What can one person do?

As a friend of the University of Oregon, you know the value of higher education, and what a degree has meant to you, your friends and your family. We encourage you to share your story with your elected officials, especially your state legislators. Your legislators were elected to represent you, so by all means, let them know what you think.

Individuals working together can make an enormous impact on the legislative process, the laws that are made, and the programs that are funded. It doesn’t take much to lobby your elected officials, just a bit of homework to understand the issues, and a bit of time to get in touch with them. Your effort could tip the scale – and help change a vote!

This guide will show you how one person can make a difference.

ADVOCACY GUIDELINES

Learn the process and issues
Familiarize yourself with the basic legislative process, and with key legislative decision-makers. Be prepared to explain the reasons for the position or action for which you are advocating.

While it is important to be prepared, informed, and factual, you are not expected to be an expert. If you understand the key points of the issue and understand how the university could be affected, then you are ready to go. If you are subsequently asked a question that you do not know the answer to, it’s fine to say “I don’t know, but I will find out and get back to you.” Resources available to you are described later in this manual.

Keep it simple
Technology has provided us with a range of opportunities to make our voices heard on a moment’s notice. However you choose to contact your elected officials – personal visits, letters, e-mails, phone calls or faxes – keep it simple:

- Be brief.
- Be specific; identify your subject clearly, including the bill number, and clearly state your position.
- Be personal; describe how the issue affects your life.
- Be reasonable; don’t ask for the impossible or engage in threats.
- Ask them to state their positions on the issue; you are entitled to know.

Tell the truth
You only get one shot at credibility. Do not stretch or embellish factual information. If you are asked a question and don’t know the answer, promise to find out, and follow up with the legislator or office that asked the question.
COMMUNICATING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Personal Visits
Visiting with a legislator in person is the most effective way to advocate. Here are some important tips:

- Schedule an appointment in advance. Be polite to whoever answers the phone. The University of Oregon Office of Governmental Affairs is happy to assist in arranging meetings with your legislators.
- Arrive on time, but do not be disappointed if the legislator is late, or if they are unable to meet with you due to unexpected meetings and issues to which they must attend. Offer to discuss the issue with the staff, and offer to reschedule your meeting.
- Keep your visit brief – no more than fifteen minutes, unless the legislator would like to have a longer meeting.
- Organize your thoughts in advance, and prepare an outline of your position.
- Identify the issue by subject as well as the bill number; if you just say a bill number, your legislator may not know what that bill does.
- Be polite and friendly. If you disagree with a legislator, state your position and graciously listen to their response. You may agree on future issues and work together then.
- Be reasonable in your requests.
- Always be polite and friendly to the staff. Legislative staff are important to the legislator, and you should count on them to convey your points and issues to the legislator if you are unable to speak with them directly.
- Leave a summary of your talking points and position. The Office of Governmental Affairs can produce these “leave be-hinds” for you.
- After the meeting, send a thank-you note or follow-up letter.

Meeting with a group?
If you meet with your legislator as part of a group, decide ahead of time who will be the main speaker. Introduce everyone so that your legislator knows why each person is there, but designate one person as the main speaker in order to keep your visit brief and to the point.

The Keys to Effective Advocacy

honesty – nothing will do you more harm with a legislator than to lie. Stick to the facts without exaggeration or embellishment.

respect – you will never go anywhere in your efforts as an advocate unless you show sincere respect for legislators and the legislative process.

keep it brief, keep it simple – make your letters and statements quick and to the point.

be prepared – understand the basics of the issue and the basics of the legislative process.

mind your demeanor – never be confrontational, never threaten, be reasonable, and have a sense of humor.

treat staff like you would treat the legislator – when you talk to staff, you are talking to the legislator; assume anything you say to staff will be said directly to the legislator; always treat staff with respect and courtesy.

stay in touch during the interim – there is a lot of advocacy you can do during that year and a half.

always say thank you – after every visit, letter or comment you receive from a legislator, send a note of thanks.
Public Appearances
If you are able to meet your legislators at public events, it is appropriate to ask them about issues. Keep questions short and to the point. Make sure your question is specific: “Will you vote for SB 5524?” or “Will you make a public pledge to support increasing funds for higher education?” Do not use a public forum as an opportunity to argue with a legislator. If you disagree with their response or find it inadequate, discuss this with them after the forum, schedule a meeting in their local office or send a letter outlining your concerns.

