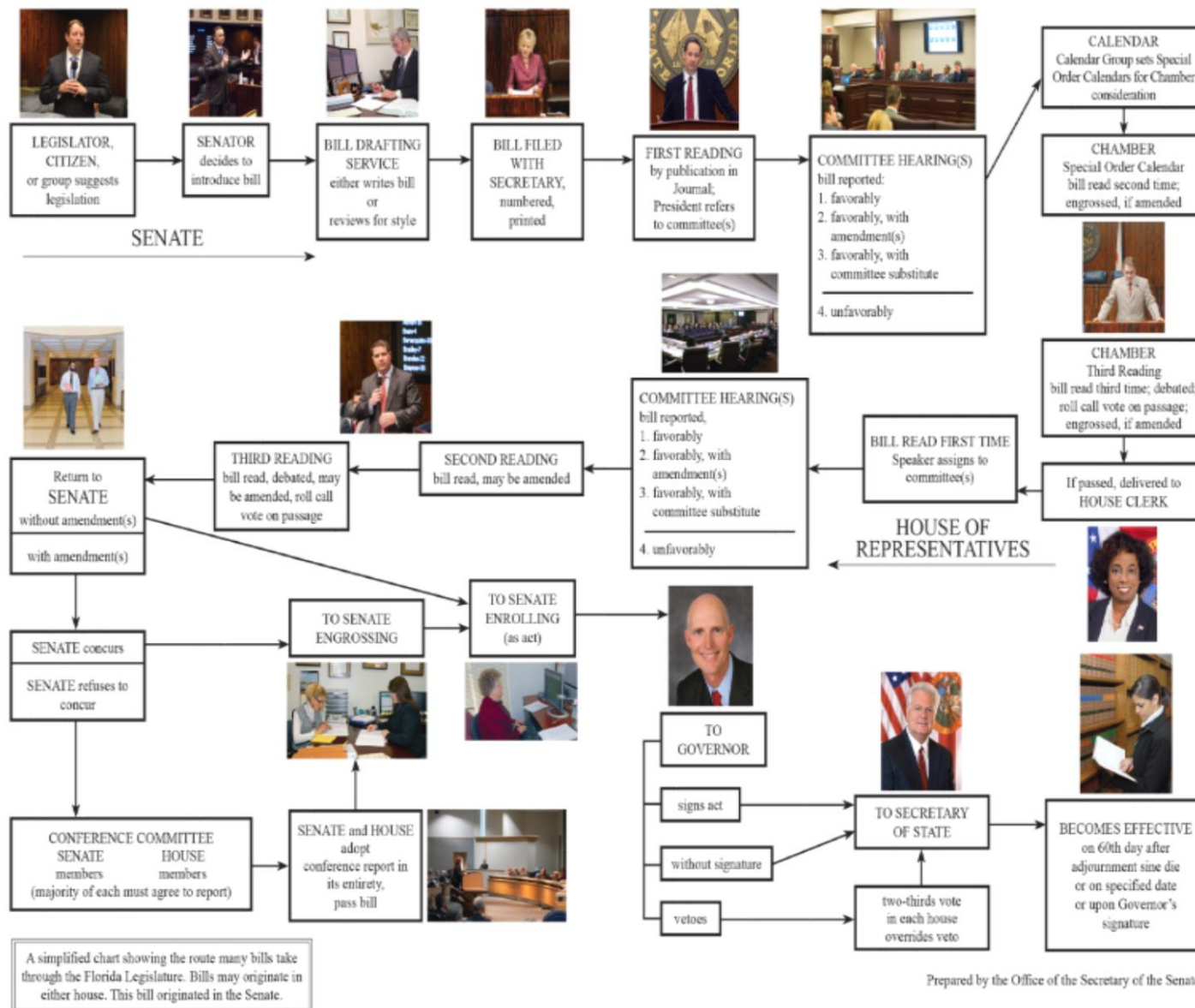


Legislative Process of the State of Florida



WHY IS A LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE IMPORTANT?

The purpose of a legislative committee is to educate the student body of the legislative process and how a bill becomes law. Once that concept is understood, the focus turns to advocating and pushing for key legislation that creates a positive impact on our patients, our nursing profession, and the field of healthcare.

The committee's hand in all of this is to organize trips to the state capitol to advocate with the FNA side-by-side and gain helpful tools. Not only that, the committee can host school forums where the local legislators can come and talk to the student body about the current hot topics in healthcare and which bills have strong chances to pass.

To our peers, many of the laws we have in place for our profession, like the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) and the Barbara Lumpkin Prescribing Act, would not exist without advocacy and the joint involvement of nurses and nursing students. That is why it is important we advocate for our patients and our profession at the same time. Together we can ensure that nurses remain protected by the law and can perform to the fullest extent of their scope or practice.



Students at the 2017 FNA Advocacy Day

"It's time that we set the record straight: nursing and medicine are different but equally important to the health of Florida's citizens. Nurses have the education and experience to play key roles in patient centered care teams"

Willa Fuller, RN, FNA Executive Director

BASICS OF A LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Forming your own legislative committee may seem like a daunting task, but with this guide made by your FNSA Board, you will learn the various components of the legislative committee and the various activities you can perform to help other students understand the importance of the legislative process and legislation.

