

2023-2024 Plan for Association
Government Relations focusing on
Advocacy, Legislative Monitoring,
State Association Management
and the APRO PAC

2023-2024

APRO

Government Relations Plan

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APRO 2023-2024 Government Relations Plan

Executive Summary

The mission of APRO's government relations function is to advance, preserve, and protect the interests of the rent-to-own industry by communicating the perspectives and views of APRO members to government officials at the federal, state and local levels. This plan outlines the association's strategy to effectively reach this goal through four primary areas of focus: Advocacy, Legislative Monitoring, State Association Management, and the APRO PAC. Each of these focus areas also include subsets of specific strategies on communications, activities, and key relationships.

Advocacy

Grass Roots Advocacy The rent-to-own industry has advocated its legislative interests through a grass roots approach for over 40 years. APRO has been the driving force behind this advocacy since the very beginning through organization and coordination of local, state, and federal efforts and effectuation of an overall strategy to protect and promote the industry.

Communications

Publications Throughout the year, APRO publishes weekly APRO Today newsletters, ongoing alerts concerning industry news and developments relevant to the membership, and the RTOHQ Magazine on a bi-annual basis with featured articles on government and legislative affairs. These publications distribute important information to the APRO membership and provide an important means to educate those outside of APRO as to the function and significance of rent-to-own in the national economy.

Social Media To further expand the distribution of the traditional print and email communications, APRO maintains and operates Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram

accounts. These accounts provide means to share and promote important industry news, activities and developments at APRO, and redistribute magazine and newsletter articles in a targeted format.

Communication Pieces APRO will create new and update existing communication pieces for distribution and utilization by members that clearly describe the RTO transaction and clarify common misconceptions in a concerted effort to educate:

1. Federal and state lawmakers
2. Local officials
3. APRO members
4. The general public

Features in the magazine and communications pieces focused on industry education and member advocacy. Some topics to include:

- Proper etiquette in hosting meetings with members of Congress
- How to build a relationship with local politicians
- Best practices for in-store invites, from members who have hosted them
- Interviews with political veterans from the RTO industry
- Stories on historical battles faced by the RTO industry
- Member stories designed to humanize our dealers and the consumers the industry serves

One-page handouts using **Infographics** can be a useful tool to creatively and simply explain complex details about the RTO transaction in terms that anyone can comprehend very easily. Infographics that compare RTO transaction to other types of transactions can make the industry be perceived to be more mainstream and help to dissolve pre-conceived notions about RTO. One such example would be a side-by-side comparison of the way Apple rents iPhones to their customers.

White papers are reports or guides created to inform readers in a clear and concise manner about a complex issue. These are designed to help readers understand an issue, solve a

problem, or make a decision. They can be particularly useful in helping members prepare to testify or reach out directly to legislators, committee members or staff. APRO will explore potential white paper topics for research and publication as an additional function of this legislative strategy.

Activities

APRO's Legislative Conference is the most important event of the year for APRO and the rent-to-own industry. It is open to seasoned industry advocates as well as to conference and RTO newcomers. APRO invites rental dealers and vendors to join together on Capitol Hill to educate our federal lawmakers about the industry, to establish relationships with members of Congress, and to advocate for issues that are critical the success and preservation of the rent-to-own industry.

Advocacy programs for members will be developed for educational purposes to help with effective and strategic marketing methods used to make an influential impact on governmental representatives. APRO will organize meetings for Congressional offices for attendees to meet with their respective senators and representatives.

Research will be conducted on the advocacy efforts of retail organizations to find parallels to be used in the rent-to-own industry.

Industry ambassador program teaches employees/dealers how to talk about the industry to their friends, family and neighbors, particularly how to overcome objections. It is an excellent entry into preparing people for advocacy on Capitol Hill. They become comfortable with the language and defending the industry. It also helps retain employees when they can feel good about what they do and are knowledgeable about their work.

Become an Advocate campaign – By using our established communications channels, create a clever campaign to capture new and especially young professional involvement.

Key Relationships

Relationship Growth Although APRO members have longstanding relationships with many legislators at both the state and federal level, many more relationships need to be made. Particular interest in states such as Minnesota, Wisconsin, New Jersey, Indiana, and New York where the rent-to-own transactions have been less than favorable.

More **conversations and research** will be conducted with lobbyists and included in best practice reports for more effective advocacy efforts.

Monitoring Legislation

APRO conducts daily **monitoring** on proposed bills and legislation, regulatory action, litigation, and trends on both the federal and state levels assessing actual and potential threats to the industry and member business operations. APRO alerts are issued to all members when a potential threat is identified. APRO's partnerships with individual state associations are also important, as many times those organizations are instrumental in responding to legislative situations on the local and state level.

