MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

#MDARTSDAY2025

ADVOCACY DOs

- Do be courteous and friendly. Refer to legislators as “Senator (Last Name)” or Delegate (Last Name).”
- Do take the opportunity to say “Thank You” whenever it arises.
- Do know the issues thoroughly and be familiar with all sides of an issue.
- Do be a good listener. You will have a better chance to address any objections to arts funding if you know why your elected official is opposed.
- Do humanize your message. Include anecdotal stories about how programs and public dollars impact real people.
- Do participate in building strong local and statewide coalitions with other cultural, civic, educational and business institutions in the public and private sector. These partners are invaluable tools for garnering support.
- Do use your enthusiasm, smiles, and eye contact to keep your legislators engaged.
- Do remember that legislative staff can make a difference. Don’t be surprised if you meet with staff, even if you had an appointment directly with the legislator. Most likely, there is a legitimate reason for the legislator’s absence. Remember the staff are important in the process as well, they are responsible for gauging constituents’ view on issues and communicating them to the legislator. Ask the staff if they need any additional information or assistance from you.

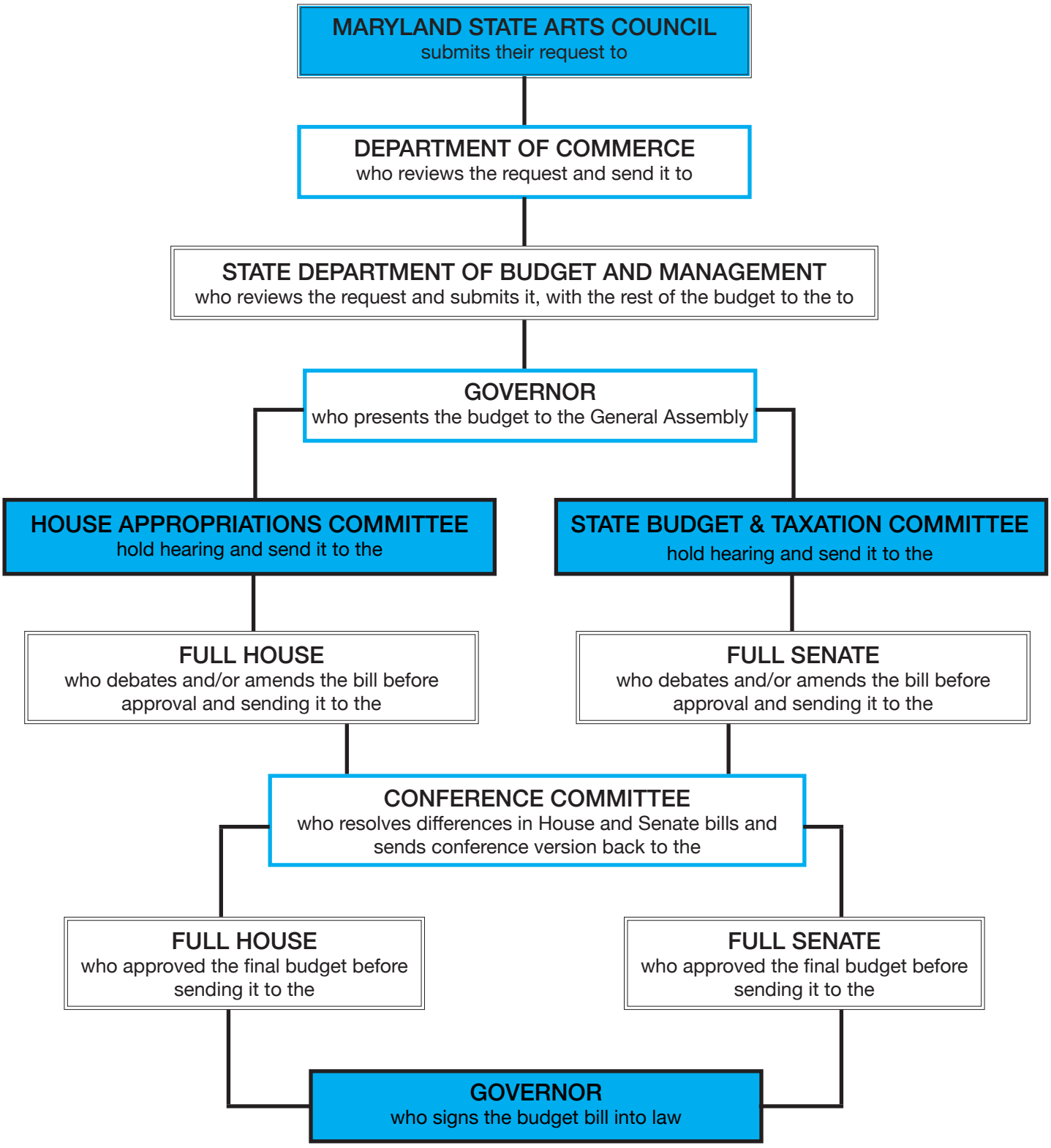
ADVOCACY DON’Ts

- Don’t be late. An unwritten law of advocating is that it’s okay for the legislator or staff to be late, but unacceptable for the constituent to be late.
- Don’t preach or lecture.
- Don’t use a negative or intimidating tone.
- Don’t expect your meeting with your legislator to be long, especially when the General Assembly is in session. Maximize your time by whittling down your presentation to include an opening statement, a few supporting details, a closing summary, and a request.
- Don’t bluff. If you don’t know an answer, say so, and call back with the correct information at the next opportunity.
- Don’t accept a general answer to your request. In a positive manner, request the official’s specific views on the issue.
- Don’t wait until the last minute to contact your elected official about an issue before legislature.

AFTER THE VISIT

- Send a thank you note as a follow-up to your visit, restating the main points of the meeting. Remember to provide any information you promised to send during the meeting.
- Make sure your elected officials are on your mailing list for your annual reports and programming guides
- Invite them to performances, exhibits, special events and receptions. If they attend, acknowledge their presence publicly and thank them for their support..
- Get to know elected officials’ staff members and keep them informed on an ongoing basis. Invite staff members to events and cultural programs as well as the elected officials.

How the State Arts Budget Gets Approved



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