



# Advocacy Handbook

2026 edition

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# Meet the team

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**Ted Thurn**

Senior Director, Government Affairs

Ted Thurn is the IREM® Senior Director of Government Affairs. He has worked in the association field for over 20 years. During his time in government affairs, Ted has led all aspects of federal and state legislative advocacy efforts and has served as a key advisor on emerging federal and state legislative agendas. At IREM, Ted is responsible for a number of government affairs initiatives and provides strategic support and recommendation of actions to executive leadership. Ted holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Saint Xavier University and a Master's degree in Public Administration from DePaul University.

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# Chapter 1:

# Introduction

## What is advocacy?

Advocacy can encompass a broad range of activities. Those who advocate are taking action to make change. This includes influencing those in power, raising attention about important issues, and giving a voice to those affected.

Advocacy should be a top priority for our members, their businesses, and their clients. It's vital that our members advocate for the real estate industry, both commercial and residential, to help educate decision-makers on issues that matter. In order to influence the decisions being made, IREM members must be active participants in the advocacy process. There wouldn't be an IREM without our members; we need experts like you to advocate for our organization.

## IREM's role in advocacy

Our goal in Government Affairs is to make it easy for you to engage, amplify, and create an impact on the most challenging issues affecting you locally and at a national level. Through various resources, our department provides members with the support they need to help ensure their voices are heard.

# Government Affairs

The Government Affairs department works to serve members through the following activities:

- Educating, informing, and mobilizing our members at the local, state, and federal levels about important and emerging legislative issues;
- Providing resources and support needed for members and chapters to be effective property management advocates—calls to action, fact sheets, background information and data, policy priorities, policy statements, legislative updates, newsletters, and lists of coalition partners;
- Representing members and chapters on Capitol Hill with federal legislators by testifying, lobbying, holding educational briefings, and writing letters on key issues;
- Policy analysis; and
- Assuring the development and implementation of national, state and local policies that promote, protect, and enhance the property management profession.



# Myths and realities about advocacy

Debunking the myths about advocacy can be a full-time job. Not only is advocacy important, but it's also effective and rewarding. Here are a few reasons to get and stay involved:

## **"I'm apprehensive about getting too involved in advocacy."**

The best advocates are not full-time, paid lobbyists, but rather property management professionals who share their experience with policymakers and their staff.

## **"I'm an expert on property management, and I can't contribute much knowledge on other property management issues."**

Being a property management professional gives you a set of skills and expertise, as well as the credibility to speak on all issues concerning property management. You may not know the specifics of a particular policy, but you can speak broadly about the importance of property management and how it's the key to building thriving communities.

## **"I just don't have time for advocacy."**

One of the ways IREM makes being an advocate easy is by providing you with the resources you need to contact your legislator. With our call to action platform, you receive the facts, background, and status of an issue which makes taking action an easy endeavor. The effort can take as little as two minutes, and all you need to do is click your mouse a couple of times to connect with your legislator.

**"My policymaker is a lost cause. Whatever I'm for, she's against."**

Message, visit and call anyway. It's important for the legislator to know that people in his or her district care about issues and oppose positions on pending issues. Put your policymaker on your organization's distribution list, continue to provide the legislator and staff with accurate, high-quality materials that pertain to their district or state. Invite the legislator to your Chapter event. Remember, it's about establishing a relationship with the legislator.

**"Isn't advocacy just another word for lobbying? I'm not a lobbyist."**

The number-one job of an advocate is to educate policymakers and the public. As a property management professional, and voting constituent, you have information that policymakers need. Again, invite your legislator to your office, properties you manage, and Chapter events.



# Chapter 2:

# Advocacy resources

## Overview

- The IREM Government Affairs Department provides a number of resources for members to utilize, all conveniently found on IREM’s website. This includes our Advocacy Action Center, where members can locate their legislators and access IREM’s Bill Tracker for federal and state legislation.
- Additionally, the website is home to IREM’s Policy Priorities and Policy Statements, our Government Affairs Digest newsletter, Coalition letters, and more!

### Calls to action

Explore ways to engage with legislators and influence policy that matters to our industry. Using **VoterVoice**, an electronic grassroots advocacy platform, users can easily connect with their federal or state representatives to support or oppose a legislative proposal. With a few clicks, ready-made messages go directly to their representatives.



### Policy priorities and statements

Learn about IREM’s position on issues affecting real estate management. Our priorities are identified by surveying IREM national and chapter leaders. Policy statements originate with the Advocacy Committee and are updated as necessary. IREM and our members use these statements for guidance on legislative and regulatory issues.



Policy priorities



Policy statements

### Coalition letters

IREM partners with a coalition of organizations including NAR, NAA, NMHC, and BOMA to amplify our voices and to utilize our strength in numbers. IREM frequently signs onto letters to Congress and other agencies advocating for issues important to real estate management.



### Government Affairs Digest

Read our monthly e-newsletter distributed to national / chapter leaders and subscribers. Our objective is to inform IREM members of Government Affairs activities and update them on current legislative and regulatory issues including flood insurance, rent, control, and much more.



