



As experts in the practice of pharmacy, we should be involved in the legislation that affects this practice.

Strength in numbers: Pharmacy students joined pharmacists and technicians from all over Wisconsin at the State Capitol for PSW's Legislative Day.

Legislation Basics

A primer for our members

by Adam Orsborn

As pharmacists, pharmacy students and pharmacy technicians, our area of expertise is the practice of pharmacy.

We are learning every day and know firsthand how new technologies, new medications, and new legislation can affect the practice of pharmacy. These factors affect how we care for our patients, they affect the quality of care that we provide, and they affect the professional duties that we can perform and be paid for. We know legislation affects our practice, but how do we affect legislation?

As experts in the practice of pharmacy, shouldn't we be involved in the legislation that affects this practice? If we, as practitioners, do not act upon and become involved in the legislative headlines that will eventually shape our practice, then we are not acting in the best interest of our profession or our patients.

It can be intimidating to speak out on an issue and it can be difficult to understand how and to whom you should com-

municate your opinions. Let this primer and PSW serve as your guide.

THE MAKING OF LEGISLATION: THE GREAT AND THE AWFUL

There is so much happening in our own backyard, what better place to start. Wisconsin has a bicameral (two-house) legislature. The State Senate has 33 Senators and the State Assembly has 99 Representatives. For a bill to be passed in Wisconsin, it must be approved by both the Senate and the Assembly. The Governor then has the opportunity either to sign or veto the bill. See figure 1 for a simplified flow of a piece of legislation trying to become law.

Before a bill even has the opportunity to be debated on the Senate or Assembly floor, it must be drafted and presented to either the Senate or Assembly by a legislator, the governor a state agency or the chief-clerk of the house. Generally, the bill is circulated to allow for any legislators to sign on as co-authors, but this is not required. The bill is then directed to the

appropriate Senate or Assembly committee based on where the bill was introduced and its subject matter.

It is a challenge for any bill to become a meaningful item on the committee agenda. Bills that are considered in committee receive a public hearing, debate, and revision through amendments. Bills that survive the committee travel to their originating house for debate and a vote. Amendments may be considered at this time as well. If the bill passes, it travels to the other house (Assembly or Senate) for further debate, potential amendment and a vote. If the bill that passed through the second house is different from the one that passed through the first house, the bill could go to a conference committee composed of members of each house. The differences between the two houses are ironed out and the final version of the bill is sent to both houses for a vote. Only if it passes both the Assembly and the Senate in its current form may it go to the Governor's desk.

The Governor has the opportunity to veto all or part of the bill or sign it in its current form. Any full or partial veto may be overridden by a two-thirds vote by both the Senate and the Assembly.

Understanding this process is one thing, but where does your advocacy and your ability to have an impact fit in?

This process would not happen without the people. Politics involves dealing with people. Who are the dealers in Wisconsin? Are they insensitive distant aristocrats? Or are they someone's mother, brother, son, father or grandmother? Maybe they are yours. They are just as thoughtful and sensitive as a close relative and they are passionate about their thoughts and ideas. Just like a close relative, your thoughts and ideas are important to them and they do get through when you make the effort. Just a few simple steps can ensure that your voice is heard and has an impact.

THIS IS WHERE YOU PLUG IN . . . TO EMPOWERMENT

1. Be aware. Understand what is happening. Just a few moments are all that it takes to recognize an important issue. Read the PSW *Fast Facts* (they really do read fast), listen to the WSPS S.P.I.N. report, go online to WWW.LEGIS.STATE.WI.US/SPOTLIGHT/INDEX.HTM or WWW.PSWI.ORG/GOVERNMENT/ for a snapshot of the important bills under consideration, listen to the news and listen to your colleagues.

2. Understand. Know the issue and how it impacts the profession of pharmacy, the patients that we care for and you as a professional. Speak with a mentor or knowledgeable instructor or colleague. Call PSW, let them know what you have heard and discuss the issue to increase your understanding. Formulate your opinion on the issue; consider how the issue impacts patient care, the profession and yourself. Develop a specific statement of what needs to be done to have a positive impact on the issue and articulate the reasons why.

3. Act Quickly. Communicate! Legislators only understand pharmacy issues that have been clearly articulated to them. The more communication that they receive about an issue, the more likely they are to act on it. Choose the method of communication that you are most comfortable with. Would you rather write a quick email? Maybe you prefer a formal letter. Perhaps all you have time for is a brief phone call to the legislator's office.

In most cases, the first person that will receive your communication will be a member of the legislator's staff who will pass on your message and keep track of all of the messages that have been received by the office on your issue.

Choose the legislator that seems most appropriate to contact. Some options include the representative and senator that represent you, the legislator who is sponsoring the bill that you have a vested interest in, and the committee that is considering public comment on the issue. Timing is important here, you can have a much greater impact if your message is heard while opinions are still being formed.

How do you get contact information for all of these people? WWW.LEGIS.WISCONSIN.GOV lists addresses, emails and phone

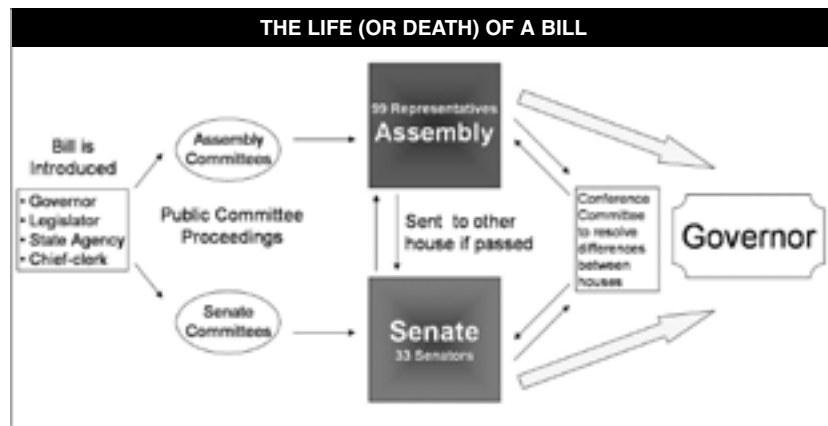
- have very little impact; craft the message in your own words.
- Ask the representative for his or her own opinions and position statement in return.
- Be professional, reasonable and considerate. Thank them for their representation.

FULLY CHARGED PHARMACY ADVOCATE

Now, sit back and enjoy the empowerment that you feel from making sure that your message is delivered and that your opinion has left its impression. Chances are, you would be amazed to learn how much legislation is passed because it seemed like a great idea at the time and no one stood up to articulate the real consequences. Sometimes, just one simple and accurate argument can shape the entire

life of a bill. More often, other organizations and professions have provided their own opinions on an issue. This requires a collective response of many simple and accurate arguments to provide the impact needed to shape the future in a positive way.

It is time for the profession of pharmacy to be aware, understand the issues and act quickly



numbers for each Senate and Assembly member and his/her staff. You can also find a list of the committees associated with the Senate and Assembly, the bills being discussed in each committee and the authors of each bill. You can also just type "Wisconsin Legislature" into your favorite web search engine and it will be the first item listed.

No matter which method you choose, some simple tips can ensure that you have an impact:

- Be clear and concise when identifying the issue, use the name of the bill whenever possible (i.e. Assembly Bill 227 or AB 227).
- State your position on the issue. Describe how it affects you, patients and the profession. Use facts and figures whenever you can. A brief and concise note can be powerful.
- Do not use form letters because they

to ensure that we will always be in the best position to provide the best care for our patients. This starts for you, today. As you learn more and professional advocacy becomes easier for you, share your experience with your fellow colleagues and students. The benefits of this will be realized in the policy decisions that are happening now.

So what are you waiting for? If you can spend two minutes when you get home reading your cell phone bill, and 30 minutes on the phone trying to correct the \$5.97 overcharge they stuck you with, what is stopping you from spending two minutes reading about the issues that shape your profession and your life and investing a little time to communicate? The gains would be limitless for pharmacists everywhere. ●

Adam Orsborn is an Administrative Resident at the UW Hospital and Clinics and a clinical instructor at the UW School of Pharmacy.

Glossary of Legislative Terms

from the Wisconsin State Legislature website, www.legis.wisconsin.gov.

Act: A bill approved by both houses of the legislature and signed by the governor, or allowed to become law without signature, or passed by the legislature over the governor's veto.

Amendment: A proposal to change a bill, joint resolution, or resolution by adding, deleting, or substituting language. (See also simple and substitute amendment.)

Author(s): The legislator or legislative committee that introduces a bill or resolution. Members of the same house who sign the bill are referred to as co-authors.

Bill: An idea, drafted in legal language, to change current law by adding new language, deleting old language, or amending existing language.

