



ACLU OF MISSISSIPPI

LOBBYING GUIDE

YOUR GUIDE TO BEING A LIBERTY LOBBYIST

ACLU
Mississippi



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Since 1969, the ACLU of Mississippi has stood side-by-side with you to seek a better Mississippi for all of us. We hold true to our mission: promoting, defending, and extending civil liberties to all Mississippians with emphasis on issues related to **criminal justice reform, educational opportunities, equal access/equality for all, voter rights, and governmental transparency and accountability.** We accomplish our mission through legislation, litigation, and advocacy.

This guide is a toolkit that will help you engage with elected officials. Inside, you'll learn how to lobby in support of legislation and in opposition of hurtful policy. This guide will help you develop the skills necessary to communicate effectively with your legislator and other key elected leadership.



How a Bill Becomes Law

1. The bill is filed and sent to committee.

No bill can become an act until it has been read on three separate days in each house. The first reading occurs when the bill is first introduced. Reference to committee immediately follows the first reading.

2. The committee considers the bill.

The committees of each house meet and consider the bills that have been referred to them, which is the second reading. Committee members vote to approve the bill, amend it, or deny it. Bills not favorably reported are typically dead.

3. The bill is debated on the floor.

Bills are listed on the calendar in the order they are reported from committee. When the bill is reached on the calendar, the bill gets its third reading. At this time, the whole house studies, debates, and amends the bill. Separate votes are taken on each amendment or change to the bill.

4. They vote.

After the bill has been debated, each member votes. If a 51% majority of those present vote in favor of the bill, it passes. Otherwise, it fails.

5. Repeat steps 1-4 in the other chamber.

If the second house makes changes to the bill, the bill is sent back to the house of origin for consideration of the amendment. If both chambers pass identical versions of the same bill, it goes to the Governor's desk.

If the second house does not approve it in committee or it is not considered by the full house, then the bill is dead.

If the bill passes in both houses but in different forms, the house of origin must accept those changes before it goes to the Governor's desk. If the bill passes but in different forms and the house of origin rejects changes, then the bill is sent to a conference committee.

Conference on a bill occurs when further discussion is needed by members of both the House and Senate. A conference consists of three Representatives and three Senators who work together to finalize a bill. Once a bill is out of conference, it must go to both the House and Senate for a vote before heading to the Governor. The deadline for bills to come out of conference and pass the House and Senate occurs during the final week of session. Any bills passed out of conference will then be sent to the Governor to be signed into law.


6. The Governor decides to sign or veto.

When the Governor signs the bill, it completes its enactment into law. If the Governor disapproves, it can be vetoed and returned to the originating house for consideration. The legislature can override a veto with a simple majority (51%) vote. A bill can also become law if it is sent to the Governor but is not signed by the deadline.

What You Can Do and When

Before a Bill is introduced:

- Research the issues and your legislators.
- Connect with local special interest groups that analyze policy to learn about the bills they are supporting or opposing.
- Encourage your legislators to introduce bills on issues that you care about.
- Tell others why legislators need to act by sharing information in-person, online, and in the news.

 Check the Mississippi Legislature website often. It includes information about all bills as well as the calendar for the day.

When a Bill is in committee:


- Contact committee members to ask them to support, reject, or amend the bill. Recruit your friends to contact them as well.
- Attend public hearings. Testify at the hearing for or against the bill, particularly if you have a personal story.

When a Bill is on the floor:

- Contact your legislator to support, reject, or amend the bill. Ask your friends to do the same.
- Tell people why you think the bill should or should not pass by posting on social media or writing a letter to the editor in your local newspaper.

When a Bill is on the Governor's desk:

- Contact the Governor's office to encourage signing or vetoing.
- Identify other people who may have special influence with the Governor, and contact them.

 If you don't get the outcome you're hoping for, stay positive. Passing quality legislation takes time.
• Learn more at www.aclu-ms.org.



LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

Below is a list of committees that handles issues most relevant to the work of the ACLU of Mississippi. Each committee is scheduled to meet at the same time each week during the legislative session. Committee meetings generally last for two hours and are open to the public. Each committee has a different number of members, roughly 10-25. The chairperson is the most powerful committee member. The chairperson decides whether a bill is calendared for consideration and can call special meetings at their discretion.

SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Accountability, Efficiency & Transparency Chair: Sen. John A. Polk	
Corrections Chair: Sen. Sampson Jackson II	Corrections Chair: Rep. Bill Kinkade
Education Chair: Sen. Gray Tollison	Education Chair: Rep. Richard Bennett
Elections Chair: Sen. Kevin Blackwell	Apportionment & Elections Chair: Rep. Bill Denny
Judiciary A Chair: Sen. W. Briggs Hopson III	Judiciary A Chair: Rep. Bill Denny
Judiciary B Chair: Sen. Hob Bryan	Judiciary B Chair: TBD
Public Health & Welfare Chair: Sen. Dean Kirby	Public Health & Human Services Chair: Rep. Sam C. Mims V

HOW TO LOBBY



WHAT IS LOBBYING?

The goal of lobbying is to influence those involved within a legislative body. You are a constituent of your legislators, regardless of party affiliation, and it is their job to listen to you because you hold the power of the vote. However, voting is only a portion of your power as a citizen.

Lobbying gives a citizen even more power by directly contacting and connecting with your legislators, and there is nothing quite as effective as meeting with somebody face-to-face and talking about the issues that impact you and so many others.

There are other ways for you to lobby even if you can't meet your legislator face-to-face. Create a petition. With enough signatures, you are sure to gain their attention. See the next page for other ways.

SCHEDULING A MEETING

Call your legislator's office to make an appointment during session. Be prepared to provide your name, address, desired time to meet, and issue.

Call the Capitol Switchboard at:

601-359-3770.

Be polite to the staffer with whom you speak and be sure to thank them for their time.

THE BASICS

Know Your Issue

Often, a legislator may have very little knowledge regarding your particular issue. It is important that you provide them with the necessary information so they can make an informed decision.

Good impressions never hurt

Relationships and connections are important in the world of government, so keep this in mind when meeting for the first time. Try not to let emotions run high when addressing the issues you've brought along.

It's About the Greater Good

Keep in mind that you are speaking on behalf of others as well, rather than just yourself. Provide inspiring examples as to how the changes you want to see will impact the community at-large.

Keep an Eye on the Results

Lobbying your issue does not stop at the end of your meeting. Keep an eye on the progression of legislation and hold your legislator accountable.

IF YOU MEET WITH A LAWMAKER ABOUT AN ISSUE THAT IS IMPORTANT TO US, LET US KNOW HOW IT WENT!

How to Talk

So Your Mississippi Legislator Will Listen

It may only take a couple dozen phone calls, emails, or other contact from constituents to get an issue on your legislators' radar.

Do A Little Research

Visit legislators' websites & social media pages to learn their backgrounds and positions or go to www.legislature.ms.gov.

- Check out Daily Action Reports under Legislation tab.
- Sign up for ACLU of Mississippi Email Alerts at www.aclu-ms.org and ACLU [People Power](#) to stay in the loop and take action at critical moments.

MEET IN PERSON

- Attend town halls meetings, voter convenings, and legislative forums. Come prepared with a question and be sure to introduce yourself after.
- During session, visit your legislators at the Mississippi State Capitol. Contact them in advance.
- Out of session, in their home district, legislators have more time. Set up a meeting and bring like-minded friends.



WRITE A LETTER



Old-fashioned pen and paper can be very effective since it's increasingly rare. Go to the ACLU of Mississippi web site for messaging or use your own words. Encourage others to write their legislators as well.

MAKE A CALL



Simply pick up the phone and call your legislator's office. You may reach a staffer or leave a message. State the issue(s) and the response you would like to see or the vote you want them to cast.

Pro Tips

Be firm but courteous. Use respectful language. If possible, include praise for a position the legislator has taken in the past.

Be brief. Legislators want to know what you think. Write just a paragraph or two and keep phone messages to a few sentences.

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MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS

Use these tips for a successful lobby visit during the ACLU of MS Legislative Advocacy Day or whenever you meet with your legislator.