### Podcasts and webinars

Tap into this powerful IREM member benefit. IREM frequently conducts live webinars and podcasts on public policy issues that are engaging, relevant, and informative. This content is recorded and available on-demand as an exclusive ongoing member resource.



### Tracking legislation

Track how IREM closely monitors proposed legislation and regulations at both the state and federal levels. Check out the list of bills we are currently tracking to stay up to date with, and get ready to join the discussion.



# What is a "call to action"?

Using VoterVoice, an electronic grassroots advocacy platform, users can easily connect with their federal or state representatives to support or oppose a legislative proposal.

Most calls to action will be visible on our website if we're asking members to reach out to their federal or state legislators. For other calls to action, the Government Affairs Team may send out an email notifying members to support or oppose a regulatory proposal through a special link provided.

- To access a legislative call to action, go to IREM's **Advocacy Action Center**.
- Our website also has a helpful **call-to-action demonstration video** that will lead you step-by-step through the process of conducting a call to action.





### Oppose Senate Bill 611 - Contact Your Representatives!!

The Oregon Senate is currently considering Senate Bill 611, which would lower Oregon's cap on rent increases to a maximum of 8% and dramatically narrow an exemption for newly constructed buildings. As currently written, the bill would also require landlords to pay three...

#### Sign up for alerts

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#### Find officials

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Elected Officials  Candidates

#### Find legislation

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View and search for legislation.

[View key legislation](#)

# IREM's advocacy initiatives



## Educating members

Emails, webinars, podcasts, and presentations educate members. Invite the HQ Government Affairs team to present at your next meeting. Past presentations addressed rent control, cannabis legislation, affordable housing, and Section 8 vouchers.

## Advocacy Impact Day

IREM's yearly event where we invite members to fly to Washington D.C. to advocate for issues important to the profession. Meeting with lawmakers is critical for the future health and growth of property management.

## In-district meetings

IREM encourages members to meet with their representatives at their district office to discuss issues important to your business and the property management profession. Learn how to schedule, prepare, and conduct successful meetings.

IREM's advocacy initiatives are various events and forms of outreach that highlight how IREM actively engages to influence policy, mobilize members, and strengthen the real estate management profession. Through education, collaboration, and participation in the advocacy process, members can help contribute to these initiatives.

## Congressional briefing

Every year, IREM Government Affairs hosts a Congressional Briefing in Washington D.C where speakers present on issues important to property management. Hosting a congressional briefing is a great way to educate Congressional staff members and strengthen relationships with federal legislative offices.

## Meetings with government agencies

IREM Government Affairs meets bi-annually with representatives from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Rural Housing Agency to discuss regulations or programs that may impact owners, managers, or residents. Additionally, in this partnership, IREM members are able to provide their expertise and guidance when new policy and regulatory proposals are made by these government entities.

## Quarterly legislative contact meetings

The objective of these meetings is fourfold:

- Inform chapters the initiatives HQ is planning, like Advocacy Impact Day and resources HQ can provide, such as presentations, calls to action, fact sheets, testimony, etc.
- Create a networking space where legislative contacts can meet and discuss legislative and regulatory proposals occurring around the country.
- Share ideas about how chapters are supporting or opposing legislative or regulatory initiatives, such as calls to action, meeting with legislators, testifying at hearings, etc.
- Provide chapters that don't have a dedicated legislative contact, the opportunity to listen in on advocacy initiatives taking place around the country and obtain information on how to establish their own legislative contact.

## Presentations to chapters

Education is critical to advocacy. The IREM Government Affairs team conducts presentations to chapters addressing:

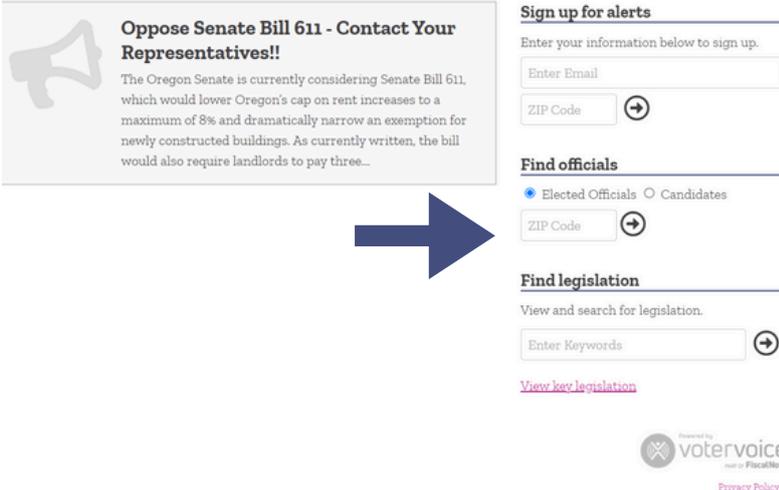
- Affordable housing
- Landlord/tenant issues - both commercial and residential
- Insurance
- Rent control
- And more!



