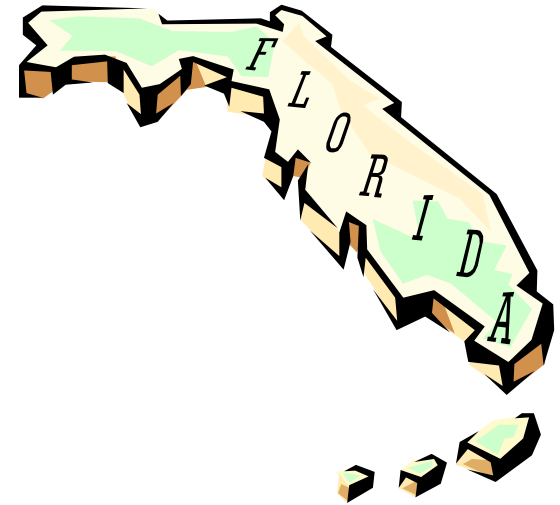


# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



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Coordinated by:

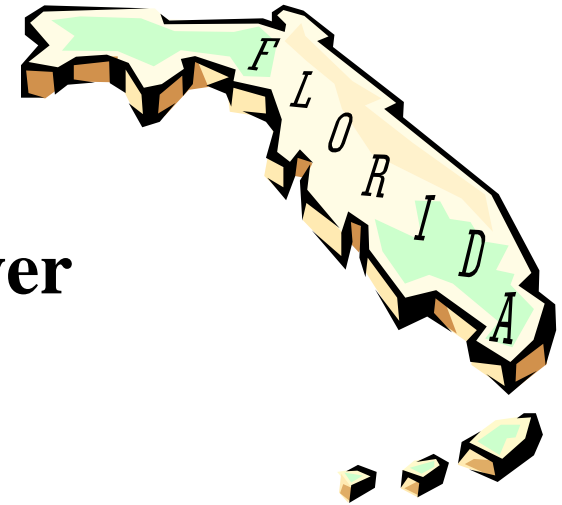


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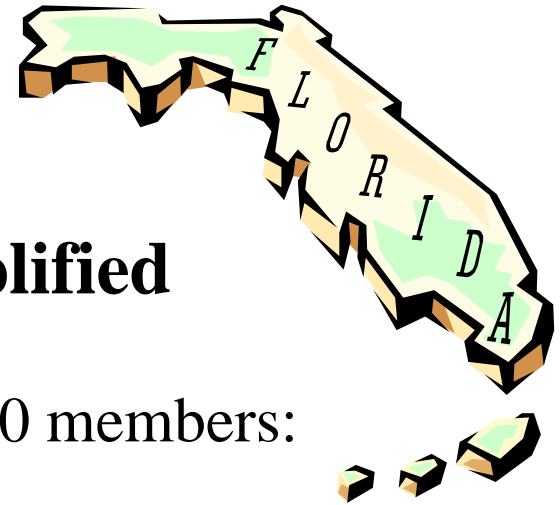
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## What This Presentation Will Cover

- Florida Legislative Process Simplified
- Types of Visits: In-District / Capitol
- Tips to Make Your Advocacy Successful
  - What to do before your meeting
  - How to plan for your meetings
  - During your meeting(s)
  - Meeting follow-up
- Action Alerts
- Things to Remember...

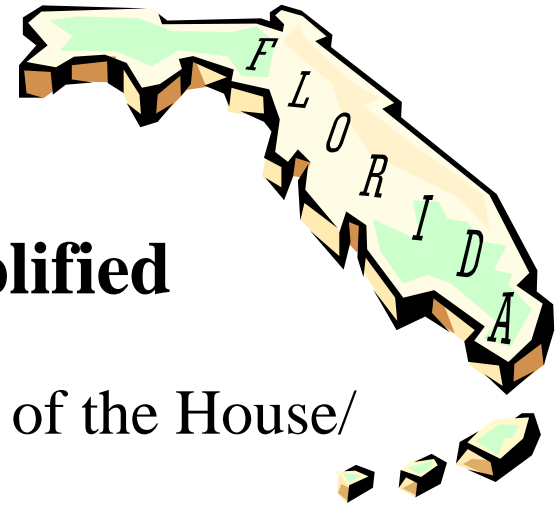
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Legislative Process in Florida - Simplified

