



Pharmacy Leaders. Transforming Patient Care.

Advocacy Toolkit

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The Texas Legislative Process

About the Texas Legislature

The State of Texas has a biennial legislature that meets for 140 days (January-May) in odd years. Special legislative sessions may also be called by the Texas governor, during which time the legislature is only permitted to pass laws on subjects submitted by the governor.¹

The Texas legislative process is governed by the Texas Constitution, Texas Code, and procedural rules adopted by the Texas Senate and House at the beginning of each legislative session.² Texas has a bicameral (two chamber) legislature, which consists of the Senate and House of Representatives (“House”). The legislature considers and votes upon proposed laws, resolutions, potential constitutional amendments, and budget appropriations.³

181 individuals serve as members of the Texas legislature – 31 members of the Senate and 150 members of the Texas House. Senate members typically represent large districts, with the ideal population of 547,952, and serve four-year terms.⁴ House members typically represent small districts, with the ideal population of 113,243, and serve two-year terms.⁵

The Texas Legislative Council (TLC) produces “The Legislative Process in Texas,” which is a great resource to learn more details about the Texas Legislature and legislative process. This resource is available on the [TLC website](#).

Key Positions

The following positions play a key role in the legislative process:

Lieutenant Governor

The lieutenant governor, who is elected by Texas voters, serves as the presiding officer of the Texas Senate, known as the president of the Senate. As the president of the Senate, the lieutenant governor maintains order, designates the chairs and vice chairs for committees, and assigns members to committees, in addition to other duties.

Speaker of the House

The Speaker of the House (“Speaker”) serves as the presiding officer of the Texas House. Each time the House convenes, the House of Representatives elects one of its own members to serve as speaker. The Speaker maintains order, designates the chairs and vice chairs for committees, and helps assign members to committees, in addition to other duties.^{6,7}

¹ “Frequently Asked Questions.” Texas House of Representatives. <https://house.texas.gov/resources/frequently-asked-questions>

² “The Legislative Process.” Texas Legislative Council. <https://tlc.texas.gov/docs/legref/legislativeprocess.pdf>

³ “Frequently Asked Questions.” Texas House of Representatives. <https://house.texas.gov/resources/frequently-asked-questions>

⁴ “Frequently Asked Questions.” Texas House of Representatives. <https://house.texas.gov/resources/frequently-asked-questions>

⁵ “Frequently Asked Questions.” Texas House of Representatives. <https://house.texas.gov/resources/frequently-asked-questions>

⁶ “Frequently Asked Questions.” Texas House of Representatives. <https://house.texas.gov/resources/frequently-asked-questions>

⁷ After the chair and vice-chair are appointed, the remaining seats are divided between speaker appointments and the seniority system. House Rule 4, Section 2(a).

Committee Chairs

Committee chairs decide when their committee will meet, and which bills will be considered in their committee.⁸

Governor

The governor, who is elected by Texas voters, is the chief executive of the state. The governor makes policy recommendations that may be introduced as legislation and signs and/or vetoes bills passed by the legislature, in addition to other duties.⁹

Key Committees

Legislative committees allow the legislature to consider bills without requiring the immediate involvement of all legislators. Bills are typically assigned to the committee which has “jurisdiction” over the bill’s subject matter.¹⁰ Committee meetings are generally open to the public and public testimony must be heard on a bill before it can be reported out of committee.¹¹ Committee chairs, vice chairs, and members are appointed by the Speaker of the House and the lieutenant governor after legislative session begins.

Senate

There are 14 Senate standing committees and 18 select, interim, and/or joint committees. The committees below are highlighted due to their roles in the passage of healthcare-related bills.

Business & Commerce Committee

The Business & Commerce Committee, consisting of nine members, is responsible for business- and commerce-related bills, including health insurance bills.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee, consisting of 15 members, is responsible for bills and resolutions that appropriate money.

Health & Human Services Committee

The Health & Human Services Committee, consisting of eight members, is responsible for all health- and human services-related bills, including bills related to provider scope of practice and Medicaid.

House

There are more than 40 House Committees and 12 joint committees. The committees below are highlighted due to their roles in the passage of healthcare-related bills.

Appropriations Committee

The Appropriations Committee, consisting of 27 members, is responsible for all bills and resolutions that appropriate money.¹² The Appropriations Committee is responsible for the

⁸ “The Legislative Process.” Texas Legislative Council. <https://tlc.texas.gov/docs/legref/legislativeprocess.pdf>

⁹ “Duties, Requirements & Powers.” Office of the Texas Governor. <https://gov.texas.gov/governor-abbott/duties>

¹⁰ “The Legislative Process.” Texas Legislative Council. <https://tlc.texas.gov/docs/legref/legislativeprocess.pdf>

¹¹ “The Legislative Process.” Texas Legislative Council. <https://tlc.texas.gov/docs/legref/legislativeprocess.pdf>

¹² “Appropriations Committee.” Texas House of Representatives.
<https://house.texas.gov/committees/committee/?committee=C030>

biennial appropriations bill, which funds all state activities (such as funding for state agencies like the Texas State Board of Pharmacy) for two fiscal years (September-August).

