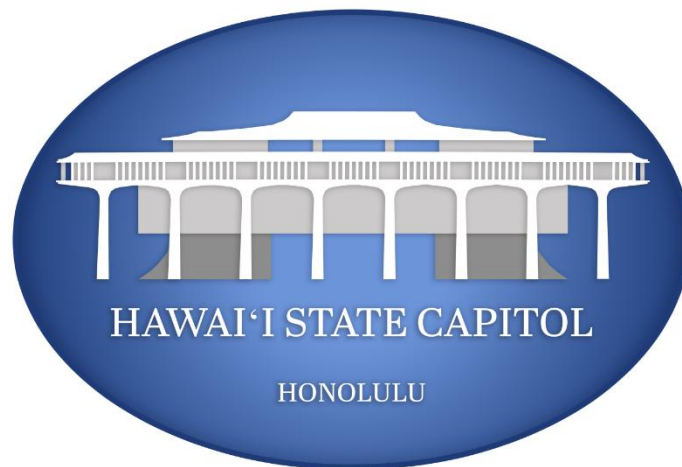


# **The Advocate's Guide to the Hawaii State Legislature: Actions**



*January 2026*

*Part 2 of 2*



The Public Access Room has produced *The Advocate's Guide* to be a resource to anyone that wants to learn more about the legislative process in the State of Hawaii. This resource is made up of two parts. *Part 1: Overview* of the Hawaii State Legislature and the legislative process and *Part 2: Actions* that advocates or interested parties can take to get involved. We hope this two-part approach makes the resource more manageable. When looking for information in this document: you can do a Find/Search by using the keyboard shortcut Control+F or Command+F and type the keyword to see where the word or concept appears. There are also references at the end of the document, to provide links to sources of information shared, or places to look for more information.

**Disclaimer:** This document reflects a layperson's perspective of the legislative process as overviewed by the Public Access Room (PAR) and should not be viewed as a legal authority. PAR is part of a legislative services agency, separate from the Hawaii House of Representatives and Hawaii Senate. For specific questions regarding steps taken by either legislative chamber, please contact the respective body directly.

PAR is part of the non-partisan Legislative Reference Bureau (<https://lrb.hawaii.gov/>) and is a statutorily established office which aims to help residents participate in the legislative process. We focus on the process, rather than policy—and are here to help people on all sides of an issue to encourage public participation. We provide handouts, workshops, and more to help people get more familiar with the ins and outs of the Hawaii State Legislature.

Follow PAR on social media for session information, additional resources, and to hear about upcoming workshops. You can also view past Zoom workshops on our YouTube channel.

 [Hawaii Public Access Room](#)

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We hope you find the information in this guide helpful! If you have any questions, contact us or stop by the Public Access Room (PAR) at the Hawaii State Capitol. Credit for this document goes to current and former PAR staff: Virginia Beck, Lacey Chu, Ashley Kaono, Andy Langhurst, and Keanu Young.

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## Part 2, Chapter 1: Proposing an Idea for a Bill<sup>1</sup>

Only legislators may introduce bills in the State of Hawaii. Legislators develop ideas for bills from numerous influences. In addition to their own ideas, they are approached by constituents, members of the public, lobbyists, interest groups, state departments, and others.

While helping to shape state law may seem like a daunting task, it all starts with an idea. If you have an idea, you don't have to be an attorney—the legislators have access to attorneys and resources in the Capitol that will help with drafting the legislation. Instead, it's helpful to have an understanding of the problem you're trying to address, or opportunity you want to create with your bill.

### Summing Up Your Proposal

Before you approach a legislator with your idea, you may want to consider the following questions:

- What are you trying to create or change? What's your vision?
- What result(s) do you hope to achieve with your bill?
- Is a law needed? Or can it be handled by getting an agency to change its administrative rules or the way it does business?
- Is this a state, federal, or county issue? If it's not a state issue, consider contacting your congressional delegation if it's a national concern, or your county council members for a county-specific issue.
- Is there legislation from another state that could serve as a model?
- Is there a website, advocacy group, or other source of information that would help shore up your position or provide helpful background information?
- Would your proposal need funding?
  - Approximately how much money will it cost?
  - Will it need one-time funding (like money to construct a new building), or ongoing funding (such as for an ongoing program)?
- Who will be affected by your bill? Do you know their positions on your proposal?

Once the idea is fleshed out, try to bullet point your proposal and draft a narrative for it. The goal is to allow the legislator to quickly grasp what your bill would accomplish. Creating talking points or a short

summary document to quickly explain your proposal and using it as a “leave behind” can be extremely useful.<sup>2</sup>

## When Should I Talk to Legislators about My Idea?

The best time to approach legislators with your idea is during the interim period (when the legislature is not in session). Late May through November is a wonderful time as things tend to be slower at the Capitol during this time. Pitching your proposal early allows adequate time for a legislator to meet with you to discuss your idea, do additional research or consult others, and ask one of the legislative drafting agencies to put the idea into bill form.

By December and early January, the drafting agencies are busy fulfilling drafting requests, and you’ll want to stay ahead of the rush. The drafters ensure that the bill is in the correct format, is legally acceptable, and would have the intended effect if enacted.

While bills may be drafted any time, they may only be formally introduced to the chamber during the bill introduction period, which usually starts on opening day (the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday in January) and ends about a week later. That’s a small window of time for thousands of bills to be introduced for consideration.

## Who to Approach?

You’ll want to find a legislator who will be supportive of your idea, and will work to help the bill’s passage. Typically, senators don’t have limits on the number of bills they can introduce each year. However, representatives do have bill introduction limits, so try to get your proposal to them before they’ve decided how to fill their allotment.

If you find a member willing to introduce your bill in the House, it’s common for them to look for a Senate member to introduce the exact same bill content in the other chamber (and vice versa; i.e. a senator will look for a representative). These identical bills introduced in different chambers are called “companion bills.” Why? If one of the bills runs into a roadblock, there may be time to work out the kinks so the companion bill from the other chamber may continue to move. (If both bills survive the Crossover deadline, legislators will usually agree on which one to abandon.) While introduced with

identical language, each companion bill proceeds on its own and may quickly change and become unlike one another.

## Your Own Senator and Representative

It's good protocol to approach your own legislators first, as they are responsible for representing the interests of their constituents. Introducing a bill for a constituent and championing it through the legislative process is one way for elected officials to support those living in their district.

## Chairs/Members of Committees<sup>3</sup>

While approaching your own legislators is good practice, it's not an absolute rule. You may also contact the chair (or members) of the subject matter committee that you think will be your potential bill's first referral. Getting the subject matter chair on board with your proposal will be a crucial step in moving the bill forward.

## Legislators who Supported a Similar Issue in the Past

It may be beneficial to approach legislators who have supported similar ideas in the past. If they are sympathetic to your cause, in addition to introducing the legislation, they can be good allies as you advocate for the bill's passage. The Public Access Room can help you search for legislators that have supported similar issues in past sessions.

## House or Senate Leadership

You may also approach those in House and Senate leadership. Leadership drives the legislative policy at the Capitol and getting a leader to support your proposal could be an effective way to start it on its journey.

## Negotiation and Collaboration

It may be that you can't find a legislator who completely agrees with you and your idea. Listen to their concerns.

- Is there additional data you can bring into the discussion?
- Are there others who agree with you that could help convince the legislator?

- Consider whether there's another solution—perhaps not giving you everything you want, but a change that would move your issue forward.

You want to inspire a bill that improves the situation you're trying to address, and has the possibility to move through the legislative process.

## Asking for a Bill

Taking your idea for a bill to a legislator is democracy in action. In-person meetings are best because they provide an opportunity for you to make your case and answer any questions the legislator may have for you. It may take some work to get a meeting with a legislator, but you're more likely to be successful by communicating with their office early with a thoughtful proposal. You can also email your proposal to a legislative office. To find your district and the legislators who currently represent you, use the [Find Your Legislator](#) tool on the legislature's website.<sup>4</sup>

Keep in mind, that even if you secure a meeting with a legislator, they may not be supportive of your idea. If they aren't, ask their advice on how you can best accomplish your vision. If the legislator likes your idea and is willing to send your proposal to a drafting agency, give them as much information as you can, including your outline, supplemental information, and your contact information.

Once your idea is put into draft form, ask for the legislator's commitment to sponsor the bill for you, and follow up with their office prior to the opening day of regular session.

