

January 2025



Your Voice: Participating at the Hawaii State Legislature



Public Access Room (PAR)

lrb.hawaii.gov/par

Your Voice: Participating at the Hawaii State Legislature. Presented by the Public Access Room (PAR), (808) 587-0478, par@capitol.hawaii.gov. Our website is lrb.hawaii.gov/par.

QR code goes to lrb.hawaii.gov/par

Agenda

- Discovering the Public's Power in the Legislative Process
- Overview of the Legislature and Legislative Process in Hawaii
 - Find your Legislator
- Providing Testimony
- Looking at the bill summary page – bill status, drafts, past testimony and more
- Learn about the Public Access Room!

Public Access Room

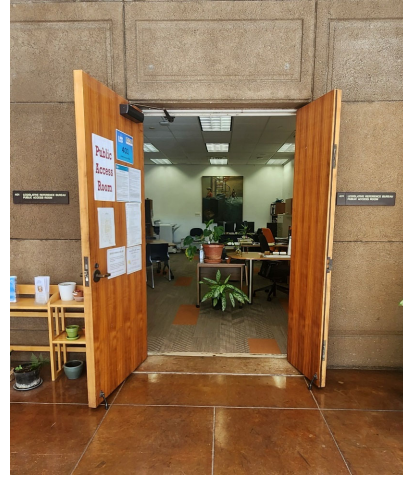
Your Office at the
State Capitol



4th Floor, Room 401

(808) 587-0478

par@capitol.hawaii.gov



Our physical office – the public’s office – is in Room 401 of the State Capitol building (at 415 South Beretania Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813) at the corner of Beretania and Punchbowl streets.

(By the way, the Hawaii State Capitol is a beautiful building with a lot of symbolism built into its open architecture. For more information, visit the governor’s website: <https://governor.hawaii.gov/contact-us/hawai'i-state-capitol-tours/>)

Hawaii Government

3 equal branches

Legislative
Makes laws

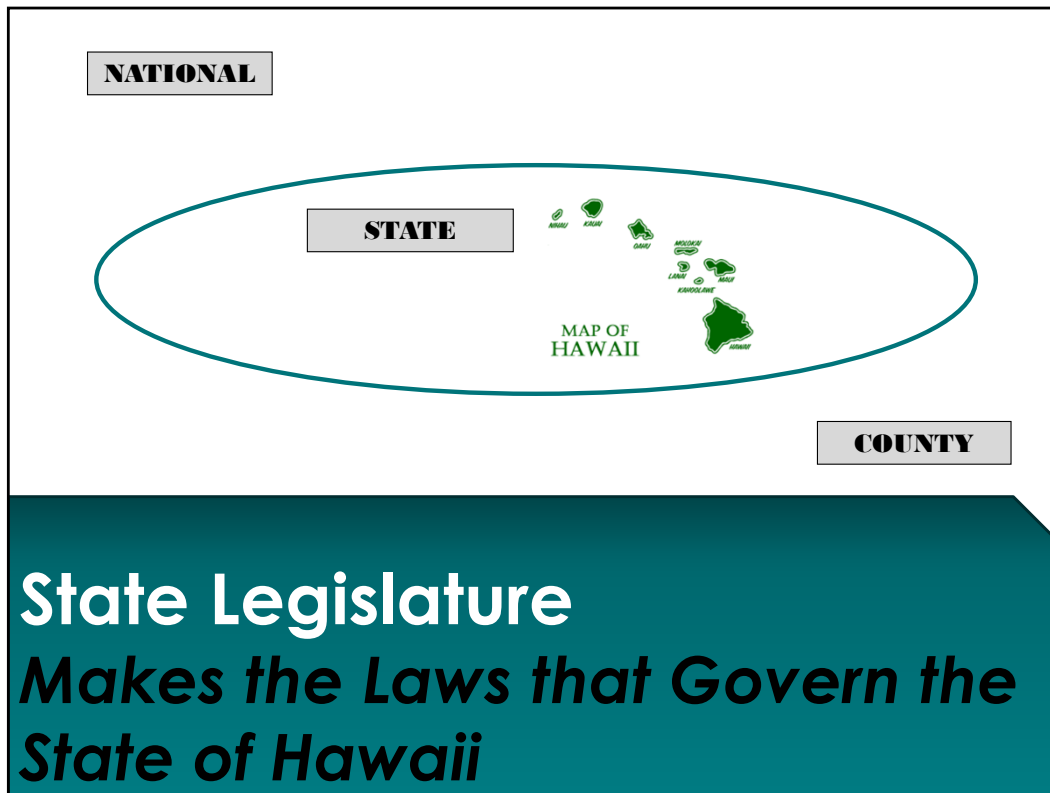


Executive
(Governor &
Departments)
Implements
laws

Judicial
(Courts)
Interprets
laws

Let's start with the big picture. Our democracy is set up with a balance of power – three different, equal branches of government that help to keep one another in check. Roughly speaking, the Legislative branch *makes* the laws, the Executive branch *implements* those laws, and the Judiciary branch *interprets* the law.

In this workshop, we'll be focused on the Legislative branch, the branch of government concerned with making the laws.



We're going to be examining just one level of the legislative branch – the **State legislature**, which makes the **laws that govern the state of Hawaii**.

There are other levels – at the broadest level, there's the U.S. Congress that convenes in Washington D.C. – they're concerned with passing laws that govern the whole country. Laws they pass apply to you whether you're in Iowa, California or Hawaii. This is the level where you'll find Hawaii's U.S. Senators Hirono and Schatz, and our U.S. Representatives Case and Tokuda.

The County level is where you'll find the Councils – the City Council for the City and County of Honolulu, and the County Councils for Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii Island's counties. Ordinances that are passed at this level relate only to that specific county.



Hawaii State Legislature Two Chambers

<u>Senate</u> State Senators (25) 4-year terms	<u>House of Representatives</u> State Representatives (51) 2-year terms
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The Hawaii State legislature is made up of two different chambers (this is called a “bicameral” legislature) – the Senate is the group of 25 senators serving 4-year terms, and the House of Representatives is the group of 51 representatives elected to 2-year terms.

Roughly speaking, a senator’s district is roughly twice as large as a representative’s district.

We can use the term “legislator” to refer to either a senator or a representative.

In this presentation, we’ll be focusing on how the chambers work to make the laws that govern the state, and both chambers operate in roughly the same way. But be aware that they actually each have special powers and responsibilities (for example, the Senate has the ‘advise and consent’ power over Governor’s appointment of department directors).

What do these lawmakers do?

SERVE • as their constituents' voice, vote on legislation

SERVE • on committees focused on particular subject matter

SERVE • in leadership roles

First off, we're a representative democracy, and the legislators actually "speak" for you. Each address in the state is represented by one member of the House of Representatives and one member of the Senate. They **serve as the voting districts' 'voice'** at the legislature as they consider legislation and may also be able to help constituents with a variety of issues.

Secondly, in order to make the whole complicated process a little more manageable, the House and Senate each organize themselves into various **committees** that focus on legislation in particular subject areas. As you'll see, the chairs of these committees have quite a bit of power. Who decides who is on which committee and who gets to be each committee's chair?

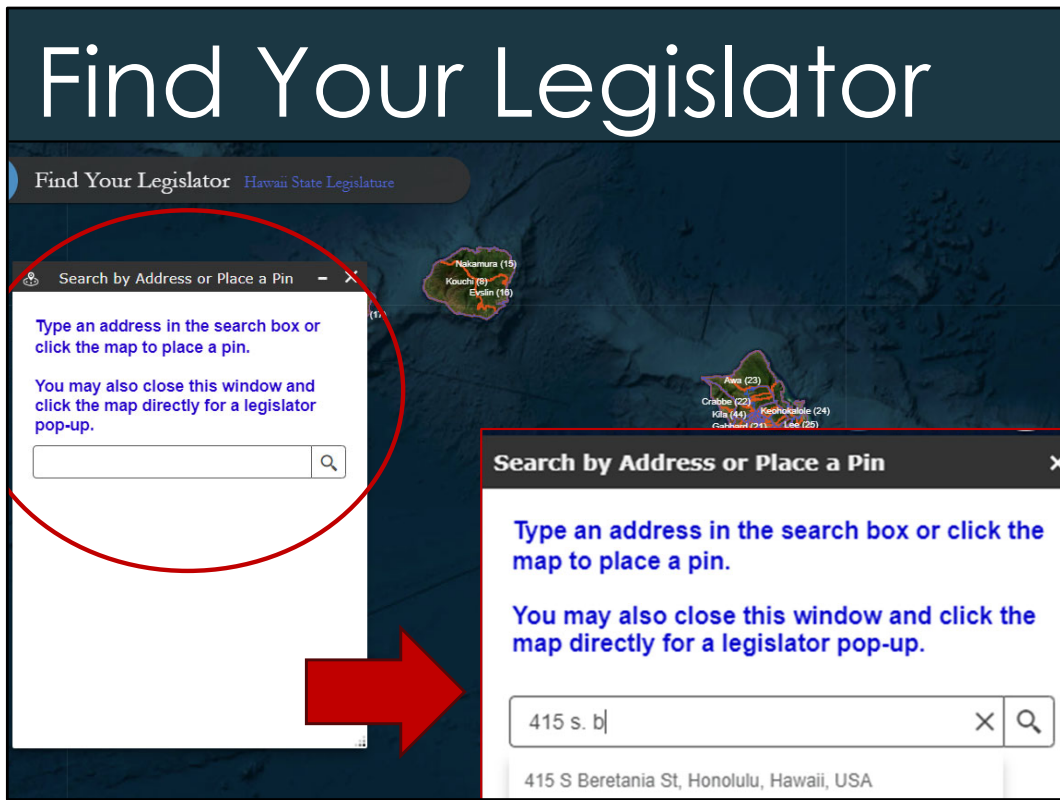
That would be **leadership**. Each chamber elects who will be their leader (the President in the Senate, the Speaker in the House, the Vice President or Vice Speaker, the Majority Leader, and Majority Floor Leader). The reason leadership is so important? Power. They influence a great deal, as you'll see in the slides ahead.

FYI -- When we use the term "Majority" it refers to the political party that has the most members in the chamber – in Hawaii currently, for both chambers that would be the members of the Democratic Party. The "Minority" party (here, the Republican members) also elect one another to leadership positions, to better coordinate the actions of their members.



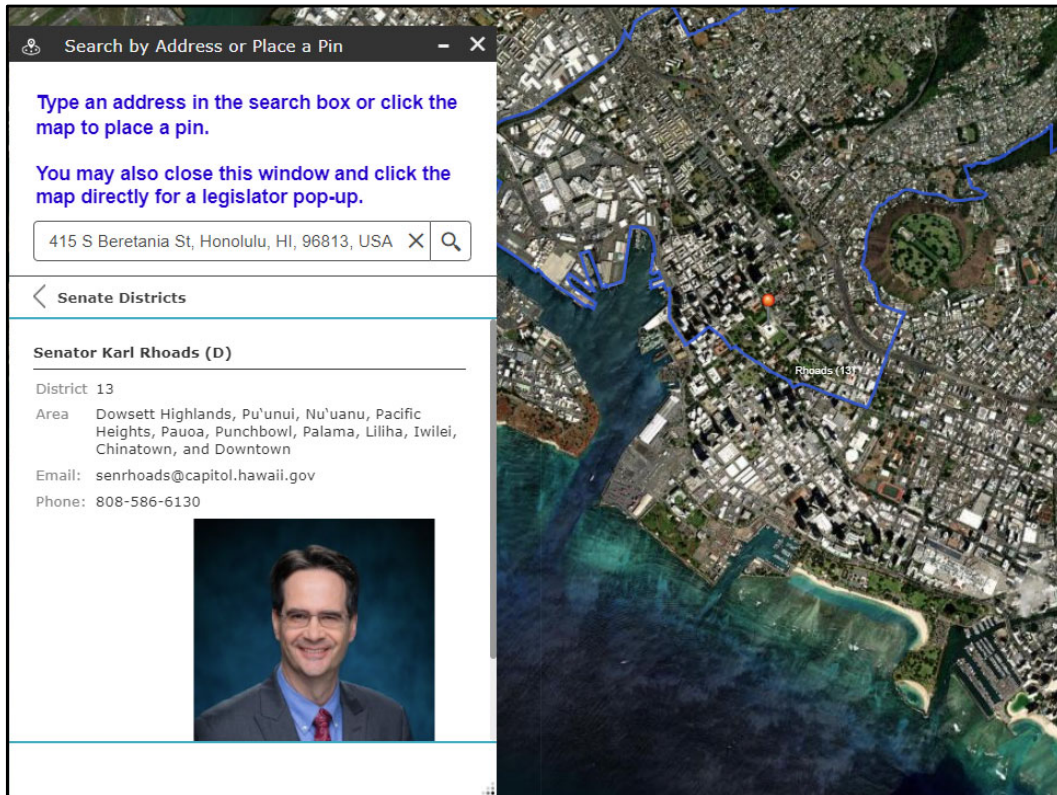
To find out who your own representative and senator are, it's as simple as going to the legislature's website, capitol.hawaii.gov

From the capitol homepage, click on the "Legislature" tab. Then select "Find your legislator" from the drop-down menu.

