

HOW TO COMMENT ON LEGISLATION

All **PUBLIC HEARINGS** (open to general public for verbal presentations) and **EXECUTIVE SESSIONS** (closed to general public for verbal presentations) are all open to public view. If you hear of one that interests you, on a specific draft bill that might affect you or someone you care about, **BECOME PART OF THE PROCESS.**

- **Show up in Olympia:** TESTIFY if you are able to; and/or, give copies of a “**HANDOUT**” to the Committee staff for distribution to the Committee’s Elected Members.
- **If you cannot attend,** send a brief **WRITTEN STATEMENT** for distribution to the members of the Committee.

Here’s what one Legislative Aide to a Representative said when asked **WHAT A “HANDOUT” TO THE COMMITTEE SHOULD LOOK LIKE:**

Keep it short – **NO MORE THAN ONE PAGE.**

Name the **BILL NUMBER** and/or issue right at the top.

Briefly set out your **MAIN POINTS IN “BULLETS.”**

SUMMARIZE your presentation – the reasoning behind your position.

Put it on **COLORED PAPER** – so it will stand out.

CHECK WITH THE COMMITTEE STAFF to learn how many **COPIES** they want (some ask for as many as 50 – 100 copies: enough for each Committee member, each of their staff, and the staff of the Committee itself).

Be sure to include **YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND CONTACT INFORMATION;** include the **NAME OF YOUR GROUP OR ORGANIZATION** if you have one.

Send **COPIES TO YOUR OWN SENATOR AND TWO REPRESENTATIVES** – even if they are not on the Committee.

*Note: If you cannot get to Olympia but you want to know what is going on in a Public Hearing, tune in **TVW (TV Washington)**, a cable television program. Its website is www.tvw.org*

THESE SAME BASIC SUGGESTIONS APPLY TO LEGISLATION THAT IS BEING CONSIDERED AT ANY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT:

CITY, COUNTY, STATE, OR FEDERAL.

PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRACY!

USE MODERN TECHNOLOGY

**** THE INTERNET.** At <http://dfind.leg.wa.gov/> you can find the names of your legislators (or, go to www.leg.wa.gov and click on "FIND OUT WHO REPRESENTS YOU"), get brief biographies of each, plus their office room locations and telephone numbers.

At www.leg.wa.gov, click on - "**Legislative Info.**" It is a gold mine! You can find bills introduced by a given legislator, learn Committee makeup, get a weekly schedule of hearings, or find a summary of bills introduced each day.

**** CABLE TELEVISION.** TVW offers the opportunity to watch – unedited - Public Hearings, interviews with decision-makers, and other events as they occur throughout the Legislative Session. Its programs are available on cable networks throughout the State. For program schedules go to www.tvw.org

CALL THE LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION CENTER – 360-786-7573, for information about bills, Committee action, or just about anything. These are some of the nicest, friendliest, most genuinely helpful people anywhere -- no matter how many requests they get, no matter how simple or complicated the question. They can also tell you who your legislators are – just give them your address + zip code (9-digit preferred).

REMEMBER THE BASICS: To CONTACT your legislators in Olympia you can Call, Write, or Visit

CALL:

You can call your legislators' offices directly, or call the **TOLL-FREE HOTLINE** weekdays from 8:00 am - 8:00 pm, and Saturdays from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm.

As you request, **HOTLINE Operators** will send your message to:

- * one of your legislators, * all three of your legislators,
- * the Governor and Lieutenant Governor – or all of these, as you request.

The **HOTLINE** is a great service. They can also tell you who your legislators are.

1-800-562-6000. TTY: 1-800-635-9993.

WRITE:

Representative _____ or,

Senator _____

P.O. Box 40600 (House), P.O. Box 404[leg district] (Senate).

Olympia, WA 98504-0600 (House) Olympia, WA 98504-04[leg district] (Senate)

EMAIL:

Write the first 8 letters of your legislator's last name, followed by _ plus the first two letters of their first name, @leg.wa.gov (e.g., *washingt_ge@leg.wa.gov* – if George Washington were your elected legislator.)

VISIT:

The **State Capital in Olympia**, any day during the session. Citizens are welcome. Also look for **TOWN HALL MEETINGS** back in the local Districts by mid-Session.