

How to Join a Cal Cities Policy Committee

What Are Cal Cities Policy Committees? Cal Cities policy-making process allows the issues facing California cities to be debated and the organization's policy directions to be established. Over 400 city officials serve on Cal Cities seven policy committees and add their collective expertise, wisdom and opinions to the policy debate that is the foundation of Cal Cities policy.

Cal Cities seven policy committees are:

- [Community Services](#)
- [Environmental Quality](#)
- [Governance, Transparency and Labor Relations](#)
- [Housing, Community and Economic Development](#)
- [Public Safety](#)
- [Revenue and Taxation](#)
- [Transportation, Communications and Public Works](#)

What Is the Role of Cal Cities Policy Committees? Over 400 elected and appointed city officials serve on policy committees, and thus participate directly in establishing Cal Cities policy. Policy committee members add their collective expertise, wisdom and opinions to the policy debate that is the foundation of Cal Cities policy by weighing in on federal, state, and regulatory issues that affect cities. The recommendations from the policy committee are forwarded to the Cal Cities Board of Directors. Once approved by the board, these recommendations are adopted as Cal Cities policy, and direct the organization's approach to future policy. The time commitment involves three to four meetings, beginning in January and ending at the Cal Cities Annual Conference in the fall. Meeting locations rotate from north to south.

Want To Become A Policy Committee Member? It is easy to become a member of a policy committee. First, decide what policy areas interest you, and thus, on which policy committee you wish to serve. City officials can receive appointments to serve on a Cal Cities policy committee in four different ways:

- **Division Appointments:** Each of the Cal Cities [16 Divisions](#) has two appointments to each of the Cal Cities seven policy committees. These appointments comprise the majority of a committee's makeup, with a total of 32 members from divisions on each policy committee. Division appointments are usually elected mayors or council members.
- **Department Appointments:** Cal Cities has [10 active departments](#) (including city attorneys, city managers, public works, etc.) These departments make one appointment to each policy committee. These appointments mostly add city staff expertise to a committee, with the exception of the Mayors and Council Members Department which appoints an elected official.
- **Caucus Appointments:** Cal Cities has [five Diversity Caucuses](#): Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander, Women's, LGBTQ, and African American. Each of these caucuses can make one appointment to each committee. If you are a member of one of these caucuses, you can seek an appointment to a committee.
- **Presidential Appointments:** The Cal Cities president may appoint up to 16 city officials to each policy committee. Cal Cities presidents may bring different priorities for these appointments which can include: adding city officials with expertise on important policy matters, enhancing diversity of viewpoints, providing opportunities for new city officials to serve, and retaining the experience of long-serving members. When city officials are appointed to serve as committee chairs and vice chairs, they are considered Presidential Appointments, which may open up a division, department, or caucus slot. Presidential appointment applications are submitted via an electronic form provided by Cal Cities after division, department, and caucus slots have been filled.

Interested in joining? Contact Cal Cities' Legislative and Policy Development Specialist, Meg Desmond, at mdesmond@cacities.org.

10 Tips for Cities Lobbying the California Legislature

1. Become engaged in the state level political process by appointing a legislative liaison within your city to track key legislation and work with your regional public affairs manager. You can locate contact information for your regional public affairs manager online at www.cacities.org/regionalmanagers.
2. Use Cal Cities as a resource. Visit www.cacities.org/legresources to access League priority bills, legislative contacts and additional information. The Cal Cities online bill tracking tool can be found at www.cacities.org/billsearch.
3. Read the *Cal Cities Advocate* newsletter to stay current on important legislation. Subscribe at <http://www.cacities.org/calcitiesadvocate>.
4. Develop relationships with your Senate and Assembly representatives as well as their capitol and district office staff.
5. Get to know members of your local press and educate them on legislative issues affecting your city.
6. Understand how state decisions impact your city's budget.
7. Build networks and collaborate with other groups in your community on key legislative issues.
8. Organize an internal process within your city for developing and proposing changes to laws that will help your city.
9. Adopt local policies on legislation that enable your city to react quickly to the legislative process and respond to Cal Cities action alerts.
10. Write letters on legislation featured in *Cal Cities Advocate*. Sample letters can be found at www.cacities.org/billsearch by searching with the bill number or bill author.

Effective Letter Writing Techniques

1. **Include the Bill Number, Title, and Your Position in the Subject Line.** Never bury the bill number and the action you want the legislator to take in the body of the letter.
2. **One Bill per Letter.** Legislators file letters according to the bill number.
3. **State the Facts.** Describe the impact the bill would have on your city. Use “real world” facts; legislators like to know how a bill would specifically affect cities in their districts. Cal Cities often provides a sample letter that includes space to describe local impacts. This part of the letter is the most valuable to the legislator.
4. **Think About the Message.** Letters may be targeted to specific legislators or entire committees. Think about who you want to act on the bill and message accordingly. If you are writing in support of transportation funding, emphasizing how the project will reduce greenhouse gases might be important to one legislator, while highlighting how the project could encourage additional development and jobs might be important to another. Both messages are correct, but your effectiveness will be in selecting the right message.
5. **Check for Amendments.** Always check the Cal Cities website (www.cacities.org/billsearch) to make sure you are addressing issues in the latest draft. Bills are often significantly amended and the issue you are writing about may have changed or have been deleted altogether by the time you send your letter.
6. **Send follow-up letters to the appropriate legislative committees as a bill moves along.** You can often use your original letter with some modifications. Visit www.cacities.org/billsearch to track the bill's location. In addition, *Cal Cities Advocate*, Cal Cities' online newsletter, features stories on key legislation.
7. **Provide a Contact.** At the close of the letter, provide a contact person in case there are questions about the city's position.
8. **Know the Committees on Which Your Legislator Serves.** A legislator is likely to pay more attention to the bill positions of their constituents especially when it comes before his or her committee. At the committee level, this is even more important because your legislator has greater ability at this point in the legislative process to have the bill amended.
9. **Copy the Right People.** Send a copy of the letter to your senator, assembly member and Cal Cities. Please also send a copy to each committee member and staff if applicable.