# Step-by-step: Scheduling meetings with legislators

## 1. Find your legislator

- Our initiative is focused on engaging with your elected officials. By using our "Find Officials" feature, you can identify your federal, state, and even local representatives.
  - To access this page, go to IREM's Advocacy [Action Center](#).
  - Type in your zip code under Find Officials. Immediately a box will pop up to type in the first line of your address.
  - The page will then populate with both federal and state elected officials. This may take a moment.
  - Click on the legislator profiles for contact information.



**Oppose Senate Bill 611 - Contact Your Representatives!!**

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**Find officials**

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ZIP Code

**Find legislation**

View and search for legislation.

Enter Keywords

[View key legislation](#)

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## 2. Check the calendar

- Before contacting your legislator's office, be sure to check the session calendars to make sure they have availability to meet with you during your appointment. Most legislators have a session calendar posted on their website.

### **3. Contact the legislator's office**

- Introduce yourself as a constituent, let them know you'd like to meet with the legislator and ask for the scheduler's email address. Send the scheduler a formal meeting request. You can use our sample letter on the website or draft your own letter. If a meeting with a staffer is offered, we highly recommend accepting it. Staffers are the "eyes and ears" of their bosses and establishing rapport with them is extremely impactful.
- Let the scheduler know you would like to introduce the legislator to IREM, our industry, and the issues important to real estate management, like rent control, fair housing, and federally assisted housing. Providing more information in advance will help ensure you meet with the appropriate staffer so they can prepare you for your meeting. Be sure to include the leave-behind materials in your request.

### **4. Keep it local**

- Whenever possible, try to relate your discussion to your lawmaker's state or district and the people whose interests he or she was elected to represent. You can talk about the federal research dollars going to the local universities, the impact of research findings on the local economy, or improvements to local programs that are the result of evidence-based policymaking.

### **5. Make it relevant**

- When crafting your message, take into consideration the priorities of the members of Congress you are communicating with, which committees they sit on, and what is important to the district or state. By discussing your research in a way that is accessible to a non-specialist and explaining why you care about your work, policymakers will better understand how property management is relevant to them.

### **6. Follow up**

- Elected officials get thousands of requests each year, so call the office a week after submitting the request to confirm it was received. Once you have confirmed the meeting details, provide the scheduler with a full list of attendees.



## Meeting etiquette

### **Be prompt, patient, and flexible**

When it's time to meet with legislators, be punctual and be patient. Schedules tend to be very fluid. Because of changing schedules, it's not uncommon for legislators to be late or to have a meeting interrupted due to a crowded schedule. If interruptions do occur, be flexible. If possible, ask to continue your meeting with the legislator's staff. Remember, staffers influence their thinking on many issues. Establishing a positive relationship with staff can be extremely helpful in future encounters with that legislator.

### **Be prepared**

Be familiar with the issues you're going to discuss. IREM has prepared briefing papers on the issues, talking points, and what the opposition is on the issue. Refer to these documents as needed in your meetings. Be prepared to answer questions or provide additional information if the member expresses interest or asks questions. If possible, take some time to do more research on the issue so you feel comfortable discussing it during the meeting. Provide the IREM fact sheets when you meet with your legislator. Email the fact sheets to the office in advance. This will help ensure you meet with the most appropriate staff, and that they are prepared.

Do your research on the legislators you'll meeting with. What committees are they on? Have they already taken a position on your issue? Have they spoken at an IREM or NAR event? Also, get to know about the legislator as a person. Where were they born? Maybe you went to the same school, share a hobby, or are fans of the same team! Be careful to use neutral, bipartisan, and factual resources (beware of "fake news!").

### **Be diplomatic**

Legislators represent the best interests of their district or state and their reelection depends upon how well they do that. During your meeting, phrase the argument in your own words and relate how the issue affects your industry and the interests of the legislator's constituency.

If possible, describe for the member how you or your group can be of assistance to him/her. Where it is appropriate, remember to ask for a commitment.

Don't be surprised if it appears you're more knowledgeable than the individual you're meeting with. No legislator can be expected to know everything! However, it's okay for you not to know all the answers to the questions you may be asked. Answer questions to the best of your ability, and if you don't know an answer, admit it. Communicate that you'll look into the issue and report back. This will also provide you the opportunity for follow-up and to provide any additional information.

### **Be responsive**

Be sure to get business cards before leaving the office. Follow up the meeting with a thank you letter that outlines the different points covered during the meeting, and send along any additional information and materials requested. A sample thank you letter will be available on the IREM website for you to use.

### **Social media**

Social media is also a great way to share your positive experiences with your meeting. Post about your meeting and tag them. They'll appreciate the exposure. If you're already active on social media, using your accounts could be a good way to increase the visibility of your advocacy efforts. When reaching out to your representatives on social media:

- Keep your messages simple and concrete. Asking your legislators to vote yes or no on a particular bill or thanking them for remarks in favor of your issue are examples of simple outreach strategies.
- Be sure to tag the appropriate handles in your message. Engage with your community. Sometimes catching the attention of a legislator on social media works best in numbers. Engage in conversation with other Advocates that rally around your similar views to create a larger dialogue. Not only could this result in more eyes on your cause, but also the creation of a community to help continue the work.
- Don't expect a direct response —but you may be surprised. Legislators receive a lot of messages from constituents on social media, so not receiving a reply is normal.

