

Washington State Legislative Service Project: Lobbyists 2013

Full Report – Spring 2014

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*The **Legislative Service Project** examines the views of key individuals involved in the Washington State Legislative process to determine how changes to this process have affected legislative civility. Study participants include legislative and agency staff, registered lobbyists and legislators who served during the 1990 to 2013 legislative sessions. Participant responses provide insight into the legislative process, public perception of the process, the dynamics of legislative civility and member interactions, and issues having an impact upon work performance from the perspectives of staff members, registered lobbyists and legislators. The ultimate goal of the **Legislative Service Project** is to improve the current Washington State legislative process and better prepare the next generation of leaders for public service in the Evergreen State.*

Legislative Service Project – Lobbyists 2013

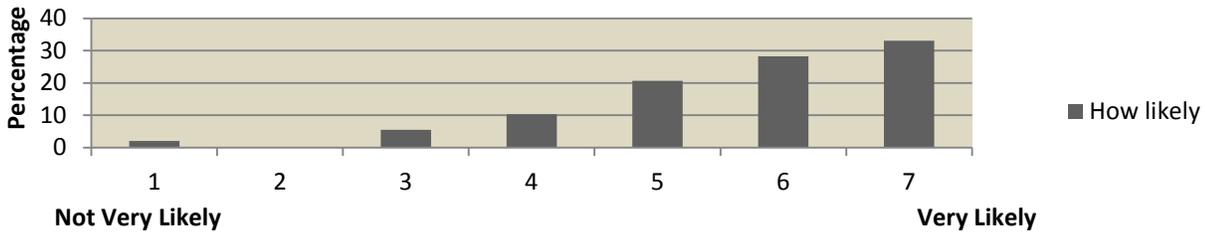
*The lobbyist portion of the **Legislative Service Project** focuses on persons who were working as registered lobbyists during the 2013 legislative session of the Washington State Legislature. Lobbyists were contacted by e-mail and provided a web link to participate anonymously in the research. Survey questions included the specific areas of: legislative public image and effectiveness, civility and working relationships, legislative campaigns, leadership/management styles, and work/sleep performance effects. Of the 703 lobbyists contacted, 162 responded and participated in the research.*

Participating lobbyists, as expected, have considerable experience with the legislative process. An overwhelming majority (94%) of survey respondents have been involved with the legislative process for at least 5 years, and 60% have at least 20 years of legislative experience. Almost 2/3s of the participants were male. About half of the lobbyists identified more closely with the Democratic Party, with the other half primarily identifying their partisan attachments as self-described independents. Survey participants were evenly distributed along the liberal to conservative scale on fiscal policy, but were heavily weighted toward the liberal end of the continuum on social policy.

Overview of lobbyists' responses on significance of the legislative service experience

*Following the trend of previous **Legislative service Project** surveys, lobbyists continue to find their work to be highly meaningful. Their prior formal education, community and political activism, and legislative process experience was identified as what best prepared them for their work as a registered lobbyist.*

If you had the opportunity to go back in time and re-live your life, how likely would you be to once again choose to lobby the Washington State Legislature? Average 5.65



What were two jobs or life experiences which you believe *best prepared you* for your current position?

Most frequently mentioned:

- Formal education, including law school and critical thinking
- Community and political activism
- Legislative process experience

Public perception of government

When evaluating previously recommended ways to improve citizens’ perception of state government, lobbyists rated “improve communication to citizens” as the easiest to implement and that “work for the good-of-the-state and not personal/partisan agendas” would create the greatest effect. The prior stated recommendation which was rated as producing the greatest difference between level of effectiveness and level of implementation difficulty was “improved communication to citizens.” The recommendation which was rated as capable of producing the least effect was “focusing on budget completion first.”

The results of previous legislative surveys recommended the following ways to improve citizens’ perceptions of state government. For each item please indicate how effective the item would be to improve citizens’ perceptions of state government and how difficult it would be to implement.

Effectiveness	Recommendation to Improve Citizens’ Perceptions of State Government	Implementation Difficulty	Difference
Average	Low (1) – 7-point scale — High (7)	Average	
4.06	Work for the good-of-the-state and not personal/partisan agendas	3.80	0.26
3.89	Increase civility between legislators	3.09	0.80
3.86	Complete legislative work during the regular session	3.19	0.67
3.81	Increase citizen education of legislative process	3.58	0.23
3.73	Improve communication to citizens	2.65	1.08
3.64	Increase citizen involvement in the process	3.67	-0.03
3.48	Increase transparency of the process	2.96	0.52
3.05	During the legislative session, focus on budget completion first	3.69	-0.64

In your view, what is one other action the Washington state legislature can take to improve its image?