Letters
Letters are probably the most common way that constituents communicate with their elected officials. Letters should:

• be brief (no more than one page);
• be typed (or written legibly) on either your professional or personal letterhead; personal letterhead doesn’t have to be pre-printed or fancy, it just means that the letter itself should include your name and address because envelopes get thrown away;
• contain a personal message; form letters may generate a volume of mail, but they do not have the impact of a personally written letter.

Sample layout for your first letter:

Paragraph 1: State clearly and concisely why you are writing, including what you are asking the legislator to do and why you care. For example, “I am writing to urge you to vote for passage of SB 5524, the higher education funding bill. As your constituent and as a graduate of the University of Oregon, I am counting on your support.”

Paragraph 2: Outline one or two critical points, and perhaps a personal example of how the issue affects you or your family. For example, “This bill will provide needed funds to ensure that a quality education at a public university remains affordable in Oregon. I was able to receive a degree at the University of Oregon, and I want my daughter to have that same opportunity.”

Paragraph 3: Ask the legislator to state his or her position, and thank them for their consideration. For example, “Can I count on your ‘yes’ vote on passage of SB 5524? Thank you for your consideration of this issue which is so important to me.”

Finally, do NOT forget to sign your letter.

If your legislator sends you a reply, then it is time for you to write letter #2. The three typical scenarios are:

1) Your legislator agrees with you and says they will do what you asked. Your letter #2 is to say thanks for the reply and thanks for the support.

Sample letter

John Duck
1234 Pine Tree Lane
Anytown, OR 97777

February 3, 2001

The Honorable Jane Smith
900 Court Street NE Room S-315
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senator Smith:

I am writing to urge you to vote for passage of SB 5524, the higher education funding bill. As your constituent and a graduate of the University of Oregon, I am counting on your support.

This bill will provide needed funds to ensure that a quality education at a public university remains affordable in Oregon. I was able to receive a degree at the University of Oregon, and I want my daughter to have that same opportunity.

Can I count on your ‘yes’ vote on passage of SB 5524? Thank you for your consideration of this issue which is so important to me.

Sincerely,

John Duck
2) Your legislator does not agree with you and will not do what you asked. Your letter #2 is to thank them for their reply, to express your appreciation for their honesty in stating their opposition, and to say that you look forward to working with them in the future on a different issue. Don’t burn those bridges – that very same legislator could be the swing vote on the next bill.

3) The third and perhaps most common reply you may receive from your legislator is one that avoids both commitment and detail. You are likely familiar with responses such as, “Thank you for contacting me regarding this important issue. I will consider this issue carefully and vote based on what I believe is best for all of my constituents.” In this case you may decide to let it go, especially if the legislator has publicly committed to a position on the issue. Or, you can write a second letter asking for more specifics. Your second letter will likely receive more attention and generate a more thorough response than your first letter.

Sending an e-mail or FAX?
E-mails and faxes are perfectly acceptable ways to contact your legislators, unless of course your legislator has made it clear otherwise. However, e-mails and faxes do not look as nice as a printed letter, and in some cases e-mails and faxes are not checked or responded to as frequently as the mail. Also, faxes are not confidential, especially when numerous legislative office share the same fax machine (which they do).

On the other hand, e-mails and faxes provide you with almost instant access to your legislator’s office. This can be crucial when a vote is hours or minutes away. As with letters, be sure to include your name and how your legislator can contact you.

