



# STATE GRASSROOTS MANUAL

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## **LeadingAge Connecticut Advocacy**

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It is our goal at the LeadingAge Connecticut (formerly CANPFA) to encourage our members to become active in the legislative process. We believe that LeadingAge Connecticut members *can make a difference* by building relationships with their state and federal elected officials!

LeadingAge Connecticut is interested in making your experience with the legislative process and grassroots activities convenient and worthwhile. Please contact LeadingAge Connecticut with any legislative questions you might have and any issues you would like us to address.

The LeadingAge Connecticut Legislative Committee develops a legislative agenda each year that recognizes the full long-term care continuum. The Committee will address and consider all requests and suggestions from LeadingAge Connecticut members as it develops the agenda. The LeadingAge Connecticut Board of Directors approves the final legislative agenda.

LeadingAge Connecticut staff and lobbyists monitor all legislation that affects members and alerts the membership to any issues that need attention. LeadingAge Connecticut retains Keith Stover of Robinson & Cole as our contract lobbyist. As our lobbyist, Keith consults with LeadingAge Connecticut on legislative issues, screens and monitors all bills and amendments and provides advice to the Legislative Committee on pertinent legislation.

Check our web page ([www.leadingagect.org](http://www.leadingagect.org)) for legislative alerts or connect to the State of Connecticut web site ([www.cga.ct.gov](http://www.cga.ct.gov)) for legislative information. Thanks to the generosity of AAHSA, we are able to feature an on-line grassroots advocacy center to help you contact your state and federal legislators through e-mail. You can access the on-line advocacy center through the LeadingAge Connecticut web page.

**LeadingAge Connecticut**  
**110 Barnes Road**  
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[www.leadingagect.org](http://www.leadingagect.org)

## STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

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You may feel that the legislative process can be intimidating, but with some knowledge of how the process works, your experience can be rewarding, fun and have a profound impact on the aging care and services.

### Structure

- The Connecticut General Assembly, also known as the Legislature, operates on a two-year cycle. Legislators serve a two-year term.
- There are 151 seats in the House of Representatives and 36 seats in the State Senate. In the event of a tie vote in the Senate, the Lt. Governor casts the tie-breaking vote.

### Timeline

- The first year (odd years) — known as the "long session" opens on the first Wednesday following the first Monday in January and ends on the first Wednesday following the first Monday in June. All issues can be considered during this session and any legislator can propose a bill. This is also the budget setting session, producing and voting on the state's biennial budget.
- The second year (even years) — known as the "short session" begins on the first Wednesday following the first Monday in February and ends on the first Wednesday following the first Monday in May. The committee process more closely controls the issues that are debated during the short session and individual legislators' proposals are limited.
- In odd numbered years, the session will more than likely have the following timetable for action:
  - **January** — Bills are introduced and referred to committees.
  - **February** — Budget session must be held no later than the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in February
  - **February to April** — Committees hold public hearings and vote on proposed bills.
  - **April to June** — The Senate and House of Representatives meet to deliberate and vote on bills that have been successfully voted out of committees.

- In even numbered years, the session has an accelerated timetable to meet its deadlines. Bills are moved through the committee process in a more expeditious manner. Consequently, many bills "die" in each committee as the leadership prioritizes its legislative agenda. The following schedule is anticipated:
  - **February** — Bills are introduced and referred to committees.
  - **March** — Committees hold public hearings and vote on proposed bills.
  - **April/May** — The Senate and House of Representatives meet to deliberate on bills that have been successfully voted out of committees.

### **Legislative Office Building and State Capitol Building**

The Legislative Office Building (LOB) and State Capitol are located on Capitol Avenue in Hartford. The LOB (the modern building) is where the legislators have their offices and where public hearings and committee meetings are held. The State Capitol (the domed building) is where the House and Senate chambers are located. When the legislators are in session, they are meeting in these chambers.

### **Directions to the Legislative Office Building (LOB)**

From I-84 East

Take Capitol Avenue exit (Exit 48). Take right off exit ramp and take your first right into the Legislative Office Building (LOB) complex. Continue straight and the LOB parking garage is located behind the building.

From 1-84 West

Take the Asylum Street exit (Exit 48). Turn right at the light onto Asylum Street. At the fork in the road bear left. Take a left onto Broad Street and take your first left driving past the National Guard Armory. Turn left and continue straight to the back of the LOB building where the LOB parking garage is located.