# Top 10 things not to say to legislative staffers

## 10. "But I thought my appointment was with the Senator."

Never indicate that you're disappointed to be meeting with a staff member. On Capitol Hill, having a good relationship with staff can make or break your cause.

## 9. "Here's some reading material for you – our 300-page annual report."

When meeting with a member of Congress or staff person, try to limit your leave-behind materials to one or two pages, and include details on where this information can be located, if appropriate.

## 8. "How much of a campaign contribution did your boss get to vote against (or for) this bill?"

Believe it or not, most staff have no idea who contributed to their boss' campaigns. Not only is this question insulting, but even if it were accurate, the staff person isn't likely to know. It's against federal campaign rules to discuss or solicit campaign contributions inside a legislator's official office, or any government building used for official business.

## 7. "I assume you know all about HR 1234."

With thousands of bills being introduced during each Congress, no staff person will be able to keep them all straight. Always provide information on the bill title, number, and general provisions.

## 6. "No, I don't have an appointment, but I promise I'll only take 30 minutes of your time."

If you weren't able to get an appointment, it's OK to stop by, drop off some materials and let them know of your interest in the issue. It's not OK to camp out in their doorway and demand that someone talk to you.



**5. "No, I don't really need anything specific."**

Educating the legislator or staff on an issue is great, BUT, if you don't ask for something – support/oppose a bill, co-sponsorship, a congressional record statement, a meeting in the district etc. – staff will wonder why you came by. Updates on your issue are fine, so long as they are accompanied by a request.

**4. "We have 10 (or more) people in our group."**

Congressional offices are tiny. If you have more than five people in your group, you'll be standing out in the hallway. Plus, having so many people talking at once can dilute the impact of your message. Try to limit your group to no more than five. If you do have a large group, assign a few people (specifically constituents) the responsibility of delivering the message, and be sure to be upfront with the office in advance about how many people are coming.

**3. "What you're telling me can't be right. I heard a Late Night show say otherwise."**

Congressional staff, or members of Congress for that matter, won't lie to you. Sometimes, they may see things differently than you do, but if they say a bill definitely is not going to be considered on the floor, or if there is no such legislation, you should believe them.

**2. "What do you mean we have to stand in the hall?"**

See number 4. A request to meet in the hallway is simply an indication of space limitations. Nothing else.

**1. "No, I don't represent anyone from your district or committee interest. I just thought you'd be interested in what I have to say."**

Members are elected to represent their constituents. Period. If you're not their constituent or you're not connected to their constituents, you're not relevant to them. Your time is always best spent working with your own elected officials and turning them into advocates for your cause.

# How to build a relationship with your legislator

## **Meet with legislators in-district.**

Because "all politics is local," meeting with legislators in their district office with staff is critical to getting your message across and showing them how much of a difference your organization and work make in the community. Contact IREM HQ if you'd like assistance in setting up a meeting. We'll give you the tools and help you need.

## **Meet with legislators (state or federal) who serve on committees that oversee real estate issues.**

Meeting with legislators who serve on a committee that oversees your industry is important because they shape the policies and regulations that directly impact your work, and engaging with them ensures your industry's perspectives and needs are understood and considered in the legislative process.

## **Invite a legislator to tour your property.**

This allows them to get a first-hand understanding of the work you do and how it matters to the people you serve.

## **Invite a legislator to a chapter meeting.**

A great way to bring your issues to their attention and speak with them personally

## **Participate in a town hall or another scheduled event.**

These events provide direct opportunities to voice concerns, ask questions, and influence the decisions of elected officials who represent their community.

## **Attend Advocacy Impact Day!**

Members fly into D.C. to conduct in-person meetings with their federal legislators.

Participating in Advocacy Impact Day allows members to:

- Learn about the issues impacting the real estate management industry and how to help shape them.
- Speak directly to the people with the power to change laws and regulations.
- Gain valuable exposure and experience.
- Build relationships with legislators that will only increase in value over time.
- Be part of something bigger than yourself!

