

**Senate Committee on Governance & Finance**  
**Senator Lois Wolk, Chair**

State Capitol, Room 408

Sacramento, California 95814

<http://senweb03.senate.ca.gov/committee/standing/governance/>

(916) 651-4119

February 15, 2011

TO: Governance and Finance Lobbyists

FROM: Senate Committee on Governance & Finance Staff

SUBJECT: Old Dogs Learning New Tricks & New Dogs Learning Old Tricks

*Can old dogs learn new tricks? Can new dogs learn the old tricks? We think so.*

We're all learning some new tricks as the new Senate Governance & Finance Committee absorbs the former Senate Revenue & Taxation Committee and the former Senate Local Government Committee. What should you expect from the Governance & Finance Committee's staff during 2011? Here are some hints that will help us help you.

**First, the basics.** Senator Lois Wolk chairs the new Committee, which has nine members. A roster of the Committee members' contact information, including the names of their staffers who work on our topics, is attached.

**When and where?** The Committee's regular hearings are every Wednesday morning. The Committee meets in Room 112. Senator Wolk starts her hearings promptly at 9:30 a.m. The calendar appears on the Committee's website.

**Knock, knock (who's there?)** Marisa Lanchester and Krimilda McKenzie are our Committee Assistants. They make everything work smoothly and we're grateful. Peter Detwiler, Toby Ewing, Colin Grinnell, Samantha Lui, Gayle Miller, and Brian Weinberger are the Committee's staff consultants. You already know most of us, so you can expect the same cheerful treatment.

**Who ya gonna call?** We deal in information. We like to talk to lots of folks about lots of topics. Don't be shy about asking us questions when you think we can help you. *What are the rules for Williamson Act cancellations? How does the property tax deferral program for seniors work? What was in the 1991 bill that restructured mental health services?* If we don't know the answer, we can probably help you find it.

You can contact us several ways.

In person: Room 408  
 By telephone: (916) 651-4119  
 By fax: (916) 322-0298  
 By email:

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**Revenues, restructuring, and results.** Like wind surfing, tangelos, and Brangelina, the Senate Governance & Finance Committee's policy jurisdiction melds familiar elements into something new and improved. In general, the Committee reviews bills affecting state and local government revenues and bonds, land use and development, local governments' powers and organization, and restructuring proposals that move government closer to the people and that improve government results, accountability, and efficiency.

**Bills, bills, bills!** Right after the Senate Rules Committee tells us which bills we're going to hear, Krimilda and Marisa call each author's office to set a hearing date. Later, Toby, Gayle, Colin, Peter, Brian, and Samantha call the author's staff to ferret out background information so they can write the Committee's bill analysis. **We don't use worksheets because we like to talk to real people.**

**PRACTICE TIP:** *If you represent the bill's sponsor, expect us to call you and ask: Where did the bill come from? What's the problem that your client is trying to solve? Is there a pending lawsuit? Has anyone tried a bill like this before?*

**Any amendments?** The Committee's rules require that author's amendments must reach us (in Legislative Counsel form) by noon on the Wednesday one week before the bill's hearing date. Don't be late.

**Timing is everything.** The Committee meets on **Wednesday mornings**. We release our bill analyses on the **previous Thursday afternoon**, six days before the hearing. That means we check the support and opposition **early Thursday mornings**. The way we gather support and opposition for a bill analysis is pretty simple. If the author's office has your letter and tells us about it, then your client's name shows up on our analysis. If your letter isn't there (or if it isn't in our own bill folder), then we won't list it. A phone call to the Committee office telling us that you love or hate the bill doesn't cut it. You must put it in writing. And common courtesy suggests that you need to give a copy of your letter to the bill's author.

**PRACTICE TIP:** *If you want your client's name to show up on our bill analysis, make sure that the author's office has your letter by Wednesday afternoon, one week before the*

*hearing date, so the author's staff can tell us early Thursday morning. You can always fax it to us at (916) 322-0298 or send an email to the consultant who is analyzing the bill.*

Don't call us on a Friday morning and beg to be added to a bill analysis that we released the day before. Like they say, timing is everything.

**It's not just about us.** Besides the Committee staff's bill analyses, the Senate Republican Policy Office also writes bill reviews for the members of the Republican Caucus. Ryan Eisberg and Scott Chavez track the bills that come through the Senate Governance & Finance Committee.

**PRACTICE TIP:** *To get your client's name listed on GOP caucus bill reviews, you must send Ryan and Scott a copy of your position letter. Fax letters to: (916) 445-3105.*

**Your analysis.** Around mid-day on the Thursday before the Wednesday hearing, we hand-carry our bill analyses to the authors' offices and to our Committee members. Our agenda packets come back from the printer on Thursday afternoons, usually around 2 o'clock. Some lobbyists actually read our bill analyses to see what questions the Senators might ask. Now there's an idea!

**PRACTICE TIP.** *We post our bill analyses to the Legislature's website. By the time you're having your first cup of coffee on Friday morning, you can get copies of our bill analyses from: [www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov)*

**Your copy.** We print about a couple dozen copies of the agenda packet for each hearing. The Sergeant-at-Arms takes the extra copies to Room 112 just before our Wednesday morning hearings. When copies go fast, some lobbyists get their feelings hurt. Don't let that happen to you.

**PRACTICE TIP:** *If you want to be sure to get a paper copy of a bill analysis, come to the wall rack in the hallway outside Room 408 on Thursday afternoon or Friday morning.*

**Omnibus, not ominous!** In addition to introducing multiple omnibus tax bills, the Committee collects several minor, noncontroversial changes to the state laws affecting local governments and puts them into an omnibus local government bill. Collectively authored by all nine Committee members, the Committee's omnibus bills are always consensus products. If anyone objects to something in an omnibus bill, that item comes out. The Committee's "Local Government Omnibus Act of 2011" is SB 194. We'll circulate a first round of additional items in February and the second round in May.

**PRACTICE TIP:** *If your client wants to propose an item for the local government omnibus bill, come see us right away. We can explain how to do your homework so that your request goes smoothly.*

**Get it in writing.** We've built up a nice repertoire of resource documents. You'll find them on the Committee's website under the "Reference" and "Publications" headings. One of the most helpful pieces is *The Quick List: An Annotated Glossary of Local Government Statutes* which

directs you to many of the laws we use. Also handy is *Revenues and Responsibilities: An Inventory of Local Tax Powers* which is a comprehensive list of the state statutes for local taxes.

**So, what do you know?** We also have several reports from the Committee's oversight hearings. When we write bill analyses, we use our own reports. It's called self-plagiarism! If you work on these topics, you and your clients can learn from the Committee's reports.

**PRACTICE TIP:** *Order copies of the Committee reports that match your clients' interests. Read our Publications List on the Committee's website. Because they don't trust us to handle money, you need to order the reports directly from the Senate Publications Office. Call them at (916) 651-1538.*

**Even more information?** Who staffs the Committee members? What does *double-jointing* mean? Where can I get information about sales and income taxes, state bonds, LAFCOs, redevelopment, and state-local restructuring? We've posted our basic reference materials on the Committee's website because we want you to use them. Finding these materials online saves you the phone call.

**PRACTICE TIP:** *Go to the Committee's website to find lots more information:*  
<http://senweb03.senate.ca.gov/committee/standing/governance/>  
*Make our website one of your "favorites," OK?*

**Spread the good word!** Who else in your shop has to put up with us? Do your colleagues (and us) a big favor and forward this memo to them. Your secretary, your research assistant, and even the bike messenger service will thank you. So will we!



*All kidding aside, if you think that we can help you in other ways, please drop by and tell us. Please help us help you. Many thanks!*