- The Florida Legislative Branch consists of 160 members:
  - Florida House = 120 members
  - Florida Senate = 40 members
- The Florida Legislature's Regular Session convenes in early March and ends the first week in May each year
- Committee meetings are held before and during Legislative session
- When not in Tallahassee, lawmakers are in their district/home office(s)

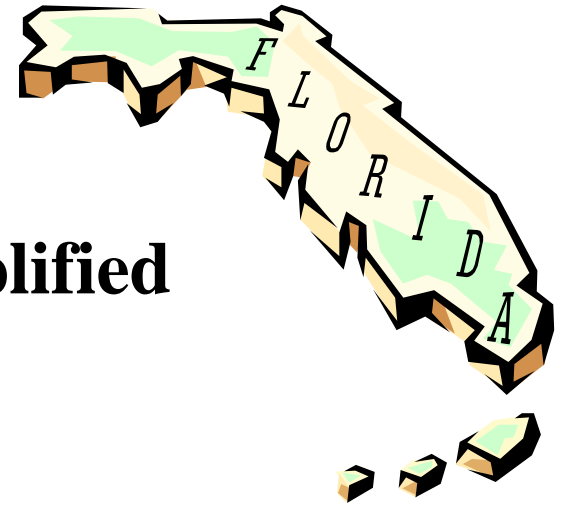
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Legislative Process in Florida - Simplified

- A bill can be filed by a member or committee of the House/  
Senate
- Once a bill is filed, it is assigned a bill number:
  - House Bills = HB (ODD Number) – HB 1083
  - Senate Bills = SB (EVEN Number) – SB 2428
  - Committee Bills = CS / Bill number
- “Bill Sponsor” - member/committee that files/introduces a bill
- “Co-Sponsor”- other members in support of a bill
- “Companion Bills” - identical, compare, similar

# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE

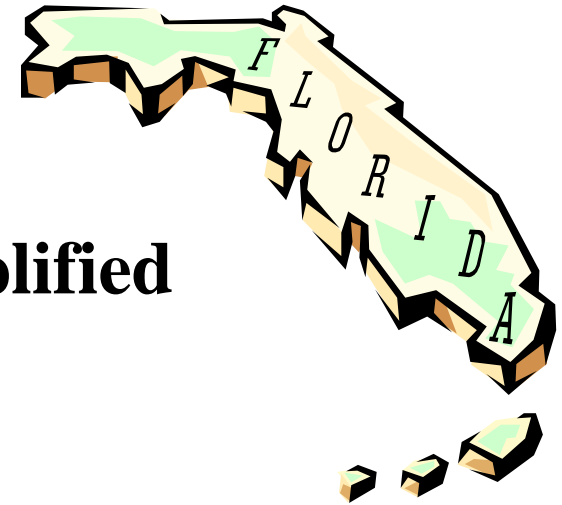


## Legislative Process in Florida - Simplified

### The Committee Process:

- After a bill is filed, it is assigned to several committees by the respective chamber leader (Speaker of the House or Senate President)
- The Chair of the Committee has the power to decide what bills will and will not be heard their committee

# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE

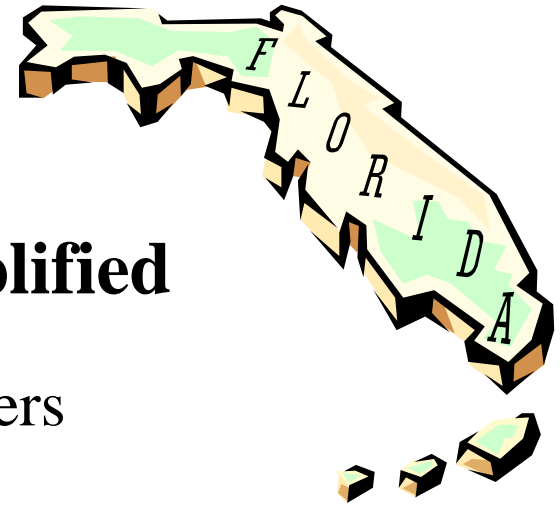


## Legislative Process in Florida - Simplified

### Committee Process Continued:

- Committees can make amendments to bills heard in their committee – this is called a ‘committee substitute’ or (CS)
- A bill must pass **each** of its assigned committees before going to the full House or Senate for vote
- If a bill does not make it through all its assigned committees, it ‘dies’ in committee

