



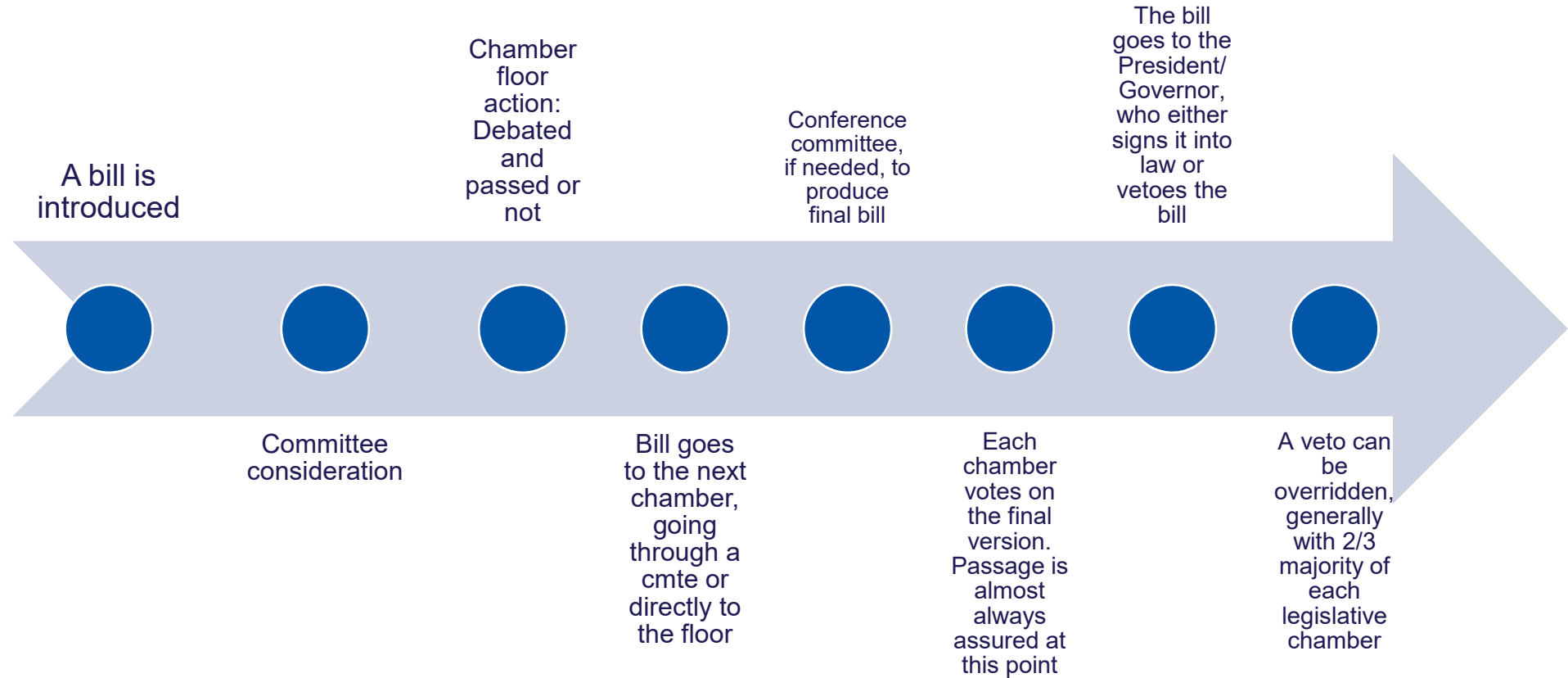
HEALTHIER WORKPLACES | A HEALTHIER WORLD

# AIHA's Advocacy Activities

# AGENDA

- The public policymaking process
- How does AIHA decide which issues to get involved with and which actions to take?
- Advocacy best practices
  - Sending a letter to government agencies or legislators
  - Serving on a government advisory board or council
  - Meeting with a Member of Congress
  - Meeting with congressional staff
  - Meeting with a State legislator
  - Sending emails to Members of Congress or State legislators
  - Meeting with agency leaders and staff
  - Meeting with a governor

# The Public Policymaking Process



# **How does AIHA decide which issues to get involved with and which actions to take?**



# Overview

Every year or two, AIHA surveys its members and seeks feedback on our public policy priorities. The final list is tallied and reviewed/approved by the AIHA Board. The latest list can be found [here](#). For our public policy priorities:

1. Staff identifies legislation, regulations, and other government actions of interest to AIHA.
2. Staff sends a survey to those VGs whose interests align with the nature of the policy priority and asks if they believe AIHA should take action & if they'd like to join a temporary project group to author AIHA's comments to a legislator/agency, if we decide to draft them.
  - *As an example, heat stress-related issues would be directed to the Thermal Stress Working Group, noise issues to the Noise Committee.*
  - *We may also engage the broader “GR Email List” (on Catalyst) to capture additional perspectives.*
3. If “Yes, we’ll draft them”, staff creates and sends a shared online Word document to the team, which includes deadlines and additional guidance.
4. Team drafts and edits the letter.
5. Staff submits the letter, or if needed, incorporates edits and requests a 2nd round of edits, and then submits the letter.
6. Letter is posted on AIHA’s website; members & the media are notified.

# Opportunities to Engage in Gov't Relations

There are several ways to engage in government relations. Some of the most popular are:

- Sending a letter to government agencies or legislators
- Serving on a government advisory board or council
- Meeting with a Member of Congress
- Meeting with congressional staff
- Meeting with a State legislator
- Sending emails to Members of Congress or State legislators
- Meeting with agency leaders and staff
- Meeting with a governor



# Advocacy Best Practices



Credit: Bing's Image Creator

# **Sending a Letter to Gov't Agencies or Legislators**

- Small to medium-sized commitment
- As part of a temporary team, you'll be asked to review legislation/regulation, author content, and edit the content of other team members. Teams last two weeks to one month
- Often, there are no meetings to draft a letter; however, for complex technical matters, staff may convene a meeting or two
- Letters can be high-level or very technical, depending on what the volunteers want
- Staff submits the letter to the government entity, posts it on AIHA's website, notifies the media, and promotes it online



# Serving on a Gov't Advisory Board or Council

- Medium-sized commitment, similar to service on AIHA VGs
- Several meetings
- Fair bit of homework between meetings
- Come to meetings prepared to contribute to discussions and debate with your fellow colleagues, generating recommendations to a government entity.
- Benefits: You'll help shape public policy by applying your technical expertise. Looks great on a resume & great for networking.

## How to Get on a Gov't Advisory Board or Council?

- Lots of opportunities at every level of government. Find them by searching online or asking AIHA GR staff
- Most require a formal application. Letters of recommendation from your employer and AIHA can help.

# Meeting with a Member of Congress (MoC)

- Medium-sized commitment
- Meetings with your MoC are relatively easy to land, and you don't need to conduct any research before requesting a meeting. Simply call or email their scheduler, identify yourself as a constituent, and request a meeting with your MoC to discuss [issue] sometime between [date range] at their [DC or local] office or online. It's that easy.
- Meetings occur in DC, their local office, or online
  - In-person meetings are best; however, online meetings are also effective, and holding a meeting is definitely better than not having one
- Each meeting last ~ 5 to 30 minutes
- Have two versions of your pitch ready to go: One short & one long
- Regardless of length, **all meetings with policymakers & staff (not just MoCs)** follow 5 phases: 1) Research; 2) Establishing rapport; 3) Your pitch; 4) Wrap-up; 5) Follow-up

# Phase 1: Research

At least a day, and ideally a week before your meeting with a MoC, you want to conduct research, answering the following core questions:

- Who am I meeting with? What do they care about? What motivates them? What common connections do we share?
- What committees, subcommittees, and caucuses (non-committee groups of MoCs) do they serve on and hopefully lead? Are any of them relevant to the issues you want to discuss?
- What about their delegation (the other MoCs in your State)? Do any of them serve on relevant committees, subcommittees, or caucuses?
- What is the issue/problem that you want to talk about?
- What do you want your MoC to do about the problem? What could they do? This is your “ask”. The presentation of a problem and ask is your pitch. AIHA GR staff can help craft these.

# Phase 1: Research (cont'd)

- Once you've answered these questions, rehearse your meeting, just as you would for a presentation at a conference, client meeting, etc.
- If you're meeting as part of a group, designate specific people for specific speaking roles.
- Create an agenda and share it with your point of contact for setting up the meeting.