Telephone Calls
Using the telephone is a quick way to let your legislator know your opinion, and it is especially useful during busy legislative sessions when change can occur frequently and without little warning. Sometimes, however, legislators are difficult to reach personally, and you may be asked to speak with an aide. If that occurs, try to speak with the aide who is responsible for higher education issues. Regardless of whom you speak with, be prepared, concise, friendly, and appreciative.

• Identify yourself by name and address. If you are a constituent, say so.
• Identify the bill you want to talk about by name and number.
• Briefly state what your position is and how you would like your legislator to vote.
• Ask for your legislator’s view on the bill or issue; ask for a commitment to vote for your position.

Testifying Before a Committee
All bills are referred to a legislative committee where they are often given a public hearing. If you wish to testify at a public hearing on a particular bill, contact the committee staff and ask to be placed on the mailing list for the committee’s agenda and to be notified by phone when a hearing is scheduled. Before heading to Salem for a scheduled hearing, always call the committee staff to be sure there have been no last minute changes to the agenda.

Here are some tips when testifying:
• Arrive early and sign the witness list indicating your desire to testify.
• Prepare a one-page typed statement of your position. Bring at least 12 copies with you, enough for each member of the committee, the staff and the press. Other supporting materials, like articles, charts and reports, should be attached to the 1-page statement.
• When it is your turn, give all of the copies of your statement to the committee staff first, then sit at the microphone.
Begin by thanking the committee chair and the members of the committee for giving you the opportunity to speak.

Keep your statement brief and to the point.

Give a clear, concise statement of your position, e.g., “I support the higher education funding bill and urge you to vote yes.”

Legislators may interrupt your testimony with questions. Answer the question then return to your statement. If you don’t know the answer, say that you don’t know and that you would be happy to find out and get back to them.

Avoid confrontations, even if you are asked a hostile or irrelevant question.

Finish by again thanking them for their time.

WHEN TO LOBBY

There are many appropriate times to be in touch with elected officials. Following are some examples:

• After an election, saying congratulations.

• At the beginning of a legislative session, letting them know who you are, and that you look forward to working with them on higher education issues.

• When the governor releases his proposed budget, asking your legislator to support, oppose, or increase the governor’s proposed budget for higher education.

• When a bill is introduced, urging your legislator to support, oppose or amend the bill. If you support the bill, you can request that your legislator sign on as a cosponsor of the bill. The more cosponsors a bill has, the more likely it is to gain support and move through the legislative process.

• When a bill is referred to a committee for a public hearing and review. Committee members often hear from constituents about bills in their committees.

• When a bill is passed out of committee and is referred to the full Senate or House. This is the time you may wish to write a letter, but also call, e-mail or FAX your legislator since the vote could take place right away. When a bill passes one chamber, it goes to the next and the process starts again. This can take days, weeks, or months.

• If a bill is bottled up in committee and appears unlikely to ever emerge, you might contact your legislators and urge them to get the bill moving.

Sometimes bills never make it out of committee. Sometimes they pass one chamber and not the other. Even if a bill passes both chambers, the governor has the power to veto the legislation. At any point in this process you may want to personally lobby your Representative, Senators, the House and Senate leaders or the Governor.

OTHER WAYS TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

In addition to communicating with your legislators, there are other ways to influence issues you care about.

Letters-to-the-Editor

A letter-to-the-editor gives you a chance to inform thousands of people about a critical piece of legislation. Many people read these sections of the newspaper, especially elected officials. Even if it is not published, your letter might inspire an editorial on the same subject.

When writing a letter-to-the-editor, observe how long the average published letter runs, and keep your letter within this length. Make your letter concise; avoid rambling and nonspecificity. Be certain to sign your name and give your address and telephone number, although the latter will not be published. Most newspapers do not print anonymous letters, although they may withhold your name if you feel strongly about it. Newspapers often receive more letters than they
can print, so if your letter is not published the first time, try again.

**Op-Eds**

Many newspapers feature a section opposite the editorial pages (often called the Op-Ed page) for citizen opinion. If you are comfortable writing, consider submitting an article on a subject you know and care about.

