



Protecting, Leading and Uniting...since 1893

FLORIDA SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION

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Assure Your Voice is Heard By Lawmakers

The Florida Sheriffs have assembled the following tips to help you get the most from your efforts in government advocacy. Use the resources located on our Legislative Action page to conduct research and correspond with lawmakers. During the session, you can also check our bill tracking page to learn the status of legislation that concerns criminal justice and public safety and stay informed about the Legislative Priorities of Florida Sheriffs on that page, as well.

Tips for more effective advocacy:

- Know who your lawmakers are and how to contact them. Use the resources on FSA's "Legislative Action Page" for more information. You can also refer to the Florida Sheriffs Association Annual Guide to Government (Winter issue) for more information.
- Make sure you understand the legislative process. Even the most basic understanding of the process will help you effectively express your ideas.
- Contact your lawmaker about a particular issue before the Legislature takes action on it. Find information at Online Sunshine: www.leg.state.fl.us/.
- Use a variety of methods: telephone, letters, e-mail, fax or in-person visits. You may even give testimony at public hearings. Contact the appropriate committee secretary to sign up.
- Tell your lawmaker what effect a particular bill – if it becomes law – will have on you, your children, business or community. Be concise, but specific.
- Be polite, even if you disagree strongly with the lawmaker's position. You'll be more effective if you are reasonable in your approach.
- Suggest a course of action and offer assistance. Don't make promises or threats.
- When writing to lawmakers, be brief. Never write more than one page. Identify your issue at the beginning and cover only one issue per letter. Back up your opinions with supporting facts – your letter should inform the reader.
- Plan any call or visit carefully. Organize your thoughts ahead of time and bring notes to help you stay on track. Prepare a one-page fact sheet concerning your issue to leave with the legislator. This will help him or her better retain the message.

For more information about the Florida Sheriffs Association Legislative Program contact Tim Cannon at 850-877-2165 or email tcannon@flsheriffs.org.

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