

WRDA-SUGGESTED LEGISLATIVE BEST PRACTICES

1. WRDA or Legislator requests bill

Legislative Committee discusses draft language and presents to the WRDA in resolution form.

2. Bill sponsorship is sought

Determine good sponsors in the Assembly and the Senate. Contact their offices and begin discussions. Meet with them if necessary to explain the desired change. Talk to your bill sponsor about the Legislative schedule and determine the best strategy for getting the bill drafted and through the Legislature. During even years, legislative sessions are short. During odd years, the budget takes up lots of time. Once your bill sponsor says it is time to act, you will need to act promptly to keep your bill moving along every step of the way.

3. Legislative Reference Bureau drafts proposed bill

One of the legislators will request drafting orders and submit your notes. Offer to work with the drafting attorney at the Leg Reference Bureau – they often have questions about the intent of the new bill.

As soon as bill draft is ready, review it with extreme attention to every detail. Often, errors must be corrected. The person on the Leg Committee in charge of the bill may need to write or help the legislator or staff who is the bill sponsor to write the introduction to the bill.

When the bill draft is fine the legislative author(s) will circulate a co-sponsorship memo to all legislators asking them to sign on to the bill. The Legislative chair should send an e-mail to all registers which includes the co-sponsorship memo from the bill author, either as an attachment or pasted into the text of the message. The email message should explain why the bill is needed. Registers should be asked to contact their legislators to sign on as co-sponsors of the bill. The message they send should include the names of the bill authors, and ideally have the legislative co-sponsorship memo attached which should include the deadline date for signing on. Register of Deeds should use their own legislator's name in the salutation for both the Assembly and Senate, type their own name at the bottom and send it to those legislators. It is important to get both Republicans and Democrats from both the Assembly and the Senate, signed onto your bill. Get at least a dozen; two dozen is better.

As opportunities arise, visit the bill sponsor and other legislators. For co-sponsors, thank them for their good judgment and support. For those not co-sponsoring, ask them to vote for the bill. Those legislators in the middle of a heated campaign will be pre-occupied. Others who have "safe seats" and little or no opposition are always worthwhile to spend time with.

4. Bill is introduced and referred to committee

Your bill draft will need to be assigned to a Committee in the Assembly and in the Senate. Check with your bill sponsor on this. When assignments are made, you need to find out the chairs of the committee in the Assembly and the Senate and ask that they put the bill on their agendas. Again, have their registers also make contacts. This is



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why it is important for every register to know who their senator and representative are and to establish a relationship with them. **The Legislative Committee should send reminders on this constantly!**

5. Legislative Chair provides information

The legislative chair should provide legislative committee members with information pertaining to the bill. A suggested practice is to include the bill and any additional reference documentation that aids the committee in taking a position on the bill.

Useful websites:

The Wheeler Report: wheeler@thewheelerreport.com

Wisconsin Legislature Notification Service: <http://notify.legis.state.wi.us/>

Wisconsin State Legislature: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/>

Government Accountability Board: <http://ethics.state.wi.us/>

6. Position Paper

A position should be made by the legislative committee whether they oppose, support or remain neutral on the bill, and if necessary a position paper should be drafted. If a committee recommendation is made, it should be sent to the President for board approval. It is important to note that many times a neutral position could change, so it is very important that the legislative chair stay up to date with the bills progress.

7. List of Legislators

Legislative chair should put together a list of legislators who are members of the committee where the bill has been referred and include a list of register of deeds from the committee member districts.

8. Contact Committee Chair

Legislative chair should contact the chair of the committee it was referred to and request to schedule a hearing for the bill. The register of deeds from the chair's district should also contact the chair for support. It is important that action is prompt.

9. Contact Pertinent Register of Deeds

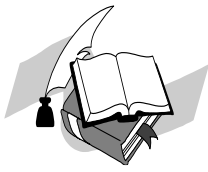
Legislative chair should send an email asking the register of deeds whose legislators are serving on the committee to support the bill. It is helpful to include the position paper in order that they are prepared to answer legislator questions.

10. Contact Outside Associations

Contacts should be made to other outside associations such as WCA, WRPLA, Joint Alpha, legislative aids, etc. to receive feedback, information or ask for support.

11. Contact WRDA

The legislative chair should update the WRDA and inform them of the public hearing date, time and place, and encourage WRDA members to attend the public hearing.



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Wheeler Report Example:

Public Hearing:

Hearing on:

AB-292 Register of Deeds (Soletski) Makes various changes affecting recording and filing of documents with the register of deeds.

Executive Session:

Executive Session on:

AB-292 Register of Deeds (Soletski) Makes various changes affecting recording and filing of documents with the register of deeds.

Additionally, it is helpful to prepare written testimony for legislative committee members from WRDA members if possible. Bring along ten copies of your written testimony and/or fact sheet, one for each member of the committee and extra copies for the secretary and public. Check to see if the hearing will be broadcast on [Wisconsin Eye](#) and encourage WRDA members to watch the broadcast if possible.

12. Bill Testifying

When the bill is assigned to a Committee in one house, decide who will testify – such as the Leg Committee Chair, the WRDA President, registers from districts of legislators who serve on that particular Senate or Assembly Committee, etc. Actually, only a few should testify but many should appear and sign forms in support. Everyone who testifies should have different information – they should not be repetitive. If the Counties Association, WLTA, Mortgage Bankers, Genealogists, or any other group will also register in support, that would be terrific.

When you testify you should first thank the committee chair (by name), state your name, your hometown and who you represent (the WRDA). You need to explain the purpose of the bill and why it is needed and how it should improve public policy. You can have a brief, one page blurb written down and eventually, you can look them in the eye and just talk about your bill. Be prepared to answer their questions but don't get into too much detail. You don't want to confuse the Legislators or raise red flags. Legislators are generalists. They tend to know a little bit about a lot of stuff.

If you find that your bill is next to the last on a long agenda, be prepared to sit for a while and you can use this time to get to know the legislators on the committee and the dynamics of the committee. At times, only a few legislators may be present because there are tons of different committees and their schedules may conflict. This is actually not a problem as it shows that the legislators do not view your bill as being controversial.

13. Bill Vote

After the public hearing takes place, the next step for a bill to advance is for the committee to approve it by a majority vote of the committee members present. The committee usually does not vote on bill on the same day as the public hearing. Voting takes place in what is referred to as executive session. This most often occurs at a later date. The chair of a committee has the power to decide if and when to schedule a public hearing on a bill and whether or not to allow a vote on it.



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After the committee hearing, contact the bill sponsor's office a few days to a week later or check on the Internet to see if the bill was passed out of committee. Sometimes the chair will exec out (vote favorably) the bill at the end of the hearing, but usually, they vote at the next meeting.

14. Assembly & Senate Floors

As soon as the bill is out of committee, your next task is to get it on the agenda of the Senate or Assembly.

In the Assembly, bills are scheduled for floor action by the Rules Committee.

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/w3asp/commpages/IndividualCommittee.aspx?COMMITTEE=Rules&HOUSE=Assembly>

In the Senate, the Committee on Organization schedules bills for floor action.

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/w3asp/commpages/IndividualCommittee.aspx?COMMITTEE=SENATE+Organization&HOUSE=Senate>

As with other committees, the chairs of these committees can decide which bills to take up. The register whose legislator is the Majority Leader; therefore, the chair of the committee, plus other registers should contact the Majority Leader's office to let them know that they want to see the bill scheduled. If the Counties Association, WLTA, Mortgage Bankers, Genealogists, or any other group will also support and make a contact, that would be terrific.

When the bill is on the agenda, it is great to have registers sitting up in the balcony. These register should have stopped by their legislator's office first to announce that they will be present to observe the floor session.

After the passages through both houses, immediately have the registers send an email to the Governor's Office urging him to sign the bill. Take the opportunity to thank the Governor for his past support of efforts to improve efficiency, productivity and good service for the office of the register of deeds. Talk with the Governor's scheduling secretary about the bill signing ceremony and make sure that there are a respectable number of registers in attendance.

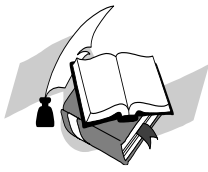
15. Legislative Action Considerations

- a. Does the proposed legislation positively or negatively impact (directly or indirectly) the duties or functions of ROD offices across our State?
- b. Does the proposed legislation address, resolve or provide a remedy that is needed on a statewide basis relating to ROD duties or functions?
- c. Does the proposed legislation benefit the residents of our state or ROD industry partners?
- d. Does the proposed legislation create unintended or unforeseen consequences which can affect our duties or functions?



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- e. If the proposed legislation does not impact (directly or indirectly) the duties or functions of the ROD offices across our state, is it advisable for the WRDA to intervene?



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Legislative Q&A

1. What is the bill process?

Review the “Legislative Best Practices” document on the WRDA secured website in the handbook under WRDA.

2. How do I find out the members of a legislative committee?

Assembly: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/w3asp/commpages/Committees.aspx?house=assembly>

Senate: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/w3asp/commpages/Committees.aspx?house=senate>

3. How do I find the history of a bill?

At the [Wisconsin State Legislature](#) home page complete the information below “Request text and history of legislative proposals”. Click Submit.

4. How can I be notified of legislative activity?

<http://notify.legis.state.wi.us/%28xusgah45omyrz255c22p0xvw%29/Home.aspx>

5. What is the best way to contact a representative?

A suggested practice is to call the representative’s office, and follow up with an email that includes the bill number and any additional reference documentation that aids the representative in taking a position on the bill. See Item #2 for link to representative’s website.

6. How can I find out how a committee voted?

Call or email the committee clerk for the prospective committee.

7. How do I find the Legislature session schedule?

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/session.htm>

8. How do I find out who is supporting a bill?

<http://ethics.state.wi.us/scripts/CurrentSession/LegProps.asp>

9. Are the Wisconsin Statutes online?

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/stats.html>

10. How do I find past legislation (previous year statutes or Acts passed by the legislative body)?

Wisconsin Law Archive: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/wislawarc.htm>

11. How can I watch state government proceedings:

Wisconsin Eye - <http://www.wiseye.org/>