



INTERNATIONAL  
CODE  
COUNCIL®

# CHAPTER LEADERSHIP ADVOCACY GUIDE



March 2024

## INTRODUCTION

As a code professional, you are an integral part of your community because you affect the way the built environment is constructed, which protects lives and enables community development. It's critical that you and your colleagues tell your stories to elected officials, other policymakers, and the general public so they appreciate your hard work and the importance of building safety.

ICC's Government Relations team collaborates with chapters, members, and stakeholders to support the adoption and effective use of the International Code Council's codes, standards, products, and services. In this guide, we want to help you tell your story. We'll walk you through some ideas of what you and your chapter can do, and we'll share some examples from chapters around the country.

The Government Relations team is here to help you. With backgrounds in elected office, state and local administrations, media, political consulting, and grassroots organizing, the ICC Government Relations staff can assist, answer questions, and serve as a sounding board to support your chapter's legislative and regulatory engagement. Visit the Government Relations webpage at [www.iccsafe.org/advocacy](http://www.iccsafe.org/advocacy) to find the contact information for your local liaison. Subscribe to the [ICC's Government Relations Monthly Update](#) and [ICC's Federal Grants Newsletter](#) for the latest information on key legislative and grant-related news.

This guidebook begins with some basic tips on building out chapter advocacy capabilities—through legislative committees, outreach to policy makers, and legislative and regulatory tracking. The following section details five different strategies to engage in the policymaking process.



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## GETTING STARTED?

If you're not engaged with government officials in your broader community, it might seem intimidating to get started. But take it step by step. It's not difficult.

**One note as we get started.** As members of the building safety community, it is in our interest to advocate for better building code funding, adoption, and implementation. While many jurisdictions actively support code advocacy, some jurisdictions discourage or have existing statutory or regulatory limitations on their employees' involvement in legislative rulemaking activities. Therefore, before taking any advocacy action, consult with your employer.



**Does your local ICC chapter have a legislative committee?** Join it or start one! This committee can consist of even a few interested volunteers or be appointed by chapter leadership to review and possibly take action on state and local legislative proposals. You don't need special experience – just an interest in the legislative process!

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*The Utah ICC Chapter hosts a standing legislative committee meeting every Wednesday morning during the legislative session, with some members at a room in the state capitol and others participating via Zoom. The committee spends about an hour discussing priority legislation and strategy.*

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**Do you, your chapter, or your department know your elected officials?** Begin by developing a list of your national, state, county, and municipal elected officials, key regulatory appointees, and community leaders. Have your chapter represented at events these leaders will attend and make it a point to introduce yourself. By getting to know your elected officials through these events, you make it less likely that they will target the building sector and code officials with burdensome legislation.



**Next, learn about your state and local legislative bodies.** The best place to start advocacy is at home. Policymakers are typically most receptive to their constituents and prospective voters. Here are some resources:

- [State Legislature Websites \(https://www.congress.gov/state-legislature-websites\)](https://www.congress.gov/state-legislature-websites)
- [Find and contact elected officials \(https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials\)](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials)



**Look for opportunities or challenges in legislative and regulatory proposals.** Different chapters have different approaches to finding and tracking legislation and regulations. Let's talk about a few.

Every state legislature has a website that allows you to search for key words or phrases. Or check out [NCSL's](#) searchable bill tracking database, [Legistracker](#) demo, [TrackBill](#) demo, or [Billtrack50](#). State regulatory bodies post proposed regulatory updates and stakeholder meetings. Many offer email list serves so affected professionals can stay engaged. What are you looking for? Some key words or terms include "fire" and "building codes," or even "construction."

It's also important to know your state's legislative and regulatory schedules. For most states, legislatures feature a burst of activity in just a few weeks during the first quarter of the year with bills being introduced, heard in committee, voted on, and possibly sent to the governor.

Some ICC chapters partner with another industry organization with similar positions that may also have a legislative/regulatory committee – such as area fire marshals, architects, or engineers. Some chapters partner with a group like the League of Cities and Counties, which typically focus on legislation and regulations impacting municipal governments. Working together as a coalition helps divide the work up. Remember that the more people that are working together, the less likely something would be missed.

With the above-fundamental backend processes in place, your chapter will be best positioned to advocate for its interests.




