

KENTUCKY STATE GOVERNMENT

Kentucky's Constitution provides for three branches of state government--the legislative, to enact laws; the judicial, to interpret them; and the executive, to enforce them.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Kentucky's General Assembly has two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. One hundred representatives are chosen for two-year terms; 38 senators are elected for four-year terms. In November of every even-numbered year, all the representatives and one-half of the senators are elected.

The General Assembly meets in **regular session** in January of even-numbered years for up to 60 legislative days adjourning no later than April 15. At the November 7, 2000, election Kentucky's voters voted to amend the state Constitution to require the General Assembly to also meet in odd-numbered years for up to 30 legislative days adjourning no later than March 30 during which the General Assembly may consider any issue, but shall be prohibited from passing any bill raising revenue or appropriating funds unless agreed to by three-fifths of all members elected to each house. The Governor may call the legislators into **special session** to consider matters specified by him. The General Assembly has the power to enact all laws -- subject to constitutional limitations. Proposed laws may be introduced in either chamber, but the House of Representatives must originate revenue-raising measures.

The period of time between regular sessions of the General Assembly is known as the "Interim." This is the **best** time for advocates to call, write, and meet with their legislators.

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW IN KENTUCKY

INTRODUCTION AND COMMITTEE REFERRAL

A bill may be introduced in the House or Senate. Each bill is assigned a number, announced by title and sponsor, and referred to a standing committee by the Committee on Committees.

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

Committee meetings are usually open to the public. When there is sufficient interest in a subject, a public hearing is held. A bill may be reported out of committee with one of the following reports:

- favorable,
- favorable with amendments,
- favorable with committee substitute, or
- unfavorable or without opinion.

A committee can kill a bill by failing to act on it.

FIRST READING

When a committee reports a bill favorably, the bill has its first reading and is placed in the Calendar for the following day. If a committee reports a bill unfavorably or without opinion, the bill is not likely to go further.

SECOND READING AND TO RULES

The bill is read by title a second time and sent to the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee may recommit the bill to another standing committee or place it in Orders of the Day for the specific day to be taken up by the Legislature.

THIRD READING AND PASSAGE

“I move that House Bill 100 be taken from the Orders of the Day, read for the third time by title only, and placed upon its passage.” This motion, usually by the majority floor leader, is adopted by voice vote, and the floor is open for debate. Following debate and amendments, a final vote on the bill is taken. To pass, a bill must be approved by at least two-fifths of the members of the chamber (40 representatives or 16 senators) and a majority of the members present and voting. If the bill contains an appropriation or an emergency clause, it must be approved by a majority of the members elected to each chamber (51 representatives and 20 senators).

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If a bill is defeated, that is the end of it, unless two members who voted against it request its reconsideration and a majority approves. If a bill passes in one chamber, it is sent to the other chamber, where it follows much the same procedure. Both chambers must agree on the final form of each bill. If either chamber fails to concur in amendments, the differences must be reconciled by a conference committee of senators and representatives. Compromises agreed to by the conference committee are subject to approval by both chambers.

GOVERNOR'S ACTION

The Governor may sign a bill, permit it to become law without his signature, or veto it. The bill may be passed over his veto by a majority of the members of both chambers. The Governor has 10 days (excluding Sundays) to act on a bill after he receives it.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

The fastest a bill can pass through both chambers of the legislature is in five days, the minimum time required for three readings in each chamber. However, most bills take longer to complete the process.

It is possible for a bill to complete the legislative process in three days through the use of companion bills. Companion bills are identical bills introduced at the same time in both chambers. After a bill passes one chamber, it is substituted for the identical bill in the other chamber which is ready for its third reading; therefore, the need for the first and second readings is eliminated. Few companion bills are introduced during a legislative session.

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COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Your legislators have the responsibility to represent you and your interests at the state level regardless of how you voted. They cannot represent you, however, if they do not know your position on the issues at hand. Below is a list of general tips on how to communicate effectively with Kentucky legislators.