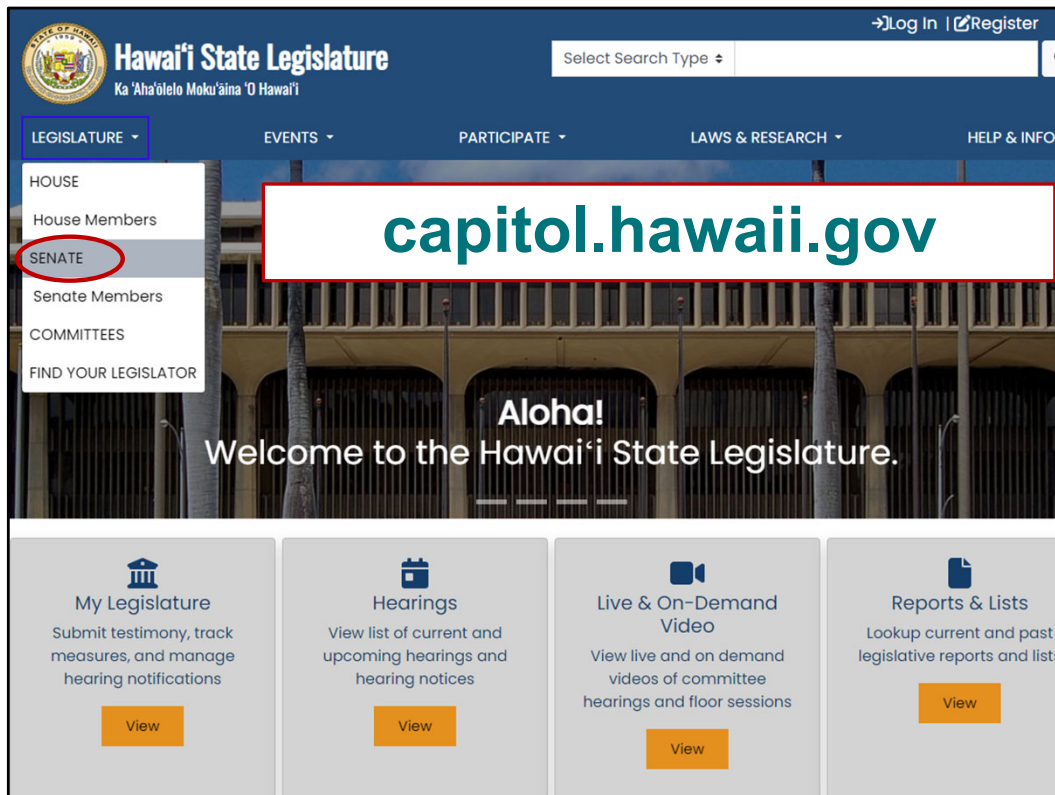


You'll come to this screen where you can type in your address or navigate on the map to a particular location

For example – typing in the state capitol's address



When we click on Senate Districts, we find that our senator would be Sen. Karl Rhoads, and are provided with his contact information and even a photo. If you click on Senate District again, it will collapse the entry and you can click on House District, next, to see your representative



The legislature's website, capitol.hawaii.gov, is a portal to all sorts of helpful information. It's also where you'd go to sign up for hearing notices and submit testimony.

To view the legislators, click on the "Legislature" tab and select either "House" to view information regarding the House of the Representatives, or "Senate" to view information regarding the Senate.

From these pages, you can view the chamber's leadership information, the committees, or all members by clicking on the button you want to view.

You can also click on House Members or Senate Members to go directly to a list of either group with pictures, contact information and the districts each represents.

Hawai'i State Legislature
Ka 'Aha 'olelo Meku'āina 'O Hawai'i

Log In | Register

Select Search Type

LEGISLATURE - EVENTS - PARTICIPATE - LAWS & RESEARCH - HELP & INFO -

Senate

Ka 'Aha Kenekoa

Leadership Committees **Senators**

Senate Links

- [2025-26 Senate Contact List](#)
- [Leadership and Committee Assignments](#)
- [2025 Senate Internal Timetable](#)
- [Legislative Allowance Expenditure Reports](#)
- [Senate Legislative Allowance Guidelines](#)
- [Hawai'i Senate YouTube Page](#)
- [Anti-Harassment Policy](#)
- [Majority Caucus Website](#)
- [Daily Floor Actions](#)
- [Senate Rules](#)
- [Administrative and Financial Manual](#)
- [Senate Advise and Consent Procedures](#)
- [Social Media Use Policy](#)

Ronald D. Kouchi
Senate President

From this Senate page, you can view the chamber's leadership information, the committees, or all members by clicking on the button you want to view. There is a corresponding page for the House.

Hawai'i State Legislature
Ka 'Aha'ōlelo Moku'āina 'O Hawai'i

→ Log In | Register

Select Search Type

LEGISLATURE - EVENTS - PARTICIPATE - LAWS & RESEARCH - HELP & INFO -


2025 SENATORS

[E-mail all Senators](#) [Current Printable Senate Directory](#)


[Show Senators](#) [Show Representatives](#) [Show All](#)

(Showing Senators for the 2025 regular session)


Legislator --Select--



Aquino, Henry J.C. (D)
Assistant Majority Whip
Senate District 19
Pearl City, Waipahu, West Loch Estates, Hono'uli'uli, Ho'opili
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 204
Phone: 808-586-6970
Fax: 808-586-6879
senaquino@capitol.hawaii.gov



Awa, Brenton (R)
Minority Leader
Senate District 23
Kāne'ohe, Kahalu'u thru Lā'ie, Kahuku to Moku'āia, Schofield Barracks, Kunia Camp
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 203
Phone: 808-586-7330
Fax: 808-586-7334
senawa@capitol.hawaii.gov



Chang, Stanley (D)
Senate District 9
Hawai'i Kai, Kul'i'ou'ou, Niu, 'Āina Haina, Wai'ālae-Kāhala, Diamond Head, Kaimukī, Kapahulu
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 226
Phone: 808-586-8420
Fax: 808-586-8426
senchang@capitol.hawaii.gov

Here's the page we get when we select "Senators." We can click on their name to get to their own web page. There's also a drop down list at the top, if you want to see Senators for past years.

**Don't forget
the most
important
participants in
State
legislative
government...**

**People
like you!**



But don't forget the most important participants in State legislative government is the Public. People like you!
Without the public, it just doesn't work.

What can you do?

- **Vote!**
 - State Senator
 - State Representative
 - Proposed Amendments to the State Constitution
- **Run for office** (or help)
- **Communicate** with legislators
- **Offer testimony**
- **Join** with others
 - Advocate!

Here's a reminder of some of the things that we as everyday citizens can do to be part of our own governance.

We vote the senators and representatives into office – senators serve 4-year terms, representatives are elected to 2-year terms. We also vote on proposed changes to the Constitution.

You can run for office or help someone else to do that – you don't need to be a political science major or a lawyer. People with all sorts of experience and backgrounds serve in these positions. We have what is called a part-time legislature (in session from January to May), and many members keep other work positions outside of the capitol while they serve. Of course, things get very busy during session, so you'd need to plan on that!

You can also communicate with the people that are in office, letting them know your priorities, views, and concerns. In PAR, we concentrate on helping you with that, as well as helping people understand how to offer testimony and reminding you to join with others to amplify your voice.

Use Your Voice

Talk with Legislators

Suggest a bill

Ask for a hearing

Testify

Contact the Governor

There's a lot you can do at the legislature:

First off, simply communicate with the people in office. Let them know your views and priorities.

You can also suggest a bill to change a law. When you see the bills being discussed, you can ask for a hearing for ones you'd like to see move forward. If bills you're concerned about do come up for a hearing, you can offer your written and oral testimony. Sometimes, you may want to lobby the entire chamber or legislature – they all need to vote on legislation.

Finally, you may want to contact the governor.

Keep at it! It can take some time to see change at the capitol.

Use Your Voice

Communicate with Your Legislators

COMMUNICATE YOUR POSITION

By Letter...

Email...

Phone call...

In Person

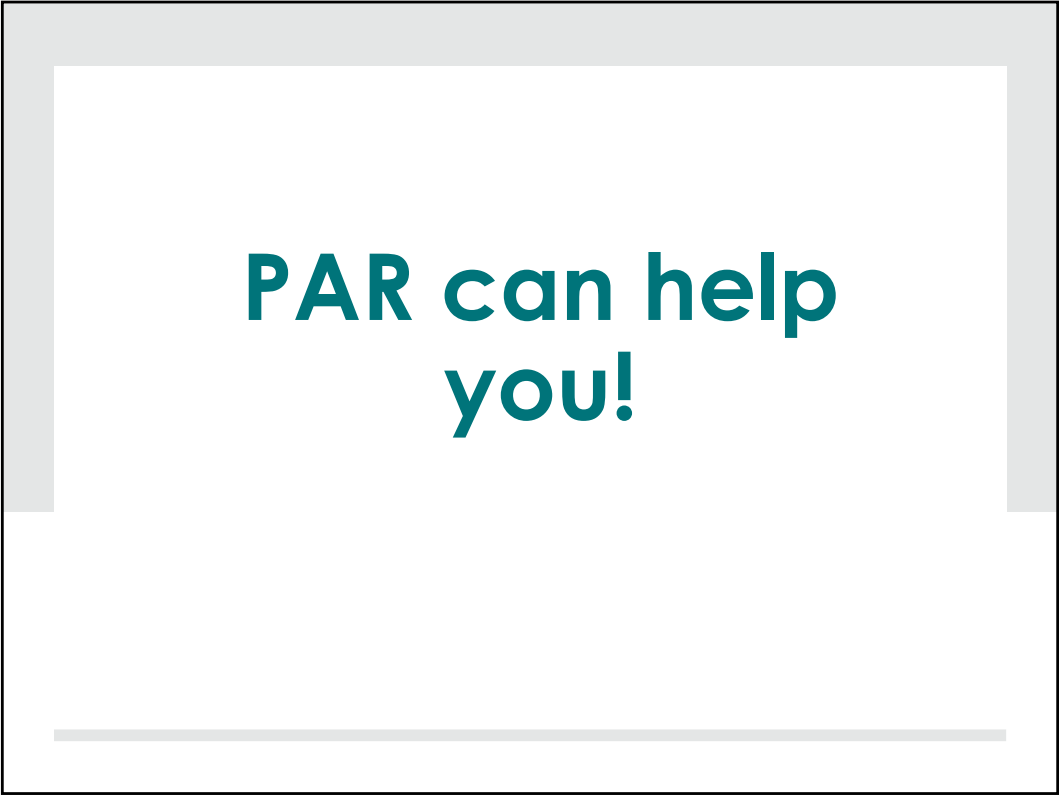
We've already mentioned voting – which is an important way of expressing your voice – but how about communicating with the people who were elected to represent you? Let them know what you think they should focus on – environmental policy, education issues, transportation infrastructure, housing, tourism, public safety issues – what seems particularly pressing to you? What would help or affect you and your family, neighbors, and colleagues? Are there particular issues in your neighborhood that concern you?

It's always appropriate to communicate with your own representative and senator about such matters – you don't have to wait for them to be in legislative session – their offices are open year-round.

Legislators like to hear from their constituents. And even though they may not do what you'd like them to do, they really do listen! Give them a chance – let them know what you think.

Is it better to write or call? Either one – just do it! Writing provides a written record, while calling allows for a dialogue.

