BE THE VOICE OF RURAL COLORADO: How to be an effective advocate

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EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

- Advocating at the State level involves
  - 1. The General Assembly
  - 2. The Executive Branch: Governor’s Office/State Agencies
ENGAGING THE LEGISLATURE

New control of chambers:
• The House is 41(D) – 24(R).
• The Senate is 19(D) – 16(R).
• The Governor is a Democrat.

New membership:
• 14 new Senators
  • 9 previously served in House
• 25 new Representatives

Increased diversity:
• 14 female Senators
• 34 female Representatives
STEP 1: MEET YOUR LEGISLATOR

• Get to know your local/regional legislators in both the House and Senate.
  • Sign up for their newsletters
  • Follow them on social media (#coleg & #copolitics on Twitter)
  • Go to their town halls

• Make it known to the legislator that you live or work in their district or region.

• If you are on an elected official, invite them to make a presentation to the elected body. (or invite them to visit your workplace)

Find your legislator:
  • https://openstates.org/ or
  • http://leg.colorado.gov/find-my-legislator
STEP 2: BE A RESOURCE

- Share your experience and how you can be a resource to the legislator on rural issues.
- Offer to gather and/or provide supporting data or information.
- When discussing a specific issue, identify:
  - The bill number.
  - Your position on the issue.
  - Action the legislator should take.
- Be prepared to testify.
  - Come to Denver to testify.
  - Request remote testimony.
  - Provide testimony via email.
STEP 3: VISIT THE CAPITOL

- Schedule a day at the capitol with your organization or city/county.

- Coordinate meetings between individuals and their elected officials.
  - (Rural Affairs, Ag, Local Government, Transportation, etc.)

- Meet the Speaker of the House, Senate President, Governor’s Staff, & Governor’s Cabinet members.

- Create and disperse an organizational flyer to highlight your mission, membership, and legislative priorities.
STEP 4: STAY UP-TO-DATE

- Read legislative reports.
- Have weekly or bi-weekly teleconferences on policy priorities and activities at the Capitol.
- Become familiar with the General Assembly’s webpage: http://leg.colorado.gov/
  - Proposed legislation: http://leg.colorado.gov/bills
  - Interim committee activities: https://leg.colorado.gov/interim-schedule
- Watch the legislature live (or repeat) at: https://www.coloradochannel.net/
STEP 5: JOIN FORCES

Join or monitor other similarly focused coalitions:

- Colorado Counties, Inc.
- Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute
- Colorado Municipal League
- Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Colorado Water Congress
- Colorado Water Institute
- Farm Bureau
- Housing Colorado
- National Council of State Legislatures
- Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
ENGAGING THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

• Meet the Governor’s Staff (at the Capitol or invite them to speak to your organization)
  • Policy Director
  • Legislative Director
  • Director of Boards of Commissions
  • Budget Director (OSPB)

• Reach out to the Cabinet
  • Rural appreciation

• Learn how to be a stakeholder through rulemaking hearings (State Health Board, Division of Insurance, Agriculture Commission)
ENGAGING THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

• Stay active with sunset/sunrise reviews of Acts and Programs (DORA)
  • Reviews begin the year before the Act is set to sunset.
  • Every year at least 20ish Acts are up for review - [www.colorado.gov/pacific/dora/review-schedule](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dora/review-schedule)
  • Submit comments online - [www.dora.state.co.us/pls/real/OPR_Review_Comments.Main](http://www.dora.state.co.us/pls/real/OPR_Review_Comments.Main)
ENGAGE WITH BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

• Volunteer for State Boards and Commissions.

• Request that State Boards and Commissions meet in your area.
  • Section 24-3.5-101, C.R.S. Legislative Declaration relating to meetings of State Boards and Commissions.
  • “…to promote as much public participation in government as possible, every state board and commission established by law is encouraged to hold at least one-third of its regularly scheduled meetings outside the Denver metropolitan area each year…”
FOR ALL ENGAGEMENT: STAY ACTIVE ALL YEAR

• Continue to engage your legislators after the session.
  • Once a bill is passed, the implementation is often as important as the direct legislative work.
  • You will need to make sure other legislators don’t unnecessarily modify your legislation in future years.

• Come to the Capitol for Interim Committee meetings.
DEMOCRACY IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT
QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

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