

Following through after the Legislative Process

After legislation is adopted, typically the agency whose statute was modified will promulgate rules and regulations. These are promulgated pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act which includes opportunity for public comment. This is the agency's interpretation and method for implementing the legislation. Those who supported and/or initiated the legislation will want to ensure accuracy and consistency in this process.

Getting Involved with the Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee is NCAPA's information resource and mouthpiece whenever the General Assembly is in session. Here are a few things you can do to become a part of the Committee's work:

- Attend the biennial meeting when the Committee sets its agenda for the forthcoming long session. The meeting is held in even years on the first day of the NCAPA conference.
- Get on the mailing list by emailing the Secretary at ncapa.legislative.sec@gmail.com to receive updates on pending legislation.
- If you have particular expertise on a given topic, consider volunteering to become a Project Manager for bills related to that topic.
- Keep the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary informed about any individual meetings or communication with legislators on a specific bill, so that NCAPA's outreach can be coordinated for maximum impact. The Committee may also be able to supply you with useful background materials and talking points.



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Legislative Committee



North Carolina Chapter of the
American Planning Association



Good planning cannot occur in North Carolina without the right legal tools and authority.

Welcome to the NCPA Legislative Committee

As planners, we conduct our work under a complex framework of laws, administrative rules, and enabling statutes that is constantly evolving. Good planning can't occur without the right legal tools and authority. Before, during and after each session of the North Carolina General Assembly, the Legislative Committee advocates for legislation promoting good planning while working hard to stop or modify bills that would be harmful to the interests of North Carolina's local governments and citizens.

The General Assembly Web Site

The North Carolina General Assembly maintains a comprehensive web site at www.ncleg.net. At this site, you can:

- Find, review and track pending bills.
- Look up who represents your area by County or House or Senate District.
- Review the background and legislative history of individual representatives, including voting records and bills introduced.
- Learn about the legislative process, including committees, staff and bill drafting. The site can be complex and intimidating at first, so it is a good idea to take some time clicking links and browsing around the site to gain familiarity. If you still feel lost, contact the Committee's Chair or Vice Chair or Secretary for help.

Understanding the Legislative Calendar:

North Carolina is one of the few remaining states having a true part-time citizen legislature. Since 1974, the General Assembly has met in annual sessions. Beginning in January of odd-numbered years, the General Assembly meets for a "long session" which typically runs through midsummer. During this session, a biennial budget is adopted and any legislative business may be considered. In even years, the General Assembly convenes in a "short session" that starts in May and generally runs through July or August. Activity during the short session is typically confined to adjustments to the biennial budget, bills that have passed either the House or the Senate in the prior long session, and a limited number of uncontroversial matters. Legally, the short session is a continuation of the long session.

In general, the long session is the time when new legislation can be proposed for consideration by the General Assembly. Opportunities to propose bills are much more limited during the short session, but new bills can be introduced, such as bills implementing the recommendation of one of the many special study commissions or committees.

Tracking Legislation during the Session

Legislative information available on the general assembly's web site Includes the current North Carolina State Statutes, the North Carolina State Constitution, House and Senate Standing Committee Lists, indexes and text of bills, calendars of committee meetings, text of amendments, information on bill status, and all roll call votes. Bills can be searched by bill number or name. All bill numbers start with the first letter of the body in which they were introduced: "H" for House, "S" for Senate.

During the long session, hundreds of bills are introduced, only a subset of which are relevant to planners, and even fewer of which will ever make it out of committee for a full vote of the House and/or Senate. The Legislative Committee works with our lobbyist and with the technical resources at the School of Government to decide which bills require the Committee's attention.

Reaching Out to your Representatives

While the Legislative Committee works on bills from a statewide perspective, representatives especially want to hear from folks who live or work in their district. Local planners play a key role in all of the Committee's advocacy efforts by contacting their representatives directly through letter, email, phone, and even face-to-face visits to express support or disapproval for specific bills. This outreach is most effective when it is backed by compelling information and well-reasoned conclusions. The following are guidelines for effective outreach and relationship-building:

- Convince yourself first by weighing the evidence and arguments. You won't be convincing to others if you are not personally convinced of the rightness of your position.
- Be recognized as a credible, reliable and readily available source of information. This is one of, if not the most important, element of a strong legislative program. If you are a credible and reliable source of information, your legislator will call upon you even if you haven't built the strong relationship. Use real life examples of how the pending legislation affects your community.
- Never, ever, ever provide wrong or inaccurate information. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and offer to get back with requested information. Never guess or provide questionable answers. It is nearly impossible to recover credibility after supplying misinformation.
- The information you provide should help the legislator meet their personal political goals. Share with the legislators any knowledge of opposition to your issue or legislation and why. Don't try to hide anything. The more informed they are the more effective they can be..
- Always be respectful and courteous to an elected official regardless of your feelings.
- Don't ever threaten or demand.