## Viewing the Drafted Bill<sup>5</sup>

While you may ask the introducer to see it ahead of time, the bill draft is not made public until it's introduced to the chamber—usually on opening day (the third Wednesday of January), or sometime during the first week of session. 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 read through it to 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. Make note of any changes you'd like to see made.

If the bill is scheduled for a committee hearing, you may provide testimony to the committee that spells out your suggested changes. Be sure to sign up to receive email hearing notices on the bill, and

add it to your tracking list.<sup>6</sup> 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!<sup>7</sup>



## Part 2, Chapter 2: Committee Hearings: Referrals & Deadlines

If you've managed to get a bill introduced, or found a bill that you support, that's a great first step. But one of the common mistakes advocates make is to wait patiently for a hearing to be scheduled so they have an opportunity to testify. For many bills, no hearings are ever scheduled, so there's no chance to testify!

If you want a bill to have a hearing and move forward, you'll want to contact the chair of the committee the bill is in and request a hearing. This is true throughout the legislative process. Hearings or public decision-makings are needed to meet deadlines, and you may have to ask the chair for a bill to be placed on the agenda.

To know which committee a bill is in—and which committee a bill needs to be in by a particular deadline—you'll need to look at its referrals and the legislative calendar of deadlines.<sup>8</sup>

## Understanding Committee Referrals

### Committee Referrals

After bills are introduced (or received upon Crossover) and go through their First Reading, they are assigned to one or more committees by leadership in the House or Senate (depending on which chamber the bill is in). These assignments are known as “committee referrals.” Committee referrals are determined by the content of the bill, the rules of the chambers, past referral decisions, and other considerations.

Bills can be referred in a variety of ways; for example: to one, two, or three committees, to two or more committees meeting together (i.e. joint committees), etc. The more referrals a bill has, the more deadlines need to be met, and the more difficult the road to passage may become.

The first committee a bill is referred to is known as the “subject matter committee” because the scope of that committee best covers the subject matter of the bill. The subsequent committees listed usually have broader jurisdiction.

## Deciphering Committee Referrals

To survive, your bill will need to pass through the committees in the order they are listed.

- The committees are listed on the bill's status page by their acronyms. You can look up the full committee names (and the chairs and members) on the "[Committees](#)" webpage<sup>9</sup> on the legislature's website, or use the handouts posted on PAR's "[Current Legislature](#)" webpage.<sup>10</sup>
- Committees are listed one after the other, using either commas or slashes.
  - Commas indicate that each committee hears the bill separately.
  - A slash indicates that those two (or more) committees hear the bill at the same time but vote as separate committees. This is called a "joint" referral and is considered one stop when counting the number of referrals.
- Bills can receive single, double, triple, or (infrequently) quadruple committee referrals. The number of referrals a bill has impacts which deadlines apply as the bill moves through the legislative process.
  - Here are some examples (using fictitious committee acronyms):
    - Single referral (no commas):
      - ABC
      - ABC/XLB (joint referral where two committees concurrently hear a bill)
    - Double referral (one comma):
      - ABC, XLB
      - ABC, XLB/GHI
    - Triple referral (two commas):
      - ABC, XLB, GHI
      - ABC, XLB/GHI, JKL
    - Quadruple referral (three commas):
      - ABC, XLB, GHI, JKL

## Prior Concurrence

Subsequent committees are generally prevented from changing a bill in ways that come under a previous committee's jurisdiction without that previous committee chair's approval—this is known as "prior concurrence."<sup>11</sup> Both the House and Senate have rules that discuss the need to receive "prior concurrence" from the subject matter committee prior to making any substantive changes in an area where the current committee has no primary responsibility.

## Hearing Scheduling

The legislative process calls for a bill to move through every committee to which it's referred, in the order listed. Committees commonly pass bills by first holding a public hearing where written and oral testimony from the public is received. *House Rules* specify that no bill shall be reported out of a committee unless it receives a public hearing, and *Senate Rules* require at least one Senate committee to hold a public hearing on a bill before it can be passed out of the Senate.<sup>12</sup> (Subsequent Senate committees usually hold public decision-makings, where written testimony can be submitted but no in-person or remote Zoom testimony will be heard.)

Because the chair of a committee has the authority to schedule a bill for a hearing (or not), you'll want to contact the chair by phone or email if you'd like a specific bill to receive a hearing. Decisions on whether to hear a bill are based on a variety of factors, including:

- The perceived merits of a bill
- Public or political interest
- Requests from colleagues or the public
- The legislative timetable

If you meet resistance from the chair, you may want to approach the vice chair and other members of the committee to see if they can help persuade the chair. Check in with your own legislator too and see if they may talk with their colleagues. Additionally, ask other members of the public who share your views to contact the chair and ask that the bill be scheduled.

While there is a constitutionally authorized procedure<sup>13</sup> to recall a bill (pull a bill out of a committee and onto the floor), it is rarely used. Instead, the "power of the chair" is respected. The chair has the power to schedule a bill for a hearing and to decide whether the bill should be voted on or simply held in committee.

When asking for a hearing in the face of an upcoming deadline, be aware that each committee has its own schedule. The committee may meet only on certain days of the week, and they have a limited amount of time to hear and discuss items.<sup>14</sup>

If a bill you've asked to be scheduled is put on an agenda,<sup>15</sup> make sure to testify and get others to testify too! It may impair your relationship with a legislator if you ask for a bill to be scheduled and then fail to offer support for the bill.

On occasion, bills are re-referred. This may occur because of changes in the content of the bill, a chair's waiving of their committee's referral, or to meet legislative deadlines. In the case of waivers or deadlines, it's not unusual for the bill to be re-referred again back to the waived committee when it reaches conference so that the appropriate chairs can participate in the discussions.

## Understanding the Calendar and Deadlines

For a bill to survive the process and become law, it must pass every committee it's referred to in the order listed. Some of the deadlines are based on the number of a bill's referrals: the more committee referrals, the more deadlines apply.

The session calendar can be found on the legislature's [website](#)<sup>16</sup> (under "Events"), or on PAR's "[Current Legislature](#)" webpage.<sup>17</sup> Look for the deadlines that are important to your measure based on the number of committee referrals it has.

You'll want to:

1. Find the deadline that applies
2. Account for the hearing notice requirement
3. Note which days the committee meets

4. See by what date/time the committee would have to schedule the hearing to meet the deadline

This allows you to contact the chair in time for them to consider your request and meet the deadline to hear the bill.<sup>18</sup> Contact the Public Access Room if you have questions about deadlines!

## Committee Deadlines

The deadlines that apply depend on whether a bill has a single referral (one committee stop), double referral (two committee stops), or triple referral (three committee stops).

The deadlines for bills to be heard, passed, and filed (reported out of committee) are:

- First and Second **Triple Referral Filing**: deadline for triple referral bills to be out of their first committee, so they can be in their second committee the next day.<sup>19</sup>
- First and Second **Lateral Filing**: deadline for triple and double referral bills to be out of their second-to-last committee, so they can be in their last committee the next day.
- First and Second **Decking**: deadline for all bills to be out of their last committee within a respective chamber, so they can be scheduled for their Third Reading (vote) on the chamber floor.
- **Final Decking**: deadline for bills in conference to be out of their conference committees, so they can be scheduled for their Final Reading votes on the chamber floor.

When we say "reported out" we mean that the committee report and bill (incorporating amendments, if any) are filed by the committee chair with the House or Senate chief clerk for the appropriate subsequent floor action (i.e. accepting the report and bill, moving them to the next committee, and/or a floor vote on the measure itself.) The chambers each set specific times as their deadlines for filing the documents, and these are communicated internally.

Deadlines titled "first" or "second" refer to when a bill is in the originating ("first") chamber during the starting part of session, or in the non-originating ("second") chamber during the latter part of session.

Some deadlines are internal to the chamber (Triple Referral and Lateral deadlines), and some are agreed upon by both chambers (Decking deadlines). While the single chamber internal deadlines may be changed by the respective chamber, any deadlines established for both chambers can only be changed by joint agreement of the House Speaker and Senate President.

## Floor Deadlines

Floor deadlines are established by joint agreement of the House Speaker and Senate President and mark the three major hurdles for bills to become laws.

The deadlines for bills to pass the Third and Final Reading votes on the floor are:

- First Crossover: deadline for bills to pass their Third Reading vote in their originating chamber and be transmitted to the other chamber.
- Second Crossover: deadline for amended bills to pass their Third Reading vote in their non-originating chamber and be sent back to the chamber of origin.
- Adjournment *Sine Die* (end of session): deadline for bills to pass their Final Reading vote in each of the two chambers.

The chief clerks of the House and Senate schedule these important votes in accordance with these deadlines.

