



Government Relations & Public Affairs Committee

Item #13-6-5
Information

June 3, 2013

SACOG Advocacy Procedures

Issue: Information regarding staff use of SACOG's Advocacy Procedures.

Recommendation: None; this item is informational only.

Discussion: At the May Government Relations & Public Affairs Committee meeting, Committee members were interested in better understanding how staff uses the SACOG Advocacy Procedures, which are attached. As discussed briefly at the meeting, the Procedures are intended to give staff the ability to carry out board policy direction on state and federal issues without coming back to the Board for every specific position taken.

As a general rule, staff interprets the procedures conservatively. Between 2009 and today, based on the best information available, it appears that SACOG staff sent letters supporting, opposing, or seeking amendments to 50 bills, with an average of 10 positions taken annually. In 38 cases, the Board adopted a specific position, and staff then acted.

In six instances, staff communicated a position on legislation without a specific Board action, but the position was based on either a past action on the same legislative language from an earlier year, or was based on special Board-adopted principles for a specific legislative topic area, which complies with the Advocacy Procedures.

In other instances, staff consulted with the Board Chair and GRPA Chair, even when not required. The Advocacy Procedures allow staff to act independently when the issue meets the three tests of (1) consistency with advocacy principles, (2) urgency, and (3) the issue is critical to SACOG or its members.

In addition to the Advocacy Procedures, staff always asks a series of questions before considering whether SACOG should weigh in on a bill. These include, but are not limited to: Does the issue impact SACOG or its members? Is the issue covered by SACOG's advocacy principles? Is the issue related to SACOG's work or plans? Is SACOG a credible voice on the issue? Does it uniquely affect SACOG (or other agencies with any of its various designations), or does it affect all local governments?

Approved by:

Mike McKeever
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment

Key Staff: Kirk Trost, Chief Operating Officer/General Counsel, (916) 340-6210
Erik Johnson, Government & Media Affairs Coordinator, (916) 340-6247

SACOG Advocacy Procedures

Purpose of Advocacy Procedures

These procedures ensure that the SACOG Board of Directors provides prior approval of any position on legislation or administrative actions. They also detail the steps board members and staff must follow before communicating a SACOG position when there is insufficient time for full board approval.

The Role of Advocacy Principles

The state and federal advocacy principles adopted annually outline the policy issues for staff to either actively pursue, bring to the board for consideration, or simply track and monitor. The advocacy principles serve as the strategic plan of SACOG's advocacy with both the legislative and executive branches of the state and federal governments.

SACOG board members and staff will make every reasonable effort to seek board approval before any position is communicated as a SACOG position. In addition, staff will utilize email to keep Government Relations & Public Affairs Committee members updated on pending issues of interest to SACOG. However, because time constraints may arise which may make board approval impossible, the following "normal" and "urgency" procedures shall be followed by board members and staff:

Issues Covered by Advocacy Principles

- **Positions on Legislation/Administrative Actions With Board Approval (Normal)**
SACOG board members and staff may communicate a position consistent with the board-approved advocacy principles after seeking approval from the Board of Directors at a regularly scheduled meeting.
- **Positions on Legislation/Administrative Actions Without Board Approval (Urgency)**
SACOG board members and staff may communicate a position on specific legislation or administrative actions that have not been approved by the board: 1) if they are consistent with the board-approved advocacy principles; 2) staff reasonably believes that time does not permit board approval; and 3) the issue is critical to the well-being of SACOG or its member jurisdictions. As soon as reasonably possible, the executive director shall email the full board to inform them of the staff action.

Issues Not Covered by Advocacy Principles

- **New Policy Issues (Normal)**
When policy issues outside of the scope of the advocacy principles arise, the executive director or board members may bring these to the Government Relations & Public Affairs Committee and then to the board for approval to amend the advocacy principles. Specific legislation or administrative actions may also be brought forward for consideration in tandem. After the board acts, the procedures above apply.
- **Legislation Without Board Approval (Urgency)**
SACOG board members and staff may communicate a position on legislation or administrative actions outside the advocacy principles: 1) if staff reasonably believes that time does not permit board approval, 2) the issue is critical to the well-being of SACOG or its member jurisdictions, and 3) the executive director secures approval from the board chair and the chair of the Government Relations & Public Affairs Committee. If the committee chair cannot be reached, the Chief Executive Officer must secure approval from the vice chair. As soon as reasonably possible, the Chief Executive Officer shall email the full board to inform them of staff action.