This committee includes several subcommittees, such as the S/C on Article II Committee, which is responsible for appropriations impacting Article II-related agencies (which includes the Texas Health & Human Services Commission, which oversees Texas Medicaid, and the Texas Department of State Health Services, which licenses state hospitals).

Calendars Committee

The Calendars Committee, consisting of 15 members, has jurisdiction over the scheduling of bills to be heard on the House floor.¹³

Insurance Committee

The Insurance Committee, consisting of nine members, has jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to insurance and the insurance industry and the Texas Department of Insurance.¹⁴

Public Health Committee

The Public Health Committee, consisting of 11 members, has jurisdiction over “the protection of public health, including supervision and control of the practice of medicine and dentistry and other allied health services” and oversight of the Health and Human Services Commission and the Texas State Board of Pharmacy.¹⁵

How a Bill Becomes a Law

The links on Page 5 illustrate the process for a bill to become a law. Only a member of the legislature can introduce a bill to their respective chamber. The bill is assigned a number according to the order it was introduced. HB 1 is always the appropriation bill. After a bill is introduced, it is assigned to a committee. The assigned committee will hear testimony on the bill and decide whether to take action on the bill. If the bill is voted out of committee, it moves to the chamber floor for debate where it can be amended. If passed by majority vote, it is sent over to the other chamber where it repeats the process for that chamber.

Once the bill has been adopted (engrossed) by one chamber it, will start the process over in the second chamber until it is approved by both chambers. Assuming there are no differences in the bills (which would then require the involvement of a conference committee), it will then be sent to the governor (referred to as “enrolled”). If the governor signs the bill or takes no action, the bill will then be enacted into state law (“statute”). If the governor vetoes the bill during session, the legislature may reconsider the bill. If the governor vetoes the bill post-session, then it is not enacted and does not become state law.

With all the steps involved it in the process, it is easy to see why only **15.2%** of bills filed were passed during the 88th Legislative Session.¹⁶

¹³ “Calendars Committee.” Texas House of Representatives.
<https://house.texas.gov/committees/committee/?committee=C050>

¹⁴ “Insurance Committee.” Texas House of Representatives.
<https://house.texas.gov/committees/committee/?committee=C320>

¹⁵ “Public Health Committee.” Texas House of Representatives.
<https://house.texas.gov/committees/committee/?committee=C410>

¹⁶ “Bill statistics for the 88th Legislature.” Legislative Reference Library.
<https://lrl.texas.gov/sessions/sessionSnapshot.cfm?legSession=88-0>

Process for [Texas Senate](#) bills.

Process for [Texas House](#) bills.



Getting Involved in the Legislative Process

ADVOCACY IS ESSENTIAL

Why Should YOU be Engaged?

Every day you are an advocate. You advocate for your patient's health and well-being by providing the best care possible. You advocate for the advancement of pharmacy practice by staying current on professional practice and assisting your colleagues. You advocate for your community by serving as a resource to others in need. Your professional advocacy work has prepared you to take the next step to advocate for your profession by communicating with legislators and other policymakers and explaining the issues impacting your community's healthcare needs. When you advocate for your profession, you are serving your patients by ensuring they receive the best care today and in the future.

Overcoming Barriers to Engagement

There are many reasons why people do not engage in advocacy efforts, some of which you may relate to. Here are a few common barriers, along with tips to overcome them:

I'm Too Busy

There are many ways to advocate that only take a few minutes. You can send an email or make a brief phone call to your legislator using information provided by TSHP. Just a few minutes of your time can make a difference in the lives of your patients and the community.

I'm Not an Expert

While you may not be an expert on every topic, your education and training has prepared you to be a healthcare expert in your area of focus. It is important to speak to what you know. Share stories of your patients and the community that you serve. You do not have all the answers-TSHP is here to help and support you.

The Legislative Process is Scary

You do not need to know the legislative process in thorough detail or be a lobbyist to be an effective advocate – all you really need to know is who represents you and your opinion on the issues. Legislators serve their districts and value feedback from their constituents. This toolkit provides all the information you need to navigate the legislative process. TSHP staff are also here to support you throughout the process.