# Phase 2: Establishing Rapport

- Warm up the meeting and quickly establish rapport by tapping into a shared connection.
- This can be anything. Maybe you grew up in the same town, went to the same college, enjoy some of the same hobbies, or care about the same issues.
- Keep this brief and light.
- The goal is to quickly establish a shared connection associated with positive feelings, caring, or both.
- Since you'll be there as a representative of AIHA, briefly describe the association, e.g., *"AIHA is a scientific professional association focused on protecting workers and their communities from occupational and environmental health and safety hazards. We represent some of the most influential people in the nation and world on these issues."*

# Phase 3: Your Pitch

- This is where you make your call to action (e.g., introduce a bill, cosponsor a bill, pass a bill, or hold an event).
- Structure this part carefully, proactively answering questions such as: What is the problem? Why is it a problem? How is the problem manifesting in the State or District? What action does Congress need to take now to solve it? Why is action needed now? What specific action would you like the MoC to take? What will happen if Congress takes action and the problem is solved?
- Said another way, what will “success” look like? How will we know when we’ve won? And also work in, just a little bit, what will happen if your MoC doesn’t take action now, if the problem isn’t solved. What are the risks of inaction?
- Brief, personal impact stories work great, as do charts & other data. Feel free to show some slides (only a few!) if it’s an online meeting.

# Phase 4: Wrap-up

- If the MoC agrees to take action, then congratulations! Be sure to ask what the concrete next action is, but don't press too hard if they suddenly get wiggly, since they might need more time to think before committing. At this point, they'll likely direct you to work with their staff.
- It's likely you won't get a firm commitment for clear action during your meeting – and that's OK – it's expected.
- You might also get a 'No' – that's OK too – try to find out why they objected, seeking to understand them.
- No matter the response, thank your MoC for their time.
- In all cases, focus on cultivating and preserving relationships.
- Ask permission to take a picture or screenshot, as applicable.
- Make sure to get the email addresses & social media accounts for your MoC & their staff, if you haven't done so already. End the meeting.



# Phase 5: Follow-up

## *After your meeting...*

Post a picture of your meeting with your MoC on any social media accounts you use, such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc., tag the MoC, AIHA, and congressional staff, writing a positive message, such as “Thanks for meeting with me to discuss the importance of improving indoor environmental quality. I’m looking forward to working together to protect more workers and their communities!”

## *Important distinction between social media and email:*

**On social media, do not say what was agreed/not agreed to in your meeting with the MoC.** If you do, the MoC may feel pressured, and your relationship with them and their relationship with AIHA may be damaged.

# Phase 5: Follow-up (cont'd)

Send a nice Thank You email to your MoC and their staff point of contact (POC). Copy AIHA GR staff on this message.

- Briefly recap the problem and any next actions that were agreed to or discussed. **Unlike social media, with email, it's a good practice to review commitments made during your meeting.**
- If you took a picture/screenshot, attach it to the email.
- This is a good opportunity to include any slides shared or additional materials that help strengthen your pitch for action.
- Request a meeting with the MoC's staff to discuss next steps.
- Set a reminder to follow up with staff if a week goes by and you haven't heard from them.
- If you don't hear back from them after sending a follow-up email, place a call to the office, explaining that you're a constituent and you've sent a follow-up message, but haven't heard back from your POC yet. This should do the trick.

# Review of the 5 Phases

1. Research
2. Establishing rapport
3. Your pitch
4. Wrap-up
5. Follow-up

# Meeting with Congressional Staff

- Medium-sized commitment
- You'll typically meet with congressional staff if:
  - A MoC isn't available when you'd like to meet
  - Follow-up to a MoC meeting
- Meetings with staff are similar to MoC meetings.
- Main difference is that staff meetings are much more issue-focused and may be more detailed, getting into the weeds of problems and possible solutions. These meetings may be more technical, particularly when dealing with senior staff.

# Organization of a Congressional Office

- Most junior: **Legislative Correspondent** – They might have some knowledge of an issue, but don't count on it.
- Mid-level: **Legislative Assistant** – They could be either unfamiliar with an issue or they could be the person advising the MoC on it.
- Senior: **Legislative Director** or **Chief of Staff** – Knowledgeable about many issues, seeing connections, patterns, and advising MoCs to further their interests.
- Specialized: **Fellow** or **Committee staff** – These are experts who typically possess or are working towards a Ph.D. or similar degree. They have many years of experience working in congress, agencies, associations, or industry.

