



CAPPS LEGISLATIVE HANDBOOK

**April 20, 2022
Sacramento, CA**

“How To” Primer on Grass Roots Advocacy

The private postsecondary segment of higher education has a tremendous story to tell: Private career schools and colleges in California have graduated millions of students over the years and have placed them in rewarding jobs. Unfortunately, too often those efforts go unnoticed and government action either ignores or severely restricts private career education and training.

Sometimes, we are our own worst enemies. We fail to tell our story and engage actively in the political process. We are caught up in the day-to-day operations of our business and forget to become involved in those activities that are essential to ensure the participation of our students in government programs.

CAPPS is working to change that. It recognizes that collectively we must exert a major effort just to remain viable as a provider of postsecondary education in California. However, CAPPS needs your individual and corporate participation to be successful.

The following pages are intended to be a quick primer on how to participate effectively in the political process. Yes, it takes considerable time, effort, and money. However, you can be assured that the effort is more than worth it.

CAPPS is always there to talk over any issue and discuss strategy and approach. Email info@cappsonline.org and we will help.

The manual will provide tips on how to:

- Educate legislators on issues important to private career schools and their students including proposed Legislation and Regulations. Select no more than three issues to talk about.
- Obtain positive recognition for these schools and students.
- Promote the passage of important and relevant legislation.

The continued success of the CAPPS grassroots effort depends on the energy and commitment of all our members. Take some time to read what follows, set up your own political timetable and goals, and then implement them. CAPPS will be pleased to give you guidance and assistance along the way.

IMPORTANT

When meeting or talking with a legislator:

- Do ask legislators for their opinions.
- Do ask legislators for a commitment to support your legislative position.
- Do give concrete examples of how your position will benefit the legislator's constituents.
- Do be considerate of the legislator's time.
- Do have handouts summarizing your position (very important).
- Don't praise or disparage any political party.
- Don't discuss your own personal political opinions.
- Don't overstate or exaggerate your position.
- Don't trivialize your opponent's position.
- Don't discuss political contributions and legislation at the same meeting.
- Don't threaten or strong-arm.

TELEPHONE PROCEDURES

From time to time, as a sector representative, you may have to contact your legislator by telephone. The following guidelines may be helpful when making such calls:

- When the Legislature is in session, it is most effective to call the Legislator's Sacramento office.
- Ask to speak directly to the legislator. Occasionally, time does not permit legislators to receive or return telephone calls. Be prepared to ask to speak with the staff person who is handling the particular subject (this applies only when a call is made to the Legislator's Capitol office).
- When the Legislator or his/her assistant is on the line, identify yourself and mention that you are a constituent, and a CAPPS member.
- State the reason for the call. Use bill numbers whenever possible. You should feel comfortable with the issue and the Association's position on it when making the call. Explain how the proposed legislation affects your school and your students and why you support or oppose it.
- Discuss only one issue per telephone call.
- Ask for the legislator's position.
- If the legislator's position is the same as yours and CAPP's, express agreement and thanks.

- If CAPPS's position differs from the legislator's, politely express disappointment and offer some facts supporting your views.
- Do not attempt to give “expert” opinions. Express how the legislation would affect your school and students, based on your experience and knowledge.
- Request that your legislator take a specific action by telling him/her what you want. State the facts as you see them. Avoid emotional arguments. If you use dollar figures, be realistic.

LETTER-WRITING SUGGESTIONS

Letters from constituents are an important source of information for legislators regarding matters of concern to the State and district. In order to write an effective letter, the following guidelines are suggested.

- Be brief. Keep all communications friendly and respectful.
- Make sure the legislator knows this communication is from a constituent and/or CAPPS member.
- Explain the Association's interest in the legislation and why the Association supports/opposes it.
- Refer to the bill number whenever possible.
- Ask for the legislator's support or opposition.
- Write the letter without copying background papers verbatim.
- Ask the legislator for a response specifying both his/her position and reasoning.

Use your office stationery and address all letters in the following manner:

The Honorable John Doe
State Capitol, Room _____
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assemblymember Doe: (Or use first name if on a first-name basis)

The Honorable John Doe
State Capitol, Room _____
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Doe: (Or use first name if on a first-name basis)

You should also consider using postcards and letters from students and/or employers to support CAPPS's positions.

You can also e-mail your letter. Be sure to include a very brief subject line indicating the topic of your communication and whether you are opposed or in favor of legislative action on that subject. Given the prevalence of e-mail campaigns it is important that legislative staff be able to quickly summarize your communications.

Sample letter to be sent to your Assemblymember. Please personalize so that each letter received by the respective Assemblymember is not the same.

(DATE)

The Honorable John Doe
State Capitol, Room _____
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Bill Number – Support or Oppose

Dear Assemblymember Doe:

The California Association of Private Postsecondary Schools (CAPPS) has sponsored SB _____, by Senator Joe Smith, which would include CAPPS as a member of the School-to-Career task force. As an owner and manager of a career school in your district, I urge you to vote AYE when this bill comes before you. Our schools have trained students and placed them in jobs since the task force was founded. Including private career colleges in this task force would enhance the current committee's effectiveness.

I urge you to support this measure. I would be very interested in what your position is on this legislation. Thank you for your consideration, and please call upon me if I may be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,

Bill Jones
President

TOP 10 LIST – THINGS ELECTED OFFICIALS’ STAFF DO NOT LIKE TO HEAR

Number 10: But I thought my appointment was with the senator.

Never, ever indicate that you are disappointed to be meeting with a staff person. Having a good relationship with a staff person can make or break your cause.

Number 9: Here is some reading material for you—our 300-page report.

When meeting with a legislator 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 online, if appropriate. Offering the information in a folder with your organization’s name (if applicable) or the subject matter on the label will help ensure that the materials are kept and are accessible, rather than tossed on a pile, or worse.

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

It is never acceptable to discuss or reference a campaign contribution while discussing policy issues or legislative votes, and in many instances is against the law.

Number 7: I assume you know all about S.B. 1234.

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

Number 6: No, I don’t have an appointment, but I promise I will only take half an hour of your time.

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

Number 5: No, I don’t really need anything specific.

If you don’t ask for something—a bill co-sponsorship, a Senate Record statement, or a meeting in the district, for example—some staff will wonder why you came by. Updates on your issue are fine as long as they are accompanied by a request.

Number 4: We have 10 (or more) people in our group.

State Capitol offices are generally small. If you have more than five people in your group, you may end up 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 your group is large, assign a few people (specifically constituents) the responsibility of delivering the message.

Number 3: What you are telling me cannot be right. I have heard/read otherwise.

Most staff and legislators will not lie to you. They know that lying will get them in trouble. Sometimes they may see things differently than you do, but if they say that a bill is definitely not going to be considered on the floor, or that there is no such legislation, you should believe them.

Number 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.

Number 1: No, I don't represent anyone from your district/state. I just thought you would be interested in what I have to say.

Legislators are elected to represent their constituents. If you are not their constituent or you are not connected to their constituents, you are not relevant to them. Some legislators do rise to higher positions of authority, but that just means they represent the additional interests of their committee or chamber, but they don't take on any new "constituents" per se. Your time is always best spent working with your own elected officials and turning them into advocates for your cause.