Floor deadlines are useful to advocates as markers of when most of the surviving legislation will move onto its next phase.<sup>20</sup>

- After First Crossover, the non-originating chambers will begin considering legislation they have received, and non-originating chamber committee chairs will begin scheduling hearings.
- Second Crossover signals the beginning of the conference period when the chambers try to agree on the final version of bills that are still alive.
- Adjournment *Sine Die* marks the end of the session and the beginning of the interim period between regular legislative sessions.

## Part 2, Chapter 3: Participating in Committee Hearings

Offering testimony at a committee hearing is one of the most effective ways to participate in the legislative process. Testimony provides an opportunity for citizens to be heard and potentially influence the outcome of policy decisions being made by a legislative committee.

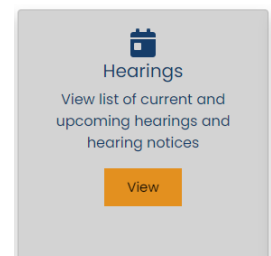
You may only offer testimony when a measure has been scheduled for a hearing. You'll know if one has been scheduled when the committee issues a public hearing notice.

### Hearing Notices

Legislative standing committees must file a public hearing notice at least 48 hours prior to the start of a hearing.<sup>21</sup> This 48-hour notice is required to provide the public with enough time to prepare testimony and make plans to testify before the committee in person. (Note: In the Senate, the first referral committee posts hearing notices at least 72 hours before the meeting.) Hearing notice requirements can be waived by the Senate President or House Speaker on the chamber floor by request of a committee chair; if this was to happen, it would likely occur around committee deadlines.

Testimony submitted less than 24 hours before the start of the hearing may be stamped late. Additionally, the option to request to testify by Zoom may be turned off before the hearing (the time that this occurs varies by chamber).

Public hearing notices give the date, time, and location of the hearing, and include instructions for submitting testimony. You can find a list of hearing notices by clicking the [Hearings](#) button on the legislature's homepage.<sup>22</sup> The hearing notice may also include information on time limits for oral testimony and whether the hearing is for decision-making only (where additional testimony would not be accepted).



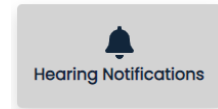
On each bill's status page, current and past hearing notices are posted, along with links to YouTube to watch the hearing in real time or after the fact.<sup>23</sup>

You can sign up to receive hearing notices for bills and/or committees by using the interactive "Hearing Notification" feature from your account on the legislature's [website](#).

## Signing up for hearing notices

To sign up for hearing notices:<sup>24</sup>

1. On the legislature's website ([capitol.hawaii.gov](http://capitol.hawaii.gov)), click on "[Log In](#)" (upper right corner of the page), and enter your email address and password; or "[Register](#)" if you need to create an account.<sup>25</sup>
2. Click on the "Hearing Notification" icon located in center screen.
3. To receive hearing notices for specific bills: Enter the bill number in the window on the left, under "Subscribe by Measure." (Type *HB123* or *sb2496*, for example—no spaces, it doesn't matter whether it's capitalized, and don't include any draft numbers.) Click "Add" and the bill number appears below the window.
4. To receive hearing notices for specific committees: Go to the "Subscribe by Committee" column on the right, which lists the House and Senate committees. Select any of the committees that you want to send you a notice whenever they schedule a hearing.
5. When done, click the "Save and Exit" button centered near the top of the page. Once added and saved, you'll receive hearing notices by email for any newly scheduled hearings going forward.



You can come back any time to change or update your selections.

## Providing Testimony

There are no rules regarding what your testimony should look or sound like—that's up to you. But here are some tips to help you prepare:

- Make sure to include the essentials: the bill number, your name, and whether you support or oppose the bill, or are just offering comments.
- Remember to keep it short and focus on your most important points:
  - One page or less is ideal for written testimony!
  - For oral testimony, committees may have a time limit of 2 minutes or less per testifier.



- Address the committee chair and members, e.g. "Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee."
- Introduce yourself and the organization (if any) you represent.
- Summarize the reason for your position, for example:
  - Explain what motivates you to testify.
  - Provide factual accounts or narratives of the impact the legislation will have.
  - Tell a personal story to illustrate your point.
  - Tell the truth and be a trusted resource.
- If providing oral testimony, use a friendly, conversational tone of voice and remember to breathe. Avoid giving a monologue or formal speech, or being accusatory or confrontational.
- As you conclude, restate your position and provide a recommendation for action (vote for or against this bill).
- Thank the committee for the opportunity to testify.
- Above all, be respectful, courteous, and professional.

You can also get ideas by looking at past testimony by bill on the legislature's [website](#).<sup>26</sup> Call PAR if you have questions!

*Remember that testimony is posted on the Legislature's website, so any information you include will be public.*

## Sample Written Testimony: The Basics

Address testimony to the Committee (get the info from the top of the hearing notice)

Specify the bill number

*Optional: Hearing date, time and room number*

Make your position on the bill easily visible

Introduce yourself and state whether you support or oppose the bill

Explain the reasons for your position. May include facts, experiences, beliefs.

*Optional: Emphasize your position by repeating it.*

Anonymous testimony is not accepted -- make sure to add your name!

*Optional: If you represent a group, emphasize it here*

Name of the House or Senate Committee

Aloha/Dear Chair \_\_\_\_ and Vice Chair \_\_\_\_,  
and Members of the Committee

Bill or Resolution Number, Draft Number

*Day and Date of Hearing*

*Time and Place of Hearing*

**IN SUPPORT (or IN OPPOSITION)**

Introduction

- 1) Introduce who you are and/or the group or organization you represent
- 2) State your position on the measure ("I am testifying in favor of..." or "I am testifying against...")

Content

- Reasons for taking your position
- Start with most important or compelling information
- Include facts, figures, experiences, or stories to support your position

Closing

*Include any summary remarks and re-state your position.*

**Your name**

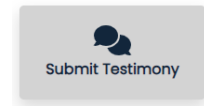
*Group or organization you represent*

*Contact information (optional)*

Remember that written testimony is posted on the Legislature's website, so any info will be public.

Image 1 - Screenshot of PAR's Sample Testimony Handout<sup>27</sup>

## Submitting and Offering Testimony



### Submitting Written Testimony

1. Go to the **legislature's website** ([www.capitol.hawaii.gov](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov)), click on **"Log In"** (upper right corner of the screen), and enter your email address and password.
2. Next, click on the **"Submit Testimony"** button located in center screen, or select it from the drop-down menu under the **"Participate"** tab.
3. **Enter the bill number**, then click **"Continue."** (Just the bill number, no draft numbers, and no spaces. E.g., enter "HB123" rather than "HB123 HD1 SD1.") The hearing information will pop up. (If no hearing has been scheduled for that measure, you won't be able to continue.)
4. **Fill out the form.** If you plan to also offer remote oral testimony via Zoom, confirm that your full name appears correctly so that it matches your Zoom identity (this will be what technical support staff will be looking at to let you into the Zoom meeting).
  - a. Select whether you support or oppose the bill, or are just offering comments.
  - b. Select whether you're testifying as an individual or on behalf of an organization.
  - c. Indicate whether you plan to offer written testimony only, or if you'd also like to present oral testimony via Zoom or in person at the Capitol.
5. **Add your written testimony.** There are two options, and you can only choose one:
  - a. Write your testimony and save it as a file on your computer. Then, upload your testimony by selecting "Choose File" or "Browse" to find and attach the document.
  - b. Or, you can type your testimony into the testimony/comments box. If you want to save what you wrote and return to it later, click on "Save Progress." Back on the initial "Submit Testimony" page, your testimony link will appear in the column on the left, highlighted in dark pink. Click on "Edit" to resume your work.
6. Click **"Submit."** Confirmation that your written testimony has been successfully submitted will appear in the left-hand column of the "Submit Testimony" page, highlighted in green.<sup>28</sup>

Note: Once you submit your testimony, you won't be able to edit it again. Call the committee clerk listed at the bottom of the hearing notice if you have concerns about your submitted testimony.

