

“

Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country.

Franklin D. Roosevelt



Throughout history, Americans have proven that the most powerful way to create lasting change in society is by engaging in the governmental process and fighting to create new policies and laws.

Learning how to effectively navigate the law-making process, however, can be a complicated task.

The easiest way to get involved is turning out to vote in both local and national elections. Once elected officials take office their decisions are driven by the people, both constituents and lobbyists, who continue to communicate with them while they are in office.

As a result, if you want your legislator to pass a bill you care about then you need to learn how to effectively advocate at the statehouse.

In this section:

- The basic structure of local and state governments in Missouri
- The winding road legislation takes on the way to becoming law
- How to track a bill as it makes it's way through the statehouse.
- Contact information for all state legislators, maps of the capitol building and a walk through of what a visit to the capitol is like.



THREE LEVELS OF

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1

LOCAL BOARDS, COMMISSIONS

School board
Library board
Block captain/neighborhood associations
City government boards and commissions (i.e. human rights commissions, police review review board, board of health, historic preservation, etc.)

2

TOWN AND CITY GOVERNMENT

City Council
Alderman
City Clerk
Mayor
City Manager

3

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

County level boards and commissions (planning and zoning board, building code commission, children's services board, board of adjustment)
County Clerk
County commission

TALKING TO DECISION-MAKERS (THIS COULD BE ANYONE IN AN OFFICIAL POSITION)

1. Always try to be respectful and greet them with their title.
2. Remember that in a discussion, both sides must be given time to share their points of view.
3. Always tell the truth, never guess. You can tell them you will follow up with the answer to their questions.
4. Be prepared to support your views or position with specific facts.
5. Have a prepared document that you can provide the decision-maker, so they can read over it and refer to it after you are gone.
6. Thank them for listening to you and thank them for their time.
7. Finally, if you believe in your position, be persistent. If you are talking to a decision-maker about an issue that needs a response within a certain time period, then follow-up to see if this person has any other questions or would like to visit about the facts you have presented.



THREE BRANCHES OF STATE GOVERNMENT



EXECUTIVE

GOV. MIKE PARSON

It is the duty of the executive branch to enforce and administer the laws. As the chief executive of the state, the governor is the leader of this branch. He is assisted by all elected officials and various departments.

Another important piece of the executive branch is that all six officers are elected individually and independently of one another, which means that the governor has no basic control over the five other executive officials.



LEGISLATIVE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AND SENATE

The legislative branch writes and passes our state laws. Our legislature is bicameral, meaning that it is made up of two chambers, the 163-member House of Representatives and the 34-member Senate. No one may serve more than eight years in either chamber. Together, they are known as the General Assembly. In both houses, the districts are divided according to population.

The General Assembly is required by the Missouri Constitution to meet, beginning in January, for four and one-half months for a regular session and then again in September for a veto session. If needed, the Governor can also call a special session.



JUDICIAL

MO COURT SYSTEM

The third branch is the judicial. This branch is composed of the state court system, that interprets the laws. This branch is divided into three levels, from lowest to highest: the circuit and associate circuit courts, the court of appeals, and the Supreme Court.

The judicial branch decides if the laws are unconstitutional. It deals in two areas: criminal, cases that cause injury to the state or society; and civil, cases of disagreement between persons over the law.

All legislation starts in the House of Representatives and Senate and has to go down a complicated path through a variety of committees before it can be voted on!

COMMITTEES KEY TO BILL PASSAGE

House and Senate members work in specialized, bipartisan committees that consider the need for a particular bill. Committee chairs are appointed by the Speaker of the House, who presides over the House, and the President Pro Tem, who heads the Senate. The committees are set up by subject matter.

When a committee gets a bill, the members study it carefully and then hold public hearings. **It is during these hearings that citizens have the opportunity to speak for or against a particular bill.** Decisions concerning the bills are always reached by a majority vote.

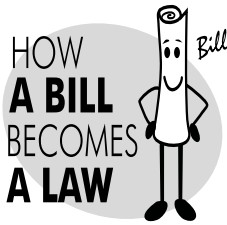
Citizens can and should attend these hearings if they have an interest in a bill. After the bill has passed out of the committee, the citizen's only option is to contact his or her state senator or representative.