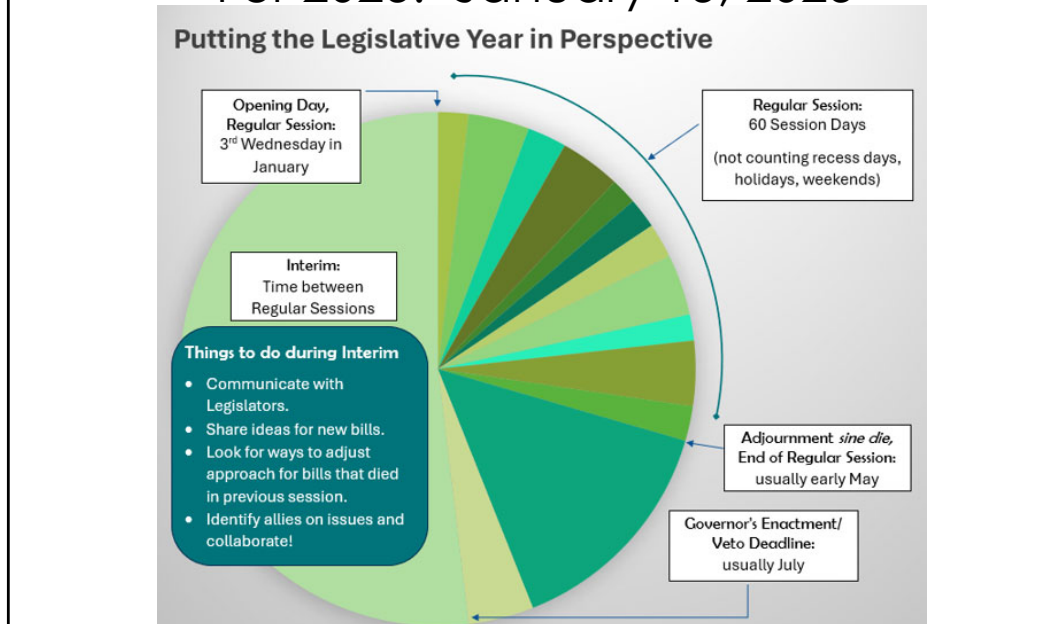
By the way, if you want to hear back from them, let them know. "I'd appreciate a call back." or "I look forward to hearing from you."



PAR can help you!

PAR can help you as you engage with the legislature and the legislative process. Unsure if you should contact your legislator? Call us, and we'll help you focus. And we're one of the best kept secrets in the state – tell your friends!

Regular Session starts on the 3rd Wednesday in January, For 2025: January 15, 2025



As mentioned, in Hawaii we have what is called a “part-time legislature.” About 2/3 of the calendar year is the ‘interim’ period between regular legislative sessions. But that doesn’t mean they’re not busy being your legislators year-round.

It’s crucial to use this time between sessions well, so you’ll be ready for the fast-moving session when it starts (which is always on the 3rd Wednesday in January as directed by the Hawaii State Constitution [[https://lrb.hawaii.gov/constitution/#articleiii Section 10](https://lrb.hawaii.gov/constitution/#articleiii%20Section%2010)]).

About 2,800 bills are introduced each year, all in about the first week after the start of session...you can imagine the frenzy!

Each of the wedges in this illustration signifies a major deadline – and is intended to show you just how fast things move during session.

2025 SESSION CALENDAR A GUIDE TO THE DEADLINES

Legislative Calendar

JAN 15 OPENING DAY – Hawaii’s constitution mandates that the regular legislative session starts at 10:00 a.m. on the 15th of January.

JAN 17 LAST DAY TO INTRODUCE ALL NON-ADMINISTRATION BILL PACKAGES – Bills bundled together by committee by the clerks. You can view the various packages of legislation by clicking on the [“Reports and Lists”](#) & **LAST DAY FOR ORGANIZATIONS TO SUBMIT GRANT AND SUBSIDY REQUESTS** – Deadline for “Grant-in-Aid” nonprofit and other organizations for various public purposes that are recognized as priorities and are Applications, information, and more specifics regarding the deadline appear under [“Legislative Information”](#).

JAN 21 STATE-OF-THE-STATE ADDRESS – The Governor’s annual address to the assembled joint legislature report on affairs of state, and to put forth recommendations and initiatives. Many visitors come to the proceedings from all over the world.

JAN 23 LAST DAY TO INTRODUCE BILLS and then puts it on the floor for consideration and then passes it to the floor for consideration and then passes it to the floor for consideration.

FEB 6 (HOUSE) & 6 (SENATE) COMMITTEE REPORTS – Committee reports are due to the floor for consideration.

FEB 13 FIRST LATERAL FILING (HOUSE BILLS) – First lateral filing of bills in the House.

FEB 14 FIRST LATERAL FILING (SENATE BILLS) – First lateral filing of bills in the Senate.

FEB 20-26 MANDATORY RECESS – Mandatory recess for the legislature.

FEB 28 FIRST DECKING – First decking of bills for consideration.

MAR 6 FIRST CROSSOVER – First crossover of bills between the Senate and the House.

MAR 7 LAST DAY TO INTRODUCE BILLS – Last day to introduce bills in the legislature.

2025 SESSION CALENDAR

Note: 60 session days (days when members convene in their respective chambers), the session day count appears in a box on lower-right, like this. ▶▶▶ # bills resolutions budget See reverse side for more deadline information

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
JANUARY					
		14	15 Opening Day	16	17 Non-Admin. Bill Package & Grants/ Subsidies Cutoff
19	20 HOLIDAY Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	21 State-of-the-State Address & Admin. Bill Package Cutoff	22 Recess #1	23 Bill Intro Cutoff	24 Recess #2
26	27	28	29	30	31
FEBRUARY					
2	3	4	5 First Triple Referral Filing (House Bills)	6 First Triple Referral Filing (Senate Bills)	7
9	10	11	12	13 First Lateral Filing (Bills)	14 First Lateral (Bills)
16	17	18	19	20	21

The legislative calendar with the specific dates that will rule our lives during session is published prior to the beginning of a session – and usually not *much* before-hand. (Look for it in December or so)

The calendar is established by the Senate President and the House Speaker (chamber leadership), working together.

By the way, the Public Access Room takes that calendar and creates an annotated version that’s color coded and has helpful definitions on the backside so you can sort out what the deadlines mean. You can find the most recent version on PAR’s website (click on the “Current Legislature” tab <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/current-legislature/>).

QR Code goes to PAR’s Current Legislature webpage – look for current session calendar with guide to the deadlines on that page

Tip: Share **ideas** for new laws

-- well before the start of session!

Legislators also hear from lobbyists, interest groups, and other legislators but also want to hear from the **PUBLIC**



Another way to use your voice is to share an idea for a new law with a legislator. The legislator can take your idea, have it drafted into a bill, and if the bill is successful, it will become an act of law. You need to know it's a tough road – over 90% of bills introduced each year don't become law. But if you've got a good idea and the time is ripe...!

NOTE: If you would like a legislator to introduce a bill on your behalf, you'll be wise to make the request during the interim months. It's usually easier to meet with legislators then and gives you a chance to discuss the matter when there is enough time to talk it over in an unhurried and thorough way. Most likely, if you wait until January...(sorry)...you're likely to be too late. Communicate with your legislator before Thanksgiving to provide time for discussion and potential drafting of language for a bill!

To get a bill introduced, find a legislator

Start with:

- Your own
- Subject matter committee chair
- Members who have supported similar issues

In Hawaii, all bills must be introduced by a legislator. Other states may have different procedures, but that's the way it is in Hawaii. So, the next step is to find a legislator who likes the idea and who agrees to introduce the bill on your behalf.

If you've done your research as to why this bill is a good idea, you'll be much more likely to get a legislator's agreement to introduce your bill. The PAR staff can help point you in the right direction in finding someone to approach.

It's often a good idea to start with the senator and/or representative serving your district. That's good protocol but isn't an absolute rule at all.

You could also go to the members of the subject matter committee to which your potential bill would probably first be referred – the Senate and/or House transportation committee for a transportation idea, for instance.

Or perhaps we know or can help you find out who's supported similar legislation or issues in the past. That might be a good legislator to approach.

[The legislator may also ask a colleague in the other chamber to introduce an identical bill (called a "companion bill"), just to help the idea's chances of moving ahead. While introduced with identical language, the bills can quickly change from one another and live or die on their own.]

Summarize the problem (or the opportunity)

- *This law would make ___ mandatory...*
- *It is needed because...*
- *Other states that have instituted similar laws include...*
- *Website with data on this subject: ...*

Start fleshing out your idea...

First, identify the problem or opportunity. (It sounds simple, but sometimes this one takes a little work). See if you can summarize it into a short paragraph (just a few sentences).


Then list what you think a law would do.

If you've got research, know of a group that's behind the idea, or a state that has enacted similar legislation, you can let the legislator know that, too.


It helps to think this through prior to speaking with a legislator...

How to Talk to Legislators

- Short & concise
- Highlight important points
- Be clear: what are you asking
- Bullet points
- Consider having a sheet to leave behind



One Pager for Legislators
November 2024



Proposal for X

a new bill / policy / issue, a request for support

Background

The Issue / Problem / Opportunity

The Solution

The Ask

Stakeholders / Supporters

Contact Info

A brief statement about yourself, your organization (if applicable), what your organization does.

Summarize the issue for which you are seeking support or assistance; legislation from other states, share data.

- Consider using bullet points
- Your summary should be quick and easy to read

Identify solutions and how your legislator can assist (for example, introducing new legislation or providing resources and support.)

Be specific about what you are asking the legislator to do.

- Introduce or take a position on a bill?
- Provide feedback on your idea?
- Suggestions of other people to contact and work with?
- Sign a letter of support?

Include a list of supporters.

Include your contact information so that the legislator or legislative staff can contact you if they have questions or

Think through what it is you want to say... Are you asking the legislator to take a particular action? Is there a situation that is a cause for concern? Do you want the legislator to hear your views and respond with his or her own?

Short and simple is usually a great place to start. If it's a complicated situation, offer an overview and a willingness to provide additional details. Help the legislator or staff member understand what you are asking for – make your request clear.

This One-Pager example template can be found on the PAR website:
<https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/overview-of-the-legislative-process/idea-to-introduction-the-birth-of-a-bill/>

under the How to Approach a Legislator section (QR code goes to this webpage – scroll down for How to Approach a Legislator section)



Opening Day on the third Wednesday in January is a great time to connect with legislators and stakeholders (and visit the Public Access Room!). Mark your calendars!

Opening Days can be quite festive – there are floor speeches and entertainment in the chambers and legislators greeting people at their offices and offering pupus!

It takes time to build relationships and Opening Day can be a great way to start, or strengthen existing relationships in a festive environment!

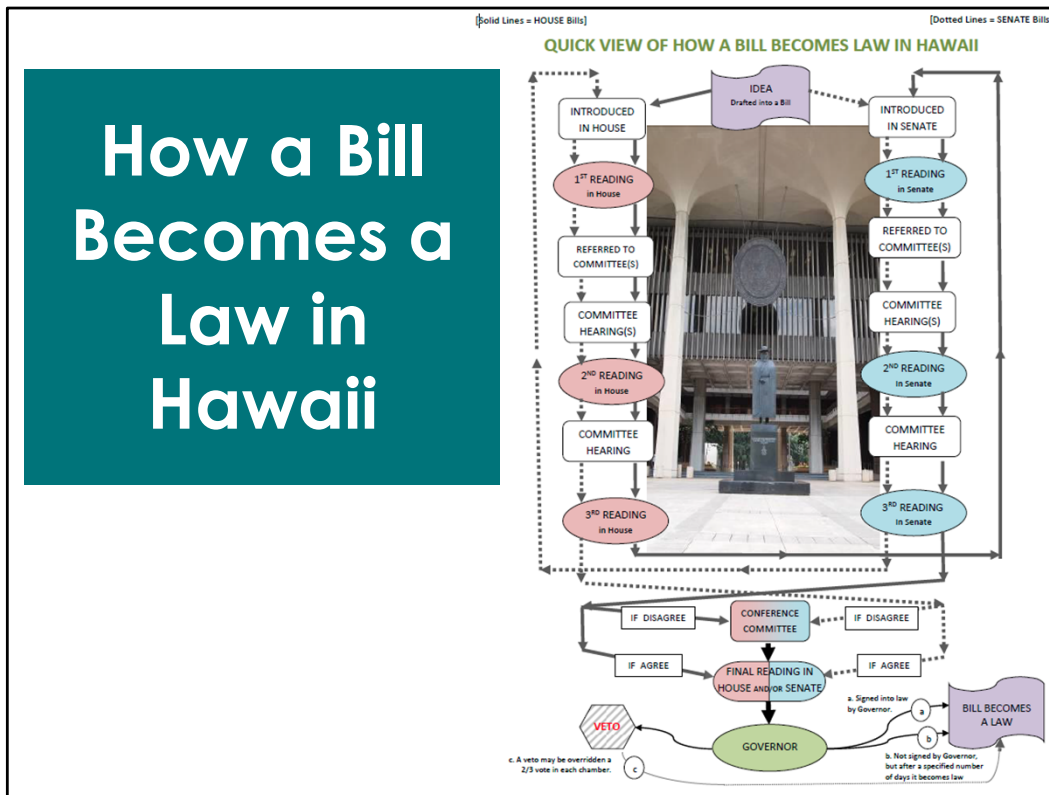
A brief glimpse of what's to come in a bill's life...