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*The Virginia Building and Code Officials Association invites chapter leaders from across the state, state agency leaders, as well as the state representatives from home builders and architectural associations to discuss common goals and build relationships.*

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## TELLING YOUR STORY TO POLICYMAKERS AND YOUR COMMUNITY

In today's world, it's incredibly important to step out into the community or in front of policymakers and tell your story. The people who show up and build relationships are the ones that get results. For those that can engage, stepping forward aids professional development, your chapter, and even your department. Learning to speak the language of policymakers is key to achieving results. And remember: advocacy is a year-round activity. You need to establish relationships now long before you ask someone for help.

**Get involved with your community.** Are you part of a church, parent-teacher group, or social organization? Do they know who you work for and what you do? And most importantly, do they know what you do helps keep your community safe? Telling your story is as easy as telling someone you had a good day at work because you saw a new, safe home being built down the street.

Public officials are people like you, so don't be intimidated to tell your story. Public official's job is to listen to and represent their constituents. Whenever you have access to a policymaker, talk positively about how your department is protecting and contributing to the community. And don't be shy to discuss issues you are concerned about.

Below are five common advocacy strategies covering written communications, in-persona and virtual meetings with policymakers, events, and media engagement.

## COMMUNICATION TOOLS YOU CAN USE

When you communicate with policymakers, there are a few things to keep in mind:



**Be clear and concise.**



**Don't raise questions that you aren't prepared to answer.**



**Whenever possible, work to build consensus.**



**Address the "5 W's" (who, what, where, when, and why).**



**Utilize the resources and assistance of the ICC staff, particularly your GR liaison.**

## TOOL #1: WRITING A LETTER

A well-crafted email is one of the most effective means of communicating with officials. Letters should be focused and usually limited to one page. Use convincing evidence to support claims. Here are the primary components of an effective letter:

**Who:** Include your position and the name of your department. Use your credentials to establish your expertise without boasting. *“Hi, my name is ---. I am the Code Official for X Department in X town and have worked in building codes for X years.” Or I am the President of the \_\_\_ Chapter which represents # building officials from the state or from a particular area., A large number of constituents may raise the attention of the elected official.*

**Why:** Highlight the issue and your position on the issue. It is best to limit each letter to one issue/subject. Use facts to back up your opinions. Although it is best to keep the written letter to one page, it may be useful to attach supporting materials (charts, graphs, and hyperlinks are all helpful).

**What:** Be clear about the issue, what you want the official to do about it, and why. Be specific in your request—use the relevant bill number, regulation or statute citation, and title information if available. Always address the “What” that you are writing about in the first paragraph of the letter. Reiterate the “What” in your closing paragraph as well. Never be confrontational, even when you have reason to believe that the official you are writing to may hold a view different than your own. Thank them for their consideration.

**Where:** Discuss the areas where the policy at issue impacts you and your profession, department, and even local community. Elected officials are particularly concerned with matters impacting their district and their voters, making outreach to those that represent your residence and/or department most effective.

**When:** Is action on the bill/ordinance/rulemaking expected? We discourage sending letters by mail as it can take weeks for that letter to be processed by security before it is delivered. Email is preferable. You can always send a hard copy along with your email.

*The following is an example from a recent Code Council campaign*



**North Texas Chapter  
International Code Council**



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Dear Sabrina, John, Carl, Ryan, and David –

My name is Wayne Snell, I live in the North Texas Region and I serve as Vice President in the North Texas Chapter of the International Code Council (NTICCC) where I've seen firsthand how codes and standards ensure the public health, safety, and sustainability in my community. I'm very concerned that the development of top-quality safety codes is being undermined by court decisions that have enabled for-profit companies to sell unpermitted and erroneous copies of these codes.

Congressional action is needed to ensure code developers can continue to invest in the advancement of existing standards and the creation of new ones. That's why I am urging Rep. Roy, and Sens. Cruz and Cornyn to support the bipartisan and bicameral [H.R. 1631/S. 835, Pro Codes Act](#).

North Texas relies on the International Building Codes suites of I-Codes to ensure construction is safe, sustainable, and resilient against natural hazards. FEMA's [finding](#) that the International Codes can avoid \$600 billion in losses from earthquakes, hurricanes, and flooding is not surprising because I have seen in my own community how modern codes save lives and protect property. To keep pace with building science, advancements in technology, and lessons learned, these codes are developed and updated every three years by the International Code Council (ICC), a nonprofit standard developing organization (SDO). Without ICC's help, my already resource-limited department would have to undertake the labor- and cost-intensive task of attempting to replicate the work of that goes into development of thousands of codes and standards currently referenced in our laws.