HOW TO FOLLOW BILLS

legiscan.com/MO

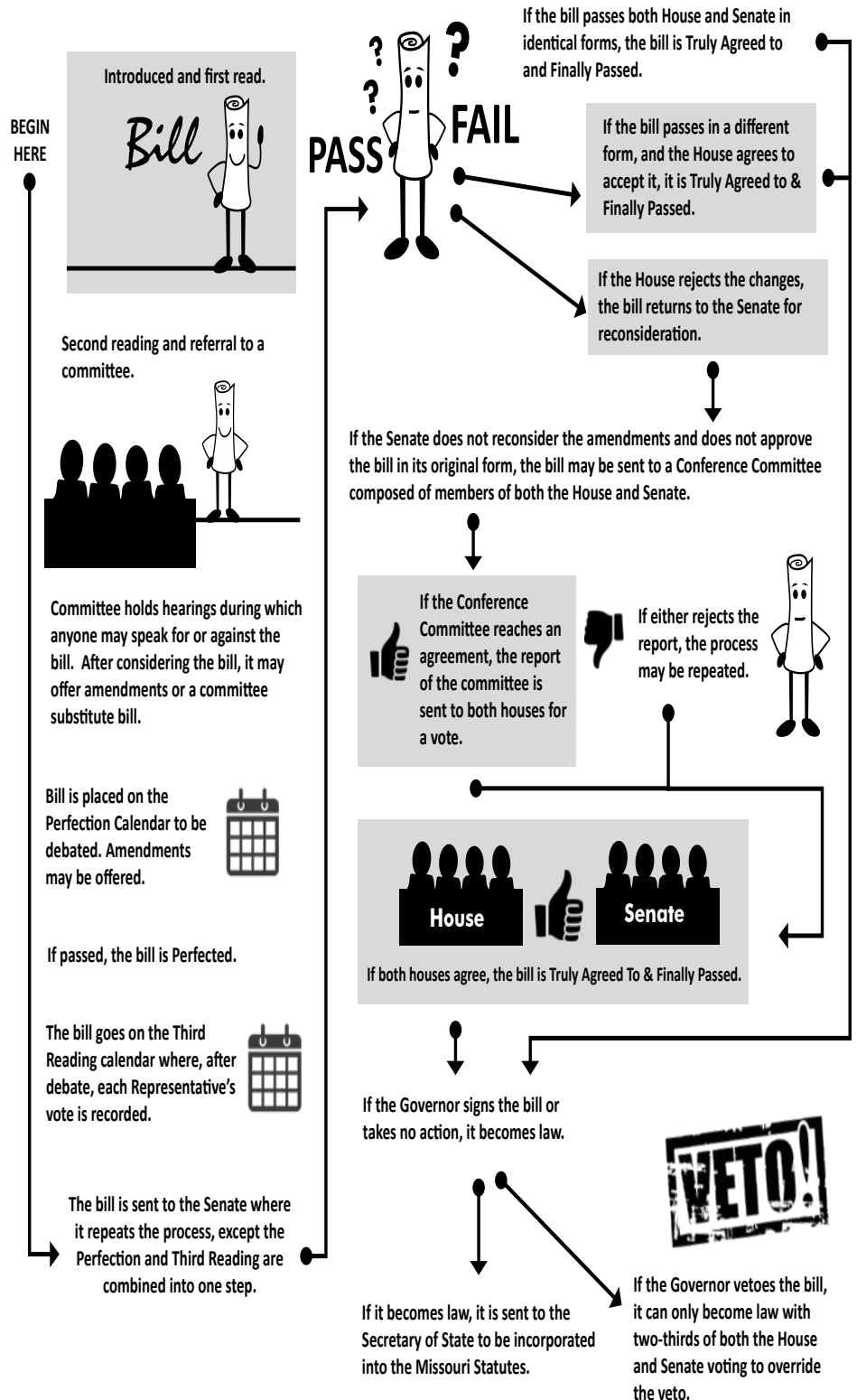
house.mo.gov/LegislationSP.aspx?report=billlist

www.senate.mo.gov/18info/BTS_Web/BillList.aspx?SessionType=R



COMPLIMENTS OF YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE

This depiction follows a bill introduced in the House of Representatives. The Senate follows a similar process.



I. INTRODUCTION OF A BILL

Members may prefile bills beginning December 1 preceding the opening of the General Assembly session in January. Bills prefiled are actually introduced on the first day of the session. Members may introduce bills through the 60th legislative day of the session. Multiple bills on the same issue can be filed.

II. FIRST AND SECOND READINGS

When introduced a bill is assigned a number in the order they are introduced and read the first time by its number and title only by the House reading clerk. It then goes on the calendar for second reading; following second reading it is assigned to committee by the Speaker of the House or President Pro Tem in Senate.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing before the committee to which a bill is assigned is the next step in the legislative process. The bill is presented to the committee by its sponsor, and both proponents and opponents are generally heard in a single hearing.

IV. COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SESSION

After a hearing is held, a committee may meet to vote and make its recommendations. These executive sessions are also open to the public, but no testimony is taken. The committee may vote to:

1. Report the bill to the House or Senate with the recommendation that it “do pass.”
2. Report the bill to the House or Senate with the recommendation that it “do pass” with committee amendments.
3. Report the bill to the House or Senate with the recommendation that a committee substitute for the bill “do pass.”
4. Report the bill with the recommendation that it “do not pass.” (Such a bill will not be taken up by the House unless 82 members vote to take it up.)
5. Report the bill to the House or Senate without recommendation.