- ✓ Pass through **all committees** it gets referred to in the House and Senate
- ✓ Pass **three readings in both the House and Senate chambers** (where all the members convene)
- ✓ Both House and Senate agree on **exact wording**
- ✓ Be signed or allowed to come into law by **Governor**, or House and Senate successfully overrides his veto

The bill has a lot of hoops to jump through to become law:

- Pass 3 readings (votes) in each chamber by the full House (51 members) and the full Senate (25 members). This is a constitutional requirement for a bill to become law. The readings take place before, during, and after the bill makes it way through the committees.
- Survive all the committees it's referred to. It's during the committee process that the bill is "heard" (that's why we show the disembodied ear here) – public hearings or decision makings are scheduled so that the public can have their voice heard regarding whether the legislation is a good idea. The number of committees a bill needs to go through in each chamber varies. As we'll see, it may be amended as it moves along.
- Both chambers must agree on the exact language of the final version.
- Be signed into law by the Governor, *or* become law without his signature, *or* if the bill is vetoed, have his veto overridden by 2/3 of the House and 2/3 of the Senate (or amend the bill to meet the governor's objections).

It's a high bar for a bill to become a law!



This is what the legislative process in Hawaii looks like... Goes through three readings while it makes its way through committees, crosses over to the other chamber and goes through the same process, and then make sure both chambers agree on the final wording of the bill that will go off to the governor. The governor can then sign the bill, veto it, or allow it to become law without signature. (If he vetoes it, the legislature does have a mechanism so they can override the veto and still have the bill become law.)

For more information on a bill's journey: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/overview-of-the-legislative-process/a-bills-journey/>

DEADLINES

2025 SESSION CALENDAR

Note: 60 session days (days when members convene in their respective chambers), the session day count appears in a box on the lower-right, like this: >>> [1] [bills] [resolutions] [budget]. See reverse side for more deadline information.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
JANUARY						
		14	15 Opening Day	16	17 Non-Admin. Bill Package & Grants/ Subsidies Cutoff	18
19	20 HOLIDAY Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	21 State-of-the-State Address & Admin. Bill Package Cutoff	22 Recess #1	23 Bill Intro Cutoff	24 Recess #2	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
	6	7	8	9	10	1
FEBRUARY						
2	3	4	5 First Triple Referral Filing (House Bills)	6 First Triple Referral Filing (Senate Bills)	7	8
9	10	11	12	13 13 First Lateral Filing (Bills)	14 14 First Lateral (Bills)	15
16	17 HOLIDAY Presidents' Day	18	19	20 Mandatory 5-Day Recess Begins	21	22
23	24	25	26 Mandatory 5-Day Recess Ends	27	28 First Decking (Bills)	29
						1
MARCH						
2	3 Recess #3	4	5 Recess #4	6 First Crossover (Bills)	7 Subst. Resolution Cutoff	8
9	10 Budget Decking	11	12 Budget Crossover	13 Second Triple Referral Filing	14	15
16	17	18	19	20 Second Lateral Filing (Bills)	21 Second Lateral (Bills)	22
23	24 First Lateral (Senate Concurrent Resolutions)	25	26 HOLIDAY Kuhio Day	27	28 First Lateral (House Concurrent Resolutions)	29
30	31					
APRIL						
		1	2	3 First Crossover (Concurrent Resolutions)	4 Second Decking (Bills)	5
6	7 Recess #5	8	9 Recess #6	10 Second Crossover	11	12

And it must do all of that by certain deadlines! Which is why that session calendar is so important. Over 90% of bills die – they don’t pass one of the deadlines... They’re called “dead”-lines because they’re designed to “kill” bills and narrow down the field of legislation being discussed.

The session calendar is usually finalized in December preceding the January start of session. It can be found on PAR’s current legislature page:

<https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/current-legislature/>

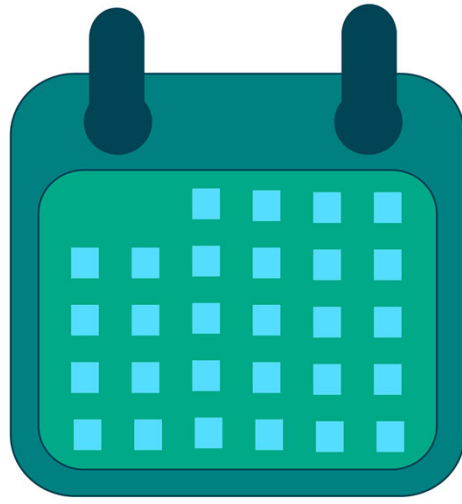
Also on this page are contact lists (email, phone, room number for legislators; committee membership lists and committee schedules; committee clerks and office managers lists, and more!)

QR code goes to PAR’s Current Legislature webpage. Look for Session Calendar handout there (2025 Session Calendar is typically finalized in December/January).

28

Bill Introduction


Bills are
introduced at the
start of session
(usually about a
one-week period)



Approximately 2,500-3,000 bills are introduced each year (Senate and House combined). There is a narrow window when bills can be introduced, usually beginning with the first day of session and usually lasting about a week.

In our state, only legislators can introduce bills. So, if you have an idea that you think would make a good law, make sure to let your legislators know. They can send your idea to a drafting agency at the Capitol where researchers can take your idea and put it into bill form. If your bill is drafted and a legislator introduces it, it has a chance to become law.

A legislator will have an idea drafted into a **BILL** that will be **INTRODUCED** at the start of **Regular Session**.

THE SENATE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2023 STATE OF HAWAII	S.B. NO.	1035 S.D. 2 H.D. 1 C.D. 1
A BILL FOR AN ACT		
RELATING TO THE GENERAL EXCISE TAX.		
BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:		
1	SECTION 1. The legislature finds that under the current	
2	general excise tax, there is an incongruity in the way medical	
3	service providers are treated. Medical services rendered at a	
4	nonprofit hospital, infirmary, or sanitarium are exempt from the	

When a legislator introduces a bill (often taking into account constituent needs or requests, he or she will then work with one of the five bill-drafting agencies in the Capitol to have the bill written up.

When the bill is submitted by your representative or senator, it is promptly **given a number, which will be the tool used to keep track of it. The prefix “HB” begins a House bill number; “SB” begins a Senate bill number.** If your bill is changed by various committees along the way, different draft numbers will be tacked onto the end of the bill number to help you keep track of the new versions. (HD = draft made by the House/House Draft, SD = draft made by the Senate/Senate Draft, CD = draft made as part of the conference process/Conference Draft.

When the bill was drafted, it was given a bill title – “A Bill for an Act Relating to the General Excise Tax,” for example. The bill title can not change, and it must reflect the bill’s contents. (The bill’s content may change as it goes through the legislative process, but it must always be appropriate to the bill’s unchanging title.)

Bills can be short or long, simple or complex. Usually, the first section will state what the bill intends to do, the following sections outline what exactly is being done (revising the law books, for example, indicating [~~deleted~~] or added language), and the final section specifies when the law will take effect if enacted.

QR code points to <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/overview-of-the-legislative-process/types-of-measures-bills-resolutions-messages/> -

look for section Anatomy of a Bill: Learn the fundamentals on what makes up a Bill that talks more about how bills are structured as well as how new content is documented proposed **to be added to current law (HRS) or proposed to be deleted.**



First Reading

Constitutional requirement:
Bills must pass
3 readings
(votes) on the
floor of each
chamber

The First Reading vote is nothing to get excited about. All the bills pass their first vote on the floor.

**You'll soon find out what
committees the bill needs to
go through...**

After the bill is introduced, it will soon get its committee referral in its originating chamber (the House for HBs, the Senate for SBs) – the list of committees the bill will go through in order to survive. It could be that our bill is referred to three committees, or to two, or maybe just one. Sometimes, the committees may be asked to meet together (a joint referral). In any case, this list of committees is called the 'committee referral' and once we know what committees a bill needs to go through, we can use our voice to influence things.

Your Voice

Ask for a Public Hearing

Chair decides which bills will get a hearing – there is limited time!



We can ask for a public hearing. We'll have to move quickly – those deadlines come up *fast!* Committees need to give at least 48-hours notice of a public hearing and the committees don't all meet every day of the week.

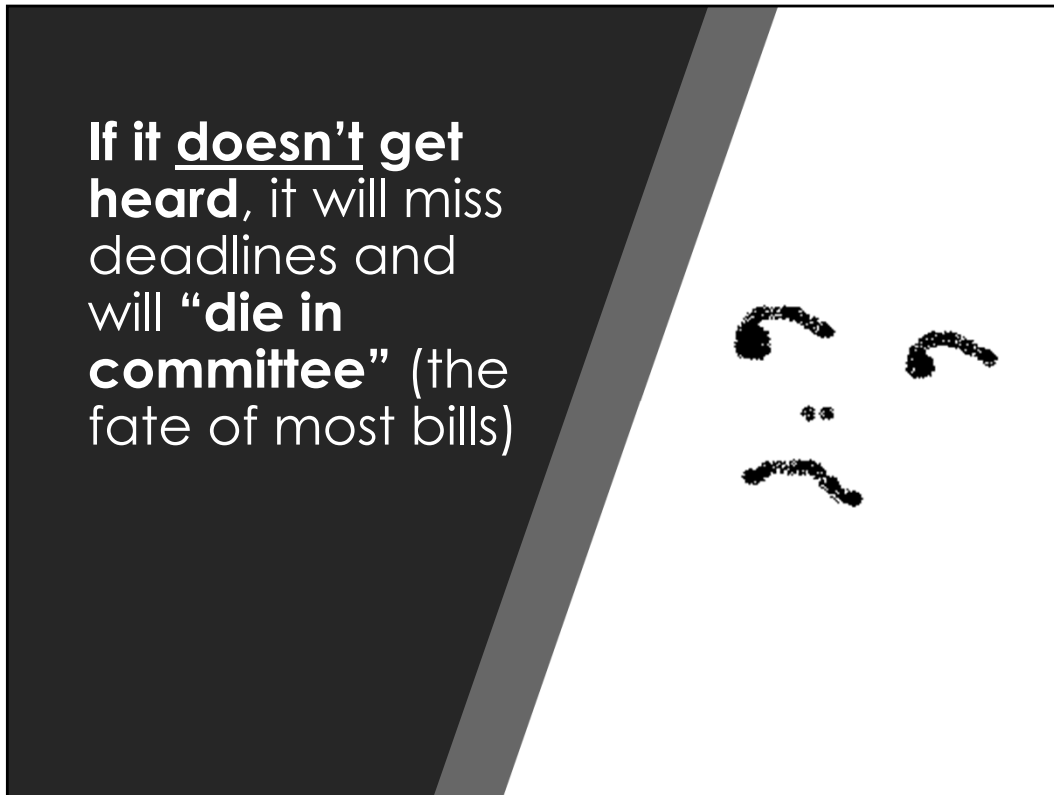
Are there other people we can get to join our call for a hearing? If so, you'll want them to help you move the bill forward –

Go to the person with the
power:
chair of the committee

We ask the person with the power – the chair of that first committee – to have the bill heard, considered by the committee.

