

3 Ways to Stay Connected

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INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY



A Guide to Your Indiana Legislature

DISTRIBUTED BY:
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DEAR FRIENDS,

Nearly every law in Indiana is on the books, because a citizen recognized a need and shared that need with his or her legislator. The process of making laws – from committee hearings to first, second and third bill readings – can be confusing.

This guide to the Indiana General Assembly provides basic information about the legislative process in Indiana.

As your senator, I represent you at the Statehouse and value your opinions. Each year, as hundreds of issues come before the General Assembly for consideration, I encourage you to contact me with your thoughts and concerns. Perhaps you may have a suggestion for a law that will make a difference in the lives of Hoosiers.

I hope you will find this guide helpful and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Brandt Hershman, State Senator



LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- Legislature convenes in mid-November for Organization Day.
- Legislature reconvenes for a long or short session in early January.
- Long legislative sessions must adjourn by April 29 and short legislative sessions must adjourn by March 14.
- Special sessions may be called by the governor.
- Between sessions, legislators participate in interim study committees where they develop legislative proposals for the following year.

TYPES OF LEGISLATION

Senate/House Bills:

- Proposed laws are introduced as Senate or House bills.

- In long sessions, legislators may introduce as many bills as they wish during the pre-filing period.
- In short sessions, each legislator is permitted to introduce no more than a total of 10 bills or joint resolutions.

Joint Resolutions:

- Proposed amendments to the Indiana Constitution are introduced as joint resolutions.
- A joint resolution must be adopted by two separately elected general assemblies and approved by a majority of Hoosier voters during a statewide general election before the Indiana Constitution can be changed.

Concurrent Resolutions:

- Concurrent resolutions address matters of general concern to the Legislature. They deal with a variety of subjects – from urging action by Congress on specific legislation to honoring individuals for achievements or contributions to Indiana.

HOW A BILL BECOMES AN INDIANA LAW

Idea Developed

A constituent, interest group, public official or the governor suggests a bill to a legislator.

The legislator then authors or sponsors the bill. Lawmakers in the same chamber may join as co-author or co-sponsors of the bill.

Bill Drafted

At the legislator's direction, the non-partisan Legislative Services Agency provides research and drafting assistance, prepares the bill in proper technical form.

Bill Introduced

After a bill is drafted and filed by a legislator in either the Senate or the House of Representatives, the bill is then read by title for the first time to the legislative body.

Referred to Committee

The Senate President Pro Tem or the Speaker of the House of Representatives refers the bill to a committee for review.

Third Reading

On the third reading, the bill is eligible for passage in its house of origin.

The bill cannot be amended unless two-thirds of the legislators agree to changes. Otherwise, it passes or fails without changes.

Second Reading

After committee approval, the bill goes again before members of the entire chamber. During what is known as the bill's Second Reading, the legislation may be amended by a majority vote of lawmakers.

Committee Action

Committee chairmen schedule bill hearings that are open to the public, where anyone may ask to speak on a bill.

Because of the high volume of bills and time constraints, not every bill receives a hearing.

Vote

The bill passes when approved by a majority of members. In the Senate, 26 of 50 members is the majority. In the House of Representatives, 51 of 100 members is the majority.

Second Chamber

The bill goes through the same process as above in the second chamber.

If the bill is amended, the first chamber must approve the changes before the bill may be sent to the governor.

Conference Committee

If the chamber of origin disagrees with amendments, the bill goes to a four-member bipartisan conference committee.

If an agreement is reached, both chambers must approve the bill before sending it to the governor.

Governor

Upon receiving a bill, the governor may sign it, veto it or let it become law without his signature.

Vetoed bills may still become law if the veto is overridden by a majority vote in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.