Most frequently mentioned:

- Complete work without special sessions
- Focus first on budget and priorities
- Emphasize issues which are resulting in positive progress
- Improve civic education, communication, and transparency
- Reduce partisanship

Legislative effectiveness

When evaluating previously recommended ways to improve legislative effectiveness, the lobbyists rated “limiting how many committees a legislator can serve on” as the easiest to implement and that “party leaders encourage working cooperatively across the aisle” would create the greatest effect. The recommendation which was rated as producing the greatest difference between level of effectiveness and level of implementation difficulty was “party leaders encourage working cooperatively across the aisle.” The recommendation which was rated least effective was “change the rule timelines so bills move faster.” Participants in the survey attribute the high number of legislative special sessions to an inability of legislators to work together, reduced revenue, and lack of incentives to finish in the allotted time. In order for work to be completed during the regular session lobbyists believe that the best actions would be for legislators to focus on priorities, limit the number of bills, and increase cooperation. While some lobbyists feel that one solution is to lengthen the regular session, they do not comprise the majority.

The results of previous legislative surveys recommended the following ways to improve the overall effectiveness of the legislative process. For each item please indicate how effective the item would be to improve legislative effectiveness and how difficult it would be to implement.

Effectiveness	Recommendation to Improve Legislative Effectiveness	Implementation Difficulty	Difference
Average	Low (1) – 7-point scale — High (7)	Average	
4.00	Party leaders encourage working cooperatively across the aisle	3.48	0.52
3.28	Review the rules for ways to modernize them	2.89	0.39
3.10	Increase legislative nonpartisan professional staff/resources	3.10	0.00
3.08	Limit how many bills a legislator can introduce	3.05	0.03
2.99	Limit how many committees a legislator can serve on	2.70	0.29
2.40	Change rule timelines so bills can move slower	3.18	-0.78
2.35	Incorporate a week break in the middle of the session	2.78	-0.43
2.35	Increase the length of session	3.29	-0.94
2.34	Reduce the hours spent in meetings each day during session	3.22	-0.88
2.09	Change rule timelines so bills can move faster	3.05	-0.96

In your view, what is one other action the Washington state legislature can take to improve its effectiveness?

Most frequently mentioned:

- Increase bipartisanship
- Limit the number of bills
- Do not have special sessions and have shorter sessions
- Become a full-time legislature

Twenty of the last thirty years has required at least one legislative special session. Why do you believe there have been so many special sessions?

Most frequently mentioned:

- Brinkmanship between the parties
- Budget and financial issues
- Because there are no consequences for not finishing on time
- The revenue forecast are not available early enough in the long session

What needs to change for the legislature to complete its work during the regular session?

Most frequently mentioned:

- Focus on priorities, process and outcome
- Limit the number of bills
- Work cooperatively

Some legislators feel that the increase in legislative workload, moving from part-time to full-time, is the reason for not finishing during regular session and that the solution is to increase the length of the regular session. Do you agree with this recommendation?

Yes- 26%

Legislative civility and relationships

Registered lobbyists taking part in the survey tended to feel that the easiest ways to improve legislative civility and relationships would be for legislators to “hold social functions which are limited to legislators” and “eat meals with other legislators.” The most effective recommendation was thought to be “show respect for other people and their opinions.” The recommendation which was rated as producing the greatest difference between level of effectiveness and level of implementation difficulty was “work with legislators from the other party on joint projects.” The recommendations which were rated most difficult to implement and least effective were (1) “for legislators to be examples of statesmanship” and (2) “change seating assignments so parties are intermixed,” respectively.

The results of previous legislative surveys recommended the following ways to improve legislative civility and relationships. For each item please indicate how effective the item would be to improve legislative civility and relationships and how difficult it would be to implement.

Effectiveness	Recommendation to Improve Legislative Civility and Relationships	Implementation Difficulty	Difference
Average	Low (1) – 7-point scale — High (7)	Average	
4.24	Show respect for other people and their opinions	2.95	1.29
4.20	For legislators to be an example of statesmanship	3.12	1.08
4.01	Be willing to work with those with whom you don't agree on bill of mutual interest	2.96	1.05
3.70	Work with legislators from the other party on joint projects	2.35	1.35
3.50	Spend time with other legislators outside of session	2.54	0.96
3.28	Visit other legislators in their legislative district	2.37	0.91
3.25	Eat meals with other legislators	2.19	1.06
2.97	Hold social functions which are limited to legislators	2.19	0.78
2.59	Change office assignments so parties are intermixed	2.79	-0.20
2.38	Change seating assignments so parties are intermixed	2.77	-0.39

In your view, what is one other action the Washington state legislature can take to improve legislative relationships?

