



# VPA LEGISLATIVE PROTOCOLS

## [02/2023]

### **Legislative Responsibilities**

#### **Legislative Liaison (LL) – elected every two years by the membership<sup>1</sup>**

- Serve as Chair of the Legislative Committee and perform all associated duties
- Register as the VPA legislative liaison with the Secretary of State's office (lobbyists), if required
- Track/report VPA legislative expenditures under adopted budgets
- Coordinate oversight of VPA / VNRC Legislative Intern with weekly bill / committee tracking assignments
- Represent VPA on the NNECAPA Executive Committee as the Vermont Legislative Representative

#### **Legislative Committee Chair – elected annually by Legislative Committee if there is no Legislative Liaison**

- Organize LC meetings, oversee drafting of legislative priorities / position papers
- Represent VPA's legislative interests
- Coordinate VPA's legislative work through the Executive and Legislative Committees, VPA Listserv
- Track legislation, identify bills of interest to planning community, and send regular reports to VPA Listserv
- Provide regular legislative updates to membership
- Act as VPA's primary legislative contact for responding to legislative & administrative requests
- Establish legislative contacts – Legislative Council, committees
- Distribute VPA position papers, briefs and make known that VPA is available to testify on topics included in VPA's legislative priority list

#### **Legislative Committee (LC) – ad hoc committee open to all members**

- Draft position papers, briefs for VPA-sponsored legislation (e.g., white papers, studies, draft legislation)
- Annually (prior to the start of the session) identify annual legislative priorities, poll membership
- Draft written testimony on bills of interest for EC consideration, with input from VPA members as feasible
- Assist the LC Chair / LL in tracking legislation
- Testify before legislative committees upon request

#### **Executive Committee (EC) – elected to represent VPA**

- Adopt, periodically update VPA legislative protocols
- Identify planning issues to be addressed through VPA-proposed legislation – e.g., as included in VPA's strategic plan, as identified at annual meetings, or as requested by members
- Appoint Legislative Liaison (every two years)
- Establish VPA's legislative budget, reimbursement policy, per federal and state requirements
- Recommend, review and endorse VPA position papers, briefs submitted by the Legislative Committee
- Annually review and endorse legislative priorities submitted by Legislative Committee prior to session
- Review/endorse testimony, bill language drafted by the Legislative Committee as needed during the session
- Maintain key alliances with related organizations (VLCT, VAPDA, VNRC, SGV, etc.)

#### **Because of the need for timely responses during the legislative session, it's very important that:**

- Legislation of interest is closely tracked – the VNRC / VPA Legislative Intern acts as "eyes and ears" at the state house to track legislation through committees and floor votes.
- Legislative priorities are assigned to one or more legislative committee members who agree to do the necessary background research (including membership polls where appropriate) and drafting, and who will serve as the lead contact/rep for particular bills or legislative priorities.
- Draft testimony be reviewed by VPA committees in a timely manner (e.g., within 24 hours of receipt) – in a very few cases it may be necessary to bypass Legislative Committee review and go directly to the Executive Committee for endorsement.

<sup>1</sup> VPA's bylaws provide for a formal Legislative Liaison position which has been unfilled since 2020. The Liaison's work has been taken up by members of the Legislative Committee, primarily the Chair.

## **Testimony Guidelines:**

- Testimony generally should be presented only upon request of a legislator or legislative committee, per our 501(c)(3) status.
- Present VPA position, as endorsed by Executive Committee, not that of a particular individual, community or organization – we're there to represent planners and good planning principles. Testimony should reflect and conform to any VPA-adopted position papers or policy briefs.
- Submit written testimony or summaries of oral testimony on VPA letterhead.
- Identify bill/draft number.
- Identify VPA legislative contact(s).
- When testifying, briefly describe VPA organization, personal qualifications, interest in topic.
- Keep written testimony/summaries brief, to the point – try to limit to one page, front and back and highlight/bullet key points.
- Provide interesting examples where appropriate – especially in response to specific questions – without focusing only on one particular community or region.
- Attach additional information, proposed bill language as appropriate.
- Get copy of testimony request form from Legislative Council, submit with expenses to Executive Committee for reimbursement.

---

### **APA Legislative Training Notes** (Stephanie Vance, Advocacy Associates/ APA Lobbyist)

<b>Myths</b>	<b>Realities</b>
Good information rules	Good messages rule
Planning decisions are based on logic	Planning decisions are emotionally charged
Elected officials want to do what's best for everyone	Elected officials represent their constituency

#### **To be effective, testimony must be engaging – it should:**

- be constituent and coalition based –
  - strength in numbers
  - represent broad base that includes constituency organizations
- be grounded in expertise –
  - know what you're talking about
  - focus on useful information
  - avoid or define professional jargon
  - self-edit (most relevant v. merely interesting)
- provide information that committee members want and need, including information that is –
  - relevant (on topic, timely, and of interest)
  - specific (avoid generalizations and lengthy explanations)
  - personal (include compelling stories, examples)
  - interactive (don't just "educate" – ask questions, request feedback, get committee members personally involved, find out what they need)