DO'S AND DON'TS WHEN MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS

- DO** Get to know your own senator and representative before you need to ask for something; no one has more influence with legislators than the voters in their district.
- DO** Know which committees and subcommittees your representative and senator serve on. Members of the General Assembly have more influence over legislation while it's in their committee or subcommittee.
- DO** Make an appointment before you go AND KEEP IT!
- DO** Let your legislator know whom or what group you represent when you contact him/her about an issue.
- DO** Give a brief description of the subject or bill that interests you--not just the bill number.
- DO** Say why an issue concerns you. Your own personal experience is your best evidence. Explain how you think an issue will affect your business, profession, community, or family.
- DO** Be positive and friendly.
- DO** Be polite, be brief, be specific. Offer to answer questions, or to get more information if necessary. (It is better to say you don't know the answer than to give a wrong or misleading answer!)
- DO** Give both sides of an issue. Tell your legislator if there is anyone this might hurt. Be honest about potential problem areas.
- DO** Be a good listener and hear out what the legislator has to say on the issue.
- DO** Respect the right of a legislator to disagree with you and vote against your issue. Say "Perhaps you can help me next time..."
- DO** Ask if your legislator has an issue you can help on.
- DO** Follow up your visit with a personal letter thanking your legislator(s) for his/her time, summarizing the issue, and again asking for support.
- DO** Remember to say "thank you" if your bill is passed (and even if it isn't--this time). Most people have no idea of the pressures on a legislator who helps them with legislation. Legislators receive surprisingly few notes of thanks from their constituents.
- DO** Also follow up by supporting candidates who have worked for your issues in the past or who indicate that they will do so in the future. *Or run for political office yourself!*

DON'T Be pushy. If you are told that a legislator cannot see you that day, then make another appointment.

DON'T Assume that every legislator is an expert on every issue; we have a citizen legislature which comes from all walks of life.

DON'T Say to a legislator, "You promised me..." If anything, say "I understood you to say..."

DON'T Be sarcastic, critical, or threatening. And don't embarrass the legislator in any way.

DON'T Ever, ever threaten legislators with losing your vote unless they do what you want.

DON'T Expect an on-the-spot commitment to your issue.

DON'T Visit the same legislator more than once on the same issue unless you have something new or different to say.

DON'T Extend your visit beyond a reasonable amount of time.

DON'T Show anger or resentment toward a legislator who votes against your bill. This legislator may be your ally on the next issue.

TESTIFYING TIPS

WHEN YOU TESTIFY BEFORE A COMMITTEE

You can influence a whole group of legislators at once by testifying at subcommittee or committee meetings (which are called “public hearings” because they involve such testimony). Legislators often rely heavily on this testimony when they cast their votes.

To testify at a public hearing:

- * Find out what the hearing rules are from the committee staff of the Legislative Research Committee and follow them.

Before you testify:

- * Notify your own legislator(s).
- * If he/she is a committee member, introduce yourself beforehand.
- * If he/she is not a committee member, educate the legislator about your concern, in person.
- * Learn the names of committee members and, if possible, faces.
- * Submit a **brief** summary of your presentation (include your name, address, and telephone number), along with relevant supportive material, so legislators are knowledgeable and prepared to act.

When you testify:

- * Address the committee, not the audience.
- * Say nothing you cannot defend.
- * Do not pretend to be more of an expert than you are.
- * **Be brief**--this allows legislators time for questions they want and need to know.

After you testify:

- * Do not applaud or boo or make public demonstrations.
- * Exit the room quietly (or quietly listen to the remainder of the hearing).
- * If you exit the meeting room, move away from the door before talking.

The Staff of the Legislative Research Commission (LRC):
Members of the LRC staff (which provide expert services and support to the legislators) are often easier to reach than the legislators themselves, and they can be very helpful. If you wish to testify before a committee which will be considering your issue (the LRC or the Legislative Record can direct you to the proper committee during the Interim), call **(502)564-8100** and ask to speak with the LRC staff person assigned to this committee.

