is comprised of over 9,000 property management professionals who manage over 24% of the nation’s privately owned residential apartment properties, 44% of the nation’s office buildings, and 10% of the nation’s retail space.  

H.R. 833, the "Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1999", contains a provision which would eliminate the cap on single asset bankruptcies. This provision of the Code subjects properties with a value of less than $4 million to an automatic stay from creditors for 90 days. However, the stay for properties of over $4 million can last for 6 months to well over a year. As written, H.R. 833 would eliminate the arbitrary cap, as recommended by the National Bankruptcy Review Commission, and treat all single asset bankruptcies the same.  

Representatives Conyers and Nadler plan to offer an amendment, which would prohibit the definition of a single asset from applying in any case where 5 or more jobs could be lost. This would in effect, nullify the single asset protection currently in the Code. Chapter 11 debtors could continue to game the system as they have in the past, by hiring employees before filing, or delaying the bankruptcy action unfairly. This provision would recreate the uncertainty that the original provision sought to contain. Bankruptcy Courts could hold endless hearings on the application of this amendment and whether certain employees may lose their jobs. This unlimited uncertainty was an underlying reason for changing the Code in 1994, when Congress determined that single asset cases are different. They rarely result in reorganization, and employees are better off if a new entity takes over the troubled property to return it to a going concern.  

The Institute urges you to vote "no" on this amendment, which will throw single asset bankruptcies into games of confusion, legal maneuvering and finagling. Reject this amendment, and support the provision as written in H.R. 833.  

Sincerely,  

Michael B. Simmons  
1999 President
May 3, 1999

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United State Senate
SH 331
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

On behalf of the professional property managers of the Institute of Real Estate Management, we thank you for your support of Section 311 of S. 625, the "Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1999". The Institute is comprised of over ______ property management professionals who manage over ___ of the nation’s privately owned residential apartment properties.

Section 311 of S.625 would close a loophole in the Bankruptcy Code, which allows for serious fraud and abuse. Currently, tenants of multifamily rental housing will file bankruptcy and refuse to pay rent, costing landlords hundreds of dollars of lost rents and legal fees to pursue bankruptcy remedies. Current law will even allow a stay from eviction for residents who have caused property damage, health department violations, and have threatened fellow residents. The rental housing industry has witnessed an increasing number of tenants who are manipulating the U.S. Bankruptcy Code in order to live in their apartments without paying rent. As written, Section 311 is narrowly crafted to provide adequate notice and due process to residents filing bankruptcy. At the same time, the provision protects private property owners (over 96% of whom are small businesses); current residents, who are often forced to pay the passed-on costs associated with those who abuse the Code; and prospective tenants who would not have to wait 6 months or longer, as they do now, to get into rental property units occupied by residents overstaying their lease.

Again, we thank you for your comments at the Judiciary Committee mark-up, addressing the importance of Section 311 of S. 625. This provision is important to the members of the Institute, and we very much appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Enis L. Hartz
Senior Vice President
Legislative Services
Institute of Real Estate Management
The alert should contain the necessary background material including bill number, status, and a list of pertinent facts about the bill. It is difficult, but important, to keep your legislative alert brief, but precise. Be certain that your first paragraph tells your member what the issue is and what action you are requesting. Include websites where members can access more information on the bill or how to contact their legislators.

**Sample CALL-TO-ACTION**

**TO:** IREM New York Chapters  
**FROM:** Patricia Nooney, CPM®  
Senior Vice President, IREM Legislative Affairs Division  
**DATE:** April 28, 2000  
**RE:** New York Forced Access Legislation  
AB 10054/SB 7059

The Institute has learned that telecommunications legislation has been introduced in New York. AB 10054 and its companion, SB 7059 would require all building owners and managers to allow telecommunication carriers access to their buildings. These bills infringe on private property rights by telecommunication carriers. If passed, AB 10054/SB 7059 would be extremely detrimental to those involved in the real estate industry by denying you, as owner or manager of property, to decide what telecommunication services are allowed in your property. Both bills are in committee in their respective chambers. To make sure these bills die in committee, your IMMEDIATE involvement is needed!

Please note that even though the language of the legislation refers to “telephone service”, the bill analysis discusses other forms of telecommunication, specifically mentioning cable television provider access. The intent is the same - this is forced access legislation in disguise!

Institute Headquarters has been fighting telecommunications and forced access legislation over the past three years with tremendous success. **We are confident that with your efforts, this bill will be defeated!**

**What you can do:**

1. Write, call, fax or email your state legislators and urge them to not support AB 10054 and SB 7059

Addresses for Senate and Assembly members can be found by accessing each chamber’s website at [www.senate.state.ny.us](http://www.senate.state.ny.us). A copy of AB 10054 and an analysis of the bill are enclosed. In addition, bullet points further outlining the Institute’s argument against AB10054/SB 7059 are attached should you want to include those in your letters as well.
Sample letter to state legislator requesting meeting for Day at the Statehouse event:

January 22, 2014

Honorable Governor Maggie Hassan
State House
107 North Main St.
Concord N.H. 03301

As the Legislative Chairman of the Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM) and a resident of Salem New Hampshire, I am writing for myself and my fellow commercial real estate colleagues from New Hampshire. We are scheduled for a NH Statehouse tour on May 8th at 2:30 PM and would like to meet you briefly at this tour. We realize you juggle a busy schedule and only ask for a few minutes of your time.

As you are aware the real-estate industry plays a critical role in the recovering economy. IREM is an affiliate of the National Association of REALTORS® consisting of more than 19,000 real estate management professionals who manage 57% of the nation’s conventionally financed apartment units, 1.3 million units of federally assisted housing, 32% of the nation’s office buildings, and 9% of the nation’s retail space. Collectively, IREM members manage more than 6.5 billion square feet of commercial space and more than 13 million residential units, totaling over $848.2 billion in real estate assets. IREM Members are employed by some of the most prestigious real estate firms in the world and nearly 70% hold upper-level management positions.

Sincerely,
David Barrett CPM®, ARM®, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM®
President, Institute of Real Estate Management Chapter #4