My Feedback Doesn't Make a Difference

Legislators are elected to serve their constituency, but they can't address issues unless they are made aware of them. Legislators and their staff rely on constituent feedback to know what issues are important to the community they serve. Legislators consider all feedback received by their district prior to voting on an issue, so it is important to speak up on issues that are important to the profession.

My Legislator Does Not Sit on a Key Committee

Even if your legislator does not sit on a key committee, they can still play a major role in passing a healthcare bill. Legislators can author or sponsor a bill or help navigate a bill through the legislative process. You never know what will resonate with your legislator until you explain to them the issues impacting your community and your profession.

My Legislator Has Different Political Beliefs than Me

Sometimes our legislators' stances on issues differ from our own. You do not have to disclose your party affiliation or whether you voted for the legislator, and you should not bring up partisan politics. Instead, focus on finding common ground. Republicans and Democrats are both concerned about healthcare; improving Texans' health and wellbeing is a common goal for both parties. Keeping the discussion focused on healthcare will provide the common ground necessary to advocate for your profession.

I Cannot Visit Austin During Legislative Session

You can be an effective advocate during session even if you are unable to make a visit to the Capitol during session. Emailing or calling your legislators' office to voice your support or opposition on specific bills will help advance TSHP's advocacy efforts. You can also engage in advocacy activities in your community. See below for ideas of how to be an advocate in your community.

How to Get Involved

Engaging in advocacy is easy. Here are a few things that you can do to get involved:

- Identify who represents you in the state legislative offices – federal and local offices are important too. Find your legislator [here](#).
- Make phone calls (page 11).
- Send emails and letters (page 8).
- Visit legislators in Austin or their local district offices (page 13).
- Share stories of the great activities that are happening in your pharmacy and hospital.
- Be informed – TSHP can help.
- Read TSHP legislative updates.
- Become a Key Contact.
- Invest in the TSHP PAC.

Engaging with TSHP

Members are encouraged to support TSHP's advocacy efforts by serving as a key contact or by supporting the TSHP PAC.

TSHP Key Contact Program

Key contacts play a crucial role in advancing legislative initiatives and bills. Key contacts build and maintain relationships with the legislators, serve as resources to legislators, and help advance TSHP's legislative issues by engaging their colleagues and members of the community. Contact the TSHP office for more information regarding this program.

TSHP PAC

TSHP PAC, the general-purpose political action committee of TSHP, promotes the election of pro-pharmacy candidates in statewide elections. Voluntary investments made by TSHP members are used to help elect candidates who understand and support the interests of TSHP members. TSHP members are encouraged to consider an annual or monthly investment to support the advancement of pharmacy practice. An investment in the PAC is an investment in your profession.

SENDING AN EMAIL OR LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR (DURING SESSION)

Sending an email to a legislator is an efficient way to communicate your stance on a bill.

Helpful Tips When Calling a Legislator's Office

Drafting the Email or Letter

Be Prepared

It is critical that you prepare your message prior to sending an email or letter to a legislator. You should never “wing it” with an email or letter to a legislator’s office.

First, identify the bill (number and name) or issue that you are writing about.

Next, develop a list of talking points. What is your stance on the issue? How has and/or will this directly impact you, the pharmacy profession, patients across the state, and the legislator’s district? Is there an opposing side to your stance? What is the status of the bill?

Decide Whether to Use a Template or Draft Your Own Email or Letter

TSHP will often provide template emails or letters that you can use in lieu of drafting your own.

If you decide to use a template email, personalize the message so it does not appear to be a form letter. Form letters do not have the impact of individual messages in the writer’s own words.

A handwritten letter always makes a great impression. If you use email, send it to the legislator. Do not copy other legislators or send a mass email. Make it a brief message with no special layouts or graphics. Do not include attachments.

Address letters to the legislator and send to:

Texas Senate:

The Honorable (Legislator’s full name)
Texas Senate
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711-2068

Texas House:

The Honorable (Legislator’s full name)
Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768-2910

Be Brief

Your letter or email will be read by a staff member who will be reading hundreds of other letters during the session. Additionally, responding to constituent messages is just one of the many responsibilities of staff members, so to ensure your entire message is read, keep it brief. Limit your message to one page, and if emailing, do not include attachments.

Contents of your message

Identify Yourself as a Constituent (if applicable)

At the start of the email or letter, share your name, that you are a constituent, and where in the district you reside. Legislators and their staff love to hear from constituents. Include your address and phone number in case the office would like to reach you.

State Your Stance on the Bill

State whether you support or oppose the bill and include the bill number. Send your message when the bill you are writing about is in your legislature's chamber. When the bill has moved to the House, contact your representative. When the bill is in the Senate, contact your senator.

Present Your Rationale in a Brief, Concise, and Clear Way

It is critical to provide rationale to support your stance. Be brief, concise, and clear. Preparing your thoughts before the drafting process will help with this. It is important to provide specific and concrete reasons for your position and avoid being vague.