Getting your bill scheduled for a committee hearing is a big step – many bills never get that far. Contact the committee chair’s office and just ask – “Would you please make sure to schedule *[bill number]* for a hearing? I think it’s important because...” They should be upfront with you about whether they will. The chair’s office has a lot of things to consider – your bill is one among many that have been referred to the committee, and they’ve only got so much time to hear bills.

When a bill is scheduled for a hearing, a *hearing notice* is published and distributed to let everyone know what’s being discussed. This is the opportunity the public has been waiting for to provide testimony.



If the chair doesn't like your bill or doesn't think it's a priority and won't schedule it, it will just sit there while deadlines go by, and it will be left behind.

If the chair is not inclined to hear your bill, you may want to talk to other members of the committee – if they're in favor of it being heard, they may be willing to advocate to the chair.

You can find lists of the committees and committee chairs on both the legislature's website (capitol.hawaii.gov) and PAR's (LRB.hawaii.gov/PAR/).

Remember to keep your eyes open for other bills that are being heard that may cover similar subject matter. You may want to testify on those. That involves keeping your eyes open for hearing notices.

**If your bill does get
scheduled for a public
hearing...**

If a bill you're interested in does get scheduled for a public hearing, you've got another chance to use your voice...

Your Voice Testify!

Who testifies?

Executive Departments, Interest
Groups, Lobbyists, Public

Testify! Offer your opinion on whether the bill is a good idea.

Your testimony at those committee meetings can be very helpful to the committee members. Don't make them have to come to decisions on legislation all on their own! Members of the public can offer a tremendous amount of experience, expertise, and variety of viewpoints that help to make better laws for us all. Also testifying will be executive departments, interest groups, and paid lobbyists.

Just a head's up: there's never as much time as you think you need to prepare your testimony! Just do the best you can and see if you can get other people who care about the issue to offer their testimony, too. The deadline is usually just 24-hours prior to the hearing.

Testimony information appears at the end of the **hearing notice**.

THE SENATE
THE THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2021

[COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION](#)
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

NOTICE OF HEARING

DATE: Wednesday, March 17, 2021
TIME: 9:30 AM
PLACE: Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

<p>THE STATE CAPITOL To comply with social media requirements, you will need to use a mobile device to view a live stream of all Senate hearings. Click here for more information.</p>	<p>HB 78, HD1 (HSCR921) Status & Testimony</p>	<p>RELATING TO THE UNDERGROUND CONSTRUCTION OF HIGH-VOLTAGE ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES. CPN, WAM Eliminates the requirement for a public utility to seek approval from the public utilities commission for the underground construction of high-voltage electric transmission lines if certain conditions are met. Effective 7/1/2050. (HD1)</p>
<p>HB 459, HD2 (HSCR881) Status & Testimony</p>		<p>Decision Making to follow, if time permits.</p>
<p>HB 940, HD2 (HSCR880) Status & Testimony</p>		<p>All testimony received by the Hawai'i Senate is posted on the Hawai'i Legislature's website, which is accessible to the public. Please do not include private information that you do not want disclosed to the public.</p> <p>Persons wishing to submit written testimony or request to testify via videoconference may do so up to 24 hours prior to the hearing.</p> <p>Click here to submit written testimony.</p>
<p>HB 171, HD1</p>		<p>If you wish to testify via videoconference during the hearing, please sign in to your account on the Legislature's website, then click on the "Testimony" icon on the home page. Detailed step-by-step instructions are available on the testimony submittal page. They are also posted on the Legislature's website here.</p> <p>Please note the following:</p>

The hearing notice lists the time and place it will meet and which measures are being considered.

Guidelines and the testimony deadline appear at the end of the hearing notice.

No rules
on what your written
testimony
looks or sounds like.

That's up to **you**.



In submitting written testimony, there's no set rule as to what it should look like. That's up to you. We do encourage you to try to keep it to a page or two. Try to make the main points immediately apparent.

Keep in mind committees may impose time limits for in person testimony especially in cases where they have a long agenda, another reason to put your most important points at the beginning of your testimony.

QR code goes to PAR Engagement 101 webpage: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/engagement-101/>

This webpage has information for signing up for an account on the Legislature's website to be able to sign up for hearing notices and walks through the steps of submitting testimony. There's even a template for testimony (just a suggestion on how to get started), if you want it.

Written Testimony

- Bill number
- Your name
- Are you **for** or **against** the bill?
- Why?



Include the essentials: the bill number, your name, whether you are for or against the measure, and where you're coming from. (Are you an expert? Great. But that's not necessary. Maybe you have an experience you'd like to share. Or maybe you're motivated by your moral or religious beliefs. Let them know where you're coming from.)

It's useful to clearly state if you are for or against the measure.

Remember...

- ✓ You don't have to be an expert
- ✓ Stories are great
- ✓ Use your own words
- ✓ Keep it short

So, remember... You don't have to be an expert. Stories are great. Use your own words. Keep it short. Type up your testimony and save it as a file on your computer. Now you're ready to submit it! (Don't have time for that? No worries – there's a place on the webform in which you can type your testimony.

To Submit Testimony
First, register your email address to
create an account
After that, just log in...

The screenshot shows the Hawaii State Legislature website. At the top right, the navigation links for "Log In" and "Register" are circled in red. Below the navigation bar, there are two main sections: "Log In" and "Register".

Log In

email address

password

Log In

[Forgot Password?](#)

HELP! If you are unable to register or are having issues logging in, click here.

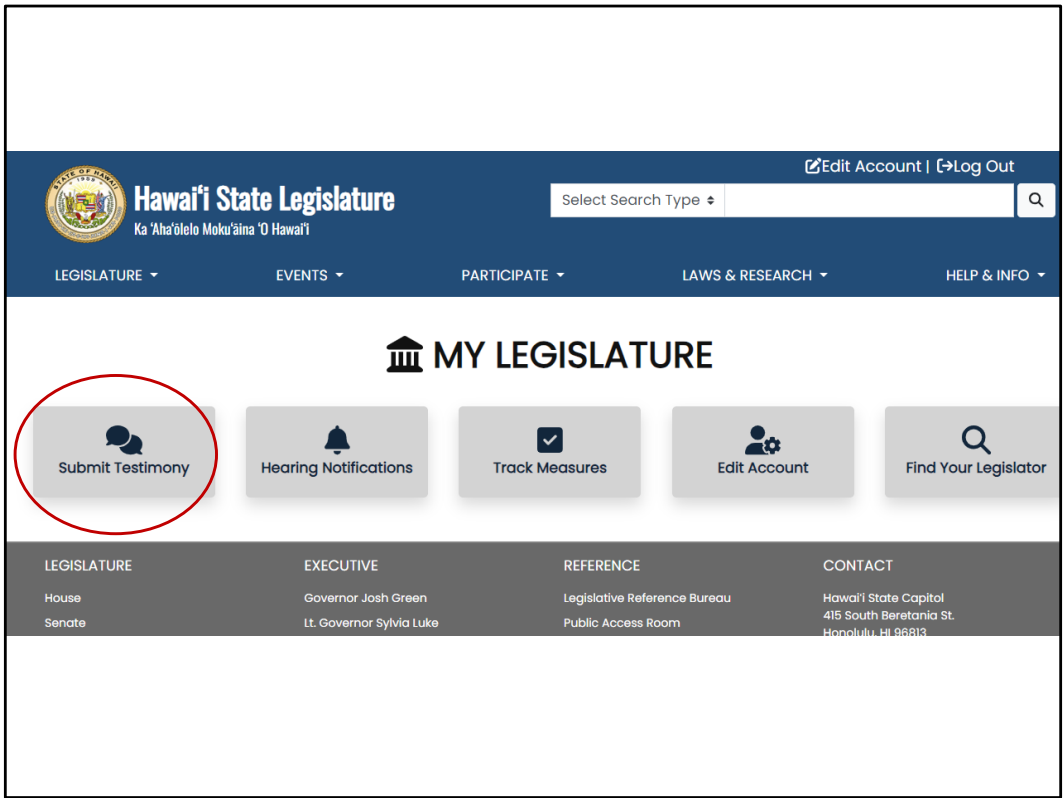
Register

Don't have a login? [Register here](#)

After registering for an account you will be able to create personalized measure tracking lists, submit testimony online, and receive hearing notice notification by e-mail.

For additional options for submitting

Go to the legislature's website (capitol.hawaii.gov). To use the "Submit Testimony" feature, first we "Log In" to the website – we'll enter our email address and the password we created.



Once logged in, there are shortcuts to the interactive features. If you've navigated away from this page, remember, you can always find them under the "Participate" tab.

Hawai'i State Legislature
Ka 'Aha'olelo Moku'āina 'O Hawai'i

LEGISLATURE ▾ EVENTS ▾ PARTICIPATE ▾ LAWS & RESEARCH ▾ HELP & INFO ▾

You are signed in as johnqcitizenhawaii@gmail.com

Submit Testimony Hearing Notifications Measure Tracking Edit Account Find Legislator

SUBMIT TESTIMONY

Testimony being submitted by John Q Citizen- (johnqcitizenhawaii@gmail.com)

Enter Bill or Measure and click Continue

Examples: HB100 or SB123 (not case sensitive)

 Continue Clear

Please note that you will no longer receive email confirmation of testimony. If your testimony is green in the list below, then it was successfully submitted and received.

Your Testimony

By using our online testimony submission process, you agree to the terms below.

Enter a bill or measure to continue. [View Instructions](#) | [See our Help page](#)


This privacy statement applies to the Hawai'i State Legislature Website, www.capitol.hawaii.gov, operated jointly by the Hawai'i State Senate and House of Representatives. The Website is designed to promote open access to information and records of the Hawai'i State Legislature and its members.

The Website has been designed to minimize the need to provide personal information as a condition to accessing information and services available on the website. Some services, such as personalized email delivery of hearing notices, require that the person using the Website submit some personal information such as the person's email address.

Then, enter the bill number you want to testify on. Don't put in any spaces between the letters and numbers, and don't add on any draft numbers. Review the terms listed on the right. All testimony is public and will be posted to the website. Click on "Continue".

You won't be able to submit testimony until a hearing is scheduled.

SUBMIT TESTIMONY

Testimony being submitted by John Q Citizen- (johnqcitizenhawaii@gmail.com) 

Enter Bill or Measure and click Continue

Examples: HB100 or SB123 (not case sensitive)

Please note that **you will no longer receive email confirmation of testimony.** If your testimony is green in the list below, then it was successfully submitted and received.




Please Submit testimony, Save Progress, or click Clear above to show Your Testimony list.

Bill	Committee Room	Date/Time	
SB 16 RELATING TO HAWAIIAN AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII.	HWN	CR 224 & Videoconference	Jan 26, 2023 1:00 PM View Notice

Testifier's Full Name
(First and Last)

*If planning on testifying via Zoom, this name must match your Zoom name exactly.

Your position on SB16

 Support
  Oppose
  Comments Only


The bill's hearing information will appear along with a submission form.

Proceed to **fill out the form** that appears.

If you are requesting the opportunity to testify remotely, make sure that the "Testifier's Full Name" field at the top of the form has the name of the person who will be offering Zoom testimony – the Zoom identity must match this field.

You'll need to click on the little circle to indicate your position on the measure – do you support, oppose, or are you just offering comments (no position on the bill, but offering information or perspective).

Comments Only



Testifying:

As an individual citizen

On behalf of an organization (name of government agency, organization, or business you are representing)

Public Access Room

How will you be testifying? [more info](#)

Zoom option disables 24 hrs before hearing

In person & submitting written testimony

Remotely via Zoom & submitting written testimony

Written testimony only


Please submit your written testimony using ONE of the two options listed below.

- Acceptable document filetype extensions: .doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf, .txt, .odt
- Attachments 20MB max
- Attachments will NOT be saved and must be attached at time of submission

File Upload: No file chosen

-- OR --

Your testimony/comments on SB16



Then, indicate whether you're testifying as an individual or on behalf of an organization and whether you'll just be submitting written testimony or if you wish to also offer oral testimony, either in person or remotely via Zoom.

Now you're ready to add your written testimony.

Written testimony only

Please submit your written testimony using ONE of the two options listed below.

