

## How to Effectively Lobby For Or Against Legislation Affecting Exotic and Small Animal Pets

**These tips offer compelling lobbying strategies for legislation affecting exotic and small animal pets.**

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### The Legislative Process

The legislative process can take years, or it can take mere hours if the needs of the state or nation are at risk. Following is a brief, simplified description of this historic American process.

All states have a bicameral (Latin for two houses) legislature, meaning a House and a Senate, comprised of representatives and senators. The federal government follows this same model, differing in that states have governors and the nation has a president.

In order for a proposed bill to become law, it requires both houses to pass the same bill and then the governor to sign it. Once signed, the new law is added to the state code and goes into effect on the date listed in the legislation.

### Where Bill/Legislation Ideas Come From

A bill begins as an idea, a request or a need from a specific person, organization, government agency or company. Someone, usually a lobbyist, contacts an elected official, explains the need for legislation, and then asks the senator or representative to sponsor a bill. If the official agrees, they must find someone from the opposite house to cosponsor this legislation. This second person(s) is responsible for passing the bill on their side of the legislature.

Most of the legislative process is accomplished in committees and subcommittees. Committees represent key aspects of everyday government, like issues dealing with commerce, state and local governments, budget, finance and transportation. A bill is designated to a specific committee, and then goes to a subcommittee, which reviews the bill in detail. This small group of elected officials reviews and edits the bill. If the majority of subcommittee members disapprove, the bill "dies" there and never returns to the regular committee.

If the bill is recommended to the committee as a whole, it returns to the full committee and the process restarts. It will now be either recommended for or against passage by the committee as a whole. If it passes, it moves to the floor of the respective house, where all members of that house debate the bill and vote yes or no.

If the floor votes in favor of the bill, it is embossed and sent to the opposite house where they can either adopt this recently passed copy, keep their current one, or combine parts of each for a totally new bill and once again, the whole process will start all over.

Eventually, sometimes after several rounds in committee, if the legislation has enough support, it passes both houses in the same form and is given to the governor for signing.

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