Most frequently mentioned:

- Respect others and their opinions
- Practice bipartisanship
- Increased socializing
- Improve communication and listen to others
- Stop attacking other parties

For the following scenarios, rate how civil the following actions are:	Civility level
Very Uncivil (1) – 5-point scale – Very civil (5)	Average
An individual disagrees with you about a political issue and tells you their stance on that issue	4.39
An individual disagrees with you about a political issue and tells you that you are wrong	2.99
An individual disagrees with you about a political issue and starts an argument with you	2.02
An individual disagrees with you about a political issue and chooses to treat you differently	1.81
An individual removes your campaign sign from your yard due to difference in their political stance	1.27
An individual disagrees with you about a political issue and starts a fight with you	1.22

Legislative campaigns

When evaluating recommendations for improving the campaign process, lobbyists tended to feel that the easiest way to make progress would be to “hold joint freshman orientations which involve both parties.” This recommendation also resulted in the greatest difference between effectiveness and implementation. The recommendation viewed as the most effective was for legislators to “avoid being hostile.” The recommendation which was rated most difficult to implement and also least effective was “allow opponents to see campaign ads prior to their release.”

The results of previous legislative surveys highlighted concerns about the effect of hostile campaigns on legislative working relationships and recommended the following ways to improve the campaign process. For each item please indicate how effective the item would be to improve the campaign process and how difficult it would be to implement.

Effectiveness	Recommendation to Improve the Campaign Process	Implementation Difficulty	Difference
Average	Low (1) – 7-point scale — High (7)	Average	
4.14	Avoid being hostile	3.44	0.70
3.95	Hold joint freshman orientations which involve both parties	2.18	1.77
3.84	Change state law to require truth in advertising for campaigning	3.94	-0.10
3.80	Party leadership be proactive to repair damaged relationships	3.48	0.32
3.58	Follow the same civility standard for inter and intra party races	3.10	0.48
3.07	If you have been attacked, get over it	3.74	-0.67
2.41	Have opponents meet one-on-one after the campaign	3.15	-0.74
2.13	Allow opponents to see campaign ads prior to their release	4.07	-1.94

Technology impacts on the legislative process and working relationships

Lobbyists tend to believe that increased use of new communication and information technology could improve the legislative process through increased constituent interactions, more provision for remote testimony, and greater use of live video conferencing. This technology can also be used to improve communication with constituents by increasing communication channels and language options. Remote testimony is seen by many lobbyists as a way to broaden the diversity of citizen participation and increase access, but its use also raises concerns related to meeting time management, potentially reduced quality of testimony, and reduced face-to-face contact.

The use of video conference technology as a way for committees to receive public testimony is being proposed. Should video conferencing be used to allow for constituents to provide remote testimony?

Yes - 72%

What are the benefits and disadvantages of remote testimony?

Benefits:

Most frequently mentioned:

- Reduce travel costs
- Receive a broader and more global perspective
- Increased access for those wanting to testify
- Increased citizen participation

Disadvantage:

Most frequently mentioned:

- Increased management and technical challenges
- Increased length of hearings
- Difficulty of interaction with speakers
- In person testimony is more effective and productive

What are ways new technology can be used to improve the legislative process?

Most frequently mentioned:

- Remote testimony, video conferencing or webinars
- Improve legislative website
- Allow multiple perspectives on issues and increased participation
- Save time and reduce costs
- Satisfied with current technology

What are ways new technology can be used to improve communication with constituents?

Most frequently mentioned:

- Encourage remote testimony, video conferencing, and webinars
- Increased incorporation of online applications, social media, and e-mail
- Alternate language options for non-English speaker

Legislative leadership and decision-making processes

Results from past legislative surveys revealed that legislators and legislative staff/lobbyists have different opinions concerning how legislators process information and make decisions. Lobbyists tended to opine that these differences result from a combination of differences in perspective, misunderstanding of decision making processes, and personal choice.

The results of previous legislative surveys revealed that legislators and legislative staff/lobbyists have differing opinions concerning how legislators tend to process information and make decisions. Why do you feel that the staff/lobbyists who work closest with legislators have an understanding which differs from legislators concerning how legislators make decisions?