Our current codes and standards development system operates with openness, transparency, and balance. It is highly effective in protecting public health and safety while also promoting sustainability and innovation. It persists at no cost to taxpayers, continues to serve Texas well, and should be retained.

I thank Senator Cornyn for supporting the Senate bill. I ask Rep. Roy and Senator Cruz to cosponsor and support the Pro Codes Act when it comes before the Judiciary Committee. I'd be happy to meet with you in person or virtually to discuss further and have attached a short one-pager with a list of other supporting organizations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Wayne Snell  
Vice President of the NTICCC



**Carrey Frazier**  
President  
Permit Manager  
City of Dallas

**Wayne Snell**  
Vice President  
Building Director  
City of Irving

**Gary Costley**  
Secretary  
Building Official  
City of Highland Village

**Mike Sizemore**  
Treasurer  
Building Official  
City of Alisa

**Eddie McCormick**  
Professional Officer  
DACA

Website: [www.nticcc.org](http://www.nticcc.org)

Email: [northtexaschaptericc@gmail.com](mailto:northtexaschaptericc@gmail.com)

Who  
Why  
What  
Who (again)  
What (again),  
How, When

## TOOL #2: IN-PERSON VISITS WITH POLICYMAKERS

A personal visit leaves a longer-lasting impression than a letter. Without a real story from their community in mind, policymakers are more apt to take what the code development and enforcement departments do for granted.

### **Setting up the meeting**

Call a legislator or regulator's office – either at the capitol or in the district (in the case of the legislator) – and set up a meeting. If the official is not available, meet with a staffer. Members of staff are compiling the research to make recommendations. In jurisdictions with term limits, that staff member you met with may soon be the elected official.

As your relationship with the elected official and his/her office develops, you may want to invite them to tour your workplace so that they can see firsthand what you do.

Remember that the ICC Government Relations Department is here to help. We can provide background on the official, as well as his/her position on issues or legislation.



### **Preparation**

Prepare for these meetings just as you would for a business meeting:

- Educate yourself thoroughly on the issues. Consider whether anything about the official's district, work experience, or background could support lend support for your arguments.
- Develop a message and make a case for the issues you wish to discuss. Messages can and should vary depending on the audience.
- Condense your arguments into two or three powerful selling points.
- Consider proactively addressing opposition arguments.
- Bring a one-page handout to leave behind with your condensed messaging for each issue that you want to discuss. Make sure that the handout has an "ask" (e.g., please support or oppose a bill) and verbalize the "ask" during the meeting. If you don't request a specific action, it is less likely that staff or the policymaker will commit to supporting your position.
- Practice your delivery until you feel comfortable and confident in your presentation.
- Consider including other relevant participants in the meeting that can complementary experience and/or that can demonstrate broader stakeholder support for your issues.
- Bring business cards!



### **Meeting with Legislative Staff**

Most legislators rely on their staff for policy help. Legislative Aides or Legislative Assistants (LAs) may be assigned to specific subject areas or committee assignments and can become very knowledgeable on current issues. They will study your fact sheets, respond to your letters, arrange your meeting, and, most importantly, LAs advise legislators on local dynamics and make vote recommendations.





Just like in a personal legislative office, committee work is heavily influenced by staff. Committee staff are the conduit through which information flows to the chairs and committee members. There are majority and minority staff on each committee.

### ***In the Meeting***

Stick to the facts. It is better to admit when you don't know something and revert afterwards. Staff appreciate follow-up—it makes their job easier too! Be an attentive listener, even if there are disagreements concerning aspects of your position.

Legislators can't be experts in every field, so keep your statements accessible for a lay audience. They will ask for details if needed. Your experience is most valuable to the extent that it is relevant to the issue you have raised and bolsters your credibility as an advocate concerning that issue. Remember that the issue is the focus of the meeting; too much personal history will dilute your message and risks losing your audience.

All politicians are open to intense public scrutiny and must be prepared to justify a bill introduction, amendment, cosponsorship, statement, or vote. As an advocate, it's incumbent on you to provide the support they need to make that justification. For example, if you are meeting with an elected official to request increased funding for the state building department, illustrate the importance of investing in the department capacity by discussing how funding translates to improved public safety and constituents' ease of access to building department services. If you're advocating for updating building codes, consider stressing public safety, as well as return on investment for constituents. Extensive, well-regarded data demonstrates codes' resilience benefits and limited implications for home prices (see [iccsafe.org/advocacy](https://www.iccsafe.org/advocacy) for detailed information).