## Testifying Over Zoom

1. **Submit your written testimony in advance** as noted above. Make sure to check the box indicating you would like to testify over Zoom.
2. Approximately 15-20 minutes prior to the hearing, **sign into the legislature's website and click "Submit Testimony."**
3. You'll see the text **"Zoom requested"** in the green box has been replaced by a Zoom link labeled **"Join."** You'll only receive the Zoom link by visiting the "Submit Testimony" page—you won't receive an email with the information.
4. Click on **"Join."** Please join the hearing 15-20 minutes prior to the scheduled start time so you can be admitted from the waiting room.
  - On Zoom, use the first and last name you provided when submitting your written testimony—this is how you will be identified and allowed to join the Zoom meeting.
  - You must use your computer audio (speaker, microphone, camera) to participate.
  - During the hearing, please make sure your chat panel is open for the duration of the hearing. This is how legislative staff will communicate with you, and how you can let them know if you have technical issues.
  - Your microphone should be muted and your video/camera turned off until it's your turn to testify.
5. You may receive a request to share your video shortly before it's your turn. **Accept the request to share your video.**
6. **When the chair calls on you, unmute your microphone, pause for a moment, then begin addressing the committee.** Remember: the time allotted to each testifier may be limited by the chair.
  - If you don't respond when the chair calls on you, you may not be able to testify.

- While committees will accommodate as many Zoom testifiers as reasonably possible during the allotted time for the hearing, there's no guarantee that everyone given the Zoom link will have an opportunity to speak.

Some important Zoom tips:

- Test your audio (speakers and microphone) and video before joining the meeting.
- Your internet speed will affect the quality of your audio and video in the meeting. Join from a hard-wired broadband internet connection whenever possible.
- Minimize background noise. To prevent audio feedback, mute or turn off any livestream broadcasts of the hearing you have running in the background when it's your turn to testify. (There may be a short delay between the Zoom meeting and the livestream on YouTube.)
- Remember that you're participating in a public event that's being broadcast live. Consider what's visible in the background of your webcam and don't use virtual backgrounds with copyrighted material. You're also not permitted to testify while driving a vehicle.
- Check the chat panel frequently until it's your turn to testify.

Note: If you requested to testify remotely but are no longer able to attend the hearing, please contact the committee clerk directly to notify them. You'll find their phone number listed at the bottom of the hearing notice.

## Testifying in Person

Respect the proceedings and sit quietly until it's your turn to testify. Silence your cell phone. Having a copy of the hearing notice (you can pull this up on your phone or laptop) is handy so you can follow the agenda and anticipate when the bill you're interested in will be discussed.

There's no mandatory dress code in the Capitol, however, some of the conference rooms can get chilly, so you may want to bring a jacket.

The chair will have the list of testifiers and will call on them one by one. When your name is called, come to the microphone, identify yourself, and speak clearly.

- Make sure to state your main points first, especially if there's a time limit (as indicated in the hearing notice).
- There's no need to read your written testimony—the committee members will have received it.
- What would you like to highlight? Is there something you'd like to add?
- Respect the committee's time. If not adding to the conversation, it's fine to say: "I agree with previous testifiers," or state: "I stand on my written testimony and am here to answer any questions you may have."

If your name is not called (either because you hadn't indicated you'd be present, or your written testimony was late or wasn't received), raise your hand when the chair asks if there's anyone else who wishes to testify and proceed to the microphone.

### Getting to the Capitol

The State Capitol basement parking requires payment at a kiosk. The entry is found by going down Miller Street off Punchbowl St. Public parking is also available at Iolani Palace (accessible via King St.), as well as the surrounding State facilities located at "Lot V" (Vineyard Garage on Punchbowl Street), "Lot G" (Kalanimoku Building on S. Beretania and Punchbowl Street), and "Lot L" (Kinau Hale/Department of Health on Punchbowl Street). There are also bus stops and Biki bicycle stations near the Capitol.

*\*This information is subject to change. For questions about Capitol basement parking contact the House Sergeant at Arms (808) 586-6500 or Senate Sergeant at Arms (808) 586-6725.*

## What Happens at the Hearing?

The committee chair (or vice chair, with the chair's absence or approval) gavel the hearing to order. There may be a statement made about the logistics of the proceedings, such as the order of testifiers, time limits, and when questioning can occur.

Typically, the hearing notice lists the order in which items will be considered. If there's a change to that, it will usually be announced at the beginning of the hearing.

The ranking staff member is usually the committee clerk, who assists the chair in running the hearing. They ensure the committee members have all the written testimony received by the deadline. Late testimony is distributed according to the will of the chair (who determines if—and for how long—late testimony will be accepted).

## Testimony

The chair announces the first bill being considered and calls on testifiers. Usually, State departments and agencies are called first, followed by organizations and lobbying groups, and lastly individuals—but the order is determined by the chair. The chair also decides how to incorporate Zoom testifiers (i.e., whether they're handled as a block of testifiers, or if they're called on according to the overall testimony list).

The committee listens to oral testimony on the bills listed. Note that all committee members may not be in the room. In some cases, they may be viewing the proceedings from their offices or will review the proceedings later. The hearing is livestreamed on YouTube and the video is posted online.<sup>29</sup>

## Questions

Committee members may ask questions of testifiers as part of the fact-finding process. Usually, they wait until everyone has testified on the bill before asking questions of certain testifiers. Often, they don't have any questions and will move on to the next item.

If you're asked a question, go to the microphone and answer as best you can. Being questioned is a great opportunity to enhance your position and provide additional information. If you don't have an answer, say so, and indicate whether you'd be able to obtain the information.

## Decision-Making

After the committee receives testimony on all bills on the hearing notice, they may recess before decision-making to ensure the committee has a quorum or to provide absent members with the time to attend and participate in the vote. (Sometimes they put off decision-making until another time; if they do, another notice will be issued so you can watch the process.)

As part of the decision-making process, the chair will make a recommendation on what to do with the bill that has been heard by the committee. The chair may:

- Call for a vote on the bill as-is;
- Call for a vote on a changed (amended) version of the bill;
- Call for a vote to hold the measure in committee; or
- Decide that no vote will be taken (i.e. defer it indefinitely).

If either of the last two options occur, the bill stops there and won't move along in the legislative process.<sup>30</sup>

### Decision-Making Options:

1. Upon the recommendation of the chair, a majority of the committee may vote to pass the bill as-is (unamended), without any changes.
2. Upon the recommendation of the chair, a majority of the committee may vote to pass the bill with changes (amended).
3. Upon the recommendation of the chair, a majority of the committee may vote to hold the bill in committee.
4. The committee may not vote on the bill. Instead, the chair announces they will "defer" or "hold" the bill.
  - If they haven't set a date for decision-making, the bill will stay in the committee and miss upcoming deadlines.
  - If they defer to a new date for decision-making, this may allow the committee more time to consider the bill, gain consensus, or prepare an amended draft of the bill. In this case, the committee must bring the bill back for public decision-making to pass it. If not, the bill simply stays in that committee.
5. A majority of the committee may vote against a chairs' recommendation to pass a bill, and the bill would die. This doesn't happen often, as the committee chair would be more likely to defer the bill if there's no consensus.

Once the committee votes to pass a bill, it can move forward in the legislative process. The chair's office is responsible for filing the committee report (and the amended bill, if changes have been made) with the chief clerk's office in time for the bill to meet legislative deadlines. Committee reports



summarize the discussion, findings, and recommendations of the committee (including any amendments), so that other members of the chamber can consider this prior to any floor vote.

## Committee Clerks

Committee clerks help make the committee hearing process run smoothly. Each chair and vice chair have a committee clerk on staff who helps with:

- Prioritizing bills for hearings
- Preparing for hearings
- Processing testimony
- Conducting research
- Filing committee reports
- Assisting with the work of the committee

In the Senate, testimony is processed by the chair's office, while in the House, it's processed by the vice chair's office (except for the Finance committee which processes its own testimony).

The phone number listed at the bottom of the hearing notice is for the committee clerk, and can be helpful if you need special accommodations for submitting testimony or need to cancel your request to testify orally. If you have questions about submitting testimony or using the legislature's website, please contact the Public Access Room rather than the committee clerk.

## Part 2, Chapter 4: Finding and Tracking Bills

If you already know the bill number, the legislature's [website](#) makes it easy to find the current version of the bill and additional information about it.<sup>31</sup>

### Finding Bills If You Know the Bill Number

1. Enter the bill number (without any spaces or draft numbers) in the Primary Search box in the upper right of [capitol.hawaii.gov](#) (e.g. "SB123," "HB2211," etc.).

