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The UCN Newsletter



UCN President Jennifer Tartan

A Message From the President

2007 will prove to be a big year for education. With the Legislature in session, there are going to be many challenges presented to NSEA's Lobby Team, like protecting your retirement, securing pay raises and health benefit increases, raising our per pupil funding, and securing smaller class sizes, to name a few. Representing UCN's interests on the Lobby Team and living in Carson City, I will be at the Legislature fighting our fight. But the Lobby Team cannot do it alone. I hope that you will offer your help in phone calls, postcards, emails and face-to-face time with legislators. Key legislatures live in your districts, and your voices are so powerful when legislatures know you are from their region. Let your President know if we can call on you to help. With voices as big as ours, we can make a difference in our locals, in the lives of the children we work with, and in our profession.

Jennifer Tartan

Writing to Your Legislators

Letters and e-mails can be particularly effective in influencing legislators' views. Writing to legislators also offers an opportunity to maintain contact and keep your issues on the front burner even when you cannot meet personally.

Writing an effective letter

Keep it brief — Keep letters to one page. Try to discuss only one bill or issue in a letter.

Identify yourself — Begin with an introduction of yourself or the organization on whose behalf you are writing. Use a simple statement, such as "I am a third-grade teacher at _____ elementary school" or "On behalf of the members of the _____...."

Get to the point — Follow your introduction with a brief statement of your issue or concern, such as "We urge your support for Assembly Bill _____, which will _____." If you are writing in reference to a specific bill, include the bill number. Follow your opening paragraph with a concise explanation of why you support or oppose the particular bill or issue. A few strong, well-thought-out arguments are much more effective than a laundry list of reasons to support or oppose a bill. Whenever possible, use bullet points to outline your arguments.

Relate it to home — Help the legislator understand why your position is important to his or her constituents. Include specific facts about how a bill will impact educators, students or schools in the legislator's district. If possible, include a local anecdote illustrating the problem you are seeking to address. Avoid the use of form letters or generic postcards — use your own knowledge and experience to inform the legislator.

Allow for follow-up — Include specific contact information and offer to act as a resource should the legislator or staff have questions or need additional information. Where appropriate, state in the letter that you will follow up with a telephone call.

Address your letter correctly — See the [details on addressing your letter](#) on the next page.

Using e-mail

E-mail can be an easy and effective tool for communicating with legislators. The tips outlined above for writing letters to legislators also apply to e-mails: keep them brief and to the point, with facts and anecdotes relevant to the legislator's district.

Avoid informal language — E-mail to a legislator should be treated as seriously as a written letter. Resist the temptation to use the informal language and symbols often associated with e-mail communications. Never use impolite language or make "demands."

Include your full address and zip code — Make sure the text of your e-mail includes your full name and street address, including zip code. Many legislative offices screen e-mails for address information identifying the sender as a constituent. E-mails that appear to come from outside the district are unlikely to be read and may be blocked by filtering programs.

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Writing to Your Legislators, continued from page 2

Addressing written correspondence

Nevada State Senators

Senator (full name)
401 South Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Email address=(first initial)+(last name)@sen.state.nv.us
i.e. Mark Amodei is mamodei@sen.state.nv.us

Dear Senator (last name),

Nevada State Assemblymen or Assemblywomen

Assemblyman/Assemblywoman (full name)
401 South Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Email address=(first initial)+(last name)@asm.state.nv.us
i.e. Bonnie Parnell is bparnell@asm.state.nv.us

Dear Assemblyman/Assemblywoman (last name),

How a Bill Becomes a Law From “Guide to the Nevada State Legislature”

Initial Steps by the Author

Idea

Ideas for legislation come from elected officials, businesses, lobbyists, and citizens.

Drafting

Legislators, legislative committees, the Governor, state agencies, and local governments may request bill drafts. Staff attorneys in the Legislative Counsel Bureau prepare the formal drafts of bills.

Action in the House of Origin

Introduction and First Reading

A bill is submitted by a Senator or Assembly member, numbered and read for the first time, assigned to a committee, and printed. A bill or resolution may be introduced in either the Senate or the Assembly and cosponsors in the other house may be listed on the front of the measure.

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How a Bill Becomes a Law, continued from page 3

Committee

A committee holds a hearing to take testimony and gather information about the bill. A committee may recommend that the house pass a bill as it is written, pass it with amendments, or not pass it. If a committee thinks that a bill requires further committee consideration, it may recommend that the house amend the bill and refer it again to the same committee or to another committee. Finally, a committee may vote to indefinitely postpone consideration of a bill, effectively killing it, or it may take no action at all.

Second Reading Before the Full House

A bill given a "Do Pass" recommendation is read a second time and placed on the general file for debate and vote. A bill which is given an "Amend and Do Pass" recommendations is read a second time, amended and reprinted before being placed on the general file for action.

Floor Debate and Vote by the Full House

A bill is read for a third time and debated. A roll-call vote follows. Passage of most bills and joint resolutions requires 11 votes in the Senate and 22 in the Assembly. The passage of a bill that imposes or increases a tax or fee requires 14 votes in the Senate and 28 votes in the Assembly.

A measure which does not receive at least this number of votes is defeated. Any member voting on the prevailing side may serve notice of reconsideration to request a second vote. If passed, or passed with amendments, the measure is sent to the second house.

Action in the Second House

The method of processing a bill in the second house is identical to that in the first house. If the second house to consider a bill or joint resolution passes it without amendment, it is sent to the Governor. Other types of resolutions are sent to the Secretary of State. If the second house amends a measure, it is returned to the house of origin for consideration of the amendments.

Resolution of Differences (if Necessary)

Consideration of Amendments

The house of origin decides whether to accept the second house's amendments. If it accepts the amendments, the bill goes to the Governor. If the amendments are rejected, the bill is returned to the second house for a decision whether or not to withdraw the proposed changes.

Conference Committee

If the second house does not recede, the bill is referred to a conference committee that includes members of both houses. The conference committee attempts to reconcile the differences and presents its recommendations in the form of a conference report. If both houses accept the report, the bill goes to the Governor. If either house rejects the report, a second (and final) conference committee is appointed. The bill dies if the members of the second conference committee fail to agree.

The Role of the Governor

The Governor must act on a bill within 5 days after he receives it if the Legislature is still in session, or 10 days if the session has ended. He may sign the bill into law, allow it to become law without his signature, or veto it. A vetoed bill returns to the house of origin for a possible vote on overriding the veto. An override requires a two-thirds majority of both houses. If the Governor vetoes a bill after the session ends, it is returned to the next legislative session.