Share how this issue has, or will, directly impact you, the pharmacy profession, patients across the state, and the legislator's district. Briefly cite evidence as needed to support your position but do not overwhelm them. Consider including a personal story – real-life experiences are highly valued. Avoid acronyms and either over- or underestimating what the staff member may know.

State your request clearly. Would you like your legislator to consider co-sponsoring the bill? Are you asking them to support or oppose the bill and why?

Volunteer to be a Resource

Legislators are always interested in hearing about the needs of their district from constituents. As of the 86th Legislature, there is only one pharmacist serving in the legislature (Sen. Charles Schwertner), so you can serve as a valuable resource to help legislators understand issues related to pharmacy. Offer to serve as a resource. Building relationships with your legislators is critical.

Consider Asking for a Response

Consider asking the legislator to respond regarding their opinions on the issue or if there is anything you can do to assist them.

Thank Them for Their Time

End the email or letter by thanking them for their time and consideration.

After Sending the Email or Letter

Follow-Up with the Legislator's Office

If you asked for a response and did not receive one, be patient and understanding. Due to the volume of emails and letters, sometimes requests for responses are delayed. Follow up with the legislator's office by identifying yourself as a constituent and referencing the date the email or letter was sent.

Be Courteous and Professional

It is imperative that you are always polite and civil to legislators and their staff. They often have reasons for their stance on the issue and behaving in a courteous and professional manner is necessary to establish common ground on an issue.

You should always tell the truth – never make up information when you don't know it. Tell your legislator you will research the issue and get back with them. But do not promise anything you cannot deliver or pretend to be an expert on something you are unfamiliar with. Credibility helps build trust. Once trust is lost, it is nearly impossible to regain.

Finally, don't get angry or argue with the staff member or legislator, vilify your opponents, or make ultimatums or threats. Today's opponent or nonresponsive legislator may be tomorrow's ally.

Notify TSHP Staff Regarding the Email or Letter

Be sure to forward a copy of your email or letter to the TSHP office (advocacy@tshp.org), along with any information from follow-up discussions. Let TSHP staff know if they can assist you in providing information or answers to the legislator's office. TSHP staff is here as a resource for you.

Sample Email/Letter to Legislator

(Month) (Day) (Year)

The Honorable (first and last name)
Texas Senate
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711-2068

re: (topic or bill #, author, and subject if writing to ask for support or opposition on bill)

Dear (Representative/Senator) (last name):

My name is (your first and last name), and I am a (job title) who resides in your district. I am a member of the Texas Society of Health-System Pharmacy.

(State the issue or bill number you are writing about and briefly describe. State why you support or oppose the bill or issue. Choose up to three strong points that support your position.)

(Include a personal story. Tell your representative why the issue is important to you and how it affects you, your family members, and/or your community.)

(Tell your legislator how you want them to vote on this issue and ask for a response.)

(Thank them for their consideration.)

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your first and last name
Street address
City, State, Zip

CALLING A LEGISLATOR'S OFFICE (DURING SESSION)

Calling a legislator's office is often more efficient for communicating your stance on a bill, especially if there is pending activity on the bill (such as an upcoming vote in the committee).

Helpful Tips When Calling a Legislator's Office

Before the Call

Be Prepared

It is critical that you take a few moments before the call to prepare. You should never "wing it" on a call to a legislator's office.

Before the call, identify the bill or issue that you are calling about.

Next, develop a list of talking points. What is your stance on the issue? How has and/or will this directly impact you, the pharmacy profession, patients across the state, and the legislator's district? Is there an opposing side to your stance? What is the status of the bill?

If you are unable to reach anyone, leave a brief message including your name and the issue you are calling about.

During the Call

Identify Yourself as a Constituent (if applicable)

At the beginning of the call, share your name, that you are a constituent, and where in the district you reside. Legislators and their staff love to hear from constituents. Also mention that you are a member of the Texas Society of Health-System Pharmacy.

State Your Stance on the Bill

State whether you support or oppose the bill and include the bill number. Send your message when the bill you are writing about is in your legislature's chamber. When the bill has moved to the House, contact your representative. When the bill is in the Senate, contact your senator.

Present Your Rationale in a Brief, Concise, and Clear Way

It is critical to provide rationale to support your stance. Be brief, concise, and clear. Preparing your thoughts before the drafting process will help with this. It is important to provide specific and concrete reasons for your position and avoid being vague.

Share how this issue has, or will, directly impact you, the pharmacy profession, patients across the state, and the legislator's district. Briefly cite evidence as needed to support your position but do not overwhelm them. Consider including a personal story – real-life experiences are highly valued. Avoid acronyms and either over- or underestimating what the staff member may know.