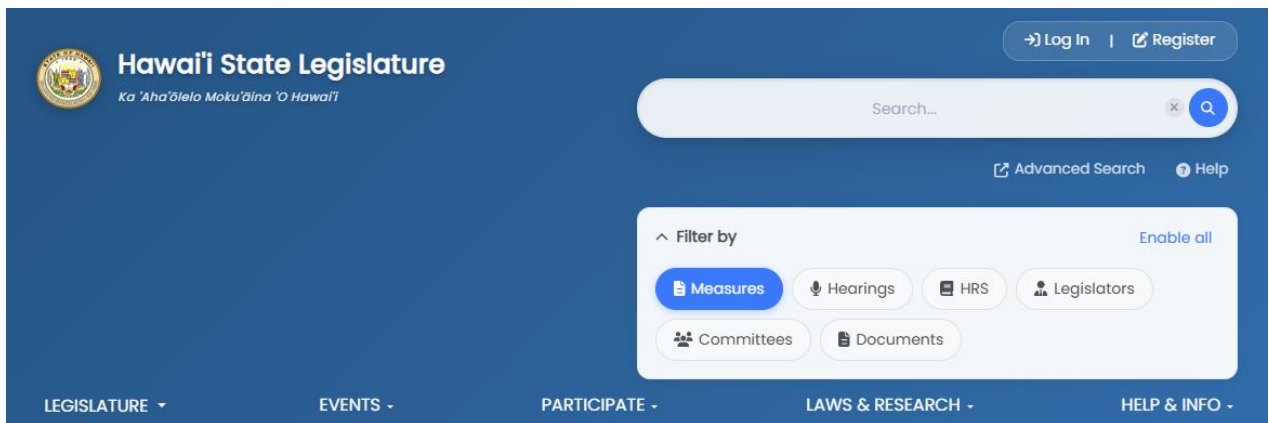





Image 2 – Primary Search box at the top of the [capitol.hawaii.gov](#) website, you can filter by measures or select nothing under “Filter By” to search all content types

2. The page that comes up is the bill's “status page.”
3. To read through the current version of the bill, click on the hyperlinked bill number at the top of the page, or the .pdf symbol next to it.
  - The PDF version has page numbers and line numbers—useful if you want to reference a particular section of the bill in testimony.

**HB500 HD1 SD1**




Submit Testimony

**Measure Title:** RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Report Title:** DOE; Extracurricular Activities; Workforce Readiness; Expenditure Ceiling; Appropriation (\$)

**Description:** Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for various workforce readiness programs and opportunities. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Takes effect 6/30/3000. (SD1)

Companion:

**Package:** None

**Current Referral:** EDU, WAM

**Introducer(s):** SAYAMA, AMATO, CHUN, COCHRAN, GANADEN, GARCIA, GATES, HASHIMOTO, HUSSEY-BURDICK, ICHIYAMA, KILA, KITAGAWA, LAMOSAO, MARTEN, MARTINEZ, NAKASHIMA, PERRUSO, QUINLAN, TAKAYAMA, TAKENOUCHI, TAM, TARNAS, TODD, WARD

**All Versions of this Measure**

HB500\_SD1  
 HB500\_HD1  
 HB500

**Committee Reports**

HB500\_HD1\_HSCRI25\_  
 HB500\_HD1\_HSCR880\_  
 HB500\_SD1\_SSCR3300\_  
 HB500\_SD1\_SSCR3808\_

**Testimony**

HB500\_TESTIMONY\_EDN\_02-02-23\_  
 HB500\_HD1\_TESTIMONY\_FIN\_02-23-23\_  
 HB500\_HD1\_TESTIMONY\_EDU\_03-22-23\_  
 HB500\_HD1\_TESTIMONY\_EDU\_03-20-24\_  
 HB500\_SD1\_TESTIMONY\_WAM\_04-04-24\_

**Hearing Notices**

EDN	2/02/23 2:00P 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE	Agenda YouTube
FIN	2/23/23 10:00A 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE	Agenda YouTube

Sort by Date	Status Text
4/18/2024	H Received notice of Senate conferees (Sen. Com. No. 699).
4/18/2024	S Senate Conferees Appointed: Kidani Chair; Kim Co-Chair; Fevella.

Image 3 - Measure Status Page for HB500 (2024)

The bill's status page organizes a wealth of information about the bill, including links to testimony that was submitted, committee reports that were filed, upcoming testimony dates with links to agendas, links to past recordings of committee hearings, and more!<sup>32</sup>

## Identifying Bills of Interest

Identifying bills that are important to you can seem like a daunting task. With around 3,000 bills introduced each year, how do you narrow it down? Here are a few approaches that you may find helpful.

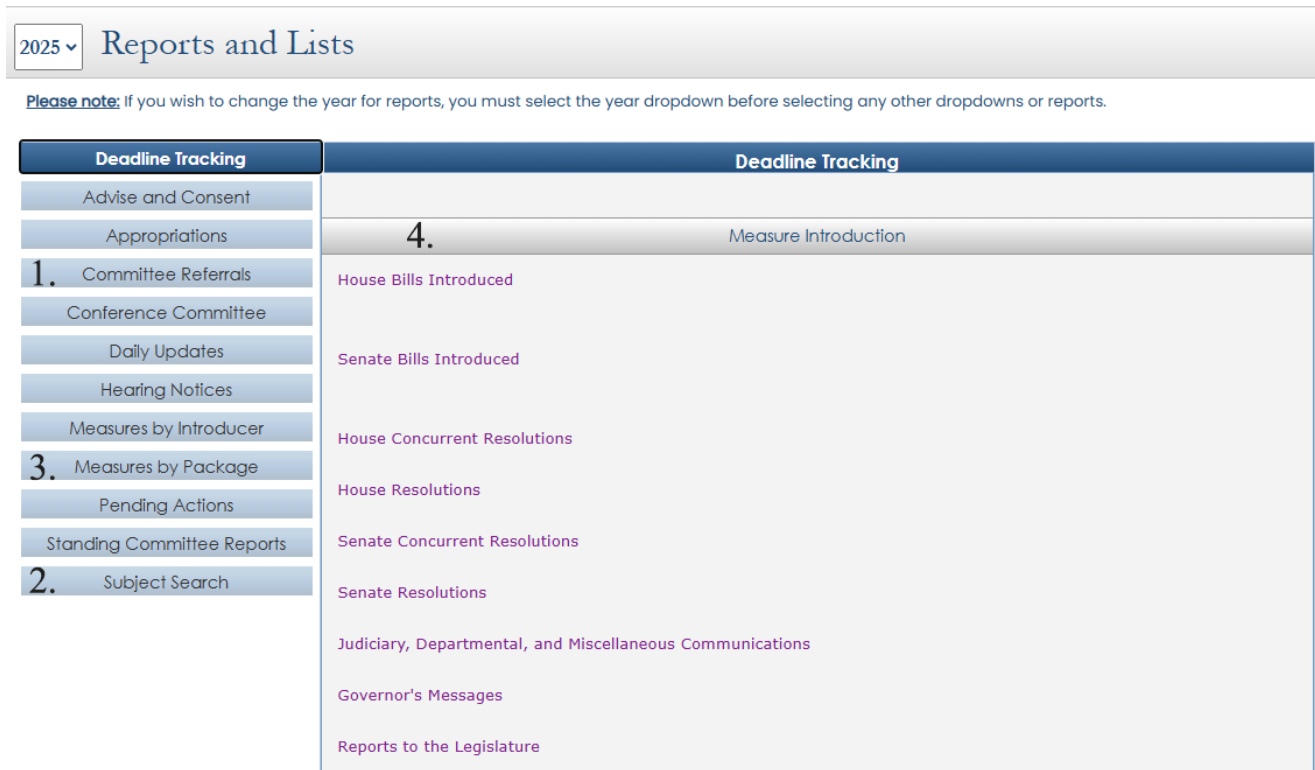


Image 4 - Screenshot identifying four items on Reports & Lists webpage

## Reports and Lists

From the legislature's "[Reports and Lists](#)" webpage,<sup>33</sup> you can explore the following options:

1. **Committee Referrals:** After referrals have been completed (usually a week after bill introduction and again after the First Crossover deadline), you can use the "Committee Referrals" bar to find all bills referred to a particular committee.<sup>34</sup>

2. *Subject Search:* Use the "Subject Search" bar to search through bills' descriptions, titles, and keywords for a word or phrase. Note: this will not search the full text of a bill—just the Measure Title, Report Title (keywords), and Description of a measure.<sup>35</sup>

2025 ▼ Reports and Lists

**Please note:** If you wish to change the year for reports, you must select the year dropdown before selecting any other dropdowns or reports.