The state constitution allows a bill to be taken from committee by one-third of the members. Such a bill is placed on the calendar for consideration.

V. PERFECTION OF A BILL

If a bill is reported favorably out of committee or a committee substitute is recommended, the bill or committee substitute is placed on the “perfection calendar.” When its turn comes up for consideration it is debated on the floor. If committee amendments are recommended, they are first presented, debated, and voted on. Further amendments can then be proposed by any member. When all amendments have been debated and voted on, a vote is taken on whether to have the bill “perfected and printed,” with any amendments incorporated into the bill.

VI. THIRD READING AND FINAL PASSAGE

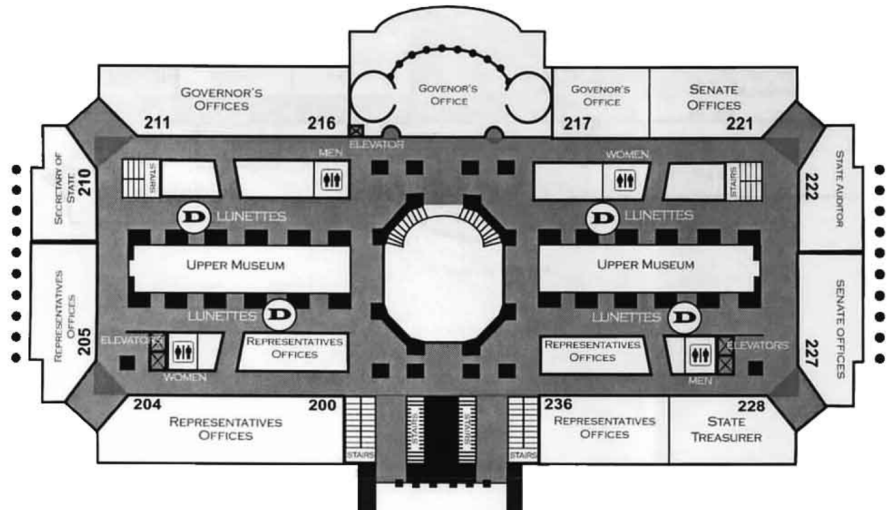
After perfection and re-printing, a bill goes on the calendar for a Third Reading. Only technical corrective amendments may be introduced at this stage, but members may debate the bill. At the conclusion of debate, a recorded vote is taken. Approval by a constitutional majority of the elected members (82 in the House and 17 in the Senate) is required for final passage. If the bill receives the required minimum of 82 votes, it is sent to the Senate, where it is again read a first and second time; referred to a committee for a public hearing; reported by committee; amended on the floor and offered for final approval. If the Senate changes the bill in any way, it is sent back to the House with the request that the changes be approved. If they are, the bill is Truly Agreed to and Finally Passed and sent to the Governor for his consideration. If one or more Senate changes are rejected, a conference may be requested and five members from each house are designated as a conference committee. Upon agreement by the conference committee (usually a compromise of differences), each reports to its own house on the committee’s recommendation. If both houses approve the conference committee report, the bill is declared Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed.

PREPPING FOR YOUR TRIP

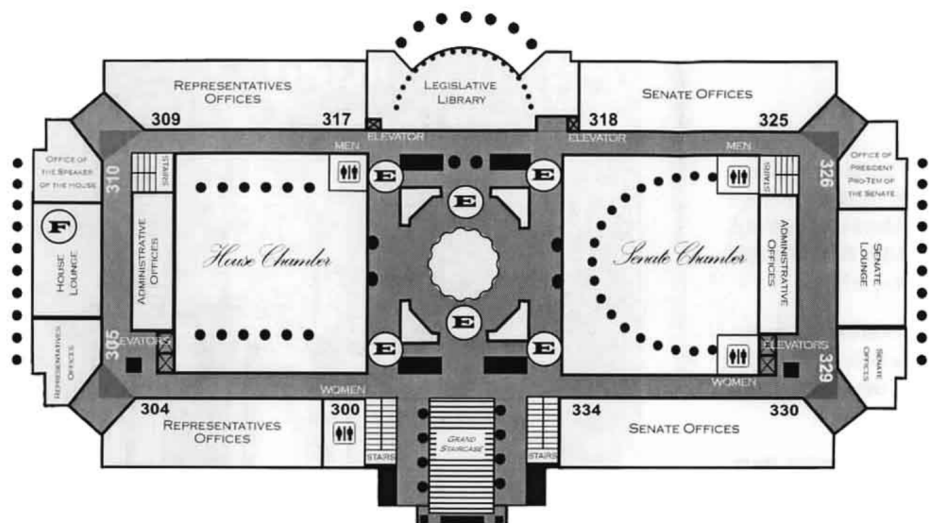
- Prepare a three minute written testimony, print a minimum of ten copies. Adding a photo of your child or family helps to humanize your story
- Prepare a 30 second elevator speech & PRACTICE
- Research your legislators
- Consult with CEAM about specific legislators to target
- Find out what's going on at the capitol that day
- You can try and call ahead to schedule an appointment. Their schedule changes throughout the day but it never hurts to give them a heads-up