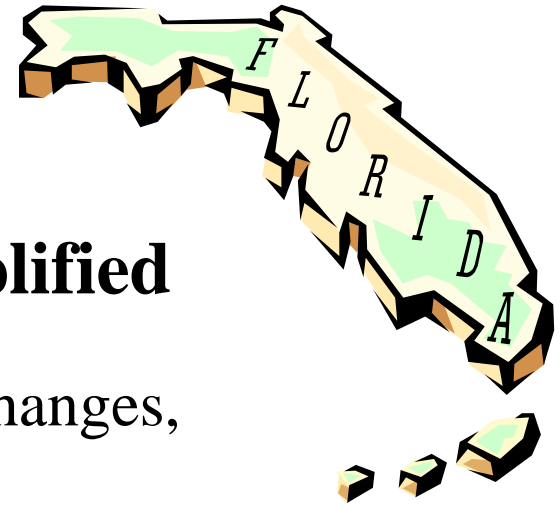
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Legislative Process in Florida - Simplified

- The same bill must be passed by both Chambers
- If one chamber passes a bill and the other chamber does not; the chamber passing the bill sends the bill to the other chamber through ‘messages’
- Example: House passes HB 1083 and sends it to the Senate via messages, Senate can choose to:
  - vote on HB1083 as presented,
  - vote with amendments or
  - if a senate companion bill has been through its committee process, Senate can vote on the companion bill
  - do nothing with the bill

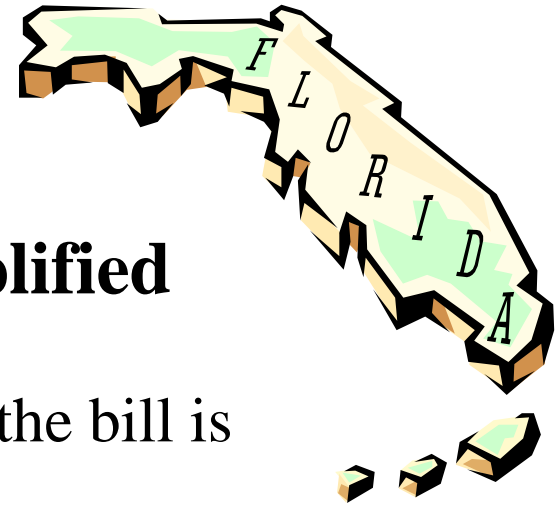
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Legislative Process in Florida - Simplified

- If Senate votes and passes HB1083 without changes, the bill is sent to the Governor
- If Senate passes a different version of the bill (either amending the HB or passing the Senate Companion bill), the versions have to be “matched” through a joint committee process to negotiate the differences and sent back to both Chambers for a vote
- If the Senate does nothing, the bill dies in messages

