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Oregon Legislative Information

You CAN Make a Difference in the Oregon Legislature...

There is something you as a citizen can do to make a difference. Get the word out to others who feel the same way and teach them the process of tracking a bill and becoming part of the legislative process.

You and others need to keep putting pressure on the right people at the right time. The process is the same in both the House and the Senate.

Here are the key areas where you can insert yourself into the legislative process and possibly make a difference:

- 1. First and foremost, contact your own State Representative and State Senator to let them know your opposition or support for a bill.** Be courteous, include your full contact information, and give them your reasons for opposition or support. If you don't know who your Senator or Representative is, you can find out by going to: <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/> and locate the search bar "Find Your District and Legislators."
- 2. Subscribe to e-mail updates and find out what committee the bill is assigned to.** You can do this by going to: <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1> click on "Bills" and type the bill number in the field. On the bill page you can sign up for e-mail updates for the bill by finding and clicking on "Follow this Bill: e-Subscribe Email". To find the committee, scroll down to "Current Committee." There you will find the committee the bill was assigned to. Now click on the committee to find committee information for the bill you are interested in. Agendas are listed on the right-hand side of the committee page.
- 3. Contact the Chairperson of the committee where the bill is assigned.** Also, communicate with the other members of that committee. Let them know you are writing to them, or calling them, because they are on the committee that is currently considering the House Bill or the Senate Bill you are following. Express your concerns or support.
- 4. Keep track of the agendas for the committees you are interested in.** You can urge the Chairperson and other members of the committee to have a public hearing on any bill you are tracking that you like. Again, agendas are listed on the right-hand side of the committee page.

An alternate method to subscribe to bill alerts as well as to legislative committee agendas and more would be to go to the Oregon Legislature's home page <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov> and click on "Citizen Engagement/e-Subscribe to Alerts."

- 5. Watch for a public hearing to come up on the committee agenda.** This is a chance for you to not only attend the public hearing, but you can also testify before the committee for or against a bill. You can also submit written testimony for or against the bill by contacting the Committee Administrator. Written testimony must be submitted at least 24 hours in advance of when a bill is

scheduled for a hearing. Instructions for “How to Testify to a Committee” as well as “Presenting Your Written Testimony” can be found at:

https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen_engagement/Pages/How-to-Testify.aspx.

6. **The next step after a public hearing can be a committee work session.** At that point, the committee can decide to amend the bill, or vote on it. The bill might get sent to another committee or to the Senate or House floor for a vote by all members.
7. **If the bill passes out of the committee to the Senate or House floor for vote,** contact your representative or senator and encourage them to vote according to how you feel about the bill (for or against), with your reasons. Be concise to give your message more impact. You can also contact other legislators with your thoughts about the bill and how you would like for them to vote.
8. **If the bill is approved by the Senate or House, it then moves to the other chamber to go through the same legislative process. Repeat the tracking and communications procedure.**

To understand the timeline of a bill...

- An idea is drafted into a bill
- The bill is assigned a bill number (A House bill always begins with the letter “H”. A Senate bill always begins with the letter “S”).
- The bill is read on the Senate or House Floor for the first time, and then posted on the Internet the next day.

You can now start tracking the bill...

- The House Speaker or Senate President refers the bill to a committee and to the Legislative Fiscal Office and Legislative Revenue Office for fiscal or revenue impact determination.
- The Committee Chairperson determines whether or not a bill will be put on the agenda for a public hearing and a work session. Many bills never make it to the committee agenda and they end up dead on arrival in committee.
- Usually there is a 48-72 hour notice for a first hearing on a bill in committee. There is a shorter notice period for bills as the session gets closer to the end.
- The majority vote of the members of the committee determines whether or not a bill will be moved out of committee.
- If the committee does not pass a bill it is considered dead.
- If the majority votes for the bill to be moved out of committee, the bill will get a second reading in the Senate or House chambers. If there are amendments, it could take up to 7 days. If there are no amendments, it could take place within in 3 days.
- When the bill is posted for a third reading on the Senate or House floor that is your signal that it will be voted on by all the members of that body. If a majority vote in favor, the bill is then sent to the other chamber.
- The whole process starts over again in the other chamber. If the bill is successful in *both* chambers, then it goes to the Governor’s desk for his signature.

If you have any questions about this process, or if Senator Thatcher can be of service to you, please call or email her.