



ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

FOR
IOWA TOURISM

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iTIP
Iowa Travel Industry Partners



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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Iowa Travel Industry Partners (iTIP) is committed to empowering our members with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively advocate for Iowa's tourism industry. Many passionate individuals and organizations want to get involved in shaping tourism policy but may not know where to start or how the legislative process works. To drive meaningful change, we need well-prepared advocates who understand the system and can effectively engage with policymakers.

This guide serves as a resource to help our members connect with their legislators and other elected officials, ensuring they can confidently communicate the value and needs of the tourism sector. By understanding the legislative process, advocates will be equipped to promote policies that enhance tourism, drive economic growth, and showcase Iowa as a premier destination.

For additional resources, please visit the [iTIP website](https://IowaTravelIndustry.org) (IowaTravelIndustry.org).

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy helps to:

- Inform stakeholders about the value of Iowa's tourism industry.
- Showcase how tourism initiatives enhance the quality of life and drive economic growth across the state.
- Ensure the tourism industry has the resources needed to continue delivering vital services and experiences.
- Secure a seat at the table for tourism leaders when critical funding and policy decisions are made

Read this [article by the Cedar Rapids Gazette](#) (2025) to better understand how grassroots advocacy works.

You are taking a bold step by advocating for tourism in Iowa. We hope this guide empowers you, giving you the confidence and readiness to be a compelling and effective advocate.

WHO IS ITIP?



ABOUT US

Iowa Travel Industry Partners (iTIP) is Iowa's leading statewide tourism association, dedicated to supporting the travel and hospitality industry. Through valuable resources, educational programs, strategic advocacy, and targeted marketing initiatives, iTIP works to elevate Iowa as a premier travel destination.

MISSION

Tourism's Champion; increasing visitation and improving Iowa's economy through partnerships.

VISION

A united team of travel professionals, providing resources to foster diverse communities that inspire travelers.

VALUES

1. Collaborate
2. Innovate
3. We, not me
4. Be direct
5. Give it a chance
6. Lead

ADVOCACY TIPS

- **Build relationships early.** Connect with local officials before you need something; this makes future conversations easier and more effective.
- **Do your research.** Reach out to iTIP and tourism organizations to gather background on issues and understand how to frame your message.
- **Know your audience.** Research officials' positions in advance and align your message with their priorities.
- **Contact officials directly.** Meet in person when possible; if not, phone calls are more effective than emails.
- **Start with gratitude.** Thank the legislator for past actions that have positively impacted your work.
- **Keep it concise.** Focus on key facts and strong arguments - legislators appreciate brevity.
- **Make it personal.** Share how the issue impacts you, your business, and your community to make it real.
- **Make a clear request.** Be specific - ask them to SUPPORT or OPPOSE legislation, or to make changes.
- **Be polite but direct.** Be respectful, but clearly request support for tourism priorities.
- **Follow up.** Thank those who supported your efforts and continue building relationships with those who didn't.



BE A SUCCESSFUL ADVOCATE

Know your elected officials:

- Find your elected officials at:
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>
- Follow your elected officials on social media.
- Sign up for their newsletters.
- Attend their events.

Know your issues:

- Gather key facts.
- Propose solutions to the problem.
- Understand the legislative process.

Develop the message:

- State the issue & offer your solution.
- Share a personal story.
- Ask for their support; keep it bipartisan.
- Keep it brief & polite.
- Always thank the legislator for their time.

Get the word out:

- Invite legislators to your events.
- Attend city and county meetings.
- Visit your state capitol.
- Write letters, emails, social media posts or a letter to the editor in your local paper.

Don't quit:

- Celebrate wins.
- Be persistent, change takes time.
- Keep pushing forward.