Most frequently mentioned:

- Differences in perspectives
- Misevaluation/misrepresentation of personal decision making process
- Desire for individuals to like you

What are ways legislators can better communicate the process they follow when processing information and making decisions?

Most frequently mentioned:

- Increased honesty and transparency
- Take time to explain the decision making process
- Listen to the perception of others – It may be closer to reality than you think it is

Sleep and legislative work performance

Lobbyists indicated that during the course of the legislative session there is a decline in their productivity, quality of work, personal and work relationships, quality of sleep, and personal and work satisfaction. The greatest decreases in productivity and job satisfaction are experienced during the compressed calendar and very long days of the legislative session. With regard to productivity, lobbyists measure productivity for themselves based on the amount of work/bills they are able to manage, availability of time to envision strategies and plan actions, and client satisfaction.

The results of previous legislative surveys identified that during session legislators get tired sooner, go to bed later, take longer to fall asleep, wake up more often at night, sleep fewer hours, get up earlier, and have a harder time getting up.

In general, do you feel that the previous statement matches most legislators' experience?

Yes 89%

As a lobbyist, do you feel that the previous statement also matched your legislative session experience? Yes 84%

Beginning of session	Rate each of these items in relationship to the beginning and end of your last legislative session	End of session	Change
Average	Poor (1) — 7-point scale — Excellent (7)	Average	
4.31	Your personal attitude about life	3.22	-1.09
4.14	Your overall quality of life	3.15	-0.99
4.35	Your family relationships	3.40	-0.95
4.15	Your personal enjoyment	3.21	-0.94
3.79	Your sleep quality	2.88	-0.91
4.22	Your job satisfaction	3.36	-0.86
4.32	Your personal work productivity	3.59	-0.73
4.29	Your work relationships	3.72	-0.57
4.21	The quality of work decisions you made	3.81	-0.40
4.03	The number of mistakes you made (excellent=few, poor=many)	3.64	-0.39

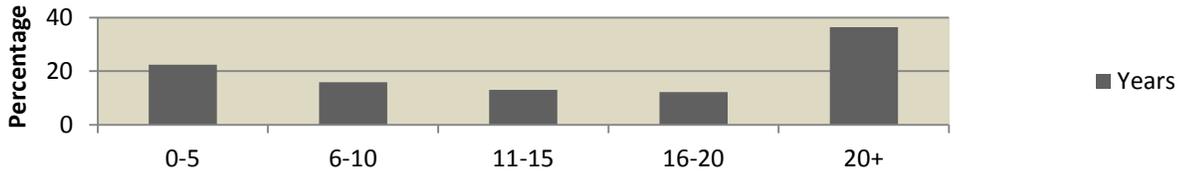
What are ways that you measure productivity for yourself?

Most frequently mentioned:

- The number of bills able to engage and manage
- Accomplishment of goals, assignments, and priorities – outcome produced
- Having adequate time to think, vision and plan
- Level of client satisfaction
- Feedback and input from others
- Maintaining a positive energy level

Appendix: Political Personal Background

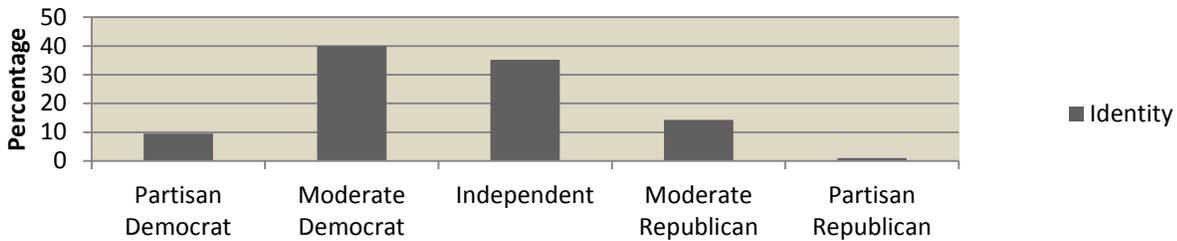
How long have you worked in a job which interacts with the legislative process?



What is your gender?

Male	65%
Female	35%

In terms of your partisan identity, where do you feel that you fall on the following continuum?



On fiscal policy issues (taxes, government, spending), rate where you stand on the following continuum? On social policy issues (such as abortion, marriage equality, doctor-assisted suicide), rate where you stand on the following scale.