REMEMBER...

WHO TO VISIT

Please visit your State Representative and State Senator. ACLU of MS staff can help you identify and locate your legislator and legislative staff to schedule meetings.

GETTING STARTED

- Open the office door and check-in with the person at the front desk (you do not have to knock). Introduce yourself as a constituent. Say that you are here as part of the ACLU's lobby day and that you want to talk with your Representative or Senator about specific legislation.
- You may not be able to speak directly with your legislator if you haven't scheduled an appointment in advance. If you can speak to a staff member, that is also terrific.
- If no one is available to speak with you, make sure to leave behind the priority legislation fact sheet.
- Stick to the message. Stay on topic and focus your comments on the proposed legislation. Remember to make the "ask."
- Adding a personal story about how the issues affect you, your family, your friends, or your community, can go a long way. Facts and figures are important, but people will remember and connect with stories much more easily.
- If your legislator disagrees with you, stay friendly, and leave on good terms so you can come back again.
- If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to, no need to worry or make something up! Tell the legislator or their staff that you will get back to them with an answer, and be sure to follow up.
- If you meet directly with a legislator, we recommend sending them a thank you email afterward. It is a nice touch and gives you a chance to reiterate your position regarding legislation.



LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR

Writing a letter to your legislator is another impactful step you can take as a constituent.

TIPS TO REMEMBER

When writing a letter to a legislator, remember:

- Be courteous and informative.
- State the purpose of the letter.
- Focus on the message.
- Restate your request.
- Refrain from over-exaggeration.
- Avoid insults.
- Omit jargon, emotional words, and acronyms.

If you receive a response, be sure to follow up.

MAILING ADDRESSES

Mississippi State Capitol
400 High St., Jackson, MS 39201

You can find your legislators' addresses by going to the House and Senate Roster pages at <https://www.legislature.ms.gov>.

Your Address

Your Phone Number and Email

Legislator's Name and Address

Dear Honorable (Full Name),

State the reason for your letter in the first sentence and the bill number you would like them to support or oppose accompanied by a brief description.

Mention you are a voter in their district and why you feel it is necessary that they understand why this issue is important to you.

State reasons they should support your position. Use facts and references when appropriate to strengthen your argument. Use citations when necessary to enhance the letter's credibility. Most importantly, if you have been impacted by an issue and feel comfortable sharing your story, please share your own personal experience.

Be brief, specific, and concise. It is strongly encouraged to only write about one bill at a time and limit your letter to one page. Ensure that the tone of the letter is positive and never threaten political or other consequences.

Thank them for their consideration of your request. Lastly tell them you look forward to their response to this issue.

Sincerely,

Sign your name

Type your name

Type your position

IMPORTANT DATES

The 2019 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature convenes at 12 noon on Tuesday, January 8, 2019. Below are some important dates to keep in mind this session.

Date	Deadline
Jan. 21	Introduction of general bills and constitutional amendments
Feb. 5	Committees report on general bills and constitutional amendments originating in OWN House. This is the first hurdle. If a bill doesn't pass committee, it is dead.
Feb. 14-18	Floor action in OWN House takes place.
Mar. 5	Committees report on general bills and constitutional amendments originating in OTHER House.
Mar. 13-15	Floor action in OTHER House takes place.
Mar. 28	Concur or not concur on amendments from OTHER House to general bills and constitutional amendments.
April 1	Conference reports on general bills and constitutional amendments to be filed.
April 3-6	Conference reports: consideration, filing, adoption, and dispose of motions to reconsider
April 7	SINE DIE

RESOURCES

ACLU Mississippi

Website: aclu-ms.org

Facebook: ACLU of Mississippi

Twitter: @aclu_ms

Instagram: @aclu_ms

Youtube: ACLU Mississippi

#EquityAgenda

Which reforms should your legislator prioritize for a more equitable state?

How did your legislator vote last session?

Find these resources at:

<https://www.aclu-ms.org/en/resources/other/legislative-resources>

Track legislation we're following on our website by searching 2019 #msleg Tracking.