Deadline Tracking	Subject Search
Advise and Consent	Search Measure Titles, Report Titles, and Descriptions of measures for the exact text entered.  Please omit diacritical marks (okinas and kahakos) from search words.  <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/>
Appropriations	
Committee Referrals	
Conference Committee	
Daily Updates	
Hearing Notices	
Measures by Introducer	
Measures by Package	
Pending Actions	
Standing Committee Reports	
<b>Subject Search</b>	

Image 5 - Screenshot of Subject Search screen from Reports &amp; Lists

3. *Bill Package:* Use the "Measures by Package" option to explore the sets of bills introduced by recognized caucuses or entities like the governor or counties.<sup>36</sup>
4. *House Bills Introduced; Senate Bills Introduced:* Use the "Deadline Tracking" section to explore all bills introduced (for example, as bills are being introduced at the beginning of session). You can quickly scan the bill title, keywords, and description to see if any of the measures are of interest. Given the volume of bills, this approach is usually best done piecemeal.
- Once in the list of bills, you can sort the list by clicking on the "Current Status" column twice to move items with more recent action to the top.
  - Or, click the "Introducer" column-heading to group the first primary introducers together to see which legislators introduced measures.<sup>37</sup>
  - As session unfolds, use the "Deadline Tracking" sections to generate lists of bills that are still alive following major deadlines.

Note: Whenever you bring up one of the reports from the "[Reports and Lists](#)" page, you can use your keyboard's search feature to narrow your results. Use the keys <Ctrl> <F> (or <Command> <F>) to bring up a search bar, allowing you to search within the results.

- For example: You do a subject search for 'Education' and hundreds of results come up. If you're interested in school buildings specifically, try <Control> + <F> and search 'Building,' which will highlight measures with the word "building" in the title, keyword, or description field.

## Primary Search

New for 2026, the Primary Search box feature on [capitol.hawaii.gov](https://capitol.hawaii.gov) can be used to search multiple document types individually or together.

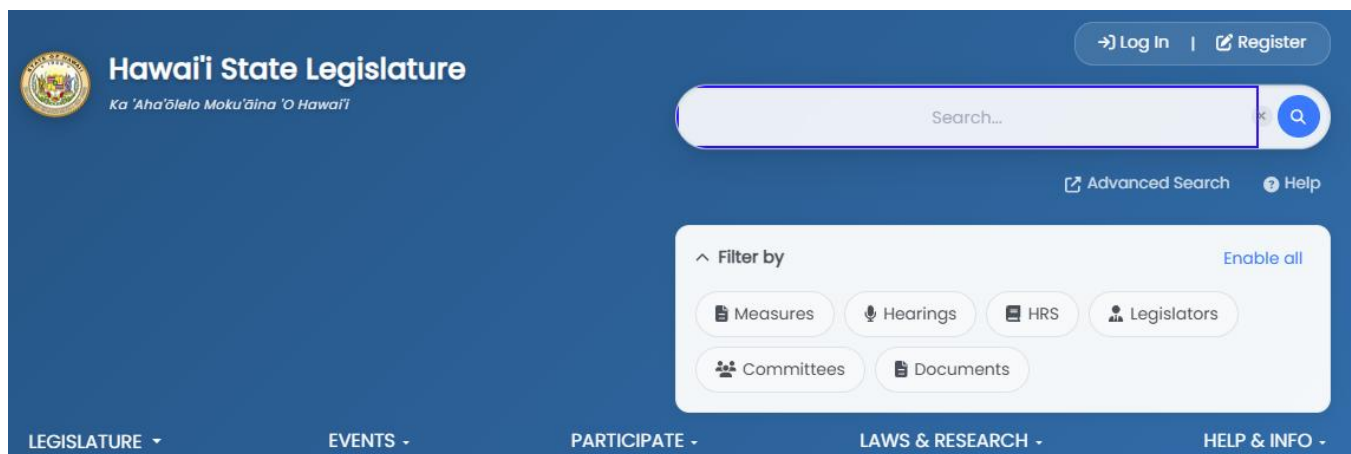


Image 6 - Screenshot of [capitol.hawaii.gov](https://capitol.hawaii.gov) top banner with Primary Search menu expanded

From the results screen of the Primary Search page, you can use filters to narrow down or expand your search, including searching multiple years at once, limiting searches by measure type, and searching specific document categories by using "Documents." Selecting "Documents" will search the full text of PDFs, including past versions of Measures, Testimony, GIA Applications, Session Laws, and more. The Primary Search also allows you to search the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), and results go directly to the HRS page.

## Finding Particular Bills

If you're looking for a particular bill, use either the "Subject Search" or "Primary Search" features to look for a word or phrase you think would be in the bill or its description. While "Primary Search" is more exhaustive, the "Subject Search" presents more easily navigated results but is limited to a single session or biennium. The Primary Search also includes a help page (look for the "Help" icon to read more about the Primary Search tool).



Any other information you have may also help:

- Do you know who introduced the bill? Use the "Measures by Introducer" bar on the "[Reports and Lists](#)" page.
- What committee is (or was) it in? Use the "Committee Referrals" bar on the "[Reports and Lists](#)" page.<sup>38</sup>
- Wondering if a topic has been introduced as a bill or resolution over multiple years in the past? Use the Primary Search box and look for the filter to select multiple session years, as well as a filter to limit by measure type (SB, HB, HCR, SCR, etc.).

## Finding Companion Bills

Many bills with identical language at introduction, referred to as "companion bills," are introduced in both the House and the Senate. While they are born identical, each companion bill can take a path of their own, can change independently, and can live or die on their own. Make sure to keep track of both bills!

Sometimes the bill's status webpage will list a companion bill in its summary information, but that's not always the case. To check if a companion bill exists when it isn't listed on the measure status page, copy the bill title or a string of words from the bill description and paste it into the "Subject Search" box on the "[Reports and Lists](#)" page<sup>39</sup> to see if any alternate bill numbers result.

## Creating a Tracking System

### Use the Measure Tracking Feature on the Legislature's Website<sup>40</sup>

If you're following more than two or three bills, it makes sense to set up your own measure tracking list on the legislature's website. That way, when you want to check the status of your bills, you can simply bring up your tracking list instead of entering each bill number individually. To start, create an account on the [capitol.hawaii.gov](http://capitol.hawaii.gov) website.

You can make just one list, or separate lists for different interests (e.g. one list for environmental bills, and another for housing bills, etc.). The reports generated can be sorted so measures with the most recent activity appear at the top of the list. This allows you to scan for new activity and stay up-to-date. Just double-click the "Current Status" column-header to view recent activity. You can also click on the "Measure" column-header to rearrange the list by bill number.

If you'd like to download a snapshot of your bills' progress, save your report as a .pdf. Make sure to select "landscape" orientation so all the columns fit neatly on one page. You can then attach it to an email to share with colleagues. You can also export the list as an Excel spreadsheet if you want to sort or filter your list.

HB1800 HD1 SD1 CDI   

### RSS Feeds

Measure Title: RELATING TO THE STATE BUDGET.

Some advocates prefer to make use of the RSS feeds to keep track of the action. Each measure status page has an orange RSS symbol next to the bill number at the top of the page. You'll need to find an RSS feed reader to track bills this way. Once your feed reader is established, you 'subscribe' to each measure status page you're interested in.

An RSS feed reader will notify you each time there's a change to the page. How you're notified depends upon the feed reader—many are "go to" services where you'll have to look at the reader site for updates, while other services may email or alert you to each change.



Here's an overview (as copied) from the legislature's website:<sup>41</sup>

**What is RSS?**

RSS is an acronym for Really Simple Syndication. RSS feeds are an easy and efficient way to receive notification when new information is available in a specific area of interest.

**How Can I Benefit From RSS?**

RSS feeds save time, allowing users to receive notification only when new content is available. Web site visitors choose the information they wish to subscribe to and can unsubscribe from any feed at any point.



**How Do I Subscribe to RSS Feeds?**

First you will need an RSS feed reader. If you are a Google Chrome user, you can easily add an RSS feed reader extension from the [Chrome Web Store](#). Just search for RSS Reader and click Add to Chrome, that's it! You can also use standalone feed readers such as [Feed Reader](#).

RSS readers are simply programs that display the contents of an RSS feed in an easy to read format.

Once you have an RSS reader you can simply click the orange RSS icons you see on webpages, or copy and paste the URL (web address) into your RSS reader. Some readers will auto detect the presence of an RSS feed on a website and you can optionally choose to subscribe.

**What RSS Feeds are Available on This Site?**

The Hawaii State Legislature currently provides RSS feeds for measure status, member page updates, and committee page updates. You can click the RSS icon [ or ] on the individual measure status page next to the bill number to view a status feed. You will also find RSS icons on Member pages, Committee pages, and Senate Daily Floor Actions.

