

USE YOUR VOICE AT THE LEGISLATURE

TO FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS, HEARINGS, AND BILLS:

Legislature's website: capitol.hawaii.gov

"Reports and Lists" page: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/advreports/main.aspx>

TO LEARN MORE AND FIND "CURRENT LEGISLATURE" INFORMATION:

Public Access Room (PAR) website: lrb.hawaii.gov/par/

PAR YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgLMUbGwLiZlHQPe82oSRg>

TO ASK QUESTIONS, GET MORE INFORMATION, OR TO SCHEDULE A WORKSHOP:


Contact the Public Access Room (PAR)

Phone: (808) 587-0478

Email: par@capitol.hawaii.gov

 Subscribe YouTube [Hawaii Public Access Room](#)

 Find us on Facebook [@PublicAccessRoom](#)

 Visit us on Instagram [publicaccessroom](#)

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

Let your elected officials know your concerns, and your position on issues that are important to you. Write a letter, email, or call their office. Find your representative and senator on the Legislature's website: capitol.hawaii.gov – on the homepage, click in the gray box entitled "[My Legislature](#)" and then select "[Find Your Legislator](#)." Here are a few tips:

- Be brief, clear, and to the point. Use your own words. Explain your position or request simply.
- When speaking with a legislator, address them as "Senator" or "Representative" (or use their leadership position) unless you have already established a more familiar relationship.
- Provide additional detail when asked or provide it in a leave-behind piece. If you don't know something, just say so. Become a trusted resource – tell the truth and don't exaggerate.
- Provide your contact information. If you send a letter, write legibly, and print your name below your signature.
- Don't discount communicating with staff – they can be quite useful in reaching and persuading the lawmaker.

SHARE AN IDEA FOR A NEW LAW

Legislators can help to translate your idea into a bill. Bills can only be introduced during the first week or so of the legislative session (which starts on the third Wednesday of January). If the bill is successful, it becomes 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.
- Do other states have laws like this? Is there a website that provides data? If you have research, sources, or examples, let them know they are available.
- Find a legislator who likes your idea. Start with your own representative and senator. Or perhaps the chair of a relevant committee. Or members who have supported similar issues in the past. (Ask PAR if you need help.)

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). You can find lists of bills on the Legislature's website "[Reports and Lists](#)" page. If you support a bill, ask the chair of the committee that the bill is in to schedule it for a hearing. This is an important part of advocacy that is sometimes overlooked. And the deadlines come up fast! Here are a few tips:

When advocating for a bill to be heard by the committee...

- Act quickly! The more committees a bill gets referred to, the sooner it needs to start moving.
- Get others to reach out to the chair and ask for a hearing, too.

- If you need help convincing the chair, you may want to approach other members of the committee (or your own representative or senator) to see if you can gather their support and have them approach the chair.
- Need help reading a bill's status page to find out what committee it's in and when it's got to move? Contact PAR.



TESTIFY!

If a bill gets scheduled for a hearing, you may have the opportunity to testify – tell the committee why the bill should become law (or why it should be stopped). Contact PAR if you'd like help signing up for email alerts for hearings or assistance using the online testimony feature.

When preparing your testimony...

- Time is always short! Do the best you can. (If you missed the deadline but not the hearing, send it in if you can! While marked "late" it may still be considered and become part of the public 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 passage of your measure. Don't worry about repeating yourself in testimony – just make sure it's still relevant if the bill has changed along the way.

A bill must pass at least three votes on the floor of the House and the Senate before it can leave the legislature. And the House and the Senate need to agree on the exact wording of the bill. 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 persistence in 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. Find them on PAR's website, under the "[Current Legislature](#)" tab.



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 regular 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. In fact, if an election isn't scheduled for the interim, the following year's session is actually a continuation of the legislature's two-year biennium. New bills are introduced, but existing bills can be acted upon as well. After elections, it all starts afresh with new legislators, new bills, and a new biennium that consists of two regular legislative sessions.



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're always happy to help!

(808) 587-0478 par@capitol.hawaii.gov



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