1. Before you begin to form your chapter's legislative committee, you must first understand what is legislation. When people mention legislation, they are talking about a lot of things but those things can be boiled down to items, namely bills, that may become law. Some examples of these include:

- a. Regulate
- b. Authorize
- c. Provide Funding
- d. Grant
- e. Sanction
- f. Declare or Restrict

Former Democratic Senator Maria Sachs (on left) and Representative Lori Berman (next across) talking at a FAU SNA's 2016 Legislative Forum.



2. Secondly, it is important to understand how the legislative process works for the state of Florida. The legislative process essentially starts from a root idea of that turns into legislation and eventually ends as a governing law.
3. Next comes the birthing process of your chapter's legislative committee. In an ideal setting, you want to try to have:
 - a. One student sit as the chair of the legislative committee.
 - b. Atleast two students under the chair position to act as committee members. The committee should have a maximum of four committee members to keep task flow fluid.
 - c. One committee advisor that is knowledgeable in legislation and can help guide the committee. The advisor does not have to be a faculty member, as they can be someone close to your college that is also well versed in legislation.

d. All members of the legislative committee, including the chair position must be either:

- i. Students enrolled in state-approved programs leading to licensure as a registered nurse (RN).
- ii. RNs enrolled in a program leading to a baccalaureate degrees with a major in nursing (BSN).
- iii. Pre-nursing students enrolled in a college or university program designed as preparation for entrance into a program leading to an associate degree (ADN), diploma or BSN.

1. Pre-nursing students must be currently enrolled or have completed at least 9 credit hours of prerequisites and must be identified as such by the Dean/Director of the state approved school they are planning to or are attending.

OKAY SO WE FORMED OUR COMMITTEE...WHAT NEXT?

Since your chapter just formed its legislative committee, it is best to have a legislative kickoff event that helps encourage students to get interested in the committee and what it has to offer.

- Maybe throw a pizza party and talk about the intended purpose of this committee for the school year.
- Have another meeting to briefly go over some of the educational legislative material:
 - “2017 Florida Nurses Association Legislative Platform”
 - <https://www.floridanurse.org/editorFiles/fna-leg-platform-2017-final.pdf>
 - “2016 ANA’s Principles for Health System Transformation”
 - <http://www.nursingworld.org/Principles-HealthSystemTransformation>
 - ANA Nursing Legislative Issues and Trends
 - <http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/Policy-Advocacy/State/Legislative-Agenda-Reports>

Now that you have formed your chapter’s legislative committee and have educated the chapter body about the legislative process and the current topics of legislation, you want to start planning events little by little. Be sure to work effectively. Planning too many events or having several events near each other may diminish the impact of the legislative committee. Also, utilize your faculty. They are there to support you and to encourage you.

LEGISLATIVE FORUMS

The Legislative Forum is an event where your chapter would invite your local legislative officials from the Florida state government to come and talk to your chapter about the current healthcare legislation going on at the state government.

- This event provides a great opportunity to ask your legislator questions about their current positions on healthcare/specific nursing legislation. Make this a campus-wide event so your SNA can build exposure and help other students learn about healthcare legislation.
- To find the local legislators in your area, use the link below to find all your elected officials representing your local area with their district office and other information:
 - a. <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/myrepresentative.aspx>
- You also want to make sure you plan this event at least 3-4 months in advance to ensure the legislators have availability in their schedules for your event. Also, make sure legislative session is not going on and use this link to find out:
 - a. <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Calendars/2018>

VOTER REGISTRATION BOOTHS

This is an awesome on-campus event your chapter can create. It may be easier to partner with a campus voting project organization as they already have the forms students can use to register, change their address, and such. Reaching out to your local student government can also be helpful as they may be able to provide material on the candidates and other general information.



FNA ADVOCACY DAYS

This is one of the biggest annual events for FNA. All the FNSA chapters across the state can take a trip to Tallahassee and lobby alongside the FNA and learn key skills they can take back to their chapter legislative committee. On this trip, students learn how the whole lobbying process works and how to effectively communicate with legislators to sway their position in favor of FNA's position on that piece of legislation.

- A good preparatory resource that helps guide what legislation FNA will focus on at the Advocacy Days event is the annual "FNA Legislative Platform". Here is the link to the "2017 FNA Legislative Platform":
 - <https://www.floridanurse.org/editorFiles/fna-leg-platform-2017-final.pdf>
- Another good resource that gives you communication/advocacy tips is the "2017 FNF/FNA Legislative Toolkit":

LEGISLATOR VISITS

Meeting with your local legislator is one of the best ways to advocate and lobby. Legislators generally love to have their constituents come and talk to them face-to-face in their district office. These conversations can actually be the game changer in swaying the legislator's position on a key piece of nursing legislation. To find your local representative and their district office information, use this link:

- <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/mvrepresentative.aspx>

Use the "2017 FNF/FNA Legislative Toolkit" as a resource to help you learn how to professionally communicate towards your legislator and how to get your points across:

ANY QUESTIONS

Hopefully this resource provides your chapter with all the tools and ways to go about to form your own legislative committee. As I said earlier, the legislative committee helps students learn the importance of legislation through these types of events and more that your own committee may come up with.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me at:

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