

Legislature 101

Washington Legislature Basics

Elected Official Landscape:

Washington has 39 counties – each with their own council or commission.

Washington Legislature:

- 49 legislative districts (LDs)
- senator (four-year term) and
- two representatives (two-year terms)

Congressional Delegation:

- two senators, elected statewide, six-year terms;
- 10 congressional districts, elects one representative, two-year terms



Who Represents you?

Go to leg.wa.gov and from the main page, find the menu on the left side of the page:

Find Your District

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/>

Once you've identified your district, you can then go back and click on:

House of Representatives and **Senate** to find out who represents you

Legislature Home

House of Representatives

Senate

Find Your District

Laws & Agency Rules

Bill Information

Agendas, Schedules, &
Calendars

Legislative Committees

Coming to the Legislature

Civic Education

Legislative Agencies

Legislative Information Center

Email Updates (GovDelivery)

How Do Bills Become Laws?

First Steps

- An issue is identified by stakeholders and brought to the legislature
- Bill is drafted by a legislator who becomes the prime sponsor
- The Code Reviser's Office puts the bill into final language
- The prime sponsor asks other legislators to sign on as co-sponsors (called a blue sheet in the house or a pink sheet in the senate)
- The bill is put into the 'hopper' at the code reviser's office where it is assigned a number (1000-3999 for the house or 5000-7999 for the senate).

Readings, Committees and Rules

- The new bill is ‘read’ on the floor of the chamber the prime sponsor belongs to (first and last line only) (FYI – all passed bills must be ‘read’ three times in each chamber)
- The bill is referred to a committee based on subject matter
- In committee, staff prepare a ‘bill report’
- Chair decides whether to schedule a public hearing, which is needed for the bill to advance
- Public hearing held
- Bill moves into Executive session where it can be amended
- Moved to another committee for second hearing, or referred to the Rules committee
- Any bill that has a fiscal impact must go to a fiscal committee (Ways and Means or Transportation for the senate or Ways and Means, Appropriations, Capital Budget, Finance or Transportation in the house).

Can We Vote Yet?

- Once a bill gets out of the Rules committee, it is placed on the ‘floor calendar’
- Non-controversial bills go to the ‘Suspension Calendar’ in the house or the ‘Consent Calendar’ in the senate where there is no debate.
- Others go to the Regular Floor Calendar for debate
- Speaker of the House/Lieutenant Governor presides
- Once debate closes, there is a vote

Then the whole process is repeated in the opposite chamber...

Are We Done Yet?

- Short answer... no.
- If a bill is amended at any time in the second chamber, after the vote it returns to the first chamber for concurrence
- If they agree – the bill is ‘passed.’


But Wait... The Governor Needs To Sign

- The Governor has five working days to sign, veto or partially veto the bill
- The legislature may override a veto or partial veto with a 2/3 majority vote in both chambers
- If the Governor does nothing, it becomes law, as if it had been signed
- The bill is sent to the Secretary of State, where it is assigned a session law chapter number.

How can I find Bills and Track Their Progress?

- Go back to <https://leg.wa.gov/> and click on “Bill Information
- From there you can search by ‘Bill Number’ or by text
- You can find all the bills sponsored by your legislators
- You can find out how they voted
- You can look at all sorts of activities and information

Search by Bill Number

Bill Initiative 2023-24  Search

Find Specific Text in a Bill

Standard Reports

Common information requested most often

Reports

Prefiled Bills
Retrieve a report of the bills that have been prefiled in the House and Senate for the current biennium.

House Introductions (latest) All Intros
Lists the bills to be introduced in the House today.

Senate Introductions (latest) All Intros

Advanced Reports

More detailed information used less often

Detailed Legislative Reports
Historical information back to 1991.

Bill Information

Text of a Legislative Document

Bills by Sponsor

- Legislature Home
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It is fun to just go in, snoop around and explore.

Questions?