

Section I

Passing a Health Freedom Bill at Your State Legislature

You can do it! You absolutely have the power to bring an issue to your state legislature and advocate for it, and make changes in your laws. The more preparation you do before introducing legislation, the better chance you have in succeeding.

Here are some of the preparatory steps: (This is not linear, some of them are going on simultaneously)

I. What to Do Before You Go to the Legislature

1. Join a Health Freedom Group or start your own.

To find a Health Freedom organization in your state go to www.nationalhealthfreedom.org or call National Health Freedom Action at 651-690-0732.

To find a Sunshine Health Freedom Fund State Coordinators in your state that is in touch with the Nature Sunshine Product distributors working for health freedom contact the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of SHFF, Joan Vandergriff, at 817-498-8055, attention Val Cantu.

2. Identify the Problem in your state.

Legislators often say: “If it isn’t broken, then we don’t want to fix it”. So it is important to be able to articulate just what the problem is. Not only conceptually but legally because “bills” turn into “laws” and you would be asking a legislator to make a new law.

a. In most states, holistic healers such as homeopaths, herbalists, naturopaths, and other non-licensed practitioners are at risk of criminal prosecutions for “practicing medicine without a license.” That is because the definition of the “practice of medicine” is very broad in the law and if you don’t have a license you can be charged. Some states have a list of exemptions from these charges such as Christian Scientist healers, or health professions that have their own license. Health freedom legislation

solves this problem by designing an exemption from criminal practice of medicine charges and mandates that unlicensed practitioners provide consumers with disclosures.

b. In addition to unlicensed persons, a licensed medical doctor, nurse, or dentist who utilizes new holistic healing techniques can lose their license in many states if they are practicing outside of the acceptable and prevailing standard of care for their profession. Almost 20 states have remedied this problem by passing laws that allow physicians to practice alternative medicine however in most states except Florida, all other licensed professionals are vulnerable when practicing outside of prevailing practices.

3. Draft a Health Freedom Bill to Fix the Problem

a. Six states already have freedom of access to unlicensed practitioner laws. They are Minnesota, Rhode Island, California, Oklahoma, Idaho, and Louisiana. (To see copies of those laws passed go to www.nationalhealthfreedom.org and click on the information center)

b. Another eleven states have introduced health freedom legislation and you can view those active bills by going to your state legislative home page and searching for bills having to do with complementary and alternative health care or unlicensed practices, or you can go to www.nationalhealthfreedom.org and go to the state map and click on the individual state health freedom organizations which generally carry information about their bills in progress.)

c. To discuss drafting legislation contact national and state health freedom organization leaders for input. (See Appendix A for a list of national health freedom groups)

II. Finding and Covering the Cost of a Local State Lobbyist

1. Find a Professional Lobbyist or Designate a Citizen Lobbying Team.

*** You need to have one person or a group of persons who will be 100% available to the sponsor of the new bill, a lobbyist. That lobbyist has to also be 100% available to the grassroots group and know and understand their wishes.**

c. The most important qualities of a good lobbyist are:

- ♪ Experience at lobbying successful bills at the legislature
- ♪ Knowledgeable about legislators and the legislative process
- ♪ Respected at the legislature and excellent communication skills
- ♪ Has relationships with many key legislators

- ♪ Knowledgeable and articulate about health freedom bill and core principles.
- ♪ Willing to support what the group wants and work for the goals.
- ♪ Even better but necessary, someone who agrees wholeheartedly with the need for the changes and your proposed solution.

2. Fundraise to Cover Lobbying and Grassroots Mobilizing Costs.

The cost of a lobbyist is varied depending on a lobbyist's credential, whether they are in a large firm, and whether they have extensive lobbying expertise. Costs can range from between \$5,000 and \$50,000 per legislative session depending. Some lobbyists charge on a per month basis, (\$1-3000/mo) and quit charging if the bill is not moving.

III. Approaching the Legislature and Finding a Sponsor

1. Learn about the lobbying rules of your state legislature.

State legislatures have laws regarding lobbying and they have a "lobbying office" where people must sign up to lobby depending on the rules of each state.

2. Go to your state legislative Homepage (search for the state name with the word legislature) and learn about how a bill moves through the system and get acquainted with the legislative process in your state. Learn everything from how many years for a session, to when session begins and ends, how to introduce a bill, when do bills go to committees, what it takes to pass them out of committees, how to get a bill passed in both the House of Representatives and Senate Chambers, what the process is for a final bill to get signed by the Governor

3. Find a Sponsor for your Health Freedom Bill

Sponsors of the bill are the legislators who will Champion your health freedom bill.

The most important qualities of a Sponsor are that:

- a. They have a deep conviction for health freedom and in the need for the bill and that the solution being presented is the best avenue for remedying the problem.
- b. They have the political position and power to move a bill forward.
- c. That they enjoy working with grassroots groups and citizens.

Choosing your Sponsor is one of the top most important decisions you will make regarding your bill passage. Consult with people who know the legislators. If you have hired a lobbyist, that person will be key in finding a Sponsor.

Some believe that the Sponsor should be on the major policy committee that will first hear the bill. For example, if the bill will be heard first in the health committee, or in the committee

dealing with professions and regulation, some believe that you should pick a legislator who sits on that committee. That is a rule of thumb however keep in mind that many really great sponsor are not on committees hearing the bill.