PROCESS FOR IDEAS TO BECOME A LAW

- **IDEA**
 - A legislator or legislators decide to sponsor a bill. Ideas come from many sources: constituents, interest groups, and government agencies.
- **BILL DRAFTED**
 - The legislator or legislators request the idea be drafted into a bill by the Legislative Services Agency, Legal Services Division.
- **BILL FILED**
 - The bill draft is sent to the Senate or the House where it is assigned a number and is then sent to the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House.
- **COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT**
 - The President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House refers the bill to a standing committee. A subcommittee, assigned by the standing committee, then studies the bill and reports its conclusions to the full committee.
- **COMMITTEE ACTION**
 - The committee may pass the bill or pass an amended version of the bill. The committee may also send the bill to the floor without recommendation.
 - **Public Hearings:** One way to participate in the legislative process is to attend or participate in a Public Hearing. (www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/publicHearings)
- **FLOOR DEBATE**
 - The bill is placed on the calendar, a listing of all bills officially eligible for debate. At this time legislators may file amendments to the bill.
- **AMENDMENT**
 - The bill and any amendments filed are debated by the whole chamber. Amendments must be approved by a simple majority of those legislators voting.
- **VOTE**
 - A constitutional majority, at least 26 senators or 51 representatives, must vote “yes” in order for the bill to proceed to the second chamber.
- **SECOND CHAMBER**
 - The bill goes through the same process in the second chamber. If the bill passes the second chamber without amendment, it is sent to the Governor. If the second chamber amends the bill it must be sent back to the chamber of origin for approval of those amendments. If the chambers cannot come to an agreement on the version of the bill, a conference committee is appointed.
- **GOVERNOR**
 - After the bill passes both chambers in identical form, it is sent to the Governor. The Governor may sign the bill, veto the bill, or take no action on the bill.
- **LAW**
 - The bill becomes law upon the Governor’s signature or after three days during the session if the Governor takes no action. Bills received by the Governor during the last three days of the session have to be signed or vetoed within 30 days. If the Governor takes no action on the bill after the 30-day time period, the bill is considered vetoed.



WHAT IS A BILL?

TYPES OF BILLS

1

INDIVIDUALLY SPONSORED BILLS

A legislator or group of legislators requests these bills and their names are listed as sponsors. They are House File (HF) or Senate File (SF).

2

STUDY BILLS

Only committee chairs can request these bills. They do not have a legislative sponsor (the committee is the sponsor if action is taken). Bills requested by the Governor's Office and state agencies also come out in the form of a study bill. They are either Senate Study Bill (SSB) or House Study Bill (HSB).

3

RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions do not change the law; they express the thoughts of the Legislature on a topic.



MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS AT THE CAPITOL

Legislators have a lot to do, they're busy with debates in the chambers, caucuses (which are not open to the public), and committee hearings (which are open to the public).

Be patient.

Unlike federal legislators, Iowa state legislators do not have a big staff or an office in the Capitol. They have their desk on the floor and a clerk who helps them keep up with paperwork. The clerk can help you if the legislator is not available.

HOW TO GET TIME WITH A LEGISLATOR

Both chambers are located on the second floor; the House is to the right and the Senate to the left. You cannot enter the chambers directly - everyone must be accompanied by a legislator.

Leave a message for your legislator:

To leave a message, fill out a message slip available at a table near the chamber entrance. The slips are color-coded: yellow for the House and pink for the Senate.

- Include your name, the legislator's name, and their seat number (which is available at the table, not to be confused with the district number). If you're in a group, only one slip is needed with your organization listed.
- Circle "wanting to see you" and include your phone number.
- Hand your slip to the doorkeeper and wait for a response. It may take some time. Stay at the front of the chamber and listen carefully - it can be noisy.
- If your legislator isn't available, the doorkeeper will call your name. If no call is made, it means the legislator is on their way to meet with you soon.



WHEN YOU MEET YOUR LEGISLATOR



- **Be confident.** Legislators work for you - there's no need to feel nervous.
- **Greet your legislator warmly.** A smile goes a long way.
- **Introduce yourself.** Share your name, where you're from, and what group you represent.
- **Address them properly.** Use their title, to show respect:
 - Senator __(last name)__ or Representative __(last name)__
- **Be brief.** Legislators are busy—focus on one or two key issues.
- **Be courteous.** Thank them for their time.
- **Don't burn bridges.** Even if they don't agree with you now, you may need their support later.
- **Follow up.** Send a brief thank-you note (email or handwritten) to express gratitude and recap your visit.

IF YOUR LEGISLATOR IS NOT AVAILABLE

- Get another slip and write a note explaining what you wanted to talk about.
- Select the “left the following message” option.
- Leave the date, time, and a phone number.
- Ask to have it left on their desk.

THE SENATE

Date: _____ Time: _____

To: _____

Seat No.: _____

Message:

_____ is at the rear of
the chamber and requests to see you:

___ in the lounge

___ at the door

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

Representative:

Seat Number:

Mr. Mrs. Ms.

Of:

1. Is waiting to see you 2. Has Left Literature

3. Has left the following message:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Delivered by:



GUIDE THE CONVERSATION

Use one of these three techniques to keep the conversation focused and ensure your key points are remembered by your elected official or legislative staff.

BRIDGE

Use this technique to steer the conversation back to your main point. If a legislator says, “Why shouldn’t we support policy that helps software companies? Isn’t a strong economy good for Iowa’s tourism industry?” rather than debating the economy, you can respond with: “I think the real question is...” and refocus the conversation on your key message, such as, “Doesn’t everyone benefit from a thriving tourism industry?” Then, answer that question.

