

NWMC LEGISLATIVE UNIT

OBJECTIVE

Considering that many decisions directly impacting local governments are made in either Springfield or Washington, a tightly coordinated response is vital to protecting local interests. The Conference's Legislative Unit serves to advance legislative initiatives that strengthen and improve local interests while protecting against unwarranted intrusions upon local authority or revenues.

FUNCTION

The Legislative Unit's primary focus is in Springfield, where the Conference has developed considerable influence. The NWMC Legislative Committee directs the Legislative Unit's mission. Consisting of mayors, trustees and key administrative staff, the Legislative Committee provides guidance and leadership throughout the legislative process.

Even though the Illinois General Assembly is session for less than six months (January through May with a brief fall veto session), the work of the Legislative Unit is a year round process.

During the spring legislative session the Legislative Unit has two primary focus areas. In addition to working toward the passage of the Conference's legislative initiatives, great attention is focused upon reviewing and responding to thousands of bills that are introduced. The Legislative Unit works closely with various organizations to identify legislation that impacts local government and to implement effective responses. The Legislative Committee reviews legislation, directs an appropriate strategy and provides that strong "voice" in Springfield to ensure that our position is heard loud and clear. Part of making sure the local government voice is heard includes our members traveling to the Capitol to provide input (including testimony to committees considering specific legislation of interest) and lobbying during the legislative process.

The Legislative Unit spends the summer reviewing the results of the spring session and surveying our membership to distill their particular legislative priorities for the coming year. In autumn, the Unit works directly with the Legislative Committee to prepare the Conference's legislative priorities for the following session. The fall veto session also requires particular attention to legislative action. Oftentimes, legislation considered "too controversial" to be voted on during the General Assembly's regular session is taken up after the November election when members feel "safe" to take these votes.

Following the completion of the veto session, the cycle begins anew the following January.

The Conference's Executive and Deputy Directors, both registered lobbyists, along with the Policy Analyst implement the Legislative Committee's legislative directives. The Conference contracts with Anderson Legislative Consulting to serve as our full-time lobbyists in Springfield. To fully represent our member's interests in Washington, many of our members belong to the National League of Cities and/or the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

SERVICES

Communication is critically important during the legislative process. The Legislative Unit places considerable focus on not only communicating with the legislators, but with ensuring that our members are fully briefed on the latest legislative action. To that end, the Legislative Unit utilizes multiple platforms to ensure members are fully informed and prepared to act at critical junctures in the legislative process.

Legislative Update

The Legislative Update provides in depth information on issues of particular concern as well as an overall summary of the progress of various bills of interest. Published on most Fridays when the General Assembly is in session.

Action Alerts

During the legislative session, when prompt action could make the difference between the success or failure of our lobbying efforts, NWMC Legislative Action Alerts are issued. These calls to action include details regarding our position on the legislation in question, which legislators need to be contacted and messaging to support the contact.

Position Statements

Provide a concise overview as to why the Conference is advocating for or against a specific bill. These are particularly valuable for use as talking points when discussing the issue with legislators.

Legislative Program

Published in January, the NWMC Legislative Program provides a compact policy statement highlighting the Conference's legislative priorities for the spring legislative session.

Legislative Events

The Legislative Unit hosts several annual events that provide direct interaction with the members of the General Assembly. Early in the spring session, we host a series of regional dialogs to present and discuss that year's Legislative Program with our legislative delegation. During a critical juncture in the legislative session, we bring our members to the Capitol for our annual Legislative Days in Springfield. Participants in Legislative Days spend their time meeting with legislative leaders, attending and testifying at committee hearings and directly lobbying legislators from throughout the state on issues of specific concern to their communities. Highlighting the trip is an informal event allowing members to socialize with legislators.

Online Resources & Social Media

The Legislative Unit highlights key legislation, bill positions and other specific information for Conference members and the general public via the NWMC website (nwmc-cog.org/legislative/about-nwmc-legislative-services), Twitter ([@NWMCLegislative](https://twitter.com/NWMCLegislative)) and Facebook (facebook.com/NWMMunicipalConference).

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