Some also believe that the Sponsor should be of the party that is in the majority in that house (Senate or House) i.e. If Democrats control the House and Republicans control the Senate, then get a Democratic Sponsor in the House and Republican Sponsor in the Senate. However, it is important to keep your issue as bipartisan as possible – show members of both parties how your concerns relate to them and their core values.

Co-Sponsors: There are Co-sponsors on bills too. Co-Sponsors and the rules for how many co-sponsors are different for every state also. Co-sponsors generally can be from either or all parties and are supportive of the bill and generally vote for the bill and help the sponsor keep the bill moving.

IV. Moving The Health Freedom Bill Through the Legislature

1. Get Your Bill Introduced

The bill language is generally reviewed by legislative counsel at the request of the Sponsor of the bill to make sure the language of the bill is exactly like the advocates wish it to be. Some Sponsors take an active role in reviewing the language of the bill and making suggestions for change. Other Sponsors will completely let it up to the advocacy group as to what the bill says. Once the language is approved the Sponsor submits it to the Legislature for Introduction. When a bill is introduced it receives a bill number.

2. Once the Health Freedom Bill is Introduced Start Mobilizing the Grassroots and Constituents of Legislators

Start having people contact the legislators with their stories. Direct them with input from your lobbyist as to which legislators to send their comments to. Teach people the value of hand-written letters, phone calls, emails, and Clinton Miller one page fax campaigns. Direct people as to when is the best timing for their contacts. Let them know when hearings are, whether they should come to hearings, what to do and say at hearings, and how they can help. Sometimes citizens have to be on standby and be ready as soon as they receive an action alert to go into action. Build the movement by building the number of active citizens on the issue.

3. The Bill is Referred to Committee

In most states, once a bill is introduced and has a bill number it is referred by the Speaker to a Committee that has to do with the subject matter of the bill. It then has to pass the Committees before it goes to the Floor for a vote by the entire legislature. If there are more than one subject area it could be referred to more than one committee. If it has a need for money funds to implement the bill it might be referred to an Appropriations Committee. Which Committee it is

sent to is important in that it will dictate who will be hearing the bill and whether it has a chance of passage.

4. Getting a Committee Hearing

In most states the Chairman of a Committee has complete discretion as to whether to hear a bill or not. Some bills never get heard because the Committee Chair does not allow it. The first task of a health freedom group and lobbyists along with the Sponsor of a bill is to convince the Chair of a Committee to put the bill on for hearing.

5. The Hearings

Once your bill will be heard efforts must be taken to assess and get the vote from committee members.

6. Getting the vote of Committee members

Getting the vote of members is the job of the health freedom group and the lobbyists. The job of the health freedom group and lobbyist is to educate the legislators so well that they are willing to stand by the bill as it is written and defend it and vote for it.

7. Getting the Support of Influential Stakeholders

Committee votes often reflect the opinions of influential political stakeholders in the community. Legislators listen to the concerns of leaders in the community. The number one asset in passing a bill is the positive relationships that you build with influential persons and legislators. Relationships are the basis of politics. Network with important individuals and groups who are “stakeholders” in this issue.

8. Subcommittees

A Subcommittee is smaller than the full committee, sometimes as small as 3 persons or up to 10. It often offers a space for a good in depth look at a bill and has meetings that help interested parties come to creative solutions. Full participation by the health freedom advocates in subcommittee process is very important.

9. Committee Deadlines

Most states have committee deadlines which help the legislature keep their workload moving. The rule book and knowing the process for each state is extremely important so that groups can plan their strategies to keep a bill moving so that it does not die due to a legislative deadline.

10. Amendments to your Bill

Discussing potential amendments is the core of the political process. Some liken the legislative process to “sausage making”. It is rare that what a group starts out with passes as it originally was introduced. However, since that is the goal, the discussion about possible changes to the bill is highly technical and political. It is important to have an attorney and key health freedom advocates available to consult with as changes are suggested to the bill.

11. Your Health Freedom Bill goes to the Floor

The Floor vote is an exciting time because the bill will be voted on by the entire House or Senate. **When your bill goes to the Floor it is a time when the complete power of the health**

freedom movement must be functioning at its highest level. Every legislator must be lobbied by the lobbyist, and by the grassroots movement. Phone calls, meetings with constituents, emails, and faxes are helpful for the push.

12. Identical Language in Both House and Senate

Even if two identical bills were introduced into each body, the bills may not be identical after going through the Committee and Floor processes. Learn the rules from the Sponsor and from lobbyists and other politically experienced people when strategizing on next steps.

13. The Road to the Governor

Once the bill is passed in a final version by one or both houses then it needs to go to the Governor for signature. Whether a Governor can veto the bill is up to the constitution and rules of the state. Vetoing a bill is a highly political act for a Governor and is done with deliberation. In some states the Governor does not have to sign every bill before they go into effect. If a Governor does not sign a bill in some states it will go into effect on its own. Health freedom advocates prefer that the Governor sign their bill as a vote of confidence and approval of the public policy of the bill.

14. A Call for Thank Yous and Celebration

You did it. Personally thank all those who participated in this process. Send personal handwritten thank yous along the way to any person who does a great deed. Send out mass emails and thank yous to grassroots supporters. Have a great celebration around the time of the Governor signing. Enjoy freedom!