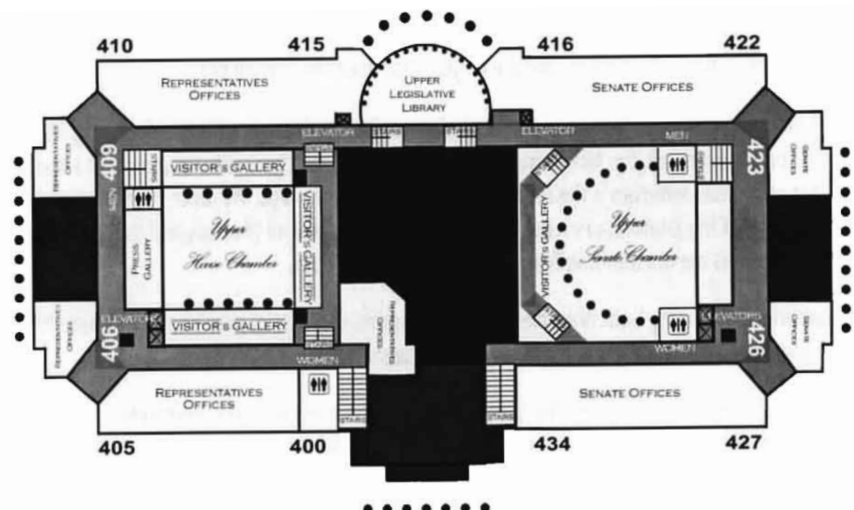
SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



FOURTH FLOOR



WHILE AT THE CAPITOL

- **WEAR COMFORTABLE SHOES**
- **Get the directory at the front information desk**
- **Dress respectfully but comfortably, be you**
- **There are metal detectors**
- **What you bring in you will be carrying all day. There is no coat check**
- **Leave 30 minutes to park and get in the building**
- **The best time to arrive is by 9:30, legislators get “called onto the floor” at 11am**
- **Best days to visit are Tuesdays and Wednesdays, legislators travel Monday and Friday and are often gone mid-day Thursday**
- **Head first to your legislators’ office to confirm your appointment and get their schedule for the day**
- **Visit your legislators on every trip but you should talk to committee chairs and any legislators on the committees (usually education committee but not always)**
- **The layout of the capitol takes a while to learn so feel free to ask anyone for help**
- **The legislative assistants (LA’s) are very helpful, they can photocopy your testimony, take you to “the floor” and pull your legislator off “the floor.” There are term limits for legislators but not LA’s. Get to know them. They are also the ones that answer the phone when you call the office.**
- **Doormen can also pull legislators off “the floor”**
- **Find out when bills will be heard, you can testify for or against any bill and you can ask for amendments, always open to the public, hearings are posted sometimes only a few days ahead**
- **You can go anytime, not just when bills are being heard**
- **Be prepared to feel like legislators aren’t listening, don’t take it personally**
- **Whether you agree with a legislator’s positions on issues or not you want something from them so be polite and courteous**
- **Remember to thank legislators for their time and hard work**



TESTIFYING AT A COMMITTEE HEARING

- Be prepared for your hearing to get pushed back many hours, secure childcare till late in the night, you can bring kids and that can help your case but make sure they are prepared for a long day
- Some hearing rooms get packed quickly so get there early if you want a seat
- Fill out a Witness Appearance Form, although that can be done when you get up to speak
- Hand out copies of your testimony with your form for as many legislators as there on the committee
- You can read your testimony or speak from the heart
- You will be facing the committee, about 8-12 legislators, with your back to the crowd (20-100)
- You usually have a three minute time limit but that can vary depending on how many people are testifying. Be prepared for only two minutes
- Most people testifying are with organizations, often administrators and lobbyists, you may be the only parent or student, that's why YOU matter!

AFTER YOUR TRIP...

- Thank you, thank you, thank you
- Always send a handwritten card, maybe even a photo or child's drawing, don't let them forget about you!
- Keep in contact, develop relationships with legislators and their LA's

LEARN MORE ONLINE

To see videos of CEAM volunteers testifying in Jefferson City, visit <https://goo.gl/pi6UQN> or scan the QR code below.

