



# **ADVOCACY GUIDE 2016**

# Talking to an Elected Official: The Basics

**Q: What are the best ways to communicate with elected officials?**

A: Here are recommended ways for you to communicate with an elected official:

- Phone or email;
- Addressing officials at a public meeting; and,
- Setting up a direct meeting.

**Q: Can LAPCS help me get in touch with my elected official?**

A: Yes! Visit the [Policy & Advocacy section](#) on our website. Here, you can look up the contact information for all of our State Representatives and Senators.

During legislative session, LAPCS will send out calls to action aimed at keeping you engaged on specific bills and resolutions. We'll make it easy for you to send an email to elected officials about the specific issue at hand, so please make sure you are on our policy & advocacy email list. Sign up by visiting [lacharterschools.org/policy-advocacy](http://lacharterschools.org/policy-advocacy).

LAPCS will also facilitate an advocacy week at the Capitol in the spring and help set up meetings with your elected officials and/or BESE members. Please be on the lookout for more details on that event.

If you need support on a specific policy issue, whether it's a state or local one, please reach out to [Sarah Vandergriff](#) or [Brady Shannon](#).

**Q: I have a meeting set up with an elected official. How should I address him/her?**

A: A few tips:

- Address elected officials by referencing their position first and then their last name – e.g., “Board Member Smith,” or “Representative Jones.” If specifically addressing the head of a committee, then use “Chairman or Chairwoman Adams,” etc.
- Introduce yourself and, if a voter in this district, introduce yourself as being from the district and state the issue that concerns you.
- Be direct in your statements and your desired outcome.
- If addressing a school board you may be asked to give your address; if so, you can use your personal one or, if you are speaking on behalf of an organization, you can use your organization's address.

**Q: I have an opportunity to address an elected official during a public meeting. What should I consider?**

A: Be mindful of any public speaking rules that may be in place for the public meeting – e.g. time limits, comment card submissions, etc.

Keep in mind that a public meeting is just that – public. Often times, public board meetings are streamed live and/or taped for broadcasting. Make sure you get a feel for who might be in the audience, and craft your remarks as necessary.

**Q: I spoke with an elected official about my issue, but things haven't changed. What else can I do?**

A: Don't give up! Achieving a desired outcome through advocacy can often be a long, tiresome process. Those who are successful consistently speak up and out on the issue, despite any opposition or obstacle they may face. It may also help to work with an organization that aligns with you on your issue.

# How Board Meetings Work

## Charter School Boards, District School Boards, & BESE

### OPEN MEETINGS LAW REQUIREMENTS

Charter school boards, traditional parish/district school boards, and the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) must abide by Louisiana's Open Meetings Law. As such, they all must:

- Notify the public on regularly scheduled and special board and committee meetings;
- Publish an agenda 24 hours before the meeting so that the public knows which matters will be discussed by the board or committee; and,
- Permit public comment before the board or committee votes on any issue.

### MEETING INFORMATION

The dates of regularly scheduled board and committee meetings should be posted on the board's website. If not, be sure to call the board's administrative office to get a listing of all meeting dates, times, and locations.

### COMMITTEES

The substance of most issues is discussed in committee meetings rather than full board meetings (where the board usually just ratifies the proposals and recommendations made by the various committees.) As a result, advocacy work is just as important at the committee level as it is for full board meetings.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Boards and committees must allow public comment on each individual agenda item before voting on the item. Public comment is not required for items that will not be voted upon. A board or committee may not offer one general comment period for all action items.

*Note:* Before a meeting begins, check to see if the board or committee has any public comment participation rules, such as filling out a comment request card or public comment time limits.

# How Legislative Meetings Work

## Legislative Committees and Bills

### COMMITTEES

Just like public boards, the substance of most issues discussed and decided upon during legislative session happens in committees, such as the Senate and House of Representatives Education Committees. And just like public boards, these committees require public comment before they take action by voting upon (and potentially amending) a proposed bill.

Unlike public boards, however, if you want to make a public comment on a proposed bill, you may only do so while it is in committee. Legislative committees have public comment rules, too—i.e. comment request cards and time limits.

### BILLS “ON THE FLOOR”

Once a committee votes in favor of a bill, it is then passed along to be debated and discussed “on the floor” by only the legislators of either legislative house. If the committee does not approve the bill, it is considered to have “died” at the committee level and cannot proceed any further.

Members of the public may observe floor debates in the galleries above the respective houses, but they may not participate.

