Demystifying the MA state legislature



Prepared for COSA by

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Agenda

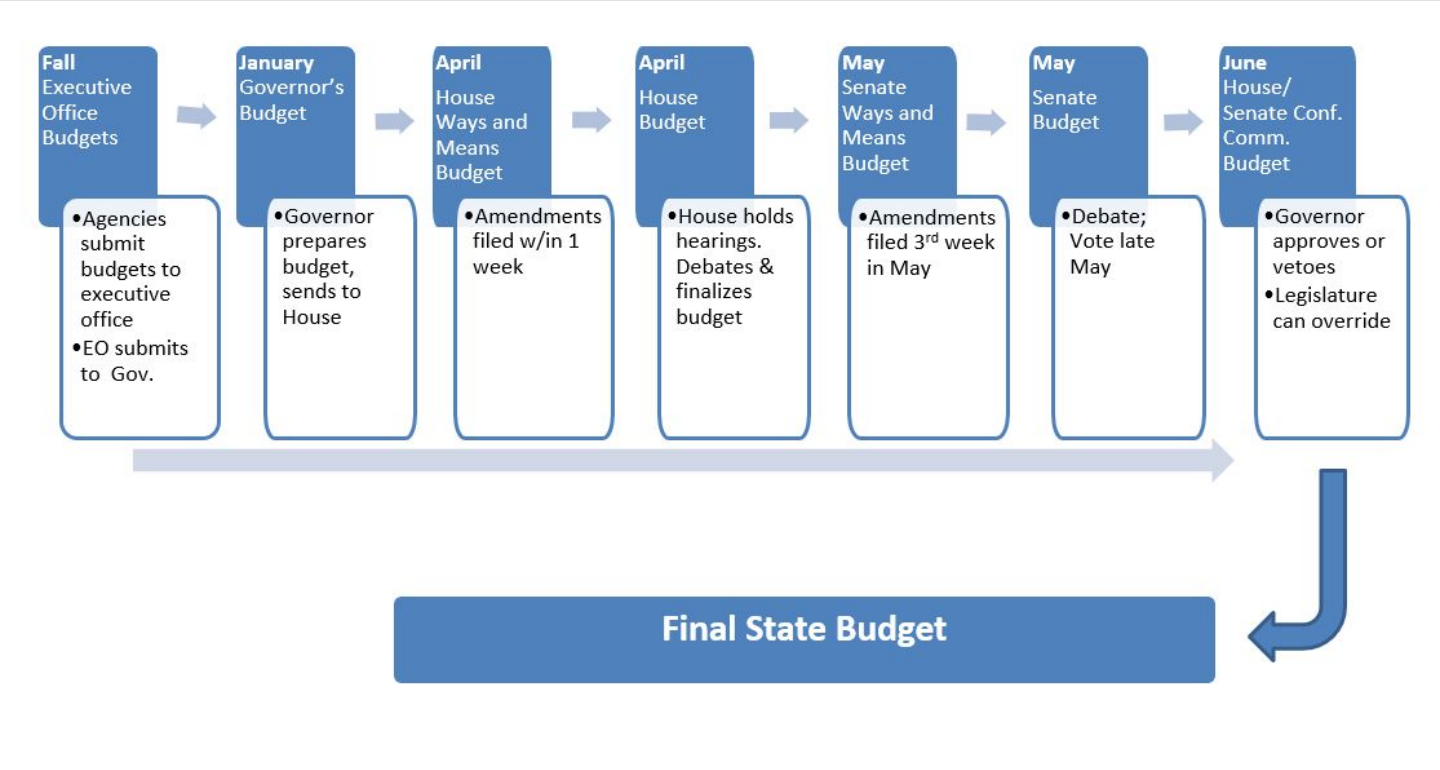
- ➔ Four pillars of the work
- ➔ Brief overview of the legislative calendar (legislative journey + budget process)
- ➔ Establishing & maintaining productive relationships
- ➔ Tips
- ➔ Answering your questions



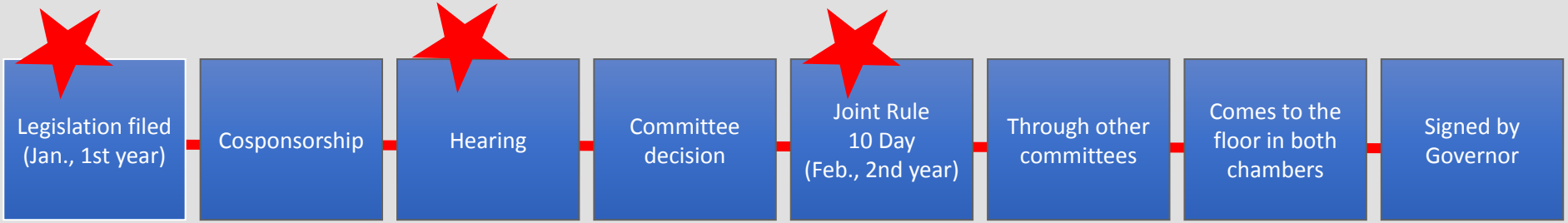
Four pillars of the work

- **Partnerships:** Municipal engagement
- **Advocacy:** Constituent service
- **Policymaking:** Legislation
- **Show Us The Money:** Budget and bond bills

State Budget Process (1 year cycle)



Legislation (2 year cycle)



Timing Matters

Establishing & maintaining productive relationships

- ❑ Introduce yourself (constituent?) and your work (in a local and/or state-wide context)
- ❑ Invite legislators to a site tour (if relevant) where they can speak with program participants
- ❑ Your homework: Acknowledge work of legislator on your issue/concern
- ❑ Know what legislators do and when they do it: budgets, legislation, constituent casework. Timing matters
- ❑ Know legislators' priorities
- ❑ Know the difference between municipal, state, federal efforts

Establishing & maintaining productive relationships

- ❏ Understand that the legislative process is not linear
- ❏ Be clear about how the legislator can be the most helpful
- ❏ Relationships are long-term
- ❏ Ask good questions and ask for commitments
- ❏ Cultivate legislative staff members *equally*
- ❏ Be ready to be helpful if the legislator asks for your advocacy/expertise
- ❏ Never assume knowledge or awareness is equal across legislators at any given moment. Always take the time to make them smarter and more aware of impact on constituents
- ❏ With 6k bills filed annually, [over] communication is good
- ❏ Offices operate differently

Tips

- ❑ Earmarks are limited, volatile, not guaranteed
- ❑ When advocating for budget and/or policy, remember in WMA, the delegation (House and Senate) relationships are important. Also remember that state-wide efforts are important
- ❑ Your legislators' good relationships with their colleagues are important
- ❑ With policy, committee chair contact is important
- ❑ With budgets, Ways and Means contact is important



- ❑ **People-power ALWAYS wins the day**
- ❑ **Your job as an advocate is to get the right information to the right people at the right time with the right demand/ask**

Answering your questions

- What is the best way to prepare for hearings?
  - 3 min. verbal + written + research + heart-centered stories + urgency + ask
  - Verbal and written gives you a double opportunity
  - Be mindful of deadlines for pre-registration and testimony submission
- What are the best mechanisms for communicating?
  - Relationship dependent (*always include your residential or program address, email and phone!*)
- Does timing matter? YES!
- How to track legislation or budget actions? www.malegislature.gov
  - www.repmindydomb.com/legis-website/ - webinar on using malegislature.gov

Answering your questions

- Are calls to action effective and how can they be improved and maximized?
  - Well-timed + concise message + key messengers + a mix of individual & aggregated (*always include residential address and/or program address & contact information*)
  - If possible, indicate impact on legislator's district and for constituents
- How can organizations show support and acknowledgement for the work their representatives take on key issues?
  - Personal communication + public messaging + social media
- How to share data and stories effectively to raise awareness for key agenda issues?

Our Contact Information

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Thank you COSA!

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