

Self-Advocacy at the State Level



Patterned after the United States Congress, California has a bicameral (two-house), two-party Legislature with 80 assembly members and 40 senators. Assembly members are elected for two-year terms and senators for four-year terms with one-half elected every two years.



http://www.governor.ca.gov/state/govsite/gov_homepage.jsp?a%3Da&BV_SessionID=@@@@1281325891.1045003539@@@@&BV_EngineID=dadcgglmhkhkbemgcfkmchchi.0

How Did We Get Here???

The California Legislature is the policymaking body of state government, restricted only by the federal and state constitutions and the governor's veto power. The Legislature also conducts investigations into almost any issue of public concern.

Budget Cuts to Education

- **K-12** – elementary, middle, high school
- **CCC** – (2) years, composed of 108 colleges statewide organized into 72 districts, serves more than 2.9 million students and represents the largest system of higher education in the world. (A.A) college prep, transfer
- **Calif. State Universities** – (4) 25 campuses
- **Universities of California** - (4) 9 campuses
- B.A., credentials, Doctoral level studies

Largest System of Education in the World

Community Colleges:



"This is an absolute disgrace," said **Sen. John Vasconcellos**, D-Santa Clara. "The community colleges serve the most people, the most needy. They shouldn't take more of a cut."

Spokeswoman for Gov. Davis:

"We reject the notion that the governor is targeting community colleges" over other institutions, McLean said.

CSU and UC Campuses



Why Should Anyone Listen

- You are a citizen
- You vote
- You experience legislative decisions
- Your taxes provide a base of funding where your tax dollars are spent on many things
- Decisions can affect your future



Do You Know How to Advocate for Yourself

- When?
- What was the issue?
- Did you have to argue your point?
- Did it take time?
- Did you have to rethink your position?
- What was the outcome?

Communicating With the Decision-Makers

- Letters
- FAX
- E-mail
- Telephone call
- Personal visits

<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov>



Writing to the Legislature

- **DO's**
 - Address the member correctly
 - Write legibly
 - Include your name, address, telephone number and date on letterhead
 - Mention your specific concerns
 - Be accurate and concise
 - Be courteous
 - Send letters in a timely manner
 - Ask for a reply, add your address to the letter

Writing to the Legislature

- **Don't**
 - Be long-winded
 - Adopt a righteous tone
 - Demand anything
 - Be rude or threatening
 - Write only to the opposing legislators
 - Assume legislators know the complete story

Are There Others Advocating



- Legislators
- The CCC system
- College Presidents
- Faculty/Staff
 - Meeting with local constituents
- Students
 - Van to the Capitol
 - March on March 17th Rally

Let Your Voice Be Heard



- Assignment
- Letter
- G:/self-advocacy folder
- Write your concerns
- How will the cuts affect you
- How will cuts affect services provided to students with disabilities
- How will it affect your goals and future

Results of Your Letters



Giving your letters to Legislative
Aid for Senate Budget
committee Chair Wesbro



Senator Ackerman – Vice-
Chair of the Senate Budget
Committee with one of your
letters!

Results of Your Letters

Senator Harmon reading one of your letters

