

In Springfield, keep it simple  
HOW TO GET A BILL PASSED

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By Sandra Swanson

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As with most politicians, the key to getting Illinois General Assembly members to do what you want is to simplify. Start by drafting a single-page fact sheet with bullet points that support your position. (The Springfield-savvy call them "one-pagers.") Failing to present a concise argument is one of the biggest mistakes businesses make, says lobbyist Stephen Morrill.

"(Legislators) have an enormous volume of legislation to consider, on a wide variety of issues," he says. "If you don't say it succinctly, the chances of getting your point across are almost nil."

Phone calls won't cut it, either. Better to hire a lobbyist or be ready to buttonhole legislators yourself over the course of many months (in advance of a committee vote or floor vote, for example).

Selecting good sponsors is critical, and it isn't necessary that your local representative be a sponsor of your bill, says lobbyist Brian Hynes. Everybody loves a bipartisan measure, so court both Democrats and Republicans. Many lobbyists say they rarely introduce bills without sponsors in both parties.

#### WHO TO CALL

Rep. Michael Madigan (D)  
Speaker of the House  
Springfield office: (217) 782-5350  
District office: (773) 581-8000

Sen. Emil Jones Jr. (D)  
President of the Senate  
Springfield office: (217) 782-2728  
District office: (773) 995-7748

Rep. Tom Cross (R)  
House Republican leader  
Springfield office: (217) 782-1331  
District office: (815) 254-0000

Sen. Frank Watson (R)  
Senate Republican leader  
Springfield office: (217) 782-5755  
District office: (618) 664-9108

Next, figure out what other businesses or industries will benefit from your bill, Mr. Hynes says. Get them to sign "witness slips," a formal record of their support that legislators will see when the bill is called for a vote.

"One of the first things (legislators) look for is who are the proponents and who are the opponents," Mr. Morrill says.

Check in with your sponsors' legislative staffs regularly. If any interest groups have problems with your bill, the staff often knows about it before the legislator does. It's also easier to get a meeting with staffers than the bill sponsors.

And last, if a special-interest group wants to change the wording of your legislation, let them. Most bills end up with at least one amendment, so be reasonable about accepting suggestions that don't affect your main goal.

"You can't be a demagogue in this process and succeed," Mr. Morrill says.

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