



# Advocating Effectively for Our Lakes with the Vermont Legislature

FOVLAP PO Box 766, Montpelier, VT 05601 [www.vermontlakes.org](http://www.vermontlakes.org)

- Build meaningful relationships with your state legislators.
- Prepare an outline or script for your conversation or testimony.
- Introduce yourself. Provide your name, where you live, and if you're a constituent. Mention that you are a member of \_\_\_\_\_lake association and FOVLAP.
- To speak on behalf of FOVLAP, the FOVLAP BOD must approve you to speak on FOVLAP's behalf.
- Anyone representing FOVLAP, publicly or in government settings, is not permitted to participate in paid lobbying for or against any matter. A person may advocate for or against a matter as an individual but cannot speak for FOVLAP on any matter without the approval of the FOVLAP Board of Directors.
- Even if you do not vote in Vermont, your vote still counts. Feel free to introduce yourself to your legislator as, "a property owner in your district."
- If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. You can offer to help find the answer from a reputable source.
- Be professional and polite.
- Be clear and concise.
- If you describe a problem, be ready to provide a solution.
- Offer yourself as a resource of information.
- Make an ask, e.g., please support/oppose...
- Always present the facts and avoid emotional responses.
- Vermont citizen legislators are volunteers, and their hours add up. Always say thank you.
- Many of us feel nervous the first time we speak to a state legislator. Practice your conversation or your testimony, and proofread your letter with a friend, family member or other FOVLAP member.

## Who is my Legislator?

You can search for your legislator(s) in the General Assembly on the Vermont General Assembly's website. Click [here](#) to search by name or town.



## How do I Track a Bill?

Go to <https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/search/2022>

You can search by :

- Bill or resolution number; for example, S.125 or H.345
- Act number; for example, 34
- keyword and/or sponsor: for example, water and/or Jane Doe

## How Does a Bill Become Law in Vermont?

The Vermont General Assembly's website provides a simple graphic on how a bill becomes law in Vermont.

Click [here](#). The nine step process is:

1. Bill introduction/first reading.
2. Bill referral.
3. Committee consideration.
4. Second reading.
5. Third reading.
6. Other chamber consideration.
7. Committee of Conference.
8. Governor's signature.
9. Bill enactment

For more information, see the Clerk of the House's, "Vermont Legislative Process" [here](#).

## Writing to a State Legislator by Letter or Email

- Introduce yourself and explain why you are writing. Be sure to use your own words.
- If you are writing regarding a specific piece of legislation, include the title of the bill in the subject line. In the first sentence of two, state whether you want them to support or oppose that specific bill. For example, "I am writing to ask you to support Senate bill, S.123 because..." or "I am writing to ask you to oppose Senate bill, S.123 because..."
- Consider using a personal story to explain how a piece of legislation would affect you and how you think it will affect your community.
- It's always good practice to include research or data to support your position. However, be concise.
- Include your contact information—address, phone number, and email—and say thank you!



## Calling a State Legislator

- Write down what you plan to say so you are ready when they, or their voicemail, pick up.
- Introduce yourself and explain the reason you are calling. For example, “Good afternoon Representative \_\_\_\_\_, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live in your district in the town of \_\_\_\_\_. I am calling in regard to \_\_\_\_\_. I would like you to support/oppose \_\_\_\_\_ because... (include data/facts, personal anecdotes or other relevant information to support your case).
- Legislators don’t have offices or office phones. You are most likely calling them on their home phone or personal cell phone.
- Always be courteous and professional. Say thank you!

## Testifying Before a State Legislative Committee

- Providing testimony does not have to be as scary as it may seem. Use the tips provided to prepare for your testimony.
- Testifying is a great way to show support when it matters. Legislators take into consideration how many individuals and groups turned out to testify on a bill.
- Any Vermont resident can testify in relation to bills in Legislative Committees. Meetings are recorded.
- Testimony must be made on your **individual** accomplishments, concerns and issues. Remember, to speak on FOVLAP’s behalf, you would need the approval of the FOVLAP BOD.
- If asked by a legislative committee if FOVLAP members agree with your testimony, you should respond that you represent your OWN personal viewpoints, or that of your own lake association.
- To find the schedules of Committee meetings, go to <https://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/meetings/2022#>.
- Be aware that schedules may change, even at the last moment.
- Stay current on the date and time of public hearings and testimony by reviewing the Senate and House calendars:

Senate: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/senate/service/2022/calendar?>

House: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/house/service/2022/calendar?>

## Procedures to Expect

- If you are testifying, review this handout, “Witness Information” provided by the Office of Legislative Council. Click [here](#). The handout provides details on the number of copies of your written testimony to bring, submitting testimony electronically and testifying by telephone. For remote legislative hearings, also refer to this [document](#).



### ***Procedures to Expect continued***

- On the day of the hearing/testimony arrive at least 15 minutes prior to when the meeting is scheduled to begin. Committees don't always stick to schedule and can move faster than expected or shown on the schedule.
- Listen to what is being said by other people to the committee. Avoid unnecessary redundancy, unless you want to place greater emphasis on something.
- To provide comments on a discussion, or another person's testimony, you must first be recognized to do so by the Committee Chair.
- Committee members always appreciate conciseness and brevity. Unless you are an expert in a certain subject and are asked to go into great detail, your testimony should not exceed 10 minutes.
- The committee chair will call you forward when it is your turn to speak.

### **Sample of Written Testimony**

- "Good morning/afternoon Mr./Madame Chair and members of the committee."
- Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today.
- Introduce your self. "My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I own a seasonal/year round residence on Lake/Pond \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, Vermont. I am currently a member of [lake association], chair of my lake association's \_\_\_\_\_ committee (if applicable), and a member of the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds (FOVLAP).
- Briefly explain what FOVLAP is:  
We are a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation, promotion, and development of environmental quality standards for Vermont lakes and ponds through communication with the local lake and pond organizations.
- Ask the Committee to support or oppose the bill.
- Tell a personal story, provide data, or other reasoning to support your position.

### **More Information**

- During each Vermont General Assembly session, FOVLAP produces a summary of Vermont Legislative bills. Go to <http://vermontlakes.org/legislativeupdates/> for **Legislative Bill Updates**.

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