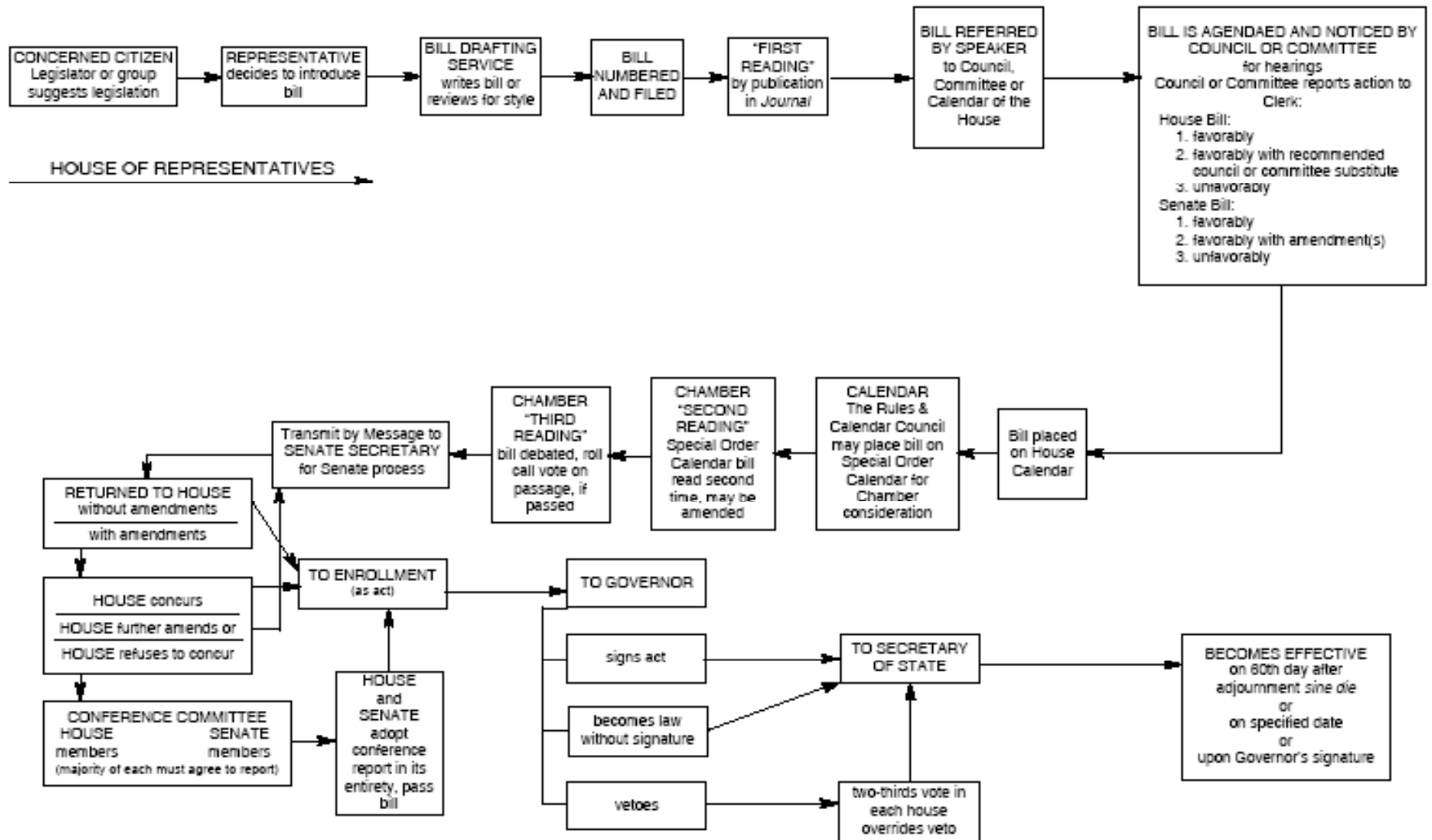
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Legislative Process in Florida - Simplified

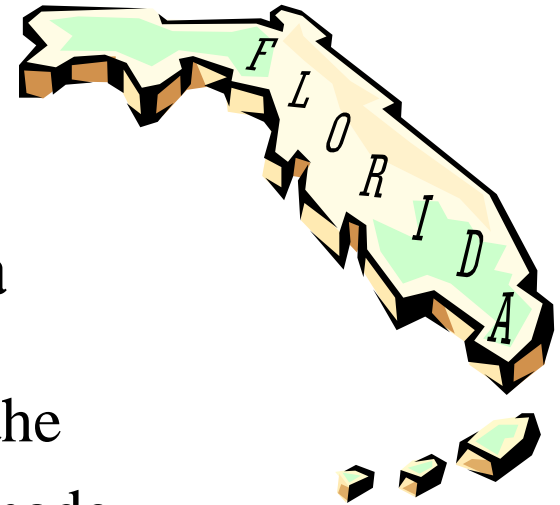
- Once an identical bill passes both Chambers, the bill is ‘engrossed’ and sent to the Governor
- The Governor can either sign or veto the bill; or do nothing
- The Legislature has the option to override the Governor’s veto with a 2/3 vote of both chambers
- If the Governor signs a bill (or does nothing), the bill becomes law on the effective date specified in the bill (most often the first of July, October or January)

# How An Idea Becomes A Law



This simplified chart shows the route a bill takes through the Florida Legislature. Bills may originate in either House. This bill originated in the House of Representatives.

# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Tracking Legislation in Florida

- It's important to track legislation throughout the legislative session as changes are frequently made as a bill progresses through the process

Free service - [www.myfloridahouse.gov](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov)

Paid programs/services like Lobby Tools

# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Types of Visits – In District vs. Capitol

### In District / Home Visits

- It can be easier to schedule an appointment when your lawmaker(s) is/are in their ‘home’ office
- Lawmakers usually have more time to meet with constituents
- Can be more convenient and cost effective for you to visit your lawmaker in their district office(s)

# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE

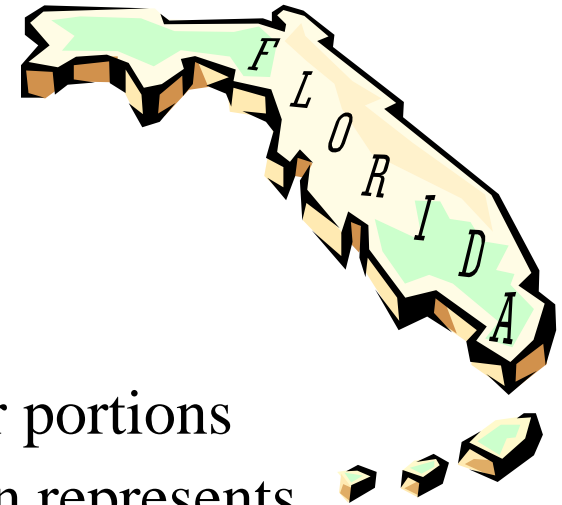


## Types of Visits – In District vs. Capitol

### Capitol

- In their Tallahassee office during session and pre-session committee meetings dates
- Can be more difficult to get an appointment as many others want their limited office time (between committee meetings and floor session)
- Can be costly to travel to Tallahassee

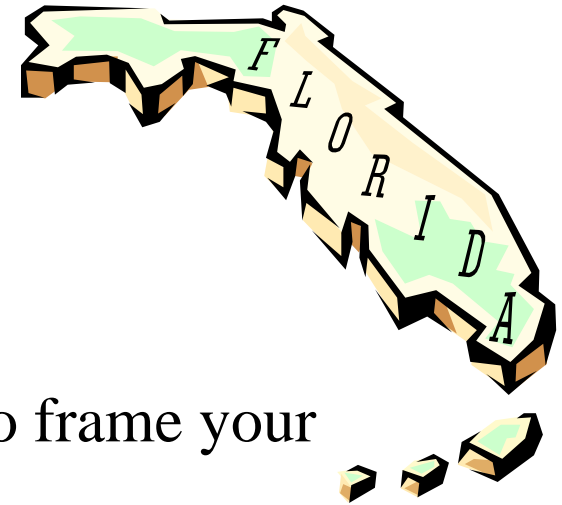
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Preparing for Your Visit

- Contact the Rep. and Sen. that represent all or portions of the county(ies) your Coalition/Organization represents
- Make an appointment to meet with them
- If the Rep./Sen. is unavailable to meet; ask to meet with their staff member working on Housing/Homeless issues
- When making the appointment, let them know:
  - who you are;
  - what organization you represent;
  - the purpose of the meeting; and
  - the number of persons who will be attending the meeting

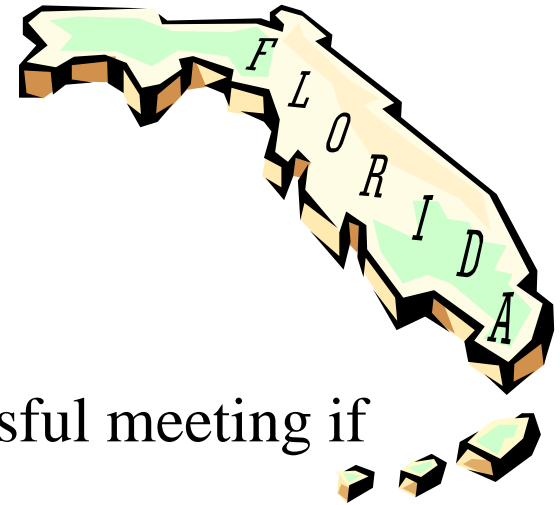
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Planning Your Meeting

- Think about what you want to say, and how to frame your message positively
- Review the Legislative material provided
- Try to find out if the Legislator is/has been supportive of these issues
  - If you can, include thanking them for their past support
- Prepare to be BRIEF - your meeting will be 5-15 minutes max
  - As a general rule, do not bring up more than 2-3 items

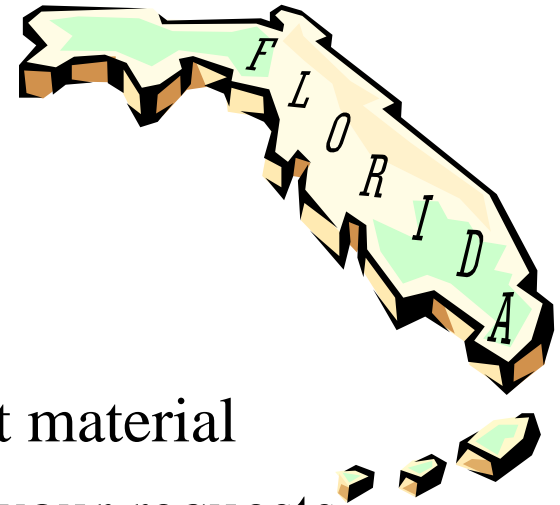
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Planning Your Meeting