HOOK

This technique lets you guide the conversation and make multiple points. For example, you could say, “There are two key factors to consider before supporting this proposed policy. The first is...” and elaborate on that point. The legislator or staff may then ask you to share the second point, giving you more time to advocate for Iowa’s tourism industry.

FLAG

Flagging is a simple yet effective technique to highlight key points. It helps draw attention to what’s most important, like saying, “The key takeaway is...” or “If you remember one thing, let it be these two points...” to emphasize the priorities of Iowa’s tourism industry.



TALKING TO THOSE WHO DISAGREE

It can be challenging to talk to people who disagree with you. In this study, the Center for Media Engagement interviewed people who live in communities with a mix of political beliefs to better understand the best strategies for talking to those with whom they disagree. Here are five main approaches to talking across political differences.

1

FOCUS ON THE PEOPLE, NOT THE POLITICS

- Build a relationship before talking politics
- Don't take comments personally
- Share your own relevant experiences
- Give a relatable hypothetical situation

2

FIND COMMON GROUND

- Bond over less polarized issues
- Be open to listening and understanding
- Ask questions to understand a different viewpoint
- Focus on shared beliefs

3

STICK TO THE FACTS & AVOID CONFRONTATION

- Stick to information that can be verified
- Back up your opinions with evidence
- Limit emotion in discussion
- Avoid confrontational language

4

BE AN ADVOCATE RATHER THAN AN OPONENT

- Adapt conversational style to audience
- Avoid words that might upset people

5

PICK YOUR BATTLES

- Talk about local politics instead of national politics
- Focus on policy instead of party
- Avoid hot-button issues



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Iowa General Assembly is the state legislature of Iowa. The General Assembly convenes within the Iowa State Capitol in Des Moines. It is a bicameral legislature composed of an upper house, the Iowa State Senate, and a lower house, the Iowa House of Representatives.

The General Assembly is to convene its regular session on the second Monday of January of each year. The General Assembly can also be called into special session by a proclamation of the Governor of Iowa or by a written request of two-thirds of both houses of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly is divided into the 1st and 2nd sessions.

FIRST SESSION

- Happens in Odd Numbered Years (i.e. 2025, 2023)
- Per Diem ends after 110 days
- Bills introduced, but not passed, are eligible for consideration during the second session



SECOND SESSION

- Happens in Even Numbered Year (i.e. 2024, 2022)
- Per Diem ends after 100 days
- At the end of the 2nd session, all bills from both sessions that do not pass die



COMMITTEES

A standing committee is a group of legislators assigned to review bills on specific topics. Once a bill is assigned, the committee chair appoints a subcommittee, usually with three members, to examine it in detail. The subcommittee reports back to the full committee, which can recommend passing the bill, amending it, referring it to another committee, postponing it indefinitely, or sending it to the floor for debate without a recommendation.

SENATE COMMITTEES

- Agriculture
- Appropriations
- Commerce
- Education
- Ethics
- Government Oversight
- Health & Human Services
- Judiciary
- Local Government
- Natural Resources & Environment
- State Government
- Technology
- Transportation
- Veterans Affairs
- Ways and Means
- Workforce

HOUSE COMMITTEES

- Agriculture
- Appropriations
- Commerce
- Economic Growth & Technology
- Education
- Environmental Protection
- Ethics
- Government Oversight
- Health & Human Services
- Higher Education
- Judiciary
- Labor & Workforce

FUNNEL DEADLINES

Each General Assembly sets two funnel deadlines to manage the large number of bills filed in the session's first two months. These deadlines ensure only bills with significant interest and progress are considered further.

FIRST FUNNEL

During the first funnel, bills must pass out of their originating committee in the original chamber to remain eligible for consideration. Bills that don't meet this deadline are no longer considered for the session. Exceptions include legislation from the Ways and Means, Appropriations, or Government Oversight Committees.

SECOND FUNNEL

In the second funnel, bills must pass out of the committee in the opposite chamber. For instance, a Senate bill sent to the House must clear a House committee by the second funnel deadline to remain eligible for further debate.



LOBBYISTS

A lobbyist is anyone who actively seeks to influence legislation on behalf of an organization. Lobbyists must register with the Secretary of the Senate or the Chief Clerk of the House before beginning their work. They declare their client's position - support, opposition, or neutral - on bills under legislative consideration.

CORNERSTONE GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

iTIP partners with Cornerstone Government Affairs as its lobbying team. Cornerstone manages daily operations at the Iowa State Capitol, both during and outside the legislative session, guiding iTIP through complex legislative processes and fostering essential relationships with key legislators. Additionally, iTIP staff and volunteers regularly visit the Capitol to engage with elected officials. This collaborative effort ensures comprehensive insights on industry-specific issues from various perspectives.



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