- Acceptable document filetype extensions: .doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf, .txt, .odt
- Attachments 20MB max
- Attachments will NOT be saved and must be attached at time of submission

File Upload: No file chosen
-- OR --

Your testimony/comments on SB16

Source |
B I S T | | | | | | | | | | Styles - | Normal - |
?

Testimony in Strong Support of SP¹⁶

My name is John Citizen, and I think this is important legislation and will help the people of Hawaii because..|

body p Characters (with HTML): 322/20000

Once you submit, you are no longer able to edit testimony. Any personal information that is contained within the testimony will not be redacted or otherwise altered and will be published to the Website.

You can type your testimony here.

Either upload a file OR type your testimony in the box. The system will not allow you to do both!

You may type your testimony directly into the "Comments" box OR you can attach a file.

So, one way or the other, once you've either attached or typed your testimony, you're ready to submit your testimony.

But first, review your information. Once you submit your testimony, you won't be able to change it, so double check that you've uploaded the right file, have correctly identified your position, how you'll be testifying, etc.

Since the testimony will be public and posted online, make sure you're comfortable with the information you'll be sharing.

When you're ready, click "Submit."

SUBMIT TESTIMONY



Testimony being submitted by John Q Citizen- (johnqcitizenhawaii@gmail.com)

Enter Bill or Measure and click Continue

Examples: HB100 or SB123 (not case sensitive)

Please note that **you will no longer receive email confirmation of testimony**. If your testimony is green in the list below, then it was successfully submitted and received.

Your Testimony

- - Not yet submitted.
- - Successfully submitted.

[Support](#) [Oppose](#) [Comments](#)

Measure Hearing

	HEARING HWN 01-26-23	View
SB16	Room: CR 224 & Videoconference	
	1:00 PM	

How the process of posting written testimony works:

Once your testimony is submitted and is listed in green in the sidebar, it is in our system. However, it is not automatically posted to the website.

Senate

- Written testimony submitted by the 24-hour deadline will be posted online prior to the convening of the public hearing.
- Written testimony received after the 24-hour deadline will be posted to the Capitol website within 24 hours after the hearing has adjourned and may be marked as "late".

House

- The hearing committee gathers all "on-time" testimony in the system for a particular bill, which is testimony submitted at least 24 hours before the hearing, and compiles it into a single document. Staff will try to incorporate additional testimony received within 24 hours of the hearing if possible.
- The hearing committee will post testimony received "on-time" to the Capitol website at the beginning of the hearing.
- Testimony received after the 24-hour deadline may be marked as "late" but will be posted to the Capitol website as soon as possible following the hearing. Testimony submitted after the hearing will not be considered or posted.

Your testimony was submitted and should appear in the list to the left. You will no longer receive email confirmation of testimony. If it is listed in green, then it was successfully received by our system.

You'll be returned to the original "Submit Testimony" page. A green box on the left corresponding to your hearing will appear. This indicates that your written testimony has been successfully transmitted to the committee.

In Person Testimony



- “Chair ____, Vice Chair ____ and members of the committee...”
- Short and simple (may be a time limit)
 - Introduce yourself
 - State your position
 - Remember to **Breathe!**
- **Become a trusted resource!**

Here are some simple guidelines

“Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee...” is a great way to start.

Short and simple (2-3 minutes) – there may be a time limit, honor it.

Introduce yourself and the group or organization (if any) you represent.

Clearly state your position – in favor? Opposed? Alternatives?

Be courteous, respectful, and professional

Remember to **Breathe!**

Don’t just read your testimony – the committee has your written words. Instead, summarize your position, provide a point you’d like to emphasize. A short story can be very effective.

Tell the truth and don’t exaggerate. **Become a trusted resource!**

After all the
testimony has been
heard...

So now what? You've offered testimony, now you wait to see what the committee will do.

The Committee may...

- **Vote**
 - pass the bill without changes
 - pass the bill with changes
- **Not vote!** Defer or hold



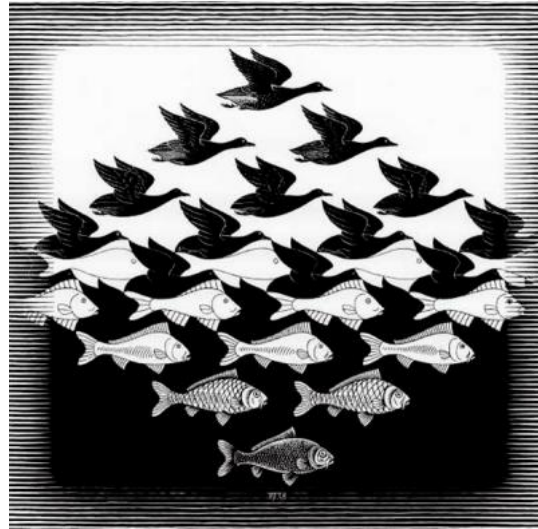
- 1) The committee may vote to pass the bill just as it is, without any changes.
- 2) The committee may vote to pass the bill “as amended,” with changes.
- 3) The committee may choose not to vote – instead, the chair announces that they will “defer” or “hold” the bill. If they haven’t set a date for decision making, this means the bill will stay in the committee and miss the upcoming deadlines.

If the committee votes to pass the bill, the bill survives and moves forward in the legislative process.

The person who decides which of these paths to go on? The chair of the committee.

NOTE: On rare occasions, the committee may vote on the bill and the bill fails to win the vote; the bill would then be dead. It is much more common for a vote to be avoided if the chair knows there will not be enough support to pass it.

If changes *have* occurred...



Changes may be **minor or significant**

If they passed the bill with changes, they can be minor changes like correcting punctuation and other technical changes, or major changes affecting what the bill does.

2 Common Changes

Effective date: "1/1/3000"

Appropriate/fund: \$_____ (blank amount)

! Note: Bill must conform to its title !

The thing that constrains how much a bill can change is its title, which never changes. The bill must always conform to its **title**. (for example: ...Relating to Education or ...Relating to License Plates)

Two common changes:

- Effective date may be **far in future** "to ensure further discussion": The "defective" effective date is a mechanism to ensure that the bill goes into the conference committee process near the end of session. There is no intention of it going off to the governor like that.
- Dollar amounts may be **blanked out**: If they want to keep a dollar amount associated with the bill, they'll make note of it in the committee report. The final dollar amount or appropriation details will usually be determined during the conference committee process.

Any changes will be summarized in the **committee report**, published whenever a bill moves forward out of committee.

If changed, it gets a new draft number...

The screenshot shows the Hawai'i State Legislature website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the state seal and the text "Hawai'i State Legislature Ka 'Aha'ōlelo Moku'āina 'O Hawai'i". Below this is a search bar with the text "Select Search Type" and a search icon. The main content area is titled "HB141 HD1 SD1" and includes a "Submit Testimony" button. The page is divided into two columns. The left column contains the following information:

Measure Title:	RELATING TO FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES.
Report Title:	State Ethics Commission Package; Financial Disclosures; Legislators; Lobbyists; Relationships
Description:	Beginning 1/1/2025, requires each state legislator to include within the legislator's disclosure of financial interests the names of certain lobbyists with whom the legislator has a relationship. Effective 1/1/2025. (SD1)

The right column is titled "All Versions of this Measure" and lists the following versions:

HB141_SD1	
HB141_HD1	
HB141	

Below this is a section titled "Committee Reports" which lists:

HB141_HD1_HSCR782_	
HB141_SD1_SSCR1233_	

The amended bill will be given a new draft number.

It has still got its bill number, but now there is a new suffix indicating which draft (or version) of the bill we're looking at. HD = House Draft, SD = Senate Draft – the number indicates the number of times it's been changed by that chamber. This can look a bit confusing at first, but it really does help to make sure we're looking at the same version of the bill.

HB2426 HD2 SD2 [Submit Testimony](#)

Measure Title: RELATING TO RELATIVE RESOURCE CAREGIVERS.

Report Title: DHS; Relatives; Resource Caregivers; Foster Homes; Licensing; Administrative Appeal; Family Court

Description: Clarifies when a relative seeking to be a resource caregiver for a child is entitled to an administrative appeal for the Department of Human Services' denial of a foster home license. (SD2)

Companion: SB3115

Package: Governor

Current Referral: HHS, CPN

Introducer(s): SAIKI (Introduced by request of another party)

Act: 148

Sort by Date **Status Text**

7/2/2024	S	Act 148, 07/01/2024 (Gov. Msg. No. 1249).
7/2/2024	H	Act 148, on 07/01/2024 (Gov. Msg. No. 1249).
4/19/2024	H	Transmitted to Governor.
4/22/2024	S	Received notice of House agreement and passage on Final Reading (Hse. Com. No. 782).

All Versions of this Measure

- HB2426_SD2
- HB2426_SD1
- HB2426_HD2
- HB2426_HD1
- HB2426

Committee Reports

- HB2426_HD1_HSCR229-24_
- HB2426_HD2_HSCR890-24_
- HB2426_SD1_SSCR3193_
- HB2426_SD2_SSCR3656_

Testimony

- HB2426_TESTIMONY_HUS_02-06-24_
- HB2426_HD1_TESTIMONY_JHA-CPC_02-15-24_
- HB2426_HD2_TESTIMONY_HHS_03-15-24_
- HB2426_SD1_TESTIMONY_CPN_03-27-24_

Hearing Notices

HUS	2/06/24 9:30A 329 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE	Agenda
JHA	2/15/24 2:02P 325 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE	Agenda

Here’s a status page of a bill that was changed four times after introduction. Click on the bill number at the top of the page to view the latest version of the bill itself. (Use the .pdf symbol to view the same draft but showing page and line numbers – very useful when you want to talk with a specific part of a bill with someone, you can easily say, page 6, line 11, for example)

On the right side of the page, you’ll find links to previous versions of the measure. To get a quick glimpse of what changes were made, check out the committee reports that are published as the committees move the bill forward. Each committee report will summarize the changes, if any, that were made.

You can also view the written testimony that was received at each hearing. Just click on the links, and you’ll be able to view .pdf files that present one page of testimony after another.

Under Hearing Notices, you can view the hearing notices (Agenda) as well as watch the proceedings – in real time, or after the fact – by clicking on the YouTube logo.

Everything that happens to the bill gets listed on its website under “Status Text”. (Unfortunately, the site will not say “this bill is dead because it has now missed a crucial deadline.” To determine that, you’ll need to know your calendar of deadlines – or call or email PAR, and we’ll be happy to help you out.)

QR code points to PAR’s using the Legislature’s Website webpage <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/using-the-legislatures-website/> - look for link to “Quickview: How to Read the Bill/Measure Status Summary Page” for a brief handout on the sections of the measure status summary page (like the example on this slide)



Second Reading

Constitutional requirement:
Bills must pass
3 readings
(votes) on the
floor of each
chamber

Yay! Your bill passed its first (or first and second) committees... Now it's back to the floor for Second Reading! A majority of the members present vote 'aye.' And now we go on to our next committee if there is one...

Your Voice Testify!

If your bill moves forward to the next committee... do it again!

- Ask to have it heard at the **next** committee
- Offer testimony at the **next** committee
- Tailor your testimony to the **new** committee
- Don't assume subsequent committees have read your earlier testimony
- Repeat as necessary!

If the bill moves forward, you can ask that it be heard by the next committee. If a public hearing is scheduled, come and testify again. You don't have to worry about a whole new creative writing project, instead you can use virtually the same testimony you provided at the previous hearing. Just make sure that if the bill has changed, your testimony is still relevant. And you may want to emphasize the parts of your testimony that address the committee's purview.



Third Reading

Constitutional requirement:
Bills must pass
3 readings
(votes) on the
floor of each
chamber

After it's made it through all the committees (which it must do by the First Reading deadline), it comes back to the floor for the Third Reading. The members of the House or Senate are given 48-hours notice of all bills coming up for Third Reading. This ensures that they've had time to review them before this critical vote. The bill has to survive Third Reading by the First Reading deadline.

