



Send Your Lobbyist to the Capitol with a Well-Equipped Arsenal

The role of legislative drafting in an effective legislative campaign

By Regina M. Buono

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The Texas Legislature meets for 140 days out of every two years. That's not a lot of time to deal with the many pressing issues facing a state of nearly 25 million people. Getting legislation through a system designed to kill as much as possible is a momentous task, and it takes early and careful planning to make sure that your team is as prepared as possible when they head off to the pink dome in Austin.

One way to improve your chances at the Legislature is to get out in front of everyone from the beginning. Or even before the beginning. Starting the session already holding your well-drafted legislation is helpful to everyone in the process—especially to you. It means less time waiting for the bill to be drafted while precious calendar days pass by, more input on the legislation and how it will work, increased goodwill with members and staffers because you're not adding to their already crowded "to do" list, and more confidence that your legislation has been researched, vetted, and written clearly, with an eye toward real world implementation and the avoidance of litigation.

The members of the House and Senate count on the Texas Legislative Council for all the above, but the Council's services aren't available to help the general public translate policy needs and ideas into negotiable language. However, there are other people in Austin who are trained in legislative drafting and have extensive knowledge of important policy and legal areas. Here is a list of reasons you should consider arming your lobbyist with a bill package crafted by experienced legislative drafters and subject area experts:

1. **Carrying Your Own Water Generates Goodwill.** Bringing a comprehensive bill package to a potential sponsor sets the session conversation off on a good note by relieving the burden on the member and his or her staff.
2. **Time is of the Essence.** A well-drafted bill can be filed immediately with the member's consent or, if sent for the review at the Legislative Council, will often take far less time to arrive for filing than a bill that must be drafted from scratch.
3. **Avoid playing the "Telephone Game."** Having your bill drafted ahead of time by an experienced drafter gives you more opportunity for input about what is filed. If the Legislative Council is drafting your bill at the legislator's request, you'll more than likely have to communicate with them through the member's office, which means more lost time and possible misunderstood communications.
4. **Instant Response.** When a nasty legislative surprise comes your way, having a legislative drafter on call to write accurate and professional committee substitutes, committee amendments, and floor amendments rather than waiting for the legislator's office to coordinate with the Legislative Council can mean the difference between law you hate and law that works for you.

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