From I-91 N/S

Take Exit 29, Capitol Area exit and proceed through traffic circle at end of long exit road. Take the second right off the traffic circle onto Elm Street. At the light take a left onto Trinity Street. After the I-84 entrance ramp, turn right into the Legislative Office Building (LOB) complex. Continue straight and the parking garage is located behind the LOB building.

\*\* Parking is tight during the legislative session, so you may need to park on one of the streets across from the LOB or in the overflow lot on Forest St. where shuttle buses are available.

**Entering the LOB from the garage:**

Take the stairs or elevators to the ground level and walk outside to the LOB entrance. The skywalk on the third floor is no longer available due to security concerns.

**Entering the LOB from ground level:**

You will enter the atrium, which is located on the first floor of the LOB. There are escalators and elevators located in the atrium.

The public hearing rooms are located on the first and second floors of the LOB. The third floor houses the offices for Senate leadership and their staff, as well as committee rooms. The caucuses and committee rooms are clearly marked on the doors. The fourth floor is where the offices for House members are located with their staff. The remaining committee rooms can be found on the second floor. Chairmen and ranking members of committees usually have their offices in the committee rooms. Maps of the LOB and Capitol are located on the LOB first floor at the League of Women Voters' booth.

**HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW**

**Introduction of Legislation**

During odd years individual legislators can introduce pieces of legislation on any subject. If a senator introduced a bill then it is given a number 1-4999 and if a representative introduces a bill then it is given a number 5000 or greater. In addition to a bill number, it will be designated as SB for Senate Bill or HB for House Bill. Thus, SB 33 is a Senate Bill while HB 5001 is a House Bill.

Each bill is then referred to the committee that deals with that particular subject. The committee then decides if the bill should be raised for a public hearing

**Committee Process**

In Connecticut, the committee process begins immediately, January for odd years and February for even years. Committees review bills and raise (approve) particular ones for public hearing. In order to have a public hearing, a bill must be formally raised (approved) by the

committee. Not every bill is raised before the deadline. Once a bill has received a public hearing, it may be voted on by the committee and sent to another committee or to the House or Senate for further action. **Just because a bill receives a public hearing it does not mean it necessarily receives a vote by the committee.** However, in order to proceed in the process, a bill must receive a public hearing. Each committee has a specific deadline by which all business must be completed. In odd years this occurs in March/April. In even years it occurs in March.

### **House and Senate Process**

Once a bill has made it through the committee process, it is put on the **calendar** in the House or Senate, depending on whether a state representative or senator introduced it. A bill must be on the calendar for at least three days prior to further action being taken. It can remain on the calendar for the duration of the session and die if not acted upon. Once the chamber (House or Senate) of origin has voted on a bill, it goes to the next chamber for further action. Once again it must remain on the calendar for at least three days.

In each chamber, legislators are allowed to file amendments on the bills that are placed on the calendar. These amendments must be germane to the bill's subject. The entire chamber must take a vote on each amendment by either a voice vote or by a roll call vote. If an amendment is adopted it becomes part of the bill. The filing of an unpopular amendment on a bill may cause it to "die on the calendar" – never being called for a vote.

In addition to voting on bills, the House and Senate can refer bills to committees that have jurisdiction over sections of the bill for further review and action. This practice is often used to stall or kill a bill.

These are the basic rules to the process, but there may be a variety of exceptions to these rules. Exceptions are outlined in the joint rules approved by both the House and Senate on the opening day of each session.

### **Governor's Action**

Once a bill has passed both the House and Senate it is delivered to the Governor for his approval. The Governor can sign the bill into law or he can veto (reject) the bill. If the Governor vetoes a bill it is sent back to the House or Senate where the legislators have an option of overriding the veto or allowing the bill to die. If they choose to override the Governor's veto they need a 2/3 vote in each chamber.

## **Public Hearing Process**

Public Hearings are an opportunity for individuals to voice their opinion on bills during the *committee process*. Although the intent is to allow the legislators to hear from the public, the process is anything but user-friendly. Don't let this discourage you!

Most public hearings are held at the Legislative Office Building (LOB) on Capitol Avenue in Hartford. Usually a committee will listen to testimony on several bills during one public hearing and several public hearings will be held at the same time. The process is very time consuming and it can take several hours of waiting before you are called to present your three minutes of testimony. If you cannot make a public hearing, you can still submit your written opinion or comments to the committee.

## **Guidelines for Public Hearings**

- LeadingAge Connecticut will present testimony on all priority issues. If you are interested in assisting LeadingAge Connecticut in this capacity, please contact us.
- If you are testifying on behalf of LeadingAge Connecticut we will prepare your testimony for you. We will also assist in crafting responses to potential questions from legislators and coordinating other aspects of the hearing schedule.
- If you are testifying as an individual, LeadingAge Connecticut staff can review your testimony if you would like. Most committees limit each person's testimony to three minutes. Be sure to support your arguments with facts or personal anecdotes.
- You should be prepared to submit copies of your written testimony. Each committee has its own requirements for the number of copies and LeadingAge Connecticut can help you with this detail. The *submitted* testimony can be lengthy and inclusive if you wish.
- It is important to remember the objective of a public hearing is not to sway votes but to place critical information on the record.
- After your brief statement, members of the committee may ask questions, seeking clarification or additional information. If you are unable to answer a question from a legislator, tell them you would be happy to provide the information within a few working days.

LeadingAge Connecticut staff will follow up with you to complete that task.

## **HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS**

Get Involved! There are many different ways to participate and all can be extremely effective.

### **Legislative Alerts**

LeadingAge Connecticut alerts members throughout the legislative session on important pieces of legislation. Updates will be in the weekly LeadingAge Connecticut *Capitol Line* e-newsletter, as well as separate mailings or e-mails on particular issues. When a massive response is necessary, LeadingAge Connecticut will fax or e-mail "Legislative Alerts" to members asking them to contact their local legislators with a specific message on a piece of legislation. It is important to respond to these alerts immediately and for you or a member of your staff to provide feedback to LeadingAge Connecticut. Your feedback can help us with our legislative activities.

### **Become a Key Contact!**

LeadingAge Connecticut has a "Key Contact" program for members who are interested in becoming involved. Key Contacts are on the front line when it comes to participation in grassroots activities. Key Contacts contact their legislators on a regular basis and provide them with information on LeadingAge Connecticut legislative issues. They also spread the word to their colleagues. If you are interested in becoming a Key Contact please notify LeadingAge Connecticut!

### **Pick Up The Phone and Call Your Local Legislators!**

Members should each call their state senator and state representative prior to each legislative session and offer their expertise on aging issues. Also, LeadingAge Connecticut begins to notify its membership of possible legislative issues and our legislative agenda well in advance of a legislative session. Thus, you can educate your local legislators on the upcoming issues.

### **Tips on Calling Your Legislator:**

Telephone calls can be most effective when time is of the essence. Legislators are extremely busy, so knowing when and where to call is important.

- When a call must be made immediately, you may have the best luck in contacting a legislator at home (or district office) between the hours of 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Most legislators will list this number in their contact information found on the on-line grassroots advocacy center at [www.leadingagect.org](http://www.leadingagect.org).
- You may leave a detailed message on the answering machine asking for a return phone call.
- You may not be able to talk directly to a legislator during the legislative session. However, staff members and constituent aides are trained to take your calls and forward your messages.
- Identify yourself and give your address and reason for calling. Briefly explain your position on the issue or legislation and be prepared to state your reasons.
- Explain why you are personally involved with the issue and how the bill will affect you and/or **your residents or clients**.
- Ask the legislator where they stand on the issue or ask for their support. Ask what additional information they may need to assist them in learning more about the issue.
- Leave your phone number, so that the legislator may call you back to discuss your position further. A staff person may contact you, so be prepared by having your background materials handy.
- **Thank** the legislator or staff person for listening.
- **Remember to be courteous in your discussions with legislators.**
- **Never threaten or use abusive language.** It will impair the credibility of your comments and create a negative feeling towards your position. Legislators have been known to vote against an issue after receiving a rude phone call!
- **Provide feedback to LeadingAge Connecticut!**

## Write to Your Legislator

- In the beginning of the session, members can write or **e-mail** their legislators, in addition to calling. In fact, an e-mail from a constituent is a very effective way to communicate and very convenient for you if you use our on-line advocacy center at [www.leadingagect.org](http://www.leadingagect.org). A few guidelines should be followed to ensure your letter communicates your position accurately.
  - Letters should be clear and concise and no longer than one page. You should indicate the subject, bill number, and title of the legislation you are concerned with if it is available.
  - Include the fact that you are a LeadingAge Connecticut member as well as a constituent.
  - Explain why you are personally involved with the issue and how the bill will affect you and/or your **residents or clients**.
  - Check to see which committees your legislators are on, because they may be voting on legislation prior to its arrival at the House and Senate.
  - **Never** threaten or use abusive language. It will impair the credibility of your comments and create a negative feeling towards your position.
  - The more personal the letter, the more likely the legislator will read it. Legislators do not respond well to form letters.
  - Include your address and telephone number.
  - Sign your letter.
  - **Forward a copy to LeadingAge Connecticut!**

## Visit with Your Legislator

There are many ways to meet one-on-one with your legislator.

