

From Policy Watch/ Nancy Amidei, Director the Civic Engagement Project

The PROCESS – “Pulling Legislators” during Floor Action

During periods when the legislature is busy, Capitol visitors need to practice a briefer, more concentrated form of lobbying visit. Here’s what happens during Floor Action.

All 49 of our State Senators are in the Senate Chamber; and all 98 of our State Representatives are in the House Chamber. Their job at this point is deciding whether to vote YES or NO on key bills and budget items. Often they’ll also be deciding whether to AMEND those bills.

➔ That’s why visitors to Olympia during this period should take **THREE E-A-S-Y STEPS.**

STEP 1: Go to the Capitol Building (the one with a dome), and go up **to the 3rd floor**, just outside the House and Senate Chambers (where-ever their key bills are being voted on).

As visitors, we can’t physically go onto the House or Senate Chamber floors to make the request, but the legislature has put in place an easy way for us to make the request.

There’s a big open area just **outside the House and Senate Chambers**, on the **3rd Floor of the Capitol building**. The House Chamber is on one side, the Senate Chamber on the other.

(Anyone in the Capitol building will be happy to point you in the right direction.)

Each chamber has two entrances: a “**North**” **Door** and a “**South**” **Door**, and just outside those doors to the Chambers are shelves with small pads of “Floor Slips” on them. [Note: at least on the Senate side, Democrats are at one door and Republicans are at another door. You should choose the appropriate door. Furthermore, the floor slips are different colors for the Dems and Repubs, and you choose the right color.]

Outside the House Chamber they are small (just about 4” x 5”);

Outside the Senate Chamber they are a bit longer (8.5” x 5.5”).

- In both cases the top of the pad shows whether you got it at the NORTH or SOUTH door.
 - In both cases there is room for you to say WHO YOU ARE, and WHICH SENATOR (or REPRESENTATIVE) you wish to speak with.
 - In both cases there is a little room for a brief message.

STEP TWO: Take a sheet from the message pad, and fill it out (pens are provided).

Write in your Representative or Senator’s name, as well as your name and your town. When sending in

a Floor Slip to a Representative, you also need to check the Floor Seating Chart (right above the pads) so you can fill in their SEAT #.

STEP THREE: Write a brief note, asking them to step out to see you.

This is often referred to as “**pulling a legislator from the Floor.**”

Mention the issue that brings you to the Capitol (a bill they are voting on, a budget item).

Ask them to step out for a brief conversation, e.g., I hope you will vote for _____ and would like a minute to explain why.

Hand the note to the Doorman standing just at the entrance to the chamber; he’ll hand it over to one of the high school student Pages..., who will deliver it to the legislator’s desk.

The legislators will know from the note whether you are standing outside the NORTH (or SOUTH) Door, and if they can, they will step out to speak with you.

If they are in the middle of an important vote, or waiting to debate an amendment or issue, they won’t be able to step off the Chamber Floor. But if they can, they will come out for a brief (repeat BRIEF – maybe one or two minutes) conversation. That’s why most Olympia regulars know that it pays to wait for 10-15 minutes to see if a legislator is able to come out.

It is also why savvy visitors make a point of checking their legislators’ photos before coming to Olympia ... the better to recognize them when they step out for a conversation. (Those photos and bio’s are at www.leg.wa.gov – Find Your Legislator.)