

Lessons Learned from Defending Licensure in Texas

REMEMBER: emphasize public health and safety...legislators don't care about geosciences – these bills are often a dollars & cents issue (framed with words including “freedom to practice”, “eliminating barriers to business”, etc).

Tips toward success:

- 1) Hire the best lobby firm that money can buy then find a solid point person for the geo community that can shake and move like no other to get things done in an instant. The fight will likely be constant. AEG's Licensure fund can provide matching resources to your Chapter, but AEG's financial resources are limited.
- 2) Don't send your smartest geologist to visit with legislators. Odds are the legislator failed science. Send your best “people person” or the legislator will lose interest.
- 3) Find out who the bill author is talking to and figure out how you can contain the damage quickly. Bill authors are often prompted to issue legislation by a well-funded out-of-state group who is aiming to eliminate licensure in multiple states.
- 4) Request the list of GITs and PGs early then find a GIS person to address match them and assign them to districts so you can quickly have them contact their legislators at various times during the process. Confirm their districts ASAP because many register with their office address. It is very important that only constituents contact their legislators. Legislators rarely listen to members of the public outside their individual districts.
- 5) Get with the ASCE (Engineers) folks at the state level ASAP. They have numbers and you need their support.
- 6) Find the right key issues early and insert them into everyone's talking points. Repeat many times while talking.
- 7) Legislators like pictures and video and it should be kept on a 9th grade level. Don't over-complicate issues.
- 8) Get a one-page memo together that hits the key points supporting the P.G. licensure and send it to the Chief of Staff for every legislator. Remember, their staff has huge influence and it is often more productive to speak with them than it is to speak with the legislator.

In Texas, our keywords were groundwater, landfills, infrastructure failure, and environmental risk for developers and banks. It was often counterproductive to use "environmental" when speaking with legislators. DO NOT mention climate change or global warming, unless these are issues that your state legislators / state governor support.

Bottom line: STAY AWAY from emotional issues and stick to the facts. The fight is never over, so stay prepared for renewing efforts during the next legislative cycle.