# Meeting with State Legislators

Largely similar to meetings w/MoCs, following the same 5 phases; however, these meetings are likely to be a bit more informal, particularly if you're meeting with them away from the State capitol buildings. Use your best judgment when dressing.

# Major Differences between Congress & State Legislatures

- **Duration:** Congress is full-time; most State legislatures are part-time. **NJ, MI, and OH are the only full-time State legislatures.**
- **Speed & Chances of Success:** It can take a decade to move a bill through Congress. In a State, it can take a month or even a week, which means it's especially important at the State-level to be prepared before you engage and be ready for this speed once you do.
- **Outside Employment:** MoCs don't have outside jobs; however, because most State legislatures are part-time, most State legislators do have other jobs, which provides them and you with additional opportunities for insight and connection.



# **Things you definitely don't want to bring up with a Member of Congress, State legislator, or other policymaker**



# Topics & Actions to Avoid with Policymakers

- Elections or Party Politics
  - AIHA is a nonpartisan organization, and you're there as an AIHA rep.
  - Regardless of how you personally feel, focus the discussion on the issues, not the people in office.

# Gifts and Policymakers

- States and the Federal government have complex gift-giving rules, and some don't allow them at all. **Keep it simple—don't give policymakers any gifts.** Don't worry – a leave-behind packet of pitch materials isn't considered a gift.
- If you're having a policymaker speak at or otherwise attend an event you charge others to attend and would like to comp the policymaker the attendee fee, make sure you clear it with their office first; otherwise, it may be considered a gift to the policymaker.
- If you accidentally give a gift to a policymaker, contact the policymaker and the Federal or State ethics office, as applicable, for further guidance. You may have to fill out a form, file as a lobbyist, or pay a fine. The policymaker might also pay you back for the gift.
- *That's really it in terms of topics and actions to avoid to stay safe.*

# Sending an Email to Policymakers

- Low time commitment: Takes about 5 minutes.
- **AIHA has a Grassroots Advocacy Center**, where you can send a message to your State and Federal legislators and agency leaders. We provide a model message, but you're encouraged to personalize your messages – they're more influential that way. **Anyone can sign up – you don't have to be an AIHA member to use this service.**
- Set a reminder to follow up on your email a week after you send it, if needed. (The squeaky wheel gets the grease – make sure you squeak a lot. 😊 Policymakers reward the tenacious.)

**AIHA's Grassroots Advocacy Center:** <https://www.aiha.org/advocacy>

# Meeting with Agency Leaders and Staff

- Medium time commitment – approx. 3 to 5 hours, including prep, holding the meeting, and follow-up.
- Fairly easy to land an agency meeting, particularly with staff. If you want to meet with agency top leadership, you'll need to be persistent, but will eventually secure a meeting.
- Compared to legislator meetings, agency meetings are much more technical.
- Think carefully about why you want to meet with an agency. This goes to their unique role in helping solve the problem you're there to discuss. Factor this into your pitch.
- Topics & actions to avoid: Same as with legislators and their staff. Avoid talking about elections, Party politics, or giving them gifts.
- Friendly reminder to send an agenda to your agency POC and rehearse before your meeting.

# Meeting with Your Governor

- Medium time commitment – approx. 3 to 5 hours, including prep, holding the meeting, and follow-up.
- Definitely harder to land this type of meeting, but it's often worth the effort in PR value alone.
- Your best bet is to request a meeting as part of a larger group (~5 people) who represent many others.
- Play 6 degrees of separation: Search your network for people who know the governor or know people who know the governor and are willing to make an introduction. (This also works great for agency leaders.)
- When preparing to request and then hold a meeting, think carefully about your pitch. What's the problem you want solved and how is the governor in a unique position to help?

# Meeting with Your Governor

- During your meeting, request permission to take a picture/screenshot.
- After the meeting, post a nice Thank You message on social media and send a follow-up email to your POCs in the governor's office. In your follow-up email, consider inviting the governor to a future event you're holding.



**One last piece of advice  
for engaging in  
government relations...**

**Have fun!**



Credit: Bing's Image Creator