## Interpreting the Information

### Assessing Bill Status -- Is it Alive or Dead?

To determine whether a bill is "alive" or "dead," you'll need to look at the bill's status page in conjunction with the session calendar.

PAR's handouts "Which Deadlines Apply to My Bill?" can be used alongside the "Session Calendar," as mentioned in Part 2, Chapter 2.<sup>42</sup> These can be helpful as you're assessing a bill's status.

- Look at the bill's current referral. Is it a single, double, or triple referral? Different deadlines apply.
- When a status line states that the bill has been "referred to [Committee]," that means it's been moved to that committee and the committee now has the bill in its possession.
- To meet a filing deadline, the bill would need to be "reported out" of the previous committee by the appropriate filing deadline.
- Which chamber is the bill currently in? After Crossover, if a bill has not made it to the other chamber, that's an easy way to tell if your bill is dead.
- When the measure/bill status page says: "48-hour notice [date]," that means the Third or Final Reading of the bill has been scheduled for the date listed, providing 48 hours' notice for legislators to review the bill draft.

New for 2026, the Primary Search results page will show a Legislative Process Timeline for measure status:



Image 7 - Screenshot of the Legislative Process Timeline from a capitol.hawaii.gov Primary Search, showing 3 steps in green marked as completed, with steps not yet completed still in white boxes<sup>43</sup>

The timeline text won't tell you if the bill is alive or dead, but indicates the latest step the bill has passed. You'll need to look at the bill's status page to see which committee a bill is in, as the timeline picture focuses on readings and crossover steps.

## Keeping an Eye on the Big Picture

In following what goes on at the Capitol, remember to keep your eye on the big picture. While you may be focused on a particular bill, it's important to stay abreast of what's being discussed and what legislation is moving forward. The landscape changes.

- Pay attention to media reports and note the bills that interest you.
- Keep your eye on social media, especially groups involved in advocacy on issues you care about, and key legislators.
- Sign up for mailing lists of groups that share similar legislative interests.
- Subscribe to hearing notices by committee, so you get a broader understanding of the committee's priorities and may find other bills that interest you.<sup>44</sup>
- Read testimony! Discover what those with different viewpoints are saying to legislators; and what helpful information, arguments, and perspectives are being shared by those in agreement with you.
- Keep an eye out for "proposed drafts," changes to short-form bills, and other bills amended that may now be of interest to you. Periodically, redo your 'bill search' to make sure nothing new is being discussed.

## Part 2, Chapter 5: Advocacy Outside of Hearings

### Communicating with Legislators

When people think of advocating at the legislature, they often think of public hearings and the testimony that's offered. However, there's important advocacy that takes place outside of hearings:

- Ask a legislator to draft and introduce a bill on an issue that's important to you. Ideally, these conversations start months before the start of the legislative session.
- Let your own legislators know your views on pending legislation or issues in your community.
- Ask the chair of a relevant committee to schedule a hearing before a crucial deadline.
- Meet with key legislators and stakeholders to explore common ground and the paths forward.
- Ask legislators for their support or opposition when a bill is scheduled for a floor vote.
- Reach out to House and Senate leadership near the end of session to advocate for a bill to enter into conference (if different House and Senate drafts exist), so they can work to resolve differences.<sup>45</sup>

You can reach out to legislators in a variety of ways:

- Email
- Phone
- Mail
- Personal visit
- Flyer, business card, etc.
- Social media

Which way is best? It depends on the situation, the preferences of the legislator you're reaching out to, the material you're attempting to convey, and how much time is available to deliver your message.

- Often more than one way is called for: an email message, followed up with a phone call, for example. Or an office visit with a "leave behind" flyer summarizing your position.
- Make sure your communication is simple, concise, and to the point. Lawmakers are often short on time so getting your point across quickly and efficiently is important.

- Consider the 5 W's: Who? What? Where? When? Why? This will help frame your message so the legislator can understand the scope of your concerns and develop the best course of action in responding to you.
- Be sure to “make your ask;” i.e., tell the legislator what you’d like them to do (please vote for..., schedule the bill..., set up a phone meeting..., let me know your views, etc.).
- If you want to advocate for or against a bill, identify the committees or legislators that have ownership over your issue. (PAR can help.) Try to get a feel for where they stand on your issue. When discussing the merits of a bill with them, try to be enthusiastic, and speak or write with conviction—if you don’t believe what you’re saying, your audience won’t either.
- Relationships are important at the Capitol. Get to know the legislators and how they operate. Ask them for advice on communicating with their legislative colleagues, or for suggestions on anyone else you could contact. They all have different ways of learning and making decisions. Remember to be polite and professional!
- Find allies to help support your cause. Sometimes it’s helpful to find an ally who’s in a legislator’s district. Reach out and develop ties with those who share your views or who may already have relationships with key legislators. They can be helpful in getting your message across.

## Communication Methods

### Email or Writing a Letter

Explain why you’re writing. Explain the concern, problem, or opportunity. Let the legislator know you’re a constituent (if you are) and be specific about what you’d like them to do. It may just be that you want to hear their views on an issue important to you—ask for them to call or write you back. Remember to provide your name and contact information so they can get back to you.

### Making a Call

In calling a legislator’s office, the phone will most likely be answered by a staff member. Be polite. Let the staffer know why you’re calling. If the staffer offers to assist you, please don’t dismiss it out of

hand—some of them have a great deal of influence with their legislator. Explain your situation and what you'd like the legislator to do.

In leaving a message or voicemail, speak slowly and clearly. Repeat your name and phone number at the end of the call and let them know you'd appreciate a follow-up. If you want to speak or meet with the senator or representative directly, make the ask, but understand that their schedules may be busy.

## Meeting in Person

- Prepare an outline of what you want to talk about. Bring along any data or material that you think will help make your case.
- Use the interim to try to meet with legislators. Their schedules are much more open then.
- Know your issue and be clear and factual when discussing your ideas with them.
- If you're bringing a small group of people with you, choose a spokesperson who is reliable, articulate, and knowledgeable on the issue being presented. Legislative offices are not overly large, so limit the number of people. Don't surprise the legislator by bringing someone to a meeting who is not expected.
- Be ready to answer questions or provide more information if requested. If you don't know, say so, and plan to follow up.
- When presenting your idea to a legislator, allow enough time in the meeting for them to provide feedback.
- Before you leave, try to get a sense of how the legislator feels about the issue presented. Are they supportive? In opposition? Non-committal? If appropriate, ask for their support or action.
- Consider a "leave-behind:" a brief document that summarizes your position and specifies what action you want the legislator to take.<sup>46</sup>

## Building Relationships with Staff

It's critical to build good relationships with legislative staff (office managers, committee clerks, researchers, etc.). Often, they are responsible for briefing or advising senators and representatives on

community issues and pending legislation. Additionally, legislative staff can have a great impact on a legislator's ability to be effective both at the Capitol and in their districts.

If a legislator is unable to meet with you, try to meet with key staff to discuss your issue or concern. Lists of office managers and committee clerks are available on PAR's website under "[Current Legislature](#)".<sup>47</sup>

## Talking to Leadership

House and Senate leadership play a key role in the legislative process. Don't forget to include them in your advocacy efforts. The support of leadership may be crucial in moving your bill or issue forward.

## Social Media

Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly known as Twitter), and blogs are powerful tools that you can use to promote legislative advocacy and to follow what legislators and other related groups are posting about.

## Debriefing After Session

### What Just Happened?

While you may think you'll never forget what happened after session and if your bill died, take a moment to make some notes.

- Who was the committee chair who failed to schedule the bill for a hearing?
- Did you have some supporters?
- How many people joined you in your advocacy efforts?
- Were there any organizations or individuals who impressed you? Could you consider joining efforts with them?
- Did you discover new stakeholders in the issue?
- Did you hear new arguments in opposition to your view?

Take time during or immediately after the events so that over the interim and at the start of next year's session, you're not going in unaware. You've learned something from the experience—put it to good use!

### Saying Thank You/Finding Out What Happened

After session, when things have calmed down, it doesn't hurt to revisit the people who helped you. A simple "thank you" can go a long way. Due to State ethics rules, legislators and staff are limited in what they may accept that could be considered a gift.<sup>48</sup>

It's also appropriate to talk with those who stood in your way. Ask for a meeting so that you can better understand their objections to your bill.