# Chapter 3: Legislative and regulatory process

## The federal legislative process

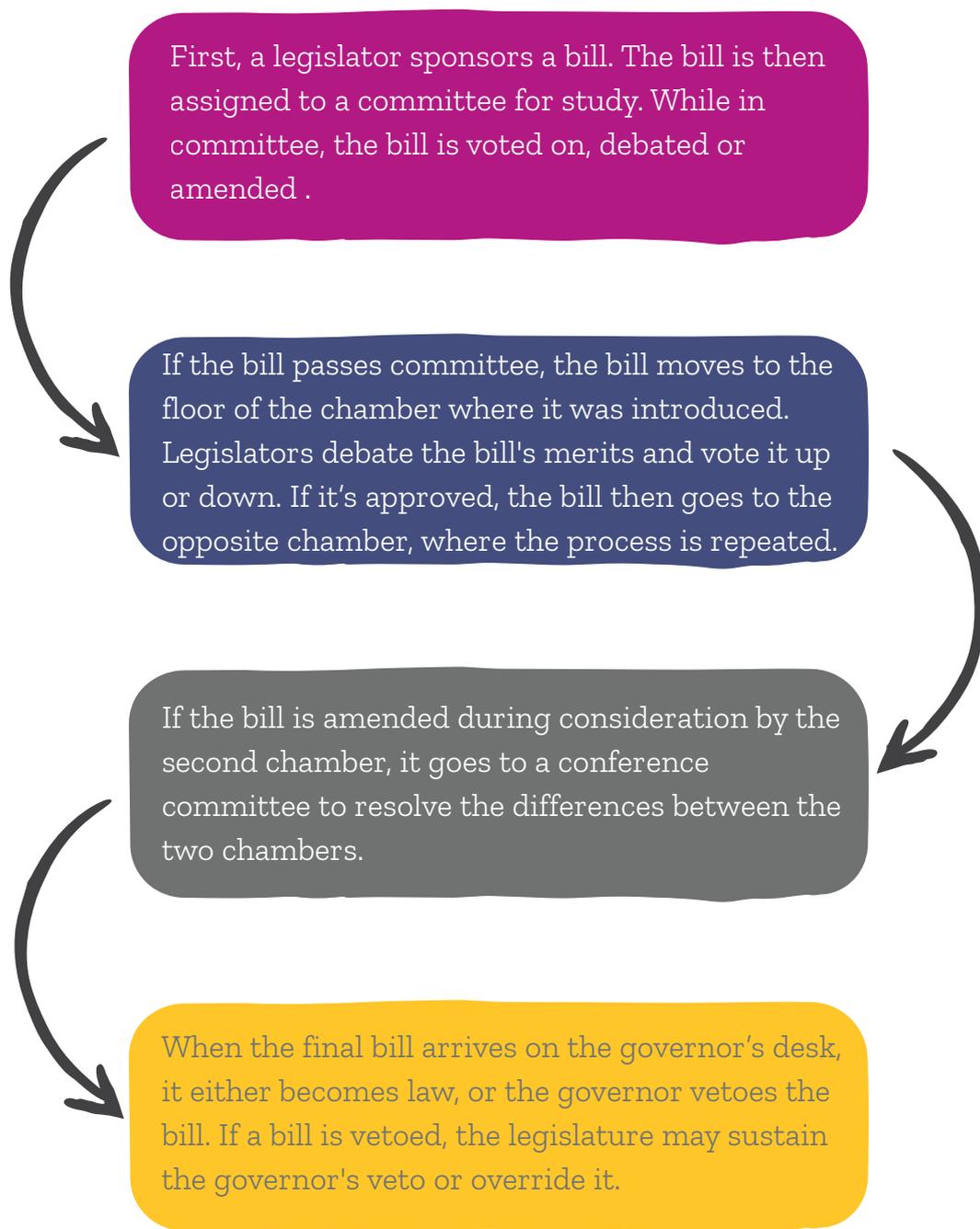
First, a member of the House or the Senate introduces a bill. The bill is then assigned to a committee for study. While in committee, the bill is put on a calendar to be voted on, debated or amended .

Once the committee approves the bill, it moves to the floor of the chamber where it was introduced. If the bill passes, it moves to the opposite chamber where it's assigned to another committee and the process is repeated.

Once released from committee, the bill is sent to the chamber floor where it's debated and voted on once again. If changes to the bill are made, a conference committee is formed to negotiate a final bill.

The resulting bill returns to the House and Senate for final approval. The President then has 10 days to veto the final bill or sign it into law. If the President vetoes, then two-thirds of both chambers are needed to override the veto.

# The state legislative process



Those are the basic steps—with variations—followed in every state except Nebraska, where there's one chamber rather than the customary two.

Overall, advocacy influences state and federal legislative processes by shaping policymakers' understanding of issues and encouraging them to take action on specific policies. Advocates can help drive legislation that reflects the needs and priorities of their communities.

# The Regulatory process

Rulemaking is the policy-making process for executive and independent agencies of the Federal government. Agencies use this process to develop and issue Rules (also referred to as "regulations").

1

First, an agency publishes an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking which explains why a rule may be needed.

2

Next a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is issued by the agency and a draft rule is published.

3

Then the public submits feedback on the proposed rule. At this time, the agency may choose to hold public hearings for additional input.

5

Agency reviews feedback, and comments and testimony are considered. Revisions may be made.

6

Lastly, the agency publishes a Notice of Final Rule, and the rule becomes part of federal regulations.

Advocacy impacts the regulatory process by providing input and expertise that shape how laws are implemented and enforced. Through public comments, meetings with agencies, and coalition efforts, advocates can influence the development of regulations to ensure they are fair, effective, and aligned with stakeholder needs.

# Chapter 4:

## Additional advocacy resources

### Policy priorities

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) lawsuit reform**

IREM supports legislation to create a “notice and cure” provision within Title III of the ADA. This would allow business owners the opportunity to rectify violations within a reasonable amount of time before being threatened with costly lawsuits or demand letters for a monetary settlement. IREM believes that this reform will protect building owners, while still holding them accountable for ensuring accessibility to all Americans.