The LRC also offers the following free resources:

⇒ **The Interim Legislative Record** is published monthly. It contains minutes of all meetings held by Interim Committees and Legislative Task Forces during previous months. Call or write Rebecca Mullins at the LRC, Room 23, Capitol Annex, Frankfort, KY 40601; (502)564-8100, ext. 307. During the General Assembly, the Legislative Record is published daily and there is a subscription price of \$250, plus postage, if mailed; \$125 if picked up. Call or write Dolly Wilson at the LRC, Room 85B, Capitol Building, Frankfort, KY 40601; (502)564-8100, ext. 415, 323, or 527.

⇒ **The Legislative Calendar** is published weekly. This contains a list of all legislative committee meetings to be held during the next week. It identifies topics to be discussed and members of the committees. Call or write Susan Kennedy at the LRC, Room 23, Capitol Annex, Frankfort, KY 40601; (502) 564-8100, ext. 307.

⇒ **Interim Committee Reports** are available periodically, usually midway through the interim and at the end of each interim (October) preceding the next Regular Session. This summarizes topics considered by each Interim Joint Committee. Call or write Margaret Bingham, Legislative Research Commission, Room 83, Capitol, Frankfort, KY 40601; (502) 564-8100, ext. 884.

⇒ Above information also available at

WWW.LEGISLATURE.KY.GOV

GRASSROOTS: Phone, Fax, Media

GRASSROOTS ACTIVITIES - TELEPHONE AND FAX CAMPAIGNS

Toll-Free Numbers at the Capitol Annex:

1(800)372-7181	Legislative Message Line
1(800)633-9650	Legislative Calendar Line
1(800)592-4399	Citizen Contact Line
1(800)896-0305	TTY Message Line

Also, call the Legislative Research Commission at (502)564-8100 for the **toll-free Bill Status Line** which is operated during Sessions only.

Governor's Message Line: (502) 564-2611

To Report Voter Fraud: (800) 464-5804

Key Fax Numbers:

(502) 564-6543 fax at the Capitol Annex for Legislators.

(502) 223-5094 fax at the Capitol for Members of the Executive Branch.

Individual fax numbers for Legislators and Congressmen are included in their address listing. (Also, individual **e-mail addresses** follow the Kentucky Senator and Representative listings.)

Telephone Campaigns

When it's hard to make a personal visit, and letters, telegrams, or express mail are not quick enough, a telephone campaign may be the answer.

State legislators and other important officials can be contacted by telephone at the numbers listed in this booklet.

When you call: Leave your name, address, area code, and phone number, the legislator you want to reach, the name or topic of your bill (also the number if you know it) and your position on the bill, and when you will be available to receive a return call.

When speaking with a legislator: Give your name and home city, state your business/questions as briefly and as specifically as you can, listen to what the legislator says, and thank the legislator for listening to you.

After you talk to your legislator: It is an excellent idea, a reminder of your concerns, and a memorable courtesy to send a brief letter summarizing your telephone conversation and, again, thanking your legislator for his/her attention.

DON'T FORGET THE MEDIA!

Letters to the Editor can be an effective way to communicate with legislators. Follow these simple guidelines:

1. Letters should be typed or neatly written. Be sure to sign the letter and include your name, address and home and work telephone numbers. Many newspapers will not print letters from people they cannot reach to confirm authorship.
2. Begin your letter with a short paragraph about your issue, add one or two short paragraphs on your views about how and why the issue would benefit you, your family, or your community. End by asking your legislator to take the lead in working out a legislative solution.
3. It helps to give the letter a local slant.
4. You may wish to use a letter to the editor to publicly thank your legislator for interest or work on behalf of your issue.