Additional considerations specific to policymakers include being mindful of the official's party stance and whether you are asking him/her to go against it and assuming somewhere along the line that officials will seek a compromise solution (e.g., on the terms and conditions of a program or the size of the funding allocation).

Offer yourself as a resource to the legislator on all things "code-related" (building, plumbing, fire, energy, etc.) Be their problem solver and you will become an invaluable resource and asset for them. Don't forget to leave your business card or contact information.

### ***Follow up***

Always follow up with a personal "thank you" note that reiterates your ask and any next steps or follow up information discussed during the meeting. Once you have developed staff contacts, send them copies of your department newsletters and other publications and invite staff members to special events.



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*Some ICC chapters host "Capitol Day" events for members. The California Building Officials host a leadership day in conjunction with legislative visits to the capitol. The Washington Association of Building Officials end its Capitol Day event with a debriefing for all participants to share information and learn from others.*

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## TOOL #3: CALLS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Sometimes, an in-person visit isn't feasible – maybe you live hours away from the state capital, or maybe your representative or their respective staffers would prefer a virtual option. Here, phone calls or virtual meetings (e.g., Zoom, Teams, etc.) can come in handy. Although all the recommendations discussed for in-person meetings apply to calls and virtual meetings, the following additional tips can help guide your phone/virtual outreach:

- For video calls, dress as you would for an in-person meeting with an elected official.
- Make sure your video background is professional and clear; consider blurring your background or using a Zoom background if necessary.
- Take your call in a quiet place.
- Treat the call as you would an in-person meeting – prepare your talking points and have resources on hand that you can reference and share. Consider, for example, sending an email prior to the call with a summary of the issues you will discuss.



## TOOL #4: HOSTING EVENTS



Often, representatives enjoy getting out of the office and do something within the community – it's positive PR for them and helps boost their relationships with constituents.

Inviting policymakers to chapter and department events is a great way to strengthen relationships and better introduce them to your work. Events can range from chapter activities (e.g., annual business meetings, holiday, and networking events), community service, or an office tour or walk through of how an inspection is conducted. Building Safety Month (and any fun events hosted through your building department) is also a cool way to involve them!

Connecting this work to tangible issues helps drive home the importance of building safety. For example, an inspection walkthrough or review of a set of plans could highlight how building systems address a topical natural hazard, accessibility, or energy conservation. Make it fun and exciting, and be mindful of your guests' time limitations.

Consider partnering with other community-based groups. Building coalitions with other like-minded groups, such as architects, engineers, building and code officials, fire officials, labor representatives, etc. can increase your event's draw.

## Hosting In-Person Events

There are no substitutes for an in-person event – audiences are often more engaged and hosts can offer a truly unique experience to attendees. Building Safety Month is a great way to launch in-person events, which can range from educational events or construction site walkthroughs, to mock inspections or classroom presentations at a local school. Again, a perfect opportunity to extend an invite to policymakers, who are eager for easy, good PR.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when planning and executing your in-person events for Building Safety Month.

- Schedule panelists or speakers as soon as you have a rough outline for the event.
  - Speakers can be academics, regulators, bureaucrats, industry, labor representatives etc. who specialize in building safety, resiliency, disaster relief, green construction, affordable housing.
  - Think about what’s topical – what are policymakers legislating on? What are locals passionate about when it comes to housing?
- Choose a venue or location that can meet your attendance goals.
  - This can be a town hall, a fire station, a local school, auditorium, or park etc.
- Promote your event four to six weeks in advance through social media, email invitations, advertisements, etc.
  - [Eventbrite](#) is a great way to get an event out, as well as contacting local news media to highlight said event.
- Consider including a virtual component so people can also attend from home.
- Run through your agenda beforehand with all parties and note timing or any sticking points.
- Observe state and local guidelines for accessibility, safety best practices and restrictions.
- Will there be food and drink? Catering? Snacks? Candy to hand out?
- At least one week before, “walk through” the event as if you are an attendee – from the moment they arrive to when they leave – to make sure you haven’t missed anything.



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*The Capital District New York State Building Officials Conference Chapter invites a mayor or county executive to welcome attendees to kick off its annual educational conference.*

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## Virtual Events

Virtual events are more cost-effective, easy to set up and can be attended from the comfort of home.

We've listed a few tips for hosting a virtual Building Safety Month event below, and be sure to download our complete webinar guide for more information.

- Leverage subject matter experts as you brainstorm topics and develop content.
- Choose a platform and set up a registration page (WebEx, Click Meeting, Zoom, etc.) that includes speaker information, the agenda, etc.
- Start promoting four to six weeks in advance and use social media, email invitations and your website to share your registration page link.
- Organize and test prior to the event, including testing internet reliability, sound, mics and computer issues.
- Follow up with attendees after the event to provide next steps and ask for feedback.



## TOOL #5: DEVELOP A PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY



One of the most effective ways to get your issues addressed is to build public support for them. You can use this to communicate with elected officials or raise awareness. The more the public understands and supports your issues, the better odds you have of achieving your goals!

To begin, develop a chapter PR team or committee. This group of people will be in charge of establishing and running your webpage and the social media accounts associated with your chapter (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, X, etc.) and creating and distributing announcements. It's important to advertise chapter meetings and events in addition to outreach concerning the policies that your chapter is passionate about.

Be prepared to reach out to local media to ensure your issues—including your letters and testimony—or events get coverage. Invite reporters to events and bring their attention to relevant committee hearings and other policy developments. Doing so will raise public awareness on building safety related issues. Just as you want to be a resource to elected officials, you can serve as an expert for background information to reporters as well.

Developing relationships with local media is similar to meeting with elected officials. Reach out to newspapers, radio stations, and even local channels through contact information that is commonly provided on their webpages. Don't be afraid to meet a reporter for coffee. However, be mindful that what you say will be presumed to be "on the record." All statements "on the record" may be reproduced as stated, in their entirety, with attribution to the speaker, with or without the speaker's permission. It's important to specify when interactions are on or off record, as well as what it means to serve as a source for a newspaper article. This is an important area where separation of work from chapter activities is important. Consult with an employer if unsure.


Designate one or two primary people within your agency, chapter or department who will answer media inquiries and provide quotes. This could be the chapter president, but most importantly, this contact must be someone who is knowledgeable about the chapter's stance on key issues and will provide a consistent message. **To reiterate, always think twice before speaking "on the record" because whatever you say or write will be documented and can be reprinted and attributed to you. Note that unless a reporter agrees to an alternative arrangement, any conversation with a member of the media is assumed to be "on the record."**

### **Tips for Getting Your Message Out**

Regularly attend open local government meetings, such as town councils, county board meetings, etc. to give updates on the needs and accomplishments of your department, agency, committee, or chapter. This helps educate public policy decision-makers and establishes you as a go-to resource. Local media attend these events and by participating, you're creating a press opportunity for your department and chapter.

When something good happens to your chapter, let people know about it! Post on social media, pitch a press release (a summary of the event and its impact, or a rundown of relevant policy) to reporters. Experiment with different ways of getting the word out.

## **ID360 Principal and Founder Appointed President of Leading Code Council**

By |  1 month ago |

*ID360 Principal and Founder, Melanie Jacobson, has been appointed President of the International Code Council's (ICC) Peninsula Chapter.*

SAN JOSE, CA, USA, January 22, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- ID360, a leading sustainability consulting company, announced today that their Principal and Founder, Melanie Jacobson, has been appointed President of the International Code Council's (ICC) Peninsula Chapter.

The International Code Council is a non-governmental organization that develops model-building codes and standards through an open, consensus process. Membership in the ICC Peninsula Chapter provides key opportunities to keep up to date on the activities of the ICC and code adoption status. The group regularly hosts forums to discuss code changes, interpretations, and updates.

"This is such an exciting time for our industry and I am honored for the opportunity to serve as President of the ICC Peninsula Chapter," said Melanie Jacobson, Principal and Founder ID360. "We have aggressive growth goals and an exciting lineup of opportunities for our members to promote green solutions throughout the peninsula region."

ICC Peninsula Chapter meets monthly and hosts events and educational opportunities throughout the year. Previously, Jacobson served as Vice President of the volunteer-run organization. Jacobson was sworn in during a ceremony on January 15. She will serve a one-year term.

For more information or to become a member of the ICC Peninsula Chapter visit [www.iccpeninsula.org](http://www.iccpeninsula.org). To learn more about ID360 visit [www.id360.green](http://www.id360.green).

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURES AND LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

This addendum provides additional information the legislative process and opportunities for associated advocacy.

