

BENCH-BAR COALITION LEGISLATIVE LIAISON PROJECT

As part of an ongoing effort to expand communications and outreach with members of the Legislature, the Bench-Bar Coalition (BBC) launched the Legislative Liaison Project (LLP).

The purpose of the project is to improve outreach to legislators by formalizing a system of contacts and liaisons with key current and former legislators. One BBC member will be the liaison for one key legislator, and each key legislator will have only one assigned BBC member.

“Key legislators” include those who:

- consider the judicial branch budget
- consider pending Judicial Council-sponsored legislation through their committee assignments
- are instrumental in legislative action on these bills as they make their way to the Assembly and Senate floors for votes
- have authored or championed judicial branch-related legislation during his/her service in the Legislature

Project Goals

The goals of the project are to:

- Build long-term relationships with legislators and build mutual “trust and confidence”
- Serve as a resource to legislators who have questions on legislative matters of importance to the judicial branch and justice system community
- Maintain the exchange and flow of information, and serve as an “early warning system” on emerging or “hot button” issues
- Take advantage of the expertise we have through our BBC membership
- Where appropriate, serve as a resource to staff handling constituent services in legislative district offices

Legislative Liaison Responsibilities

Each BBC liaison is expected to make at least one quarterly contact with his or her assigned legislator. To better prepare for these contacts, BBC members should participate in BBC conference calls and issue briefings on judicial branch-related legislation, and review news and informational materials provided by the Judicial Council’s Governmental Affairs office. The BBC’s on-line Toolkit will also continuously be updated to provide information that liaisons will need to effectively communicate with legislators.

Examples of effective liaison duties and contacts include:

- During first contact, announce your role as BBC liaison
- Offer to research questions and respond to requests
- When appropriate, refer legislator or legislator’s constituents to others for assistance or a response
- Make interim phone calls and send e-mails to legislator and/or staff

- Meet staff in both District and Sacramento offices, if possible
- Consider meeting legislator for coffee or lunch to provide update on issues
- Regularly submit a feedback form to Governmental Affairs (on at least a quarterly basis, or more frequently, as needed) with any questions or comments from legislator
- Keep legislator “in the loop”: invite to special events at your court, bar association, or legal services venue; share informational materials; add to your mailing list, etc.
- Keep an open, two-way line of communication with the legislator and key staff
- Use periodic notices of current developments you receive as a rationale for a follow-up legislative contact
- Participate in BBC liaison planning calls or meetings

Legislative Liaison Assignments

To serve as a legislative liaison, please complete and return the Legislative & Executive Branch Contact Form, identifying the legislator, key staff member, or member of the Governor’s Administration to whom you are interested in being assigned. Assignments will be made until all key legislators have liaisons.

Liaison assignments will be made based on your responses on the form. You will be contacted as needed to resolve any conflicting requests or questions, and an assignment confirmation email will follow.

We look forward to working with you on this important project, and would like to thank our partners at the California Judges Association for their assistance in developing this program.

Project Contact Information

Please contact the Judicial Council’s Governmental Affairs office at (916) 323-3121 or laura.speed@jud.ca.gov.