**Meet with Editorial Staff or Reporters**

Stop by your local newspaper’s office and chat with reporters or editorial page editors. Give them special information about higher education issues – the Advocacy Program can provide this for you.

**Radio Call-In Shows**

Let others know what you think. Ask questions of those who appear on these shows. Ask a Representative or Senator how he or she intends to vote on an upcoming issue. Encourage listeners to call their elected officials. Radio talk shows are also great opportunities to mention the importance and value of your University of Oregon education.

**Reach Out to Other Organizations**

Bring up higher education issues at meetings of other groups you belong to, and enlist others’ support in letter-writing and grassroots lobbying campaigns.

**HOW AND IDEA BECOMES LAW**

The legislative process is governed by rules, laws and procedures, making it somewhat mechanical in nature. Although the legislative process is long and complex, all laws begin as ideas.

An idea for a law can come from anyone; an individual or group of citizens, a legislator or legislative committee, the executive or judicial branch, or a lobbyist. By statute, state agencies must file bills pre-session. But during session, only a legislator or a legislative committee can introduce a measure to the House or Senate for consideration.

Legislators may file an unlimited number of measures between the general election and the time the legislature convenes. Once the legislature convenes, Senators are allowed unlimited introductions for the first 36 calendar days; Representatives for the first 36 days.

If deadlines are missed, the Senate Rules Committee or the House Committee on Legislative Rules and Reorganization must approve requests for drafting and/or introduction. Appropriation or fiscal measures sponsored by the Joint Committee on Ways and Means are exempt from filing deadlines and may be introduced at any time.

**Types of Measures**

The Legislative Assembly can accomplish tasks in addition to creating, amending or repealing laws. It can honor a distinguished Oregonian, propose an amendment to the Oregon constitution, or send a message on behalf of the Oregon legislature to the President of the United States. In these instances, a bill is not the appropriate form of measure.

There are six types of measures: a bill, joint resolution, concurrent resolution, resolution, joint memorial and memorial.

A bill, the most common type of measure, is a proposal for a law. All statutes, except those initiated by the people or referred to the people by the Legislative Assembly, must be enacted through a bill.

The path of a bill, from the time it is just an idea to the time it arrives at the Governor’s desk for approval, is paved with many detours. In order for a bill to become law, it must be passed by both houses in the identical form. This is achieved through the following step-by-step process, using the House of Representatives, for example, as the house of origin.
The Path of Bill

- An idea to change, amend or create a new law is presented to a Representative.

- The Representative decides to sponsor the bill and introduce it to the House of Representatives, and requests that the attorneys in the Legislative Counsel office draft the bill in the proper legal language.

- The bill is then presented to the Chief Clerk of the House, who assigns the bill a number and sends it back to the Legislative Counsel office to verify it is in proper legal form and style.

- The bill is then sent to the State Printing Division, where it is printed and returned to House of Representatives for its first reading.

- After the bill’s first reading, the Speaker refers it to a committee. The bill is also forwarded to the Legislative Fiscal and Legislative Revenue Officers for determination of fiscal or revenue impact the measure might have.

- The committee reviews the bill, holds public hearings and work sessions.

- In order for the bill to go to the House floor for a final vote, or be reported out of committee, a committee report is signed by the committee chair and delivered back to the Chief Clerk.

- Any amendments to the bill are printed and the bill may be reprinted to include the amendments (engrossed bill).

- The bill, now back in the house of origin (House), has its second reading.

- The measure then has its third reading, which is its final recitation before the vote. This is the time the body debates the measure. To pass, the bill must receive aye votes of a majority of members (31 in the House, 16 in the Senate).

- If the bill is passed by a majority of the House members, it is sent to the Senate.

- The bill is read for the first time and the Senate President assigns it to committee. The committee reports the bill back to the Senate where the bill is given the second and third readings.

- If the bill is passed in the Senate without changes, it is sent back to the House for enrolling.