- State Net (Lexis/Nexis) Federal and State Legislative monitoring
- Google

Communications

Any **pending legislation** at the federal level affecting the rent-to-own industry will be communicated to both the state association and, depending on level of severity or relevancy, to APRO's network of members via an APRO alert.

Activities

Daily monitoring of all legislation proposed at both state and federal level.

- Bill tracking
- Committee Hearing tracking
- Vote tracking
- Calendar tracking
- Enacted Bills
- Pending Bills
- APRO Position on Bills (Support, Oppose, Neutral)

Over 40 keywords are used to track state and federal bills on Lexis/Nexis and Google, and more will be added as the industry changes and adapts.

- Lease Agreement
- Consumer Protection
- Bed Bugs
- Lease-Purchase
- Rent-To-Own
- Repossession
- Rent
- Tire rental
- Furniture rental
- Appliance Rental
- Storage Shed

A comprehensive Bill tracker will be maintained and shared with members only to help membership be aware of the status of RTO related legislation across the country.

Key Relationships

State Net Lexis/Nexis Search engine is the primary search, Google is secondary. Other legislative data bases will be researched on an ongoing basis to find the most cost-effective service available.

State Associations

Communications

APRO will publish a “State Association Spotlight” featuring 3-4 state associations in each of the RTOHQ Magazine issues. When a state association meeting is scheduled, a notice will be featured in the APRO Today newsletter and published on the Upcoming Events section of the APRO website.

The following format will be used on each feature:

- Name of Association
- Association President
- How many members?
- When do they meet?
- Where are they located?
- History of the association
- Legislative obstacles the association has faced

Activities

APRO will support annual State Association Meetings and Legislative Days through attendance by the CEO or an APRO staff member, when possible, and through promotion of these events in

APRO publications as described above. Active state associations holding scheduled meetings include:

- Arkansas Rental Dealers Association
- Kansas Rental Dealers Association
- Iowa-Nebraska Rental Dealers Association
- Pennsylvania Association of Rental Dealers
- Missouri Rental Dealers Association
- Maryland Rental Dealers Association
- Alabama-Mississippi Rental Dealers Association
- California Association of Progressive Rental Organizations
- Colorado Rental Dealers Association, Michael Gordon
- Delaware-New Jersey Rental Dealers Association
- Florida Rental Dealers Association
- Georgia Rental Dealers Association
- Rental-Purchase Dealers Association of Indiana
- Illinois Rental Dealers Association
- Kentucky Rental Dealers Association
- Louisiana Rental Dealers Association
- Maine Rental Dealers Association
- New York Rental Dealers Association
- Northeast Rental Dealers Association (CT, MA, RI)

All of these state association features will be compiled into a [state association handbook](#) to be maintained and kept up to date year-round. APRO will also maintain a state association web page on the APRO website and maintain that information year-round as well.

Research

More [research](#) is needed on best practices with state associations

- Consortiums—when they work and when they don't
- When is it cost effective to hire a lobbyist?
- How large should an association be to justify its existence?
- How often should associations meet?
- What is the value of state associations and their meetings from the perspective of vendors?

A [survey](#) will be conducted with state associations annually to gain valuable perspectives on the status of the organizations and to determine what can be done to strengthen the overall health of state associations.

Key Relationships

There are currently 17 states without organized state associations. APRO will work to identify key stakeholders in those states and assist with [organizing](#) where possible. Forging consortiums with surrounding states will be a priority.

[Relationship tracking](#)—we will begin compiling a spreadsheet of key relationships with state associations particularly focused on the following tabs.

- State Association Presidents
- State Legislators
- State Association Lobbyists
- Industry Advocates

APRO PAC

The APRO PAC is managed by the association and provides an important tool for crowdsourcing member contributions and directing funds to election campaigns and key legislators with influence and interest in the rent-to-own industry. This PAC currently holds a modest balance of funds, but additional efforts and strategies are needed to raise funds in order increase and diversify financial contributions as part of this overall legislative plan, particularly given at 2024 is a major election year.

Fundraising

APRO will begin explore new fundraising efforts to communicate and promote the existence of the PAC to the membership and the benefits of directing contributions through the PAC. Fundraising has historically been isolated to the annual Legislative Conference. The Federal Election Commission stipulates certain requirements for solicitation or accepting voluntary contributions from eligible employees of APRO member companies. Prior to initiating any fundraising campaigns beyond member companies, APRO staff will ensure proper consents are in place to maintain FEC compliance.

Donations

APRO's PAC Board of Directors is responsible for determining usage of APRO PAC funds. The Committee will identify legislator and campaign priorities during the upcoming 2024 federal election and direct PAC funds in furtherance of the overall strategy of this Legislative Plan. Only qualified candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate are eligible to receive PAC funds.