## Using the Interim

### Meeting with Legislators

You'll find it's a lot easier to make appointments and meet with legislators after session is over. They have more time, and their office managers are less stressed. It helps if you can be clear about why you want to meet, e.g. to strategize for next session, discuss introducing a new bill at the next session, determine other stakeholders with whom to talk, etc.

### Strategizing with Allies

If you identified others with a stake in your issue, you might want to consider joining forces.

- What will you do differently next session?
- Who will meet with which legislators to discuss a new draft of the bill?
- Is there additional information available that would be helpful to obtain?
- Does anyone have the expertise to provide infographics or charts that would help to convey the information?



## Back to the Drawing Board; Asking for a Bill

Remember, the best time to approach legislators with your idea is in the summer and fall months of the interim. Getting in early allows adequate time for a legislator to meet with you to discuss your idea(s) and send your proposal off for drafting. The drafting agencies are very busy fulfilling drafting requests in December and early January, so you'll want to stay ahead of the rush. The general rule of thumb is to try to get your bill request to legislators by Thanksgiving. The deadline to introduce bills is typically one week after the start of session (the third Wednesday in January).<sup>49</sup>

## Closing

We hope you found this guide helpful. Now that you're more equipped with the tools to understand and engage in the legislative process, remember that your voice is a critical part of our democracy. The journey of a bill from idea to law is complex, but it's not a closed system. By contacting your legislators, participating in public hearings, and collaborating with fellow advocates, you are not just observing. You are actively shaping the future of our state and your community. Stay informed and don't underestimate the power of an informed and passionate citizenry.

And remember the Public Access Room is available. Sign up to receive our newsletter,<sup>50</sup> follow us on social media, and watch our recorded workshops on YouTube.<sup>51</sup> And you can always call, email, or stop by Room 401 if you have questions!

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> See Part 1 of this resource for an overview of the Hawaii State Legislature and the legislative process
- <sup>2</sup> For a sample template of a ‘leave behind document’ visit <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/overview-of-the-legislative-process/idea-to-introduction-the-birth-of-a-bill/> and look under “How to Approach a Legislator”
- <sup>3</sup> To view legislators by committee visit: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/legislature/committees.aspx?chamber=all>; to see all legislators visit: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/legislature/legislators.aspx>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://search.capitol.hawaii.gov/?type=legislator-addresses>
- <sup>5</sup> See Part 1, Chapter 3 of this resources for more information on “What’s in a Bill”
- <sup>6</sup> Visit <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/engagement-101/> for PAR’s resources on signing up for hearing notices and tracking bills as well as Part 2, Chapter 3 and Part 2, Chapter 4 of this resource
- <sup>7</sup> See Part 2, Chapter 2 of this resource for more information on deadlines
- <sup>8</sup> See PAR’s “Session Calendar” and “Which Deadlines Apply to My Bills” handouts for more information: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/current-legislature/>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/legislature/committees.aspx?chamber=all>
- <sup>10</sup> <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/current-legislature/>
- <sup>11</sup> Use a control+f search to look for “prior concurrence” in the *House Rules* here: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/house.aspx> and the *Senate Rules* here: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/senate.aspx>
- <sup>12</sup> Find the link to the *House Rules* here: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/house.aspx> and the link to the *Senate Rules* here: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/senate.aspx>
- <sup>13</sup> Article III, Section 12 of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/constitution/#articleiii>. The Constitution of the State of Hawaii <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/constitution/> can also be found as part of the Hawaii Revised Statutes: [https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol01\\_Ch0001-0042F/05-Const/CONST\\_.htm](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol01_Ch0001-0042F/05-Const/CONST_.htm). In this document, we’ll be using the Legislative Reference Bureau website’s links to individual items. Recall is also discussed in Part 1, Chapter 4 of this resource
- <sup>14</sup> Find the committee schedules on PAR’s webpage <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/current-legislature/>, there is will be a separate schedule for committees of the House and of the Senate.
- <sup>15</sup> See Part 2, Chapter 3 of this resource for more information on hearing notices
- <sup>16</sup> <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/>
- <sup>17</sup> <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/current-legislature/>
- <sup>18</sup> Committee schedules can be found on PAR’s webpage: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/current-legislature/> along with the “Session Calendar” and “What Deadlines Apply to My Bill” handouts
- <sup>19</sup> If a bill receives a quadruple referral (rare), it would need to move out of its first and second committees before this deadline
- <sup>20</sup> See Part 2, Chapter 4 for more information on the Deadline Tracking reports that can be found here: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/advreports/main.aspx>
- <sup>21</sup> See the *House* and *Senate Rules* for information regarding hearing notices for standing committees. Visit <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/house.aspx> and look for link to the *House Rules*, and <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/senate.aspx> for a link to the *Senate Rules*
- <sup>22</sup> You can view hearing notices by date, by measure, or select “Hearings Measures by Date” to see hearing notices by committee then with each measure listed individually: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session/upcominghearingsfiltered.aspx>
- <sup>23</sup> See PAR’s webpage <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/using-the-legislatures-website/> for the PDF document “How to Read the Measure Status Summary Page”
- <sup>24</sup> See PAR’s webpage for more on signing up for hearing notices: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/engagement-101/>
- <sup>25</sup> Log-in here: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/account/login.aspx> or register here: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/account/register.aspx>
- <sup>26</sup> Look for bills with testimony from <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/> or see PAR’s resources on submitting testimony: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/engagement-101/>. See Part 2, Chapter 4 of this resource for more information on searching for bills.
- <sup>27</sup> Sample written testimony handout can be found at <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/engagement-101/>

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- <sup>28</sup> If you asked to testify via Zoom, you should also see: “Zoom requested.” This turns into a Zoom button labeled “Join” shortly before the hearing. See section: “Testifying Over Zoom” in this chapter
- <sup>29</sup> <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/livevideo.aspx>
- <sup>30</sup> See Part 1, Chapter 1 for more information on the Legislative Session and the ability for bills to carryover from the first year to the second year of the two-year (non-rolling) biennium.
- <sup>31</sup> More information about using the Legislature’s website [capitol.hawaii.gov](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov) can be found on PAR’s webpage: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/using-the-legislatures-website/> and <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/engagement-101/> including finding and tracking bills: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/engagement-101/tracking-bills-at-the-legislature/>
- <sup>32</sup> Visit <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/using-the-legislatures-website/> for the PDF document “How to Read the Bill Status Summary Page”
- <sup>33</sup> You can access the “Reports and Lists” page <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/advreports/main.aspx> from the “Reports and List” square on the main page of <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/> or by clicking on “Laws & Research,” then selecting “Reports and Lists” from the drop-down menu
- <sup>34</sup> “Committee Referrals” is a menu item on the left-side menu where the top option is “Deadline Tracking”
- <sup>35</sup> “Subject Search” is a menu item from the left-side menu at the very bottom of the list that starts with “Deadline Tracking”
- <sup>36</sup> “Measures by Package” is a menu-item from the left-side menu that starts with “Deadline Tracking”
- <sup>37</sup> See Part 1, Chapter 3 of this resource for more information on the primary introducers of a bill
- <sup>38</sup> Find the “Reports and Lists” webpage here: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/advreports/main.aspx>
- <sup>39</sup> <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/advreports/main.aspx>; see also Part 1, Chapter 3 of this resource for more on companion bills
- <sup>40</sup> See “Creating Measure Tracking Lists” from <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/engagement-101/tracking-bills-at-the-legislature/>
- <sup>41</sup> <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/rss.aspx>
- <sup>42</sup> Visit <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/current-legislature/> for PDFs of the “Session Calendar” and “Which Deadlines Apply to My Bill” handouts
- <sup>43</sup> Look for the help box from the Primary Search webpage <https://search.capitol.hawaii.gov/> for more information on Understanding the Legislative Timeline
- <sup>44</sup> See Part 2, Chapter 3 of this resource for more information on signing up for hearing notices
- <sup>45</sup> See Part 1, Chapter 2 of this resource for more on the conference process
- <sup>46</sup> For a PDF template of a ‘leave behind document’ visit <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/overview-of-the-legislative-process/idea-to-introduction-the-birth-of-a-bill/> and look under “How to Approach a Legislator”
- <sup>47</sup> <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/current-legislature/>
- <sup>48</sup> See “Gifts to Legislators” and “Gifts” on the Hawaii State Ethics Commission’s webpage <https://ethics.hawaii.gov/quickguides/>
- <sup>49</sup> See Part 2, Chapter 1 of this resource for more information on asking for a bill
- <sup>50</sup> <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/newsletters/>
- <sup>51</sup> [PAR social media](#) See the beginning pages of this document for our Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube information