

Questions Nursing Students Asked
About
Iowa Nurse's Association Legislative and Policy Day

1. What is the purpose of the day?
 - ✓ To experience lawmaking in action at the state level.
 - ✓ To learn to be an effective spokesperson.
 - ✓ To learn how to research policy issues.
 - ✓ To gain a level of confidence and comfort in advocating for your own nursing practice and for health care for your patients/clients.

2. What are the issues to advocate for?

Every year the issues change, depending on what is happening in the larger environment. Some issues take a short time to get adopted; some take a decade or more. A policy “rule of thumb” is that it takes three years to get an issue passed/adopted by policymakers. The Iowa Nurses Association reevaluates every year what issues to promote

3. Why am I told “how to lobby”? I can say the right thing.

“Lobbying” is defined as “encouraging the passage, defeat or modification of legislation.” “Regular folks” like yourself can be some of the most effective “lobbyists”, especially if you follow the three keys: preparation, politeness and perseverance. If you are familiar with the process, we congratulate you. Many more nurses and nursing students are uncomfortable and do not know where to start to prepare themselves for a meeting with their legislator. It is our intent to provide a knowledge framework of the basics and whatever assistance and information we can, to help you speak to issues in your part of the state or that you experience for your clients or yourself.

4. Why did the Lt. Governor “push” for her issues?

Elected officials are asked to share their agenda with the attendees as part of the educational process. It also demonstrates whether there is “overlap” of priorities between organizations or not. It is an expectation that leaders will set an “agenda” to be accomplished, especially on those issues they heard a number of people speak about during the election process.

5. How do I figure out who to speak to?

You should speak to your own elected representative and senator. Use the “Find Your Legislator” feature at <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/FindLeg/> Type in your home address and zip code and it will be provided to you.

6. What does my legislator look like?

At www.legis.state.ia.us, select from the left column “Legislators” then click on the top item “List of All Legislators”. When you select your legislator, a picture of that person will come up on the screen (<http://www3.legis.state.ia.us/ga/legislators.do?>) Select your state senator and state representative to have a picture and find out what leadership role, committees they serve on, bills and amendments they have introduced.

7. Who are the “interested” or “most powerful” legislators that should be approached?
The most “interested” or “most powerful” to you is those who have been elected to represent you from the part of the state that you reside in.
<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Legislators/LegislatorInfo.aspx> lists the legislators who are in leadership positions. If your elected officials are in leadership positions, their decisions can carry more weight, however, power shifts frequently and if a couple more votes are needed to pass a bill, a handful of legislators can gain power in order for there to be a majority vote (51 votes in the 100 seat House or 26 votes in the 50 seat Senate).
8. Why do I have to wait so long to see the legislator?
Legislators have responsibilities for: attending committee meetings, meeting with constituents, serving on subcommittees, managing the consideration of the bill or speaking with representatives of large groups of people (aka lobbyists). At any given point in time, they may be trying to speak to a number of constituents who have come to speak with them at the same time you are or may have responsibilities to get more information, rewrite the language or find out what support or opposition there is to the bill they are working on.
9. Why are legislators not available when I come to the Capitol?
The response to the question above addresses why the individuals may not be available. It is always helpful to find out if they are available to meet with you in advance when you come to Des Moines. If not, see about attending a local legislative forum, writing them a letter, sending an email or making a phone call to them to communicate your interest and position on the nursing or health care issue.
10. Why are there large numbers of people at the Capitol?
Many people come to the Capitol to speak face-to-face to their legislator and get a sense of the “democratic process” of making laws that affect all citizens of the state of Iowa. It is an educational experience.
11. Are you prepared to be an effective nursing influence?
It is very rare that an idea becomes a law in one time asking for it. It is a constant educational process. Legislators evaluate whether they should vote for an action based on a variety of factors: 1) the number of people who are asking for it; 2) is there consensus, 3) who is for and who is against; and 4) whether there is a cost to the state treasury. Many issues take several years to pass.
12. Why is the registration set as it is?
There is limited space to use on the Capitol Complex for a private meeting for large groups. Also meeting rooms in the Capitol are controlled by legislators during the legislative session, so there is no guarantee of the space being available in the Capitol to hold a program.
To have a large enough meeting space, meeting planners often use hotels. The hotels and meeting rooms are rented out for a profit to make money for the owners. The fee charged reflects a room charge, food cost, service charge for the waiters/waitresses, a sales tax on those services for city or state government, as well as a small payment for materials and staff time to organize the activity.