- You have a greater chance of having a successful meeting if you set the agenda and stick to it
- If you do not focus the discussion, the Rep./ Sen. will
- Have a couple different personal stories about people that your Coalition/Organization has helped and tie it to the need for the specific legislative request you are making

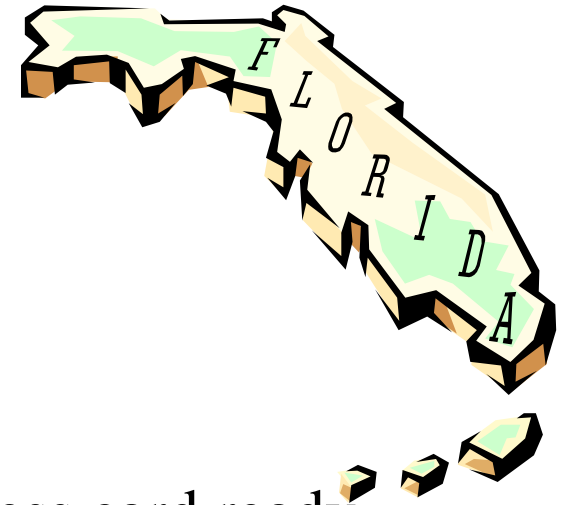
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Meeting Day

- Ensure you have enough copies of the support material to leave your legislator/staff as a reminder of your requests
- If you have made an appointment, **BE ON TIME!**
- When you get to their office, have your business card ready to hand to the receptionist or legislative aide, and let him/her know:
  - who you are, what organization you represent, and why you want to meet

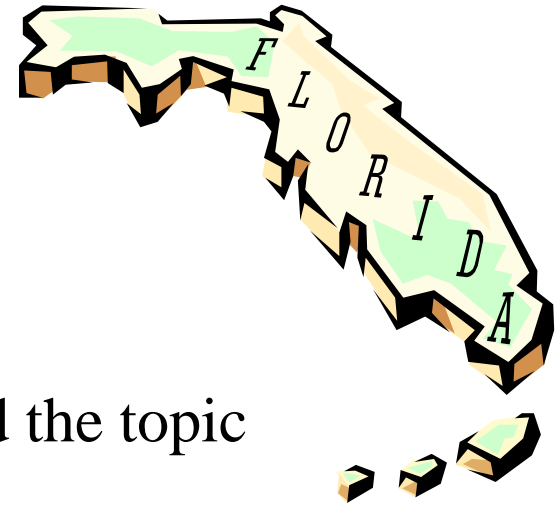
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Meeting Day

- If you do not have an appointment
- When you get to their office, have your business card ready to hand to the receptionist/legislative aide, and let them:
  - who you are, where you are from, what organization you represent, and why you want to meet
- Ask if the Rep./Sen. or their staff is available to meet with you
  - If they are not, ask if there is a time later in the day that might be open
  - If their calendar is full, ask them if you can leave some material for the Rep./Sen.

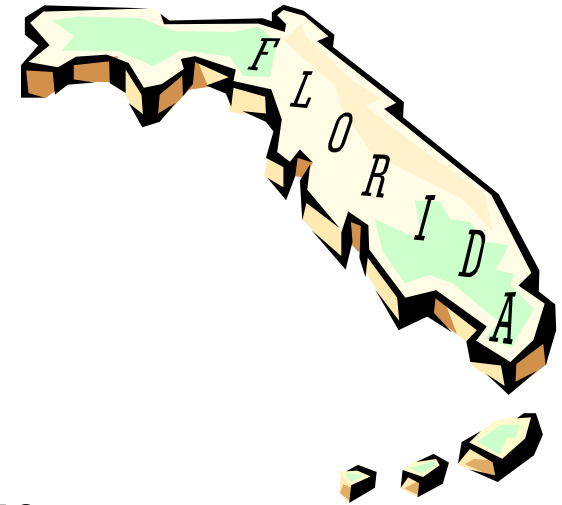
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## During the Meeting

- Open the meeting by introducing yourself and the topic
- Thank them for taking the time to meet with you
- Give the legislator/staff person printed informational/support material so they can refer to it during your meeting
- Be as brief as possible and state your views clearly
- Make the case for this issue by telling real life stories and personal experiences from your community (their district) and how their support of your request will make a difference

# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## During the Meeting

- Ask them to do something specific on the issue (support, sponsor, cosponsor, or oppose)
- Be honest and answer the legislator's/staffer's questions. If you don't know the answer, tell them you'll find the answer and get back to them
- Listen. Do not do all the talking. They may have concerns that need to be addressed/answered

# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Before Your Meeting Ends

- Ask your legislator and get them **to commit** to assist you in ending homelessness in your community!
- Summarize the meeting, repeat commitments made by the legislator/staffer, and tell the legislator/staffer when you will follow up
- Get a response to your request or an expected timeline for a response
- Ask the legislator/staff person for their email or direct telephone line that you can use to follow up to the meeting

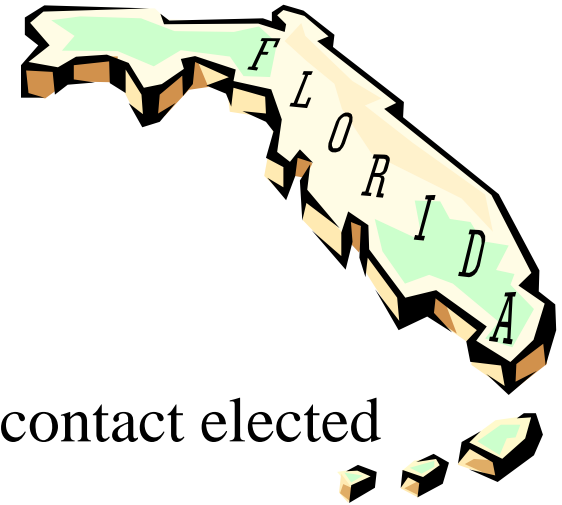
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## After Your Meeting

- Send a **short note** to your legislator/staff person to thank them for their time; reaffirm your view and any agreements made in the meeting
- Monitor your legislator's actions on the issues and continue to communicate with him/her as the issue advances
- Don't be a stranger to your elected officials/staff members
  - Know them by name, and make sure they know you by name
  - Make sure they know you are a resource on homeless/housing issues
  - Anonymity is the antithesis of effectiveness
- Invite officials to your community partnership programs for conversations and photos

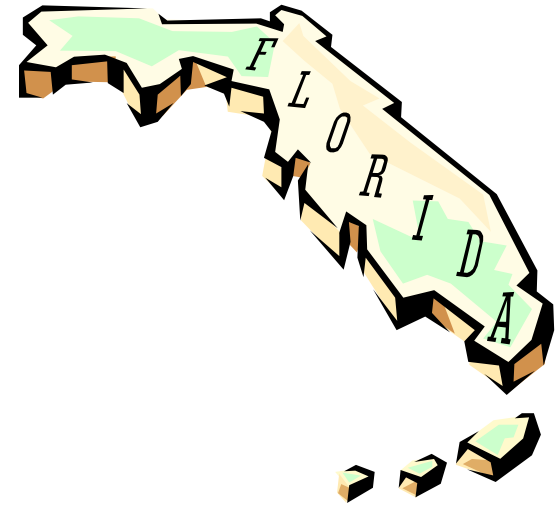
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Action Alerts

- Email alerts sent to advocates asking them to contact elected officials about a specific issue
- Alerts usually contain:
  - The immediate concern
  - Talking points
  - Who to contact and how
  - Background on the issue
- Easy way for advocates to stay on top of issue and remain engaged with elected officials
- Important in advocacy efforts

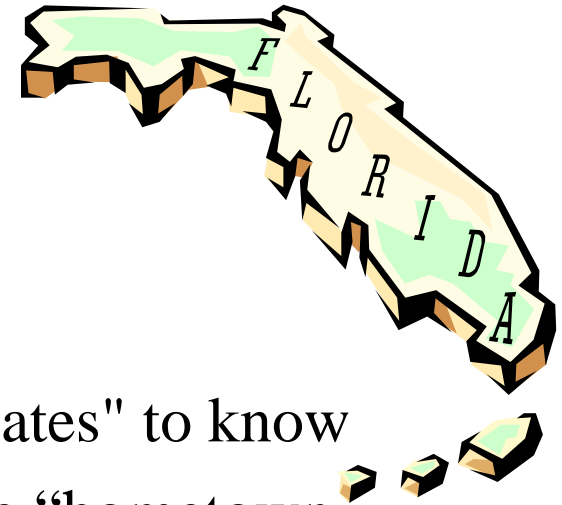
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Remember...