State your request clearly. Would you like your legislator to consider co-sponsoring the bill? Are you asking them to support or oppose the bill and why?

Be Courteous and Professional

It is imperative that you are always polite and civil to legislators and their staff. They often have reasons for their stance on the issue and behaving in a courteous and professional manner is necessary to establish common ground on an issue.

You should always tell the truth – never make up information when you don't know it. Tell your legislator you will research the issue and get back with them. But do not promise anything you cannot deliver or pretend to be an expert on something you are unfamiliar with. Credibility helps build trust. Once trust is lost, it is nearly impossible to regain.

Finally, don't get angry or argue with the staff member or legislator, vilify your opponents, or make ultimatums or threats. Today's opponent or nonresponsive legislator may be tomorrow's ally.

Thank Them for Their Time

End the call by thanking them for their time and consideration.

After the Call

Follow-Up with the Legislator's Office

After the call, send an email or note to the staff member, thanking them for their time and attention. Reference early in the message that you are a constituent (if applicable); reference the date and time of the call; include a summary of your discussion; and provide your contact information, including your address, for their reference. Provide any additional supporting material (limit to 2-3 items) and address any questions or requests that you received during the call from the staff member.

Notify TSHP Staff Regarding the Call

Be sure to email the TSHP office (advocacy@tshp.org) regarding the status of your call and whether staff can assist you in providing information or answers to the legislator's office. TSHP staff is here as a resource for you.

Sample Phone Conversation with a Legislator's Office

Here is an example of a possible call to a legislator's office:

Staff Person: Thank you for calling Senator Jones' office. How can I help you?

You: My name is (your first and last name), and I am a (job title) who resides in your district. I am a member of the Texas Society of Health-System Pharmacy.

(State the issue or bill number you are writing about and briefly describe. State why you support or oppose the bill or issue. Choose up to three strong points that support your position.)

(Tell your legislator how you want them to vote on this issue and ask for a response.)

(Thank them for their consideration.)

You: Thank you for your time and have a great day!

VISITING A LEGISLATOR'S OFFICE (DURING SESSION)

If possible, visit your legislator's office during legislative session.

Helpful Tips When Visiting a Legislator's Office

Before the Visit

Schedule Your Visit

Schedule your visit in advance with the legislator or their staff member who handles healthcare-related issues. While you can drop by their office, it is unlikely that you will be able to meet with the legislator or key staff if you do not have an appointment.

When requesting the appointment, identify yourself as a constituent (along with any other constituents in your group), a member of the Texas Society of Health-System Pharmacy and provide the names of any other attendees. Legislators and their staff love to hear from constituents.

Ask who you will be meeting with. Will you be meeting with the legislator? If meeting with the legislator's staff, who will you be meeting with and what is their role? Request to meet with the health policy expert on the staff. This will help you to prepare for the meeting and identify how familiar they will be with the issue(s) or bill(s) you will be discussing.

Be Prepared

It is critical that you prepare in advance for your meeting with a legislator or their staff. You should never "wing it" with on a visit to a legislator's office.

First, identify the bill(s) that you would like to meet with them about. Limit your conversation to 1-2 bills, though you can leave additional information with the legislator or their staff about other bills that you would like them to consider.

Develop a list of talking points. What is your stance on the issue? How has and/or will this directly impact you, the pharmacy profession, patients across the state, and the legislator's district? Is there an opposing side to your stance? What is the status of the bill?

Identify your goals for the meeting. Would you like them to consider co-sponsoring the bill? Are you asking them to support or oppose the bill and why? Do not ask for a firm stance on the issue.

Consider whether you would like to offer to provide them with a pharmacy tour after legislative session (see page 19 for more information about the process).

The meeting will likely be 30 minutes or less. Do not be late. Be prepared for the meeting to be delayed, or even cancelled, especially if the legislator is attending the meeting. Legislators are often asked to be in three places at once during session, so it's important to be flexible when meeting with legislators and their staff.

If you are attending the meeting with a group, develop a plan for the visit with your group and choose a spokesperson to begin and guide the discussion. Arrange a meeting time and location for the group to meet beforehand and go into the office as one group.

Dress Professionally

Dress professionally for the meeting. Consider wearing your white coat.

Gather Supporting Materials

Identify what materials you would like to bring to the meeting. TSHP has materials available on a variety of subjects, and TSHP staff would be happy to assist you with developing additional materials. TSHP staff will prepare materials to leave with the staff or legislator typically “one-pagers” outlining the purpose of the legislation and why they should support it. Make note of additional materials legislator requests for further clarification on the bill.

During the Visit

Start the Meeting with a “Thank You”

Begin the meeting by thanking the legislator or staff member(s) for meeting with you.

If the legislator is attending the meeting, consider sharing news from their district. They appreciate hearing updates from home, including news on any mutual friends or contacts that you may have.

State Your Stance on the Bill

State whether you support or oppose the bill and include the bill number. Send your message when the bill you are writing about is in your legislature’s chamber. When the bill has moved to the House, contact your representative. When the bill is in the Senate, contact your senator.

Present Your Rationale in a Brief, Concise, and Clear Way

It is critical to provide rationale to support your stance. Be brief, concise, and clear. Preparing your thoughts during the planning process will help with this. It is important to provide specific and concrete reasons for your position and avoid being vague. Share how this issue has and/or will directly impact you, the pharmacy profession, patients across the state, and the legislator’s district. Briefly cite evidence as needed to support your position but do not overwhelm them. Consider including a personal story – real-life experiences are highly valued. Avoid acronyms and either over- or underestimating what the staff member may know.

Make a clear request to your legislator, based on the asks that you identified during the planning process.

Volunteer to be a Resource

Legislators are always interested in hearing about the needs of their district from constituents. As of the 88th Legislature, there is only one pharmacist serving in the legislature (Sen. Charles Schwertner), so you can serve as a value resource to help them understand issues related to pharmacy. Offer to serve as a resource. Building relationships with your legislators is critical.

Offer to Provide the Legislator with a Pharmacy Tour (if possible)

If you have determined that you are able to offer a pharmacy tour, mention this to the legislator or their staff and offer to follow up with them after the legislative session. This is a great opportunity for them to learn more about the role of pharmacists. See page 19 for more information about planning a pharmacy tour.

Be Courteous and Professional

It is imperative that you are always polite and civil to legislators and their staff. They often have reasons for their stance on the issue and behaving in a courteous and professional manner is necessary to establish common ground on an issue.

Be a good listener. Be respectful, flexible, and consider their opinions, even if they differ from your own.

Always tell the truth – never make up information when you don't know it. Tell your legislator you will research the issue and get back with them. But do not promise anything you cannot deliver or pretend to be an expert on something you are unfamiliar with. Credibility helps build trust. Once trust is lost, it is nearly impossible to regain.

Never mention campaign contributions or present a check during the meeting. Legislators are bound by state ethics laws, and mixing campaign work with their official duties is a violation of those laws.

Finally, do not get angry or argue with the staff member or legislator, vilify your opponents, or make ultimatums or threats. Today's opponent or nonresponsive legislator may be tomorrow's ally.

Thank Them Again for Their Time

Conclude the meeting by thanking them for their time and consideration.

After the Visit

Follow-Up with the Legislator's Office

Send a written thank you to the legislator's office after the visit and follow up on any requests or questions received during the visit.

Notify TSHP Staff Regarding the Visit

Complete the TSHP Legislative Visit Form and email it to the TSHP office (advocacy@tshp.org), along with any information from follow-up discussions. Let the TSHP staff know if they can assist you in providing information or answers to the legislator's office. TSHP staff is here as a resource for you.

Continue the Conversation with Others in Your Community

Continue the conversation about this bill or issue at home by sharing information with other people who may be impacted.

Who's Who in a Legislative Office

There are several individuals you should be aware of in the legislator's office besides the legislator.

Chief of Staff

The Chief of Staff supervises and trains the legislative staff and provides office management duties. They also assist the legislator with a variety of matters.

Legislative Director

The legislative director oversees legislative bill activities.

Attorney/General Counsel

The attorney/general counsel provides legal advice, bill analyses, and draft bills and amendments.

Policy Analyst

Policy analysts perform bill analyses and serve as resource experts for the legislator. If meeting with a policy analyst, ask to meet with the analyst handling healthcare or insurance issues. These staffer's knowledge of Texas health law is invaluable to understanding how what laws must be changed to achieve a policy goal.

Other Staff

Other legislative staff members may include legislative assistants and interns.

TESTIFYING BEFORE A LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE (DURING SESSION)

Another way to participate in the legislative process is to testify before a legislative committee on a bill or issue. You can sign up to testify on stations around the Capitol on the day of a bills hearing.

Alternatively, you may also register in support or opposition of the bill if you are at the Capitol the day of the hearing at the registration kiosks.

Before the Hearing

Be Prepared

It is critical that you prepare in advance for testimony. You should never "wing it" when testifying.

First, identify the hearing date and time for the bill that you would like to testify on. Next, draft your testimony. What is your stance on the issue? How has and/or will this directly impact you, the pharmacy profession, patients across the state, and the legislators' district? Why is your stance the best solution or is there a better solution?

Draft Your Testimony

Include the following in your testimony:

State Your Name and Stance on the Bill

State your name and whether you support or oppose the bill at the beginning of your testimony. If you do not state this information, the Chair will most likely interrupt your testimony to ask for this information.

Begin Your Testimony with a “Thank You”

Thank the Chair and committee members for the opportunity to provide testimony on the bill.

Present Your Rationale in a Brief, Concise, and Clear Way

It is critical to provide rationale to support your stance. Be brief, concise, and clear since ***you will only have 2-3 minutes to testify***.

Preparing your thoughts during the planning process will help you draft a concise message. It is important to provide specific and concrete reasons for your position and avoid being vague. Share how this issue has and/or will directly impact you, the pharmacy profession, patients across the state, and the legislator’s district. Briefly cite evidence as needed to support your position but do not overwhelm them. Consider including a personal story – real-life experiences are highly valued. Avoid acronyms and either over- or underestimating what the staff member may know.

Thank Them Again for Their Time

Conclude your testimony by thanking them for their time and consideration. Offer to answer any questions that they may have related to your testimony or the bill.

Gather Supporting Materials

Identify what materials you would like to submit with your written testimony. TSHP has materials available on a variety of subjects and TSHP staff would be happy to assist you with developing other materials. Leave-behinds should typically be no more than 1-2 pages. Plan to bring no more than 2-3 documents or a small folder to leave with the committee. Bring enough copies for all members of the committee plus five additional copies.

Rehearse Your Testimony and Request Feedback

Be sure to rehearse your testimony to avoid reading it to the committee, if possible. It may also help to time your testimony to ensure it is within the 2-minute limit. Invited speakers are given more time to testify. It is also helpful to seek feedback on your testimony. TSHP staff are happy to assist you with this.

The Day of the Hearing

Dress Professionally

Dress professionally for the hearing. You might want to consider wearing your white coat.

Arrive Early

Lines to enter the Capitol are often long so be patient – it is worth the wait. The South and West Entrances are often the busiest. Persons with a state license to carry a concealed

weapon have expedited entrance through a separate line-just show your license to the state trooper for entrance.

Register to Testify at the electronic kiosk

The Texas Capitol has kiosks located near the hearing rooms so that you may submit your request to testify. Do this as early as possible as testimony is taken in the order that the requests are received. Once you establish an account, it will prepopulate most of the form once you log in during future visits.

If you plan to testify in a specific order with a group, register at the same time. Legislative staff typically do not reorder to allow groups to present together.

Prepare to Wait to Testify

Sometimes it is difficult to predict how long you may wait to testify. Consider bringing water and snacks with you but be advised that snacks and water are not allowed in hearing rooms. It is possible that bills will be heard out of order to accommodate legislators who wish to present their bill or that the hearing may be suspended to allow legislators to join their colleagues on the floor before resuming the hearing.

During the Hearing

Waiting to Testify

Be in the hearing room when the bill is called and not in an overflow room (overflow rooms may be made available depending on the hearing schedule and number of people waiting to testify).

Present Your Testimony

Remember to state your name and stance on the bill at the very beginning of your testimony. Do this before thanking the committee for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Be sure to speak clearly and do not read your testimony if possible. Try to make eye contact with legislators and do not worry if a legislator walks out during your testimony. Legislators are often in and out of the hearing room, depending on other committee meetings that they may be scheduled to attend.

Be prepared for the committee members to ask you questions. If they interrupt your testimony to ask you a question, answer the question and then ask the chair if you can proceed.

You will hear a beep warning you that you have one minute left. When that happens, make your most important point and then wrap up your testimony. After the second beep, finish your sentence and stop talking, or you can ask the chair if you can finish. If the chair asks you to stop talking, you must stop your testimony.

Be Courteous and Professional

It is imperative that you are always polite and civil to legislators. They often have reasons for their stance on the issue and behaving in a courteous and professional manner is necessary to establish common ground on an issue.

Be a good listener. Be respectful, flexible, and consider their opinions, even if they differ from your own.

Do not get angry or argue with the legislator, vilify your opponents, or make ultimatums or threats. Remember that hearings are public and video recordings of meetings are entered into public record.

After the Hearing

Follow-Up with Legislator's Offices if Requested

Follow up on any requests or questions received during the hearing.

Notify TSHP Staff Regarding Your Testimony

Email a copy of your testimony to the TSHP office (advocacy@tshp.org), along with any information from follow-up discussions. Let TSHP staff know if they can assist you in providing information or answers to a legislator. TSHP staff is here as a resource for you.

Continue the Conversation with Others in Your Community

Continue the conversation about this bill or issue at home by sharing information with other people who may be impacted.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEGISLATORS (BEFORE/AFTER SESSION)

Legislators often rely on others to help them be aware of a wide variety of issues impacting the state and their districts. You can assist them by building relationships with your legislators and supporting their work in the community.