- **A Visit at Your Place!** - A great way to give legislators a first hand look at the work that you do and the services that you provide is to invite them to spend an hour or a day with you. Legislators can witness the challenges and rewards associated with providing housing and services to the elderly.

- **Capitol Visit** - You can offer to meet your legislators at their Capitol offices to discuss legislation. This may be most convenient for the legislators during session.
- **District Visit** - You can meet your legislators in the district over coffee or dinner. Many legislators like to meet in the district early in the day and then head to work or to the Capitol.

#### **Tips for Planning a Visit**

- Call your local legislator and invite him/her to visit.
- Meet with your staff to discuss the agenda for the visit.
- Provide coffee and muffins, etc. and a meeting room where the legislator can ask questions of staff.
- **Take pictures of the legislator with you and the staff.**
- Provide a copy of the photo to the legislator when you follow up with a thank you note.

### **Write a Letter to the Editor**

Members can write Letters-to-the-Editor on specific issues. Legislators read newspapers and so do their constituents! Select the appropriate newspaper from the following list and address the envelope to "Letters- to- the- Editor" or go to their website and submit it online.

Letters should be no longer than 200 words and all letters must be signed. Remember to include your name, address and a phone number where the newspaper can reach you to verify that you sent the letter.

**Connecticut Post** – 410 State Street, Bridgeport, CT 06604

**Hartford Courant** – 285 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06115

**New Haven Register** – 40 Sargent Drive, New Haven, CT 06511

**The Day** – P.O. Box 1231, New London, CT 06320

**The News Times** – 333 Main Street, Danbury, CT 06810

**Waterbury Republican-American** - 389 Meadow St,  
Waterbury, CT 06722

**The Register Citizen** – 190 Water Street, Torrington, CT 06790

**Norwich Bulletin** – 66 Franklin Street, Norwich, CT 06360

**Bristol Press** –P.O. Box 2158, Bristol, CT 06010-2158

**New Britain Herald** – 1 Herald Square, New Britain, CT 06050

**Stamford Advocate** – 75 Tresser Boulevard, Stamford, CT 06904

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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All of the legislators can be reached at their Capitol offices. There is a toll free number for each caucus.

**House Democrats** 1-800-842-8267  
**House Republicans** 1-800-842-1423  
**Senate Democrats** 1-800-842-1420  
**Senate Republicans** 1-800-842-1421

**Governor's Office** 1-860-566-4840 1-800-406-1527

**To get more information regarding contacting your legislator, go to [www.leadingagct.org](http://www.leadingagct.org) or [www.cga.ct.gov](http://www.cga.ct.gov).**

**State Legislative Committees** – All of the legislative committees are housed in either the Legislative Office Building (LOB) or the Capitol. The mailing addresses are as follows:

**Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT 06106**  
**State Capitol, Hartford, CT 06106**

Please find the room numbers and phone numbers listed below.

Aging	Room 011, Capitol	(860) 240-0090
Appropriations	Room 2700, LOB	(860) 240-0390
Banks	Room 2400, LOB	(860) 240-0410
Children	Room 011, LOB	(860) 240-0370
Commerce	Room 110, Capitol	(860) 240-0380
Education	Room 3100, LOB	(860) 240-0420
Energy & Technology	Room 3900, LOB	(860) 240-0430
Environment	Room 3200, LOB	(860) 240-0440
Finance, Revenue & Bonding	Room 3700, LOB	(860) 240-0460
General Law	Room 3500, LOB	(860) 240-0470
Government Admin & Elections	Room 2200, LOB	(860) 240-0480
Higher Education	Room 1800, Capitol	(860) 240-0260
Housing	Room 011, Capitol	(860) 240-0340
Human Services	Room 2000, LOB	(860) 240-0490
Insurance & Real Estate	Room 2800, LOB	(860) 240-0510
Judiciary	Room 2500, LOB	(860) 240-0530
Labor & Public Ees	Room 3800, LOB	(860) 240-0540
Planning & Development	Room 2100, LOB	(860) 240-0550
Program Review	Room 506, Capitol	(860) 240-0300
Public Health	Room 3000, LOB	(860) 240-0560
Public Safety	Room 3600, LOB	(860) 240-0570
Regulations Review	Room 011, Capitol	(860) 240-0580
Transportation	Room 2300, LOB	(860) 240-0590
Veterans Affairs	Room 509A, Capitol	(860) 240-8467