

GET ACTIVE AT THE LEGISLATURE

An occasional email brought to you by the Public Access Room (PAR)

NOVEMBER 2020

November is a key time to talk with legislators



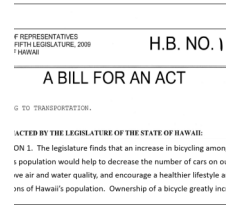
Try to Change the Law



A Quick Overview



Who to Speak To?



Viewing the Bill

Know of a State Law that Needs Changing?



November is a great time to connect with your State representative or senator with your ideas. Let them know how you'd like to see a law changed or if you'd like an entirely new law to be put on the books.

If you wait until session starts in January, you've waited too long. The general rule of thumb is to try to reach your legislator before Thanksgiving — this gives them time to translate your idea into a bill and to get others to support the concept.

A Quick Overview — How to Present Your Idea



Not sure where to start? Try summarizing the chief problem (or opportunity) that a change in the law would address. Then, start with bullet points of the specific changes you'd like to see made to the existing law.

Have a ton of research or a website with loads of data? Point the legislator there, or add the information as an attachment. Likewise, if you know of other states that have passed similar legislation, that's helpful for the legislator to know.

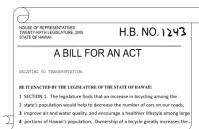
Who To Speak To? You Need a Legislator



In the state of Hawaii, only State representatives and senators can introduce bills into the process, so you'll have to find someone willing to author the bill for you. Where to start? Your own legislators are a good place to begin. You may also try the chair of the committee your bill is likely to first be referred to. Contact PAR if you need assistance.

Note that if you find a member willing to introduce your bill in the House, it is common for them to look for a Senate member to introduce the exact same bill content in the other chamber. And vice versa, a senator will look for a representative. Why? If one of the bills runs into a roadblock, there may be time to work out the kinks so the companion bill can get through. (If both bills survive the crossover deadline, the legislators will usually agree on which one to abandon.)

Viewing the Bill



The bill draft is not made public until it is introduced to the chamber, usually on opening day (this coming year, that will be January 20, 2021) or sometime during the first week of session. Note that it may not be possible to see the bill draft before the start of session.

When the bill is introduced, note the bill number and take the time to read through the bill and make sure it still does what you intended. The legislator may have inserted their own ideas and the drafting agency may have made changes for clarity or legal reasons.

Be sure to sign up to receive email hearing notices on the bill and to add it to your tracking list. Then, you'll wait to find out the bill's committee referrals and be ready to ask the first committee's chair to please hear your bill. Things move quickly at the start of session! Let PAR know if you'd like help making sense of the procedures and deadlines, or finding bills you're interested in.

Public Access Room (PAR)
A Division of the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB)
<https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par>
415 S. Beretania St., #401, Honolulu, HI 96813
par@capitol.hawaii.gov
(808) 587-0478

Follow us on Twitter [@Hawaii_PAR](https://twitter.com/Hawaii_PAR)
Find us on Facebook [@PublicAccessRoom](https://facebook.com/PublicAccessRoom)