- You are **an advocate**
- You do not have to be an expert on housing/social service policy to advocate on behalf of homeless/near homeless people you serve
- Advocacy requires the art of compromise....never expect it all
- Your legislators and their staff are usually very attentive to the concerns of their constituents
- You provide the hometown connection that is essential to help elected officials listen with both ears

# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



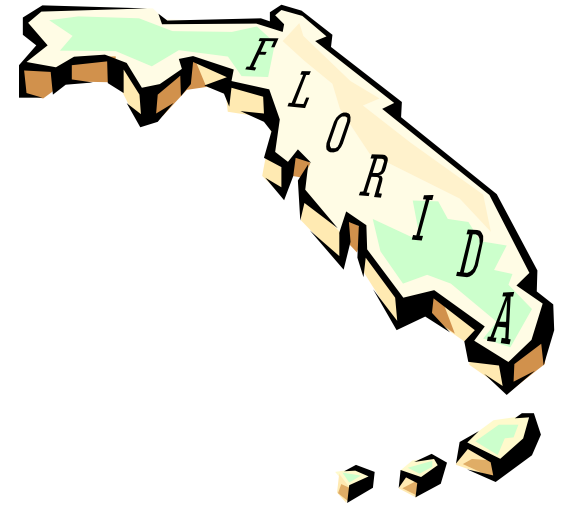
## **Remember...**

- Trust that your "every day professional advocates" to know the details; your job is to set the stage with the "hometown connection"
- Have them trust you as someone to turn to for more details if they are needed on this or other homeless/housing issues
- Say "thank you" before you say "please"

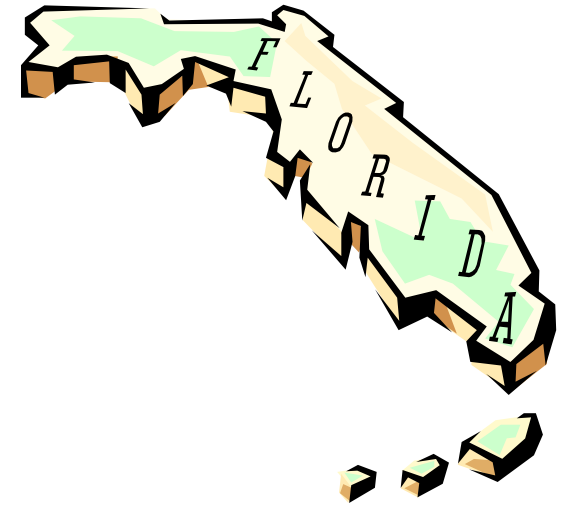
# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE

## Homeless Advocacy Day

- Show a “UNIFIED” Voice
- Be Part of Change
- Meet Other Advocates
- Experience Florida’s Legislative Process



# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Homeless Advocacy Day

**Wednesday, April 7, 2010**

The Florida Capitol – Tallahassee

### Hotel Accommodations

**Days Inn at 3100 Apalachee Parkway, Tallahassee, 32301**

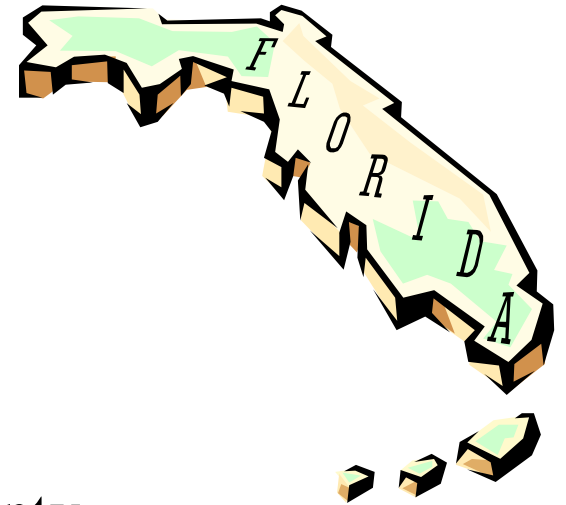
\$58 per night (April 6 and 7) – 850-877-6121

Reservations must be made by Friday, March 26, 2010

“Florida Coalition for the Homeless” rate.

*The Days Inn features a free continental breakfast and free high speed internet.*

# HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE



## Contacts

Lesa Weikel

Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County

(813) 223-6115

[Lesa@homelessofhc.org](mailto:Lesa@homelessofhc.org)