Your Voice

On Occasion, Advocate to Entire Chamber

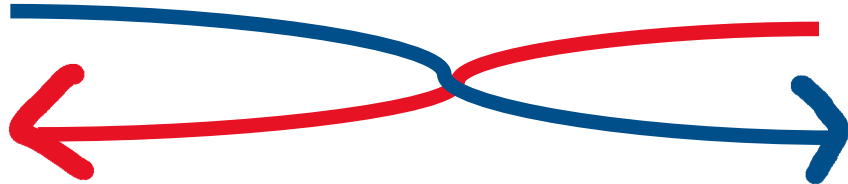
- Ask for their vote
- Get others to join you

During the bill's path through the legislature, it must be voted on 3 times in the full chamber of both the House and the Senate. On rare occasions, whether the bill will pass the vote may be in question. (Most bills die in committee, rather than on the floor of the House or Senate.) In such cases, you may want to use your voice to let your own representative or senator know how you would like them to vote. In some cases, you may want to contact *all* of the members to let your opinion be known. Know a member is on the fence? Try to find one or more of their constituents to chime in.

Crossover

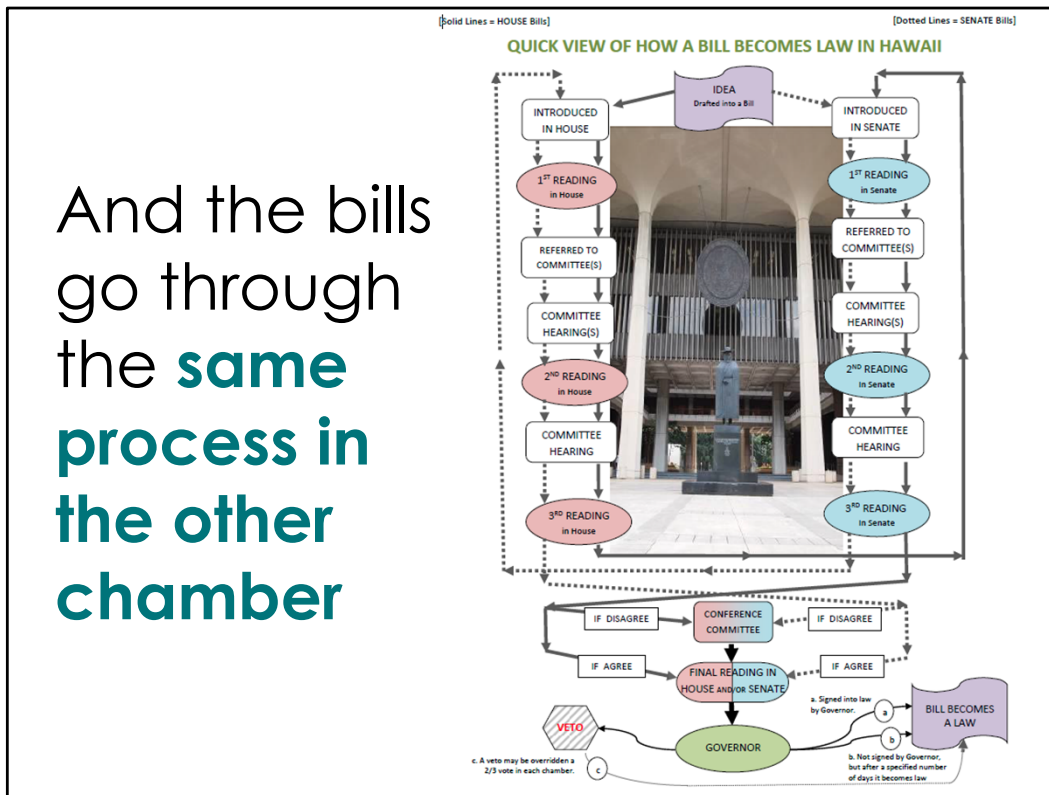
House bills go to the
Senate

Senate bills go to the
House



If your bill survives all three readings, then it ‘crosses over’ and attempts to go through the same process in the other chamber!

This time it will be the non-originating chamber that passes it on First Reading and then assigns committees, and you’ll ask for the bill to be heard, just like before. Deadlines come quickly during this part of session, and a bill must get through all three readings in the non-originating chamber by the Second Crossover deadline.



So, we've gone down one side of the diagram, and now we start down the other side. Now the Senate will be considering the House bills that survived First Crossover, and the House will be considering the Senate bills that survived.

(Note: If we were following a Senate bill, it would have to pass the Senate committees it was referred to and three readings on the Senate floor before First Crossover – it would then be transmitted to the House for its journey there.)

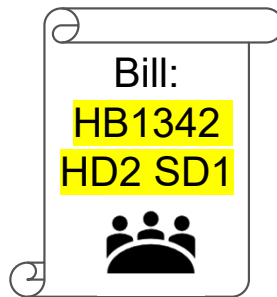
Session moves even faster
after **First Crossover...**

Bills must get through their
non-originating chamber by
Second Crossover

If a bill makes it past Second
Crossover and multiple drafts
exist..

Things move quickly after First Crossover! They must get through their committees and three readings by the Second Crossover deadline.

House and Senate leadership can appoint members to **Conference Committees** to find agreement on a bill that has different House and Senate versions (ex: HB1243 HD2 SD1)



Conference committees try to reach agreement on final version of the bill

If the House has passed one version of the bill, and the Senate has passed another, the conference committees appointed by House and Senate leadership for that bill will try to iron out the differences and come to an agreement on the final version of the bill to be presented to their chambers. For example, if the House moved forward a HD2 version, and the Senate voted on a SD1 version: the conference committees can compare the drafts and consider what the final version of the bill should look like.

Conference committee members (also known as ‘managers’) are usually made up of chairs (or their designees) of the committees that heard the bill. The subject matter committee chair (the first committee to hear the bill in each chamber) are usually the chairs of the conference committee.



Conference Meetings



- **No guarantee** that members will be appointed or meetings scheduled
- **Public**, but no testimony
- **Joint conference rules** set by House and Senate leadership
- Usually, only **conference chairs** talk
- If bill has a **money referral (to FIN or WAM)**, needs final approval from money committee
- Any final version needs to be reported out with joint conference committee report filed by **Final Decking deadline**

Bills can still die here. Conference committees may fail to be appointed, convene, or may not come to an agreement. The fate of your bill may be tied to the fate of other bills being negotiated by *other* conference committees. While the meetings are open to the public, no testimony is accepted. Instead, advocates contact the conference members and anyone else they think may have some influence over the outcome and focus on which particulars they want to see in the final bill. Joint rules regarding conference are established by House and Senate leadership. Usually, the only ones talking during conference meetings are the conference chairs. Some conference committees may meet repeatedly as they attempt to come to an agreement. If a bill has a money referral (to FIN or WAM), they'll need approval from the money committee before reporting it out. The conferees need to come to agreement and report the bill out by the Final Decking deadline. [If there's an appropriation, it will need to be reported out by the "Final Decking (Fiscal Bills)" deadline – usually a day later than the deadline for non-money bills.]

Your Voice

Advocate to Conferees

... and any other
legislators you've
developed a relationship
with...

While the meetings are open to the public, no testimony is received. Instead, advocates contact the conference members and anyone else they think may have some influence over the outcome. Advocates may focus on which particulars they want to see in the final bill.

The conferees need to come to agreement by the Final Decking deadline. For the budget and other appropriations bills, you'll see that there's a "Final Decking (**Fiscal Bills**)" deadline.

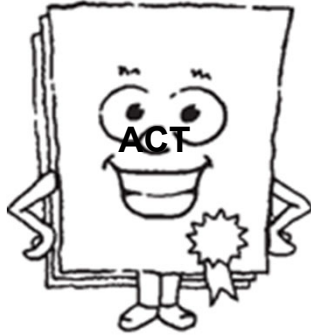
Final Reading



Both chambers must vote on
final version of bill
by the end of session
(*a.k.a. adjournment sine die*)

Finally, if the bill emerges from conference committee with a conference draft (CD1), that new version of the bill must be voted on by both the House and the Senate. The Final Reading must take place by the end of session (adjournment *sine die*) and members must be given 48 hours notice before the vote.

Your Voice

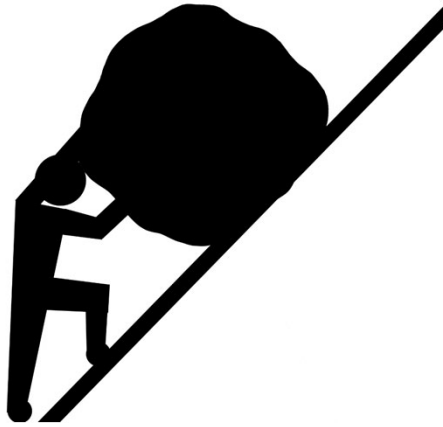


**Let the Governor
know your view**

But it's not over yet! The Governor has a say in whether the bill becomes law. You may want to let the Governor know that he should sign the bill into law – or let him know if you want it vetoed! If it does get signed (or not vetoed by a certain date), the bill becomes an act of law that governs the state of Hawaii. The date the law goes into effect is specified in the last section of the bill.

Note: If the bill is vetoed, there's still an opportunity for it to become law – the House and Senate can reconvene in special session, and if both chambers override the veto with a 2/3 vote, the bill is enacted. The legislature also has the option of amending a vetoed bill to meet the governor's objections; it then becomes law if the governor signs it.

**If it doesn't succeed...
Don't give up –**



get ready for next year's session!

Only about 10% of proposed bills make it all the way through the process.

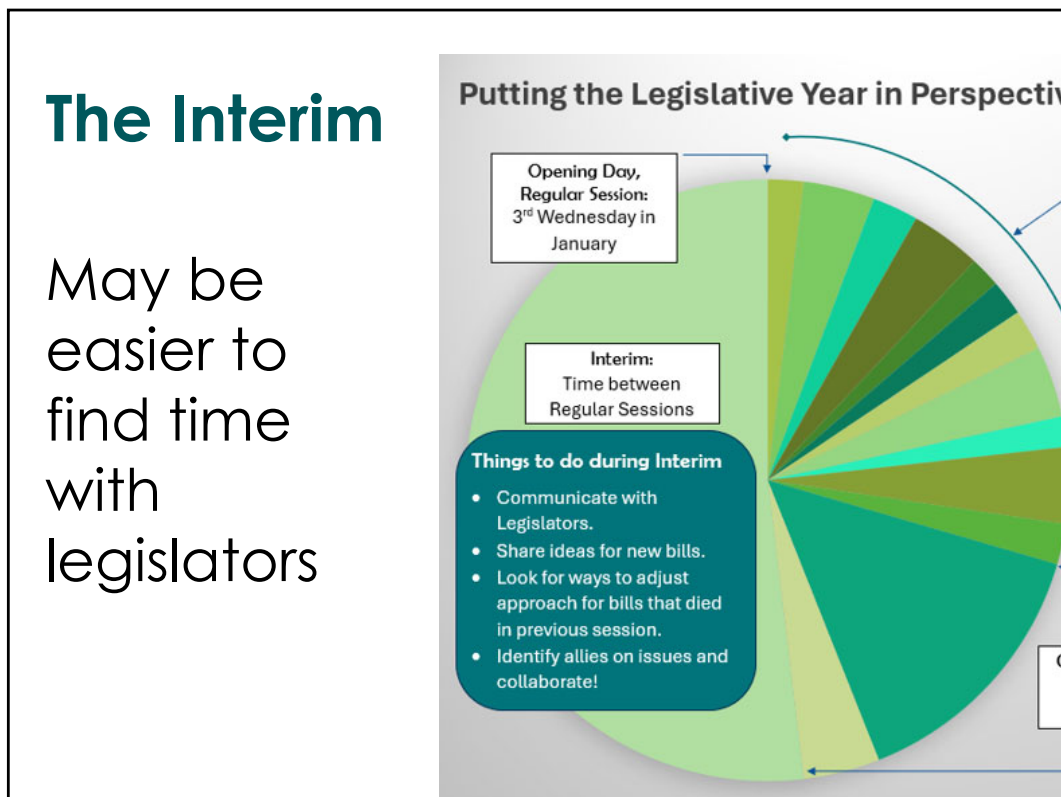
If your bill dies...keep at it and remember that “many hands make light work.” The process is often long and complicated, so having other people involved will both increase your chances and keep you from burning out. Go over what happened during this year’s session and get ready for next year. Many ideas take more than one session to get to the end of the process – they can be adjusted and reintroduced.

It’s disappointing to a bill you are in favor of die. It helps to remember the bright side – Did a hearing spark good discussion on an issue? Raise awareness? Identify potential allies? Often, you can take a step back and find some progress that’s been made.

