

ASK FOR A PUBLIC HEARING

Many bills never get even a single public hearing. If a bill does not get heard, it will miss crucial deadlines and will “die in committee” (the fate of most bills). If you support a bill, ask the chair of the committee that the bill is in to schedule it for a hearing. Here are a few other tips:



When advocating for a bill in committee...

- Act fast. Deadlines come and go quickly.
- Get others to advocate for a hearing, too.
- You may want to approach other members of the committee to see if you can gather their support.
- If your bill fails to get heard, look for bills that are similar -- if they are being heard, use that opportunity to express your views and stimulate discussion.

TESTIFY!

If a bill gets scheduled for a hearing, you may have the opportunity to testify. This is when you can tell the committee your view on why the bill should become law (or why it should be stopped).



When preparing your testimony...

- Time is always short! Do the best you can.
- Aim to get it in by the deadline. (If you missed the deadline but not the hearing, send it in anyway! It may be marked "late" but may still be considered by legislators and become part of the record.)
- Get others to testify, too!
- Whether you are providing oral or written testimony, be sure to include your name, the bill number, and whether you support or oppose the bill at the beginning of your testimony.

REPEAT AS NECESSARY!

If you were in support of a bill and it passed out of committee, your work does not end there. Be ready to ask for the *next* hearing, find more people to come and help you testify, and gather legislative support for the final passage of your measure. And remember, having a bill become a law is not easy -- it may take years for the idea to become law. An important part of advocacy is teaching the legislators about your issue and why the bill is vital.



CONTACT THE GOVERNOR

If your bill has made it all the way through the Legislature, it will be in the Governor's hands. Call his office or use the webform available on his website, governor.hawaii.gov, to let him know if you'd like him to sign the bill into law. (If you are against the bill, ask him to veto it.) As with all the other stages of the lawmaking process, there are deadlines -- so act quickly!



COMMUNICATE WITH LEGISLATORS

While it's *always* appropriate to communicate with your legislators, during the interim they usually have more time. The interim -- May through mid-January -- is the time between legislative sessions. So, if you supported a bill or an issue during session and it was less than successful, the interim is a great time to meet with legislators and allies to discuss ways to proceed. Then you will be ready when session starts up again -- as it always does on the third Wednesday of January!



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS AND HOW TO BE INVOLVED

The non-partisan Public Access Room (PAR) can help you learn more about how to advocate for bills and issues at the legislature. We can also teach you about the wonderful tools available on the legislature's website -- you can keep track of bills, easily find lists and reports, sign up for hearing notices, and much more. Let us help you understand the dynamics of how things are accomplished at the legislature. Give us a call or email us -- we are always happy to help!

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