Ideas for Building Relationships with Your Legislators

- Invite them to meet you for lunch or coffee.
- Invite them to tour your pharmacy.
- Say hello to them in your community and wish them well.
- Invite them to any pharmacy special events, clinics, or screenings.
- Attend any community forums that they host.
- Follow them on social media.
- Attend or host a fundraiser in your community.
- Visit them in their district office.
- Consider volunteering for their campaign for one afternoon (or several).
- Get involved in other areas of your community.
- Be a problem solver and healthcare advocate and resource.

HOSTING A PHARMACY VISIT FOR A LEGISLATOR (BEFORE/AFTER SESSION)

Having a legislator visit your pharmacy is a great opportunity to share the amazing work that you do to serve your patients and the community.

Planning for the Tour

Identify the Purpose of the Potential Tour

First, consider the purpose of the tour. What are the objectives you would like to achieve? How can you help the legislator understand the role of pharmacy and the benefits to the community? Ask TSHP staff and leadership to assist with the organization of the tour.

Consider the tour schedule, including areas that you would like to tour with the legislator. Consider including direct patient care activities, if possible.

Consult with Hospital Leadership

It is imperative that you receive approval from your leadership before mentioning a potential pharmacy visit to a legislator. It is possible that the hospital administrator may already be planning a visit for a legislator – if so, ask if pharmacy can be a stop on the tour.

Invite the Legislator

Once you receive approval from hospital leadership and coordinate with TSHP, send a formal invitation to the legislator as soon as possible. Invite their staff to attend and include key details (location, tour date options, etc.). Ask if there are specific areas of the pharmacy or hospital that they would like to tour.

Begin Planning the Tour

As you develop the tour schedule, leave time for discussion. You may need to limit the areas visited to accommodate this. Provide opportunities for the legislator to meet key members of the pharmacy team and hospital administration.

Establish who will be overseeing logistics, including logistics for the day of the tour. This will help ensure the best experience possible for the legislator.

Notify Staff & the Hospital Public Relations Team

Notify staff in advance so they can be aware of the visit and prepare accordingly.

Notify the hospital's public relations team as soon as the visit is confirmed. This will give them an opportunity to send press releases and have a photographer present to document the visit.

Gather Supporting Materials

Identify what materials you would like to provide to the legislator regarding your hospital and pharmacy. TSHP has developed a pharmacy fact sheet template that you can provide that explains the impact your pharmacy has on the community. TSHP staff are also happy to provide additional materials upon request. Provide no more than 2-3 documents or a small folder.

During the Visit

Prepare for Questions

Your legislator may have questions regarding your pharmacy, the pharmacy's role in advancing patient care, and the impact your pharmacy has on the community. Provide ample opportunity to answer questions.

Always tell the truth – never make up information when you don't know it. Tell your legislator you will research the issue and get back with them. But do not promise anything you cannot deliver or pretend to be an expert on something you are unfamiliar with. Credibility helps build trust. Once trust is lost, it is nearly impossible to regain.

Volunteer to be a Resource

Legislators are always interested in hearing about the needs of their district from constituents. As of the 88th Legislature, there is only one pharmacist serving in the legislature (Sen. Charles Schwertner), so you can serve as a value resource to help them understand issues related to pharmacy. Offer to assist and serve as a resource. Building relationships with your legislators is critical.

Be Courteous and Professional

It is imperative that you are always polite and civil to legislators. They often have reasons for their stance on the issue and behaving in a courteous and professional manner is necessary to establish common ground on an issue.

Be a good listener. Be respectful, flexible, and consider their opinions, even if they differ from your own.

Finally, don't get angry or argue with the staff member or legislator, vilify your opponents, or make ultimatums or threats. Today's opponent or nonresponsive legislator may be tomorrow's ally.

Share this advice with other members of the hospital team.

Thank Them Again for Their Time

Conclude the tour by thanking them for their time and consideration.

After the Visit

Follow-Up with the Legislator

Send a written thank you to the legislator after the visit and follow up on any requests or questions received during the tour.

Send the legislator a copy of any photos or articles about their visit.

Notify TSHP Staff Regarding the Tour

Share details of the tour with the TSHP office (advocacy@tshp.org), along with any information from follow-up discussions. Let TSHP staff know if they can assist you in providing information or answers to a legislator. TSHP staff is here as a resource for you.

Maintain the Relationship

Continue to build your relationship with the legislator. See page 18 for ideas and tips.

ENGAGING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Sharing legislative issues and updates with your social media networks is a great way to advocate for your patients and the pharmacy profession.