Even though the process of making a law may seem slow (it can take years) and is often frustrating, the process keeps a lot of “bad” legislation from coming into law. Just read through the descriptions of all the bills introduced at the start of session – you’re sure to see some things you disagree with!

The Interim

May be easier to find time with legislators



And remember how important the interim is – the time between legislative sessions.

If your bill dies, the following interim is a good time to start stirring up interest in reviving it. Debrief and consult with allies about what worked and what didn't during session. Work with other stake holders to find points of acceptable compromise. Teach the legislators and/or the community more about your issue. Perhaps ask a legislator to draft a new bill that may stand a better chance of passage.

After the flurry of session, you'll find the capitol so much more relaxed during interim! It's a great time to talk with legislators and their staff.

Before you know it...

**It'll be the 3rd Wednesday in
January,
And the whole process begins
again*...**

*Actually, it's a **two-year cycle** that
follows the elections...

We didn't want to confuse you at the outset, but if your bill dies in an odd-numbered year, the first year of the 2-year legislative cycle (a biennium), it's not really dead(!).

In the first year of a biennium, any bill that didn't pass out of the legislature actually just goes into a coma. We say that it "died" but it's actually a potential "zombie" that could come back to life. In the 2nd year, in addition to all the new bills legislators will introduce, bills from the 1st year can be revived at exactly the same place they "died."

BUT at the end of the even-numbered year, the 2nd year of the biennium, if it hasn't passed into law, it is really truly finally absolutely totally DEAD.

We'll have elections in November of the even-numbered year, and a new biennium begins the following January with all new bills introduced.

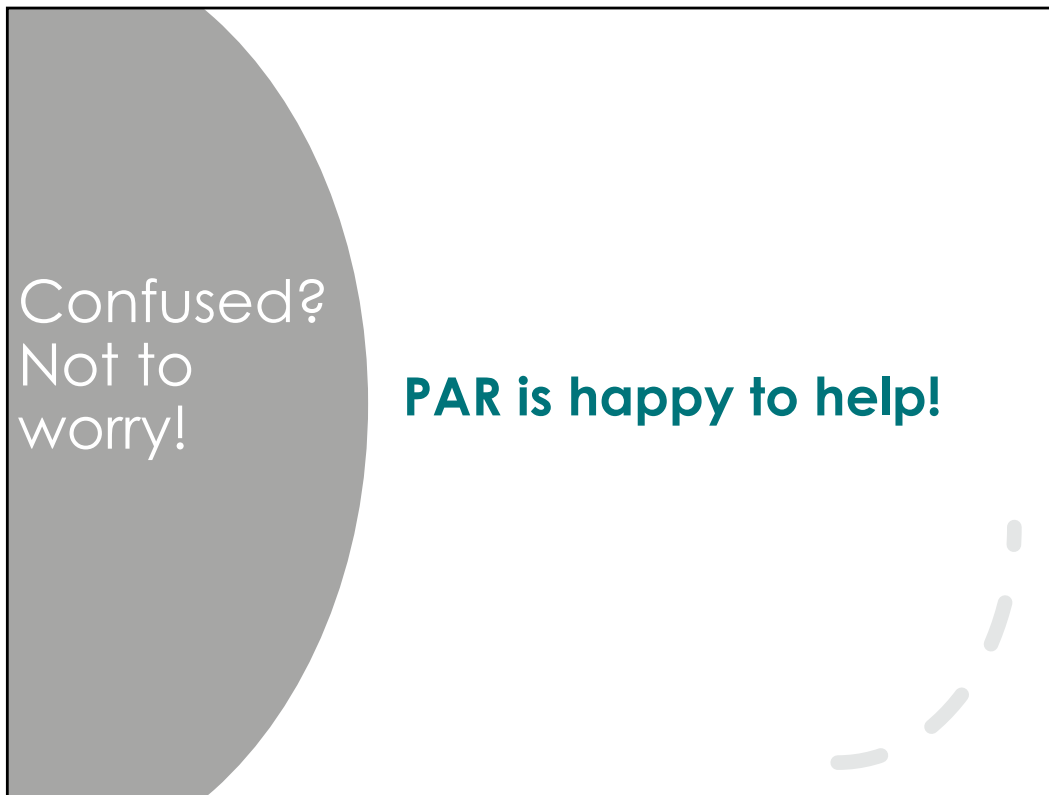
That's no reason to stop your campaign, though. Remember, more than just a specific bill, you're advocating for an idea! You can make a list of what you'd like a bill to do, take it to a legislator, ask that person to introduce a bill for you the following year... and it starts all over again.

Biennial Legislature

- In **odd-numbered years** (after elections), it starts afresh with **all new bills**
- In **even-numbered years**, **new bills** are introduced (with higher bill numbers) **plus** the bills from the previous session that didn't make it – they can keep moving
- But if no new action is taken, they will die

In the first year of a biennium (odd-numbered year), any bill that didn't pass out of the legislature and 'died' along the way isn't actually dead – it becomes a "carryover" bill that could come back to life in the second year (even-numbered year). In the second year, in addition to all the new bills legislators will introduce, bills from the first year can be revived at exactly the same place they were at the end of session. (Note: Often nothing happens to a carryover bill.) At the end of the second-year session, any bill that hasn't passed into law is completely dead. We'll have elections in November, and a new biennium begins the following January with all new bills introduced.

Remember, more than just a specific bill, you're advocating for an idea! During the interim, meet with legislators and allies to talk about your strategy next year. You may want to have a new bill introduced that incorporates some concerns that came up this session. You may want to ask for just part of what the original bill asked for. In any case, use the interim to get ready for next January. PAR's open year-round, too. So don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of help.



We know it all can seem a bit overwhelming and confusing. This is a lot of information! But the Public Access Room was established by the legislature as a resource to help to answer any of your questions and help you understand and learn more about the process.

Public Access Room (PAR)



- Help, information, and training at **no charge**
- **Non-partisan**
- Lots of resources!
 - Guidance on process
 - Computers with internet
 - Wireless access & recharge station
 - Helpful handouts
 - Website (lrb.hawaii.gov/par)
 - Workshops and tutorials (YouTube)
 - Infographics on Facebook and Instagram



We are **non-partisan**, dealing exclusively in **process** and never in **policy** considerations. There is never a fee for our services – we’re supported by your tax dollars. You can come to PAR to use one of the public computers or the printer, have a small meeting, get copies of your testimony, or watch a hearing remotely. We have tables for you to work on your laptop (there’s free wifi throughout the building) or recharge your devices. Or perhaps just sit and relax a while. We can answer your questions and point you to resources. We also offer workshops and tutorials so you can learn more.

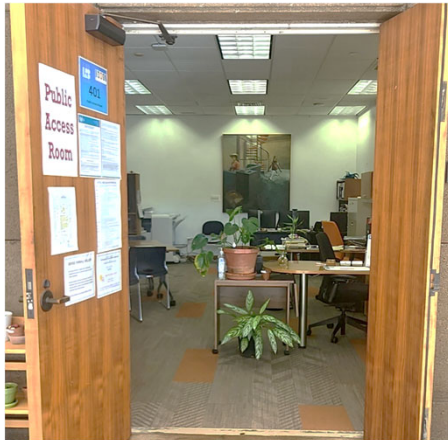
More information on LRB can be found on the website: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/>
QR code goes to <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/>

Public Access Room (PAR)

(808) 587-0478

State Capitol, Room 401

par@capitol.hawaii.gov



 Hawaii Public Access Room

 PublicAccessRoom

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Contact us with any questions, or if you'd like more information.

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room 401

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YouTube: Hawaii Public Access Room

Facebook: PublicAccessRoom

Instagram: publicaccessroom

Website <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par>

*For helpful handouts,
and to learn more, head
to the Public Access
Room's website*



There's a lot of information on the PAR website, lrb.hawaii.gov/par , if you want to learn more.

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Legislative Reference Bureau

Home Learn Engage


LRB - Public Access Room > Engagement 101

Engagement 101

Don't make the legislators do it alone – the public serves a vital role in the legislative process. Offer your views and perspectives to help the legislature make the best laws for the state of Hawaii.


Find Your Own Senator and Representative

Not sure what districts you're in or who represents you? The [Legislature's website](#) makes it easy for you to [find your Senator and Representative](#).



Register for an Account on the Website

[Make an account](#) to submit testimony, sign up for hearing notifications or create a measure tracking list. You'll only have to do it once!



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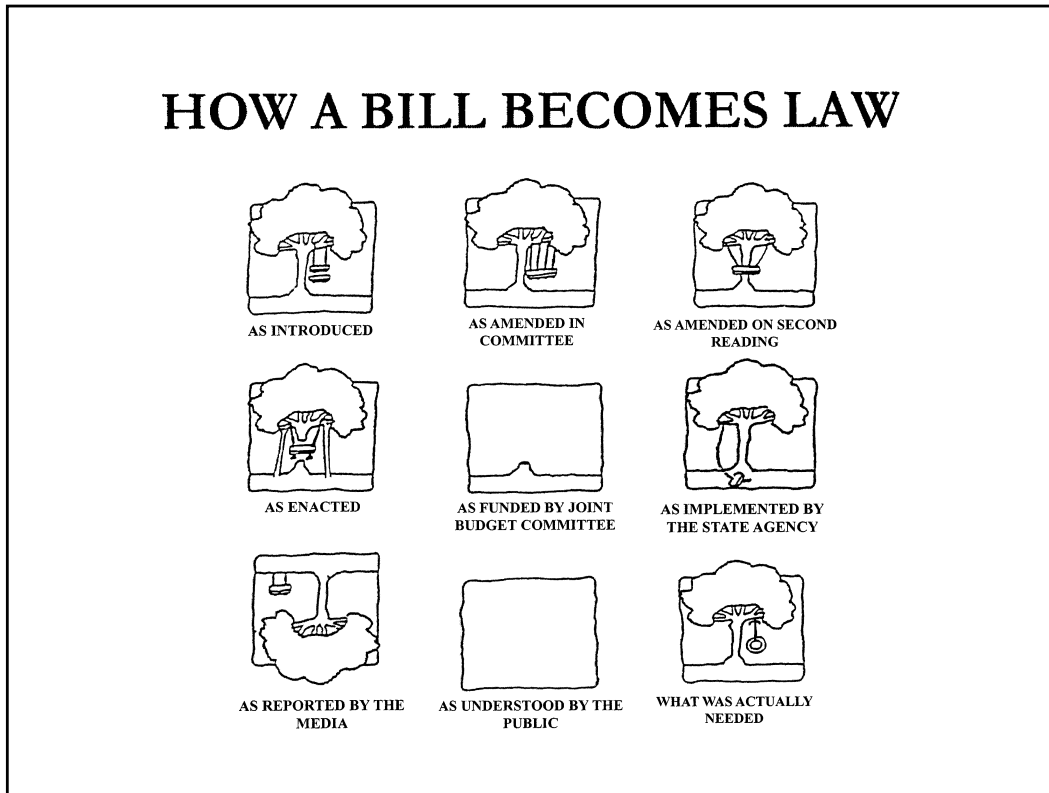
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HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW



- We get a legislator to introduce a bill for a double-decker tree swing. Wonderful.
- But then, it gets changed in one of the committees. They insist it should be double-wide instead. Fine. We can live with that.
- It then gets changed again, this time on the floor during second reading (this can happen – though it doesn't very often). Strange change, though, as now it's not going to be of any use to anyone! It's blocked by the tree trunk!
- Luckily, before the bill is enacted they've fixed it, sort of – they've dissected the tree trunk, put up support braces – it's not very pretty, but I guess it's something. Someone's going to hit their head though...
- Unfortunately, along the way the funding provision got stripped from the bill so there was no money allocated to do anything.
- So, the state agency does what it can, which isn't much help – it's a useless swing, lying on the ground.
- Along the way, the media's reported on all of this, but at times they seem to have things completely upside down.
- As for the public, it's not even on their radar! Not at all.
- And what was actually needed, was a tire swing. That would have been the best solution.

So, this is to illustrate a couple of things: 1) Keep your sense of humor. Helping to shape laws is a serious thing but keeping your sense of humor will help to keep you sane. 2) Don't be too wedded to your initial vision. If we were sure the double-decker tree swing was the only answer, we would be blind to a much better solution!