#### **Assistance animals**

IREM invites guidance from the government on the issue of assistance animals (also referred to as emotional support or companion animals) with respect to the Fair Housing Act (FHA). Unlike service animals, which are regulated by the ADA, companion animals receive no specialized training and are typically for individuals with mental disabilities or those in need of emotional support.



## **Data security**

Property managers collect and maintain huge amounts of sensitive data, including social security numbers and financial information, putting them at risk from cyber-criminals. IREM supports government efforts aimed at sharing information about possible cyber threats, establishing reasonable data security standards, and helping avert security breaches and their aftermath. IREM opposes legislation that would be overly onerous on property owners and managers or their clients. We also strongly encourage members to use best practices to protect their clients' confidential information.

## **Federally assisted housing**

Federally assisted housing helps find homes for people who would otherwise have challenges obtaining safe and decent housing. Providing assistance to low-income earners helps them find housing and helps real estate managers and owners fill vacancies. IREM members own and manage over 60% of all federally assisted housing and public housing units in the United States. Under project-based programs, the federal government, through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) contracts with private owners to fund the difference between the rent for the unit and 30% of the tenant's adjusted income. IREM closely monitors all legislative and regulatory activity pertaining to federally assisted housing and engages with policymakers to encourage continued funding and clarification of new and existing notices and rules.

## **Flood insurance**

IREM supports the reform and long-term reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to ensure its ongoing sustainability, encouragement of cost-effective private flood insurance options, and long-term reauthorization of NFIP so that it remains a viable option for property owners.

The NFIP is a partnership among federal, state, and local governments that helps mitigate flood risk and provide affordable flood insurance to those who need it most. If the program expires, flood insurance will become more costly or even unavailable. The NFIP provides over 90% of all flood insurance nationwide and almost 100% of coverage for individually owned properties and small to mid-size commercial properties.

### **Fair housing**

IREM believes in equal opportunity in housing and supports the right of all people to freely choose where they will live without the constraint of prejudice or discrimination. IREM opposes practices and policies that have a known discriminatory effect on any demographic group defined by race, color, religion, national origin, sex, handicap, familial status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

### **Disparate impact housing theory**

IREM is opposed to policies and practices that are known to have a disparate impact on any demographic group defined by race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, familial status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. However, IREM supports the ability for real estate professionals to continue such policies or practices if there is a legitimate business purpose for the policy, and that purpose cannot be accomplished in a readily identifiable and not unduly burdensome means with a less discriminatory impact. IREM further opposes actions that require unreasonable research into whether such policies or practices have a disparate impact or discriminatory effect.

### **Source of income as a protected class**

Some state and local governments have designated source of income as a protected class under their fair housing laws forcing property managers to accept tenant-based subsidies.

By accepting these subsidies, landlords must also accept lease amendments to comply with government requirements.

We support government-assisted housing and making affordable housing available to all citizens. We believe that involvement in these programs should be voluntary, and we oppose any policies that require owners of private housing to surrender their property rights. The selection of tenants and the terms of the contractual relationship are functions of the property owner or manager, not the government. Requiring certain tenants to have different (government-mandated) provisions included in their leases puts increased financial and administrative burdens on housing providers and may be unfair to other residents.

### **Medical and recreational cannabis**

An increasing number of states are legalizing cannabis to varying degrees, but it is still illegal at the federal level. This conflict between federal and state laws creates a complicated situation for real estate owners and managers. Property managers should review state and local statutes and regulations to ensure they are in compliance with medical cannabis laws and regulations. Property managers may also utilize best practices to address the issue as they see fit, such as lease addendums, with which smoking and illegal drug use can be prohibited. IREM invites guidance from the government on how to implement policy and procedures for the properties operated by real estate owners and managers.

### **Real estate management licensing**

IREM believes that the management of residential apartments, condominiums, cooperatives, homeowner's associations office buildings; shopping centers; and all other commercial property by independent contractors involves real estate activities and should require a license under existing state license laws.

While IREM acknowledges that real estate management licensing is a state's rights issue and should be left to the discretion of each individual state, IREM is opposed to a separate state mandated license or certification for community association management and urges all forms of real estate management to be under the jurisdiction of existing state real estate broker and agent licensing laws. In states where state mandated community association manager certification or licensing already exists, IREM supports placing the ongoing regulation and management of the certification or licensing process under the jurisdiction of the state real estate commission.

### **Rent control**

IREM is opposed to government control of rents and supports a property owner's right to establish rents that produce sufficient income to accommodate the basic needs of residents and encourage investment in new construction and existing properties. IREM urges elected officials at all levels of government to oppose rent control as it significantly affects the housing inventory by accelerating the deterioration and loss of existing housing while discouraging the construction of new housing.



# Congressional staff roles

To be an effective communicator, it is helpful to know the titles and principal functions of key staff. In addition to their Washington offices, members of Congress also maintain at least one office in their districts. Senators usually have several offices throughout their home state. Titles are often abbreviated with acronyms, which are provided.

## **Chief of Staff:**

The Chief of Staff reports directly to the member of Congress. He/she usually has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcome of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. This person is in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the supervision of staff.

## **Legislative Director (LD):**

The Legislative Director develops, implements, and advances the legislative agenda while handling the policy portfolio. The Legislative Director works closely with the Member, chief of staff, and the legislator's district staff to advance the legislator's priorities.

## **Legislative Assistant (LA):**

The Legislative Assistants are the backbone of the Congressional staff. In most offices, there are several Legislative Assistants who are responsible for the Member's legislative activity within particular policy areas. An LA usually covers a number of related areas, especially in the House of Representatives where staffs are smaller. For example, depending on the Member's interests and committee assignments, one LA may cover taxes, economic issues, and the federal budget, while another covers defense, international relations, veterans affairs, and trade.

## **Press Secretary or Communications Director:**

The Press Secretary's responsibility is to build and maintain open and effective lines of communication between the member, his/her constituency, and the general public. The Press Secretary is expected to be familiar with both print and electronic media and how to most effectively promote the member's views or position on specific issues.

## **Scheduler or Appointment Secretary:**

The Scheduler is responsible for allocating a member's time among the many demands that arise from congressional responsibilities, staff requirements, and constituent requests. The Scheduler may also be responsible for making necessary travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates, visits to the district, etc.

## **Caseworker:**

Most Congressional offices have one or more Caseworkers assigned to assist their constituents. The Caseworker's responsibilities include helping resolve problems constituents present in relation to federal agencies, e.g., Social Security and Medicare issues, veteran's benefits, passports, etc. Caseworkers usually work in the Member's district offices.

# Key Congressional committees

Committees are essential to the legislative process in Congress. Each committee has jurisdiction over a certain set of issues, and the members of that committee get the first crack at revising and voting on bill. Visit the key committees' websites to find out if your legislators serve on one of the following committees.

## **The Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs**

The U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is one of twenty Senate committees tasked with conducting Senate business related to specialized areas of legislative interest. The Committees' areas of jurisdiction include, but are not limited to: banking, insurance, financial markets, securities, housing, urban development and mass transit, international trade and finance, and economic policy.

## **The House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services**

The House Financial Services Committee has jurisdiction over issues pertaining to the economy, the banking system, housing, insurance, and securities and exchanges. Additionally, the Committee also has jurisdiction over monetary policy, international finance, international monetary organizations, and efforts to combat terrorist financing.

All housing related bills are referred to these committee, therefore they set the agenda on housing issues—deciding whether Congress focuses on affordable housing shortages, mortgage finance reform, disaster recovery, rent control debates, or homelessness solutions.



# Important legislative terms

**Adjourn:**

Formally end a meeting of a chamber or committee.

**Amendment:**

A proposed change to a pending text (e.g., a bill, resolution, another amendment, or a treaty [or an associated resolution of ratification]).

**Bicameral:**

Literally, "two chambers;" in a legislative body, having two houses (as in the House of Representatives and the Senate comprising the U.S. Congress).

**Bill**

The primary form of legislative measure used to propose law. Depending on the chamber of origin, bills begin with a designation of either H.R. or S.

**Bill summary**

Upon introduction of a bill or resolution in the House or Senate, legislative analysts in the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress write a short summary that objectively describes the measure's significant provisions. Introduced version summaries are subject to length limitations as a matter of policy.

**Budget resolution**

A measure (provided for by the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, as amended) that sets forth a congressional budget plan, including aggregate budgetary levels, which may be enforced during the subsequent consideration of spending and revenue legislation. It is in the form of a concurrent resolution (e.g., an H.Con.Res or an S.Con. Res), not a law-making vehicle; as such, it is not submitted to the president.

**Cloture**

The method by which a supermajority (typically, three-fifths) of the Senate may agree to limit further debate and consideration of a question (e.g., a bill, amendment, or other matter). Details of the procedural process are provided for in Rule XXII of the Senate standing rules.

**Committee / subcommittee**

A panel (or subpanel) with members from the House or Senate (or both) tasked with conducting hearings, examining and developing legislation, conducting oversight, and/or helping manage chamber business and activities.

**Committee chair**

The member of the majority party on a committee who has formal responsibility over the panel's agenda and resources, presides at its meetings, and can, in some circumstances, act on the committee's behalf.

**Committee report**

Document accompanying a measure reported from a committee. It contains an explanation of the provisions of the measure, arguments for its approval, votes held in markup, individual committee members' opinions, cost estimates, and other information. Committee reports are published in the congressional report document series.

**Companion measure**

Identical or substantially similar measures introduced in the other chamber. Identical bills, procedurally-related measures, and legislation with text similarities are other related bill types. Read more [About Related Bills](#).

**Concurrent resolution**

A form of legislative measure used for the regulation of business within both chambers of Congress, not for proposing changes in law. Depending on the chamber of origin, they begin with a designation of either H.Con.Res. or S.Con.Res. Joint resolutions and simple resolutions are other types of resolutions.

**Conference committee**

Temporary joint committee created to resolve differences between House-passed and Senate-passed versions of a measure.

**Conference report**

The document presenting an agreement reached by a joint temporary committee (a conference committee) appointed to negotiate a compromise between the House and Senate.

**Continuing resolution (continuing appropriation)**

An appropriations act (typically in the form of a joint resolution) that provides stop-gap (or full-year) funds for federal agencies and programs to continue operations when the regular (or annual) appropriations acts have not been enacted by the beginning of the fiscal year.

**Cosponsor**

Representatives or Senators who formally sign on to support a measure. Only the first-named Member is the sponsor, all others are cosponsors, even those whose names appeared on the measure at the time it was submitted.

**Enacted**

Made into law

**Enrolled measure**

Final official copy of a measure as passed in identical form by both chambers and then printed on parchment for presentation to the President.

**Engrossed measure**

Official copy of a measure as passed by one chamber, including the text as amended by floor action.

**Filibuster**

In the Senate, the use of dilatory or obstructive tactics to delay or block passage of a measure by preventing it from coming to a vote.

**Hearing**

A formal meeting of a congressional committee (or subcommittee) to gather information from witnesses for use in its activities (that is, the development of legislation, oversight of executive agencies, investigations into matters of public policy, or Senate consideration of presidential nominations).

**Hold**

A request by a Senator to his or her party leader to delay floor action on a measure (e.g., bill) or matter (e.g., nomination), to be consulted on its disposition, and/or an indication that he or she would object to a unanimous consent request to consider said item of business or otherwise delay or obstruct consideration.

**House Rules Committee**

A committee in the House that, among other things, is responsible for reporting out "special rules"—simple resolutions that propose to the House tailored terms for debate and amendment of a measure on the House floor.

**Joint resolution**

A form of legislative measure used to propose changes in law, or to propose an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Depending on the chamber of origin, they begin with a designation of either H.J.Res. or S.J.Res. Concurrent resolutions and simple resolutions are other types of resolutions. Bill is another form of legislative measure used to propose law.

**Markup**

Meeting by a committee or subcommittee during which committee members offer, debate, and vote on amendments to a measure.

**Measure**

A legislative vehicle: a bill, joint resolution, concurrent resolution, or simple resolution.

**Motion to proceed to consider**

A motion in the Senate, which, if agreed to by a majority of those present and voting, brings a measure (e.g., bill) or matter (e.g., nomination) before the chamber for consideration. Often referred to simply as a “motion to proceed.”

**Motion to recommit**

In the House, a motion offered by a member of the minority party at the end of floor consideration that, if adopted in its simple form, returns the measure to a legislative committee. If combined with “instructions to report back forthwith,” the motion effectively provides one last opportunity for a minority party member to offer an amendment to the measure. In the Senate, the motion may be offered at other times during consideration of a measure, and is not a prerogative of a member of the minority party; it may also be used as a means of offering an amendment.

**Motion to table**

A non-debatable motion in the House and Senate (and in their committees) by which a simple majority may agree to negatively and permanently dispose of a question (e.g., an amendment).

**Official title**

A bill’s sponsor designates an official title which may be amended in the course of legislative action. Bills may also have short titles. The more complex a bill becomes, the more likely the bill is to acquire additional titles.

**Original bill**

An introduced bill that embodies a text approved in a committee markup but not formally introduced prior to the markup. Senate committees are authorized to report original bills within their jurisdictions in addition to reporting measures that have been introduced and referred to them; some House committees also have authority to originate certain measures.

**Popular title**

An informal, unofficial name for legislation that may be assigned by the House, Senate, or CRS to improve access. Popular titles are usually not found within official legislative texts (e.g., the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is commonly known as the health care reform bill).

**Quorum**

Minimum number of members of a chamber (or committee) required for the transaction of certain types of business.

**Quorum call**

Action to formally ascertain the presence of the minimum number of members required to transact business. In the Senate, quorum calls are also commonly used as a sort of “time out” in floor proceedings without recessing the chamber.

**Ranking member**

The most senior (though not necessarily the longest-serving) member of the minority party on a committee (or subcommittee). The ranking member typically oversees minority committee staff and may coordinate involvement of the minority party committee members in committee activities.

**Roll call vote**

A vote that records the individual position of each Member who voted. Such votes occurring on the House floor (by the “yeas and nays” or by “recorded vote”) are taken by electronic device. The Senate has no electronic voting system; in such votes, Senators answer “yea” or “nay” as the clerk calls each name aloud. Each vote is compiled by clerks and receives a roll call number (referenced in Congress.gov as a “Record Vote” [Senate] or “Roll no.” [House]). See Roll Call Votes by the U.S. Congress.

**Sponsor**

A Representative or Senator who introduces or submits a bill or other measure.

**Supermajority**

A term sometimes used for a vote on a matter that requires approval by more than a simple majority of those members present and voting, with a quorum being present; also referred to as extraordinary majority.

**Veto**

Presidential disapproval of a bill or joint resolution presented to him for enactment into law. If a president vetoes a bill, it can become law only if the House and Senate separately vote (by two-thirds) to override the veto. A less common form of presidential veto – a pocket veto – occurs if Congress has adjourned without the possibility of returning and the president does not sign the measure within the required 10-day (excluding Sundays) period.

**Source:** Rare Disease Legislative Advocates. (n.d.). **The RDLA Glossary of Policy and Advocacy Terms** [Review of The RDLA Glossary of Policy and Advocacy Terms]. EveryLife Foundation.

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