USE YOUR VOICE AT THE LEGISLATURE

TO FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS, HEARINGS, AND BILLS:
Legislature's website: capitol.hawaii.gov

FOR LISTS OF LEGISLATORS, INFORMATION SHEETS, AND TEACHING TOOLS:
Public Access Room (PAR) website: lrb.hawaii.gov/par/

TO ASK QUESTIONS, GET MORE INFORMATION, OR TO SCHEDULE A WORKSHOP:
Contact PAR
Phone: (808) 587-0478
Email: par@capitol.hawaii.gov

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS
Let your elected officials know your concerns, and your position on issues that are important to you. Write a letter or email or call their office. (Find your legislators on the Legislature's website: capitol.hawaii.gov.) Here are a few tips:

When writing a letter or email...
• Be brief, clear, and to the point. Write in your own words. Be courteous.
• Explain your position or request and why it matters.
• Include your return address or contact information. If you write a letter, sign your name legibly or print it below your signature.

When speaking with a legislator...
• Address him or her as "Senator" or "Representative" (or use their leadership position) unless you have already established a more familiar relationship.
• Keep it short and simple. Get to the point and make your ask. Show respect for the legislator’s time.
• Provide additional detail when asked or provide it in a leave-behind piece. If you do not know, say so. Become a trusted resource -- tell the truth and do not exaggerate.

SHARE AN IDEA FOR A NEW LAW
Legislators can help to translate your idea into a bill. Bills can be introduced during the legislative session (mid-January through early May). If the bill is successful, it will become an act of law.

You don't have to translate it into legal language, just summarize the problem (or the opportunity):
• List what you think the law should do.
• Bullet points may help. You want a legislator to quickly grasp what you're trying to say.
• If you have research, sources, or examples, let them know they are available.

Find a legislator who likes your idea. Start with...
• Representative and Senator who represents you
• Chair or member of relevant committee
• Members who have supported similar issues in past
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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