News Releases are especially likely to be printed in your area newspaper if they have a local angle; the large dailies take a somewhat more regional or statewide approach. In preparing releases, follow the "rules" designed to make things as easy as possible for the people dealing with them:

1. At the top, put the name of your organization and its address, and the name and phone number (home and office) of the person who can supply additional information if necessary.
2. Leave at least two inches of white space (for editor to write instructions) before starting the release.
3. Type, double-spaced, on one side only.
4. Photocopy the release or type each one individually.
5. If the release runs more than one page, write "more" at the bottom of each page and put a one-word identifying slug at the top of all pages but the first (e.g., "Supported Living-page 2").
6. Do not break a paragraph or a sentence. (Each page might be given to a different typesetter.)
7. Write "end" or "30" or "#" at the end of the release.

Remember: Your legislators keep up with local events through the newspaper, too. U.S. Congressmen use clipping services provided by their staff or others. In addition, you are keeping the public informed of your issue.

Make friends with your local newspaper editor and radio and TV public service manager so that you know whom to keep informed, and so you don't walk in as a stranger when you want coverage or a favor. Get a media representative on your board, if you can. They can help you with style and direction, and maybe get you extra coverage. Thank them for whatever they can do.

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GRASSROOTS - LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGNS

GRASSROOTS ACTIVITIES - LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGNS

Some Letter-Writing Do's

- ****Address** your letter properly.
- ****Include** your return address.
- ****Identify** the bill you refer to not only with a number, but also with a brief description.
- ****Identify** the group you are associated with, if you are.
- ****Make** your letter personal. If you or your group has stationery, use it.
- ****Be** as brief and concise as possible.
- ****Get** right to the point/what you want and why.
- ****Include** personal experiences or news clippings if they are relevant.
- ****Be** modest and polite, but share any specialized knowledge you have.
- ****If** you are a constituent, say so. If you have voted for the legislator, say so.
- ****Write** at the right times--when laws are being drafted, when hearings are being held, when a vote is pending in committee or on the floor.
- ****End** your letter by urging the legislator to support your views and by thanking him or her.
- ****Send** your legislator a "thank you" letter if she/he voted your way.
- ****Send** a bill's sponsors "thank you" letters for their efforts, win or lose.

Some Letter-Writing Don'ts

- ****DON'T** be abusive.
- ****DON'T** criticize the legislator (not if you want him/her to read further).
- ****DON'T** threaten to vote against him/her or try to bribe him/her with your vote.
- ****DON'T** misspell a legislator's name!
- ****DON'T** send a copy that does not appear to be an original.
- ****DON'T** send a Senator a copy of a letter to a Representative, or vice versa.
- ****DON'T** use trite phrases or cliches; express your feelings in your own words.
- ****DON'T** begin with "As a citizen and taxpayer..." That is assumed.
- ****DON'T** apologize for writing and taking up the legislator's time. A good legislator wants to hear from constituents. The other kind won't be around long.
- ****DON'T** put off writing until tomorrow--it may be too late.
- ****DON'T** forget to write when your legislator does something of which you approve or of which he/she is proud. It is easier to ask support from a friend.

THE CORRECT WAY TO ADDRESS YOUR LETTERS

State Senator or Representative

The Honorable _____ (Name)

The Capitol Annex

Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Senator _____ (Name) _____ :

Dear Representative _____ (Name) _____ :

Governor/Lt. Governor

The Honorable _____ (Name)

Governor, Commonwealth of Kentucky

The Capitol Building

Frankfort, KY 40601

The Honorable _____ (Name)

Lt. Governor, Commonwealth of Kentucky

The Capitol Building

Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Governor _____ (Name) _____ :

Dear Lt. Governor _____ (Name) _____ :

U.S. Senator

The Honorable _____ (Name)

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator _____ (Name) _____ :

U.S. Representative

The Honorable _____ (Name)

United States House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Congressman

(Or Congresswoman) _____ (Name) _____ :

The President

The President of the United States

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:
