



Art of Advocacy



**FLORIDA FEDERATION OF GARDEN CLUBS, INC.
TRI-COUNCIL OF FFGC**

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NOTE: Thomas.loc.gov has been taken over by Congress.gov. (2023)

PREFACE

HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE

You are just one person and you feel passionately about an issue. You want to educate people about it. You want to make a difference, to raise awareness, and maybe even raise money to support your cause. However, you don't have the money or an organization that will support you and your opposition is fueled by big corporations or the government. It may seem overwhelming. How do you start?

First of all, get rid of those nagging feelings of helplessness or inadequacy. Have no fear, the Tri-Council of FFGC is here for you and wants to empower you in speaking out on issues that directly impact you, your family, and our environment.

This document is a compilation of information from different resources that will inform you about how our government works and how to be an effective advocate. You are not alone. Included in this information is a legislative primer, written by our very own Marion Hilliard (FFGC President 1995-1997 and National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC) Government Action Education Chair: Environmental Concerns and Conservation Committee). Her document is on the NGC website, and it provides a step-by-step outline on how to go about advocating for your position in the United States' Congress. Her information is as relevant today as it was the day she wrote it.

There are experienced advocates in the FFGC that are more than willing to help you. Don't hesitate to reach out to them. It is our hope the information in this document will give you the confidence and tools you need to speak up for the things you feel are important. Remember, the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment gives you that right.

WHY ARE PUBLIC COMMENTS SO IMPORTANT?

Edmund Burke has been quoted many times, "the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." You have a right to be heard, but what good is that right if you don't **USE IT** to express your concerns.

At this point in time, a lot of stock is put into politicians and other decision-making bodies to be transparent and accountable to its citizens. Often there are public forums that give individuals an opportunity to voice their concerns before final judgments are made.

Public comments often help representatives be more effective and powerful by a large citizen outcry. They at least want to appear to be representing their constituency so they continue to get their votes, to keep their office. This is what fuels democracy and why your comments are so important whether at a public meeting, writing letters, emails and/or petitions.

Inger Jones, President, Tri-Council of FFGC
Jackie Host, President, Environmental Consultant's Council

LEGISLATIVE ACTION!

How can individual members of FFGC make sure they are part of the legislative process? As a non-profit organization, FFGC members are not prohibited from lobbying. In fact, the Mission Statement of the FFGC is: "The Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., promotes the love of gardening, floral and landscape design and civic and environmental responsibility by providing education, resources, and networking opportunities for our members, youth and the community."

Following the lead of the FFGC, Tri-Council members are encouraged in the Tri-Council mission statement to advocate for sound environmental stewardship and this administration is trying to provide some tools to help our members to be successful in their advocacy efforts. That is why this document has been compiled.

The FFGC website is a great place to start when a member wishes to advocate on an environmental issue. When you enter the FFGC website you will see on the menu "Members." One of the links under members is "Tri-Council." Here you will find the heading "How to be an Advocate," which is this document. Over time, FFGC members have written and adopted many position papers including ones supporting protection of our Springs, fracking, planting native plants in the landscape and wildflowers on roadsides, and numerous other environmental concerns. These are well thought out positions and can be found on the FFGC website (ffgc.org).

The main objectives of the Tri-Council are "*To protect the environment, increase knowledge in horticulture and promote excellence in landscape design.*" Also included in the objectives is "Furthering the education of the members and public in the fields of gardening, landscape design and environmental awareness through the conservation of natural resources." Addressing environmental problems and their possible solutions, promoting environmental literacy and advocating sound environmental stewardship is our goal. Working together we can be a force for good and better stewards of our planet.

Inger Jones, President, Tri-Council of FFGC

10 QUICK TIPS TO BEGIN YOUR ADVOCACY

Educate yourself as much as possible about the subject that concerns you. Study the laws, read newsletters and magazines and go to websites that discuss the issue you care about. Never rely on hearsay or rumors to substantiate your facts. In other words, it is very important that you do your homework.

Volunteer. If there are organizations that care about the same issues as you do, join them. Ask them, "How can I help?"

Don't just talk the talk, walk the walk. For example, if you are concerned about all of the plastic pollution in the world, do everything you can do personally to eliminate it from your home. Lead by example. People respect that kind of commitment.

Never imply to anyone that you represent an organization unless you have the credentials to do so. Example, even though I am a member of the National Audubon Society and the St. Johns' Riverkeeper, I should never say I am representing them without their express permission to do so.

Attend as many public forums and events as possible to keep up to date on your issue and get to know those who share your concerns.

Consider hosting an event at your library, church or home and invite people you would like to work with. A lot of support can be found at informal gatherings.

Learn who the policymakers are and visit them personally. Face to face contact is often the best way to let the decision-makers know you are concerned and will continue to work until your goals have been reached.

Take advantage of social media to get the word out about your cause. Make Facebook, Twitter and other media work for you. Don't hesitate to send letters to the editors of newspapers and magazines. Contact news reporters from TV and radio stations. They may not report on your issue, but at least they know how you feel and there is no telling how this may influence them in later broadcasts.

Send letters and emails to decision-makers who can further your cause. Sign petitions or start one to support your issue. More than one of these may be necessary.

Never be argumentative or derogatory to people you want to consider your views. Stick to the facts and always be courteous even if you think the other person isn't. Being respectful is a very good tool that you can use to get the results you want.

Jackie Host, President, Environmental Consultant's Council

Legislative “How To Series”

Compiled by Marion Hilliard, FFGC President, 1995-1997 &
Former NGC Government Action Education Chair: Environmental Concerns and
Conservation Committee

HOW TO SERIES: SURVIVING “THOMAS” – THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION CENTER

THOMAS was launched in January of 1995, at the inception of the 104th Congress. The leadership of the 104th Congress directed the Library of Congress to make federal legislative information freely available to the public. Since that time, THOMAS has expanded the scope of its offerings to include the features and content listed below.

Bills, Resolutions
Activity in Congress
Congressional Record
Schedules, Calendars
Committee Information

Presidential nominations
Treaties
Government Resources
For Teachers
Help and Contact

THOMAS – Legislative Information on the Internet, can be found at <http://thomas.loc.gov>

What You Can Find on THOMAS

A provided summary on each THOMAS feature briefly states what information is available. Accessing each subcategory of the feature will provide a huge amount of information from which you and pick and choose.

Novices, or newcomers to surfing (using) THOMAS may want to start their learning process by accessing the feature “Government Resources” which contains basic information and details about the current Congressional House of Representatives and the Senate.

BILLS, RESOLUTIONS

This home page feature searches the text of legislation for the current Congress by word/phrase or bill number. This is a “quick and dirty” search for those who do not want the advanced features found on the Advanced Bill Text Search page. A link, Search Bill Summary & Status, contains information that includes the sponsor(s), the official, short and popular titles, bill summary, a link to the full text, the committees of referral (committee(s) the bill was referred to) and legislative history.

ACTIVITY IN CONGRESS

The link, Yesterday in Congress, provides a list of floor activity for the previous legislative day of the current Congress. It also provides The Daily Digest which is a summary of a day's activities in both chambers of Congress and provides a link to search Congressional Records from the 101st (1989) through the current Congress.

SCHEDULES, CALENDARS

If interested in learning more about the Congressional Calendars access Days-In-Session Calendars. The link House Floor This Week provides dates and time of the House session, along with bills that are likely to be passed or expected to receive floor action. This feature is updated throughout the week when the House is in session.

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Committee Reports from the 104th (1995) through the current Congress can be obtained by accessing Search Committee Reports. Generally, reports can be searched by word/phrase, report number, bill number and committee. Fortunately searches can be limited by type of report (House, Senate, Conference, Joint). Searching only by word or phrase usually produces a huge number of results.

PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS TREATIES

SEARCH TREATIES provides information from the 90th (1967) through the current Congress. This feature does not contain the actual text. The full text of treaties can be searched at GPO (Government Printing Office) Access.

FOR TEACHERS

THOMAS resources for teachers include classroom activities, lesson plans, guides to congressional information and more.

How To Series: Understanding the Legislative Process

A simplified version of how a bill becomes a law

INTRODUCTION

There are two basic types of legislation: bills and resolutions. Anyone may draft a bill; however, only members of Congress can introduce a bill. Bills are used to create public policy.

There are *three types of resolutions* – joint, concurrent, and simple – that can be used to appropriate money or express a sentiment of Congress. Constitutional amendments originate in Congress as joint resolutions.

Bills are assigned an identifying number, are referred to a committee, or committees that have jurisdiction over its subject and is printed by the Government Printing Office. Those in the House begin with H.R., and those in the Senate begin S. All legislation appropriating money must originate in the House.

COMMITTEE ACTION

When a bill reaches a committee, it is placed on its agenda by the Committee chairperson. It is at this point that a bill is examined carefully and may be sent to a subcommittee. If a committee does not act on a bill, it is the equivalent of killing it. Committees, therefore, have a great deal of power to decide which bills will receive attention. The more support a bill receives from congressional or committee leadership or from the president, the greater its chances are for getting committee attention.

SUBCOMMITTEE REVIEW

Subcommittees have a narrower focus than committees. There usually are three steps taken: Hearings, Mark Up and Reporting Out.

Hearings: Expert witnesses, other public officials, supporters and opponents are called to testify and put on the record their views about the merits or shortcomings of the legislation.

Mark Up: When all hearings are completed the subcommittee may meet to mark up the bill, that is, make changes and amendments prior to recommending the bill to the full committee. Committee members may offer their own views on a bill and suggest amendments. Amendments do not have to be related to the subject of the overall bill at this stage. If a subcommittee votes not to report the bill dies.

Reporting Out: When the mark up is complete, a final draft of the legislation is voted on for approval. If a majority supports the bill, it is reported out. If the legislation does not receive majority support, the bill dies. After a subcommittee reports out legislation, the full committee will go through the same consideration process. If the committee approves a bill, it is reported out to the full House or Senate.

Publication of a Written Report - After a committee votes to report a bill, the committee chair instructs the committee staff to prepare a report on the bill. This report describes the intent of the legislation, its impact on existing laws and programs, position of the executive branch, and views of dissenting members.

Scheduling Floor Action - After a bill is reported back to the chamber where it originated, it is placed in chronological order on the calendar. In the House there are several different legislative calendars, and the Speaker and majority leader largely determine if, when, and in what order bills come up. There is only one legislative calendar in the Senate.

Debate - When a bill reaches the floor of the House or Senate, there are rules or procedures governing the debate on legislation. In the House, the Rules Committee sets the terms of debate. The Senate places fewer restrictions and terms of debate are often set by a Unanimous Consent Agreement. These rules determine the conditions and the amount of time allocated for general debate.

Voting - After the debate and the approval of any amendments, the bill is passed or defeated by the members present and voting.

Referral to Other Chamber - When a bill is passed by the House or the Senate it is referred to the other chamber where it usually follows the same route through committee and floor action. This chamber may approve the bill as received, reject it, ignore it, or change it.

Conference Committee Action - If only minor changes are made to a bill by the other chamber, it is common for the legislation to go back to the first chamber for concurrence. However, when the actions of the other chamber significantly alter the bill, a conference committee is formed to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions. If the conferees are unable to reach agreement, the legislation dies. If agreement is reached, a conference report is prepared describing the committee members' recommendations for changes. Both the House and the Senate must approve the conference report.

Final Action - After a bill has been approved by both the House and the Senate in identical form, it is sent to the President. If the President approves of the legislation he/she signs it and it becomes law. Or, the President can take no action for ten days, while Congress is in sessions, and it automatically becomes law. If the President opposes the bill he/she can veto it; or if he/she takes no action after the Congress has adjourned its second session, it is a pocket veto and the legislation dies.

Overriding a Veto - If the President vetoes a bill, Congress may attempt to override the veto. This requires a two-thirds roll call vote of the members who are present in sufficient numbers for a quorum.

Note:

- Rules and Procedures in State Legislatures may differ from the Congress Chambers.
- Members of Congress receive proposed drafts of bills from constituents, academics, interest groups, lobbyists, any state legislature, a department of the executive branch, federal agencies and the President of the United States.
- Members of Congress who embrace the concept can introduce it as the sponsor. Or, if they wish to keep some distance from the proposal, can introduce it by request, but having introduced the bill does not mean they are necessarily embracing its ideas.
- Members of Congress may seek support by asking other members to sign-on to the proposed legislation and co-sponsor the bill.
- Attempts to amend proposed legislation may drastically alter the bill as originally submitted if approved.

ADVOCACY GLOSSARY

It is suggested that the information be printed, saved and shared. One of the most confusing things for new advocates to deal with is the jargon of government. This glossary contains definitions of terms commonly used in the lawmaking process and in advocacy.

Administrative Advocacy: An attempt to influence policies within the executive branch such as agency rulemakings, grant programs, or agency budgets. Also known as "regulatory advocacy."

Advocacy: Speaking out on issues of concern. This can mean something as formal as sitting down and talking to your legislator; as intensive as engaging in efforts to change a change in laws or policies; or as simple as telling your neighbor about the impact of a law.

Amendment: A change to a bill or motion, sometimes replacing the entire bill (called a "substitution"). An amendment is debated and voted on in the same manner as a bill.

Appropriations: Basically, a fancy word for budget. A legislature's appropriations committee will craft a bill that lays out how the government's money should be spent for a given time period (usually a fiscal year), which is then voted on by the legislature and signed into law by the president or governor. Often, these bills are huge, and contain many "riders."

Authorization: Legislation that formally establishes a program or activity and sets its funding limit. Authorizations are often for a limited time, and programs must be periodically "re-authorized," sometimes with changes.

Bill: Legislation drafted for consideration by the legislature. Bills usually must be formally filed with the legislature's clerk and given an identifying number (H.R. 7, for example, is the seventh bill filed in the House of Representatives this session).

Charity: A non-profit organization that is tax exempt under IRS code section 501(c)(3) which derives substantial support from the general public or is a religious, educational, medical or governmental or charitable support institution. Charities must apply for 501(c)(3) status with the IRS.

Committee: A group of legislators that develops legislation on specific topics (veterans" affairs, for example), and has jurisdiction over all legislation that deals with its topic. Generally, legislation must pass in a committee before the entire legislative body can vote on it. Committees often schedule public hearings to discuss legislative issues. Most action takes place at the subcommittee level.

Congressional Record: The official transcript of federal House and Senate proceedings. Often includes statements by members that are added directly into the record, and not fully read on the floor in the interest of time and staying awake.

Conference Committee: The House and Senate appoint members to a conference committee to resolve differences between versions of legislation passed by both bodies. Both chambers then vote the combined legislation, which is called a "conference report."

Continuing Resolution: Legislation passed by both the House and the Senate permitting executive branch agencies to continue operating in the absence of a budget. In past years, several continuing resolutions have been needed before a federal budget was finally passed.

Cosponsor: When a legislator supports a bill, but is not the primary sponsor, they may sign their name onto the bill as a cosponsor to show their support. Legislation can sometimes have hundreds of cosponsors.

Direct Lobbying: To present a case for or against a specific piece of legislation, and to ask a legislator to vote a certain way. While any citizen can lobby his or her legislators, nonprofits have limits on how much money they can spend on lobbying.

District: The geographic area from which a U.S House member or state legislator is elected.

Electoral activities: Activities that directly attempt to influence the outcome of an election. Charities are strictly prohibited from engaging in electoral activities, although other types or nonprofits are not.

Electoral Advocacy: Efforts to educate voters (such as legislative scorecards), or to register or encourage them to vote. These activities cannot include efforts specifically designed to influence the outcome of an election (see Electoral Activities).

Executive Order: An action by the President or a Governor that has the legal authority of a law, often dealing with regulations or the workings of agencies.

Filibuster: Delaying tactic used in the US Senate by the minority in an effort to prevent the passage of a bill or amendment. The Senate's rules allow for unlimited debate in some situations, unless a 2/3 vote to end debate passes. A filibuster results when one or more Senators continue "debating" for as long as possible (sometimes for days).

Grassroots Lobbying: Stating a position on a specific legislative proposal to the public, then asking the public to urge their legislator to support that stated position. Nonprofits are limited in the amount they can spend on grassroots lobbying.

Hearing: A meeting in which evidence to support particular points of view can be presented to a committee. Usually in conjunction with the consideration of a specific bill and can include experts on a specific topic, or members of the public who would be affected by the bill or issue at hand.

House: The lower body of the Congress, and most state legislatures. House members are elected to represent a geographic district. The US House (with 435 voting members and five nonvoting delegates) is much larger than the Senate (with 100 voting members) , as is the case in most states.

Information Advocacy: Activities to either provide, or ensure the provision of, information that can be used to shape policy.

Judicial Advocacy: Working for policy change through the legal system, either by lawsuits, friend of the court briefs, or providing information for legal cases. Also includes efforts to promote a more just and equitable legal system, which may also include legislative advocacy.

Legislative Advocacy: Efforts to change policy through the legislative branch. May include formal lobbying in support or opposition to a bill, the crafting of new legislative language, writing amendments to existing bills, or encouraging others to contact their legislators.

Lobbying: Communication with elected officials or their staff, which seeks to influence a particular position on a pending piece of legislation.

Mark up: The process of amending a legislative proposal in a committee or subcommittee. Committee members can offer amendments, which if successful, are incorporated into language of a particular bill. Legislation may be drastically changed during mark up.

Majority Leader: The leader of the majority party in the Senate, elected by his or her peers. In the House, the Majority Leader is the second in command after the Speaker of the House and is also elected to that post by his/her peers.

Minority Leader: Leader of the minority party in the House and Senate, elected by members of his or her party.

Omnibus Bill: A bill related to a specific area that covers many issues or topics. Often, the federal budget is an omnibus bill that deals with many agencies' budgets at once.

Public Law: After a bill passes both the House and the Senate and is signed by the president, it becomes a public law.

Regulation: A rule or order that has the force of law that originates from the executive branch (usually from an agency) and deals with the specifics of a program. Congress, for example, may instruct EPA to reduce automotive emissions by 5%, but the EPA must develop regulations to reach this goal.

Rider: An amendment to an appropriations bill, which may not actually deal with the allocation of government funds.

Roll Call: A formal vote on a bill or amendment taken by each legislator announcing "yea" "no" or "present" as their name is read by the clerk.

Senate: The upper body of the Congress, and most state legislatures. Each state has two US Senators, elected at-large, to serve six-year terms, with one-third of the seats up for re-election every two years. In state legislatures, Senators usually represent larger geographic areas than House members.

Speaker of the House: The "leader" of the House of Representatives, elected by the majority party. The speaker controls the calendar and other aspects of the House's activities.

Sponsor: One or more legislators who are the primary writers of a bill. All bills must have at least one sponsor, but many have more than one primary sponsor, and a number of cosponsors as well.

Subcommittee: A part of a committee that deals with a specific issue within the committee's jurisdiction (such as the veterans' benefits subcommittee of the Veteran's Affairs committee). Most legislation is first developed and voted on at this level, as a full committee will usually not consider legislation until it has passed its subcommittee.

Voice Vote: Voting on a bill by acclamation or by asking those in favor to say "yea" and those opposed to say "no." Usually, only non-controversial legislation without any "no" votes is passed this way (such as renaming post offices), but a voice vote will sometimes be taken before a roll call vote.

Whip: Senator or Representative who serves as an internal lobbyist for the Republican or Democratic party to persuade legislators to support their party's position, and who counts votes for the leadership in advance of floor votes. While the whip is an official position, there may be other members who act as a whip for specific legislation or issues.

"Environmental Responsibility is Everyone's Responsibility"

Marion Hilliard, Former NGC Government Action Education Chair: Environmental Concerns and Conservation Committee

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