### ***Committee Membership***

Members of Congress, as well as state legislators, tend to define themselves by the committees and subcommittees on which they serve. The responsibilities of committee membership take priority, and members tend to focus most of their attention on legislative issues under the jurisdiction of their committees. Although it's always important to contact the legislators that represent your community, be sure to engage leaders of the committees with jurisdiction over your issue. You can determine which issues are covered by which committees by viewing legislative websites.

At the federal level, building safety and relevant funding initiatives may be covered by the following: the House/Senate Committees on Appropriations; Energy and Commerce/Energy and Natural Resources, Financial Services/Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Science/Commerce, and Transportation and Infrastructure/Homeland Security and Government Affairs. All of these committees have more focused subcommittees, such as the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, or the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies.

At the state level, all legislatures have an Appropriations Committee and most have some form of a Housing Committee. The Connecticut General Assembly, for instance, has committees on Housing, as well as Planning & Development, Public Safety, and Regulation Review, all of which may cover topics relevant to building codes. California, on the other hand, has committees on Housing and Community Development, Public Safety, and Utilities and Energy. Feel free to reach out to your GR liaison for more information on relevant committees.

### ***Legislative Agenda Development and Implementation***

Agenda setting includes determining which legislative and oversight hearings occur when, when legislation is marked up in committee, and what legislation will receive consideration by the full legislative body.

It is the primary job of the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader to set the agenda. In addition, leadership assigns members to committees, and sets procedural rules. In the minority party, leadership figures play a similar role.

Both parties have members called "Whips" whose job it is to ensure their party has sufficient legislative support for priority legislation. Despite the power of leadership, leadership does not always control how each individual member votes on a specific issue. Personal views have bearing, and local concerns may take precedence over the party line.

### ***The Legislative Process***

Out of the hundreds of thousands of bills introduced in federal, state, and local legislatures, fewer than 1 in 10 are enacted into law.

It's very important to make your views known to your elected representatives as early in the legislative session as possible to allow time to build that support.

After one or more legislators introduce a bill, it is referred to one or more committees responsible for the subject addressed by the bill. Usually, the committee chairs will determine which bills will be heard by the committee. These hearings are open to the public and in many cases can be watched virtually. This is the prime opportunity to present strong, organized, well-documented testimony (in person or in writing depending on the legislative procedures) on any bill affecting building safety codes.

When an important hearing is approaching:

- Consider submitting testimony. Doing so is a great way to make your case for a bill, as is testifying during the hearing. Depending on venue's protocols, written comments may need to be submitted to the committee beforehand. This information should be listed in the official hearing notice. In most states, anyone can provide testimony, either by signing up online or the morning of in person.
- Rally chapter members and other like-minded organizations to testify or submit written testimony. Although it may make sense to have different speakers cover different aspects of your talking points, repeated messaging from a diverse array of stakeholders can be very effective.
- Meet with committee members and staff. Provide undecideds and allies with talking points. Offer to prepare questions that will elicit favorable testimony or call into question the merits of opposing arguments.

Meet with committee members, staff, and other like-minded organizations after the hearing to discuss next steps. Prepare responses to any outstanding questions raised.

In advance of votes on the bill, consider the following:

- Weigh in with voting members (e.g., on a subcommittee, committee, or the legislative body considering the measure) with a formal letter stating your support or opposition.
- Encourage additional chapter members and likeminded organizations to co-sign your letter and/or to submit their own.
- Focus efforts on leadership (e.g., of the committee), as their vote recommendation will carry weight with other members.
- Follow up with individualized outreach to voting members to share your position.
- Prepare positions and talking points in anticipation of anticipated amendments and coordinate with member offices as amendment information becomes available. Different legislative bodies have different procedures concerning when, how, and how much notice must be provided concerning amendments.

### **Next Steps**

1. The subcommittee with jurisdiction votes on whether to refer the bill to the full committee for action or to reject it.
2. If the committee votes to pass the bill, it is forwarded to the full House/Assembly or Senate where the leadership decides whether or not to bring it to a vote.
3. If and when the House/Assembly or Senate passes a bill, it goes to the other body where the process of referral, debate, and committee and subcommittee hearings starts over. The exception is Nebraska, which is a unicameral body.
4. If both the House and Senate pass a similar, but not identical, bill, a joint Conference Committee will be appointed to work out a compromise, which is then sent to each body for a final vote.
5. If approved by both bodies, the bill goes to the President (or governor in the case of state legislation) who will either sign it into law or veto it.
6. Congress and state legislatures can override a Presidential or governor veto if two-thirds of the members of the House and Senate or state legislature vote to do so