## How a Bill Becomes A Law

1. A bill is drafted and submitted for consideration by a legislator.
2. If proposed by a Senator, the bill is then introduced in the Senate; if proposed by a Representative, it is then introduced to the House of Representatives.
3. The President of the Senate or the Chair of the House sends the bill to the appropriate committee of the corresponding house.
4. The committee – such as a Senate or House of Representatives Education Committee – takes public comment on the bill and debates the bill between its membership.
5. The committee can postpone discussion of the bill, amend it, or take action on it by voting. If it doesn't pass, it “dies” in committee. If it passes, it is then sent to the Rules Committee.
6. The Rules Committee decides the rules for debate and when it will be debated by the entire membership of either the Senate or the House of Representatives.
7. The legislators then debate the matter on the floor and take action upon it by voting. If a majority votes in favor of it, the bill is then sent to the other legislative house for consideration – i.e. bills that were introduced in the Senate are then sent to the House of Representatives, and vice versa. The leadership of the respective legislative house then sends the bill to the appropriate committee whereby the process is repeated.
8. If the bill survives the second committee and floor debates, it is then sent back to the original house that authored the bill to debate any amendments that may have been added by the legislative members of the other house.
9. If the original house for the bill rejects any amendments that have been made, it is then sent to a Conference Committee whereby members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives meet to determine a compromised version of the bill.
10. If both houses approve the Conference Committee's version of the bill, it is then submitted to the Governor, who may approve it via signature or reject it via veto.

# Board of Elementary & Secondary Education (BESE)

## DISTRICT 1

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## Senator John Milkovich, Vice-Chairman

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## Senator Gerald Boudreaux

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# House of Representatives Education Committee

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# Common Acronyms, Words & Phrases

## Educational

### **BESE: THE LOUISIANA BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

BESE governs and sets forth the rules and academic standards for Louisiana's public schools (from early childhood and kindergarten through high school).

### **CMO: CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION**

A charter school operator who is authorized to operate more than one charter school through a nonprofit network.

### **EMO: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION**

A for-profit company that manages academic, fiscal, and operational services on behalf of a nonprofit charter school board through contractual agreements.

### **ESSA: EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT**

A US federal law passed in December 2015 that governs K-12 policy; it replaces the No Child Left Behind Act and is a reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

### **IDEA: INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

A US federal law that ensures services to children with disabilities.

### **IEP: INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM**

A written statement of specially designed instruction developed, reviewed, and revised by a group of qualified education personnel and the parent/guardian for each student with a disability.

### **LDE: LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The state agency tasked with implementing the educational rules and policies set forth by BESE.

### **LEA: LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY**

A public board or other public authority legally constituted by the state to have administrative control and direction of a public elementary and secondary school.

### **MFP: MINIMUM FOUNDATION PROGRAM**

The mechanism by which BESE adopts a formula to equitably allocate funding for education to schools and districts.

### **RSD: RECOVERY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

A special statewide school district whereby failing schools are transferred from a school district to the jurisdiction of the LDE.

# Common Acronyms, Words & Phrases

## Political

### AMENDMENT

Any alteration made (or proposed to be made) to a bill or clause thereof, by adding, deleting, substituting, or omitting. May also be referenced as a committee substitute – i.e. when a bill is offered by a committee in lieu of another bill that was originally referred to the committee for consideration.

### BILL

A proposed legislation under consideration by the legislature. A bill does not become law until it is passed by both houses of the legislature and approved, and in most cases, approved by the Governor. Once a bill has been enacted into law, it is called an Act or Statute.

### COMMITTEE

A small body of members appointed by the presiding officer of the legislature to consider and make recommendations concerning the disposition of bills, resolutions, and other matters.

**Conference Committee:** A committee composed of members from the two houses specifically appointed to reconcile differences between House and Senate versions of similar bill(s).

**Joint Committee:** A committee composed of members from both houses.

**Standing Committee:** A committee appointed with continuing responsibility in a general issue area or field of legislative activity – e.g. “Education Committee.”

**Committee of the Whole:** Either house of the legislature sitting in its entirety as a committee to consider bills or issues.

**Committee Report:** Official release of a bill or resolution from committee with (or without) a specific recommendation, such as “pass,” “pass as amended,” or “do not pass.”

**Died in Committee:** The defeat of a bill by not returning it from committee to the house for further action.

### CONCURRENCE

Action by which one house agrees to a proposal or action that the other chamber has approved.

### CONSTITUENT

A citizen residing within the district of a legislator.

### FIRST READING

The first presentation of a bill or its title consideration. Readings are a formal procedure that indicates a stage in the enactment process. Each bill must receive at least three readings on three different days in each house.

### FLOOR

Figure of speech meaning the floor of the House or Senate while that body is in session.

**GALLERY**

Balconies of the chamber from which visitors may view the proceedings of the legislature.

**HEARING**

Public discussion and appearance on a proposal or bill; usually scheduled by a committee.

**LEGISLATOR**

Elected member of a legislative body (either a Representative or Senator).

**LOBBYIST**

A representative of a special interest group whose function is to influence legislation affecting the special interest.

**PRESIDENT**

Title given to the person elected as the presiding officer of the Senate.

**SPEAKER**

The title given to the person elected as the presiding officer of the House of Representatives.

**SPONSOR**

The person (usually a legislator) who presents a bill or resolution for consideration; may be joined by others, who are known as co-sponsor.

**VETO**

Governor's disapproval of an enrolled bill. Has the effect of killing the bill unless the legislature subsequently votes to override the Governor's action by a 2/3 vote of each house.