Bulletin of Proceedings: A publication of the legislature that contains a numerical list of all bills and other measures introduced and the actions taken on them; indexes by subject matter and author of all measures introduced; and a numerical listing of statute sections and session laws affected by acts and enrolled bills of the current session and acts from the previous session that had an effective date delayed until the current session.

Calendar: The daily schedule of business for each house that shows the order in which proposals and other business will be taken up on the floor.

Committee: A group of legislators appointed to hold public hearings or otherwise consider proposals within certain subject areas and recommend some of them for further consideration on the floor. (See also conference committee, special committee, and standing committee.)

Concurrence: A measure that has passed one house is sent to the second house for agreement or concurrence. The second house may concur or may refuse to concur.

Conference Committee: A committee consisting of members of both houses to work out their differences when the 2 houses pass different versions of the same bill.

Constituents: People who live in a given senate or assembly district.

Engross: A motion to engross a bill is the step before final passage in the house of origin. An order to print a proposal in its engrossed form means to incorporate all amendments and chief clerks corrections to the original bill for consideration by the second house.

Enroll: Once a bill has passed both houses, its amendments, corrections, and changes are consolidated into one text to be presented to the governor for signature.

Executive Session: A committee meeting where committee members vote on the disposition of a bill or other proposal. Only committee members may speak in an executive session.

First Reading: The formal announcement on the floor of the legislature that a bill or other proposal has been introduced.

Floor Debate: Discussion of a proposal in the Senate or Assembly chambers. A bill being debated is referred to as being "on the floor."

Floor Amendment: Any amendment offered for legislative consideration at the 2nd reading stage, or for committee consideration, but not drafted by the Legislative Reference Bureau.

Joint Hearing: A hearing held by a joint committee or by committees of the senate and the assembly.

Joint Resolution: A proposal that makes a request, affects operations of both houses, pays tribute to public figures, or proposes a constitutional amendment that is acted on by both houses but does not require approval by the governor.

Joint Session: A joint meeting of the senate and the assembly.

Joint Standing Committee: A permanent committee made up of members from both houses of the legislature.

Override: The legislature may pass a measure over the governor's objections by voting to override a veto by a two-thirds majority of members present in both houses.

Paired Voting: When a roll call vote is requested, each member must vote either "aye" or "no" unless paired with another member. Pairing is a written agreement between 2 members on the opposite sides of a question not to vote on the question if one or both are absent with leave, which allows the absent member to influence the outcome of the vote.

Parliamentary Procedure: The rules and rulings under which legislatures conduct their business.

Partial Veto: The governor may veto any part of an appropriation bill.

Public Hearing: Meetings held by committees at which members of the public, lobbyists, legislators, and state agency representatives may speak or register for or against a proposal.

Resolution: A proposal that makes a request, affects the operations of one house, including amending its rules, that requires no action by the 2nd house.

Roll Call Vote: A vote in which members' votes are recorded with their names.

Rules: The detailed code of parliamentary procedure adopted by each house at the beginning of each session. They prescribe the way in which the legislature does business and provide methods for settling disputes. In addition to the rules of each house, there are also joint rules.

Second Reading: The stage at which amendments to proposals are considered.

Service Committee: Committees that primarily handle the internal operations of each house.

Session: The entire 2-year period that begins with the swearing in of a new legislature in January of the odd-numbered year and ends just before the swearing in of the next legislature.

Session Laws: The acts of the legislature compiled and published for each biennial session. The acts of the 1993 Legislature will be the Laws of 1993.

Special Committee: A committee appointed to examine legislation on a particular topic. Sometimes called a select committee, it automatically ceases to exist when its task is finished or when the session ends.

Standing Committee: Committees established by the rules of each house to examine legislation, hold hearings, and make recommendations on legislative measures. They may be abolished or created only by changing the rules.

Statutes: The general laws of the state that have been given statute section numbers by legislation or by supreme court order. They are revised every 2 years.

Substitute Amendment: It completely rewrites and may replace a bill or other proposal.

Sustain: To uphold the governor's action following a veto or partial veto of a bill.

Table: A motion in parliamentary procedure to temporarily set aside a measure and attend to other business.

Third Reading: The stage at which bills and other proposals come up for final discussion and possible passage. No amendments may be offered at this point.

Veto: A bill passed by the legislature that the governor rejects in its entirety.

Veto Message: For each bill vetoed or partially vetoed, the governor must explain the reasons for the veto in a message to the legislature.