- If the bill is amended in the Senate by even one word, it must be sent back to the House for concurrence. If the House does not concur with the amendments, the presiding officers of each body appoint a conference committee to resolve the differences between the two versions of the bill.

- After the bill has passed both houses in the identical form, it is signed by three officers: the Speaker of the House, the Senate President, and the Chief Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate, depending on where the bill originated.

- The enrolled bill is then sent to the Governor who has five days to take action. If the Legislative Assembly is adjourned the Governor has 30 days to consider it.

- If the Governor chooses to sign the bill, it will become law on the prescribed effective date. The Governor may allow a bill to become law without his/her signature, or the Governor may decide to veto the bill. The Governor’s veto may be overridden by a two-thirds vote of both houses.

- The signed enrolled bill, or act, is then filed with the Secretary of State, who assigns it an Oregon Laws chapter number.
Staff in the Legislative Counsel office insert the text of the new law into the existing Oregon Revised Statutes in the appropriate locations and make any other necessary code changes.

Effective Date of Legislation

The Oregon Constitution provides that laws become effective 90 days after adjournment of the Legislative Assembly unless the bill indicates otherwise. Some bills contain a clause which specify a particular effective date. Still others may have emergency, sunset (ending dates), or referendum clauses attached.

2001 Oregon Legislature at a glance

Senate  16 Republicans, 14 Democrats
Senate President: Gene Derfler (R-Salem)
Education Chair: Charles Starr (R-Hillsboro)
Ways & Means Co-Chair: Lenn Hannon (R-Ashland)

House  33 Republicans, 27 Democrats
Speaker of the House: Mark Simmons (R-Elgin)
Student Achievement and School Accountability Chair: Vic Backlund (R-Keizer)
Ways & Means Co-Chair: Ben Westlund (R-Bend)

http://www.leg.state.or.us

Contact OGA

The University of Oregon Office of Governmental Affairs (OGA) is available to assist you in your advocacy efforts. We can provide fact sheets, talking points, information on current legislation, and assist you in contacting and arranging meetings with your legislators.

Office of Governmental Affairs
1292 University of Oregon
10 Johnson Hall
Eugene OR 97403-1292
(541) 346-5020
oga@darkwing.uoregon.edu
http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~oga

Michael Redding
Associate Vice President
(541) 346-5022
mredding@oregon.uoregon.edu

Betsy Boyd
Federal Affairs Director
(541) 346-0946
eaboyd@oregon.uoregon.edu

Tim Black
Advocacy Director
(541) 346-5023
timblack@oregon.uoregon.edu

Karen Scheeland
Governmental Affairs Coordinator
(541) 346-5021
karensch@oregon.uoregon.edu

107th Congress at a glance

Senate  50 Republicans, 50 Democrats

House  221 Republicans, 211 Democrats
2 Independents, 1 Vacancy

Oregon Delegation
with committee assignments

Senator Gordon Smith (R-Pendleton)
404 Russell, Washington, DC 20510-3704
(202) 224-3753
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Budget
Energy and Natural Resources
Foreign Relations

Senator Ron Wyden (D-Portland)
516 Hart, Washington, DC 20510-3703
(202) 224-5244
Budget
Commerce, Science and Transportation
Environment and Public Works
Special Committee on Aging

Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-Portland)
1406 Longworth, Washington, DC 20515-3703
(202) 225-4811
Transportation and Infrastructure

Representative Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield)
2134 Rayburn, Washington, DC 20515-3704
(202) 225-6416
Resources
Transportation and Infrastructure

Representative Darlene Hooley (D-Salem)
1130 Longworth, Washington, DC 20515-3705
(202) 225-5711
Banking and Financial Services
Budget

Representative Greg Walden (R-Medford)
1404 Longworth, Washington, DC 20515-3702
(202) 225-6730
Agriculture
Government Reform
Resources

Representative David Wu (D-Portland)
510 Cannon, Washington, DC 20515-3701
(202) 225-0855
Education and the Workforce
Science

http://www.senate.gov

http://www.house.gov