Legislative sessions

The Legislature convenes in mid-November for Organization Day, then re-convenes in early January when regular business begins. Long sessions must adjourn by April 29, and short sessions 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 Bill/House Bill: Proposed changes to Indiana law are introduced as Senate or House bills.

Legislators may introduce as many bills as they wish during the pre-filing period, however, they are limited on the number after that time.

Senate Joint Resolution/House Joint Resolution: Proposed amendments to Indiana's 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 state Constitution can be changed.

Senate Concurrent Resolution/ House Concurrent Resolution: Concurrent resolutions address matters of general concern to the Legislature; they deal with subjects as diverse as urging Congress to enact legislation or honoring a high school sports team.

Contacting your state legislators

Legislators value the opinions and suggestions of their constituents. To contact your state Senator, write the Senate, State of Indiana, 200 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2785.

Write to your state Representative at the Indiana House of Representatives, 200 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2786.

You may call your senator at 800-382-9467 or 317-232-9400. People with hearing or speech impairments can reach the Senate via TDD at 800-548-9517 or 317-232-0404.

To reach your representative by phone, call 317-232-9600. The toll-free numbers are 800-382-9841 for the Republican caucus, and 800-382-9842 for the Democrat caucus.

For more information

If you would like to find out the status of a particular piece of legislation **during the legislative session**, call the Legislative Information Center at 317-232-9856.

Easy-to-use computer terminals also are available to the public at the center, located in Room 230 of the Statehouse. The terminals are linked to the bill tracking system.

Calendars listing bills that are scheduled for committee hearings and floor action are available at the center, too. Copies of bills are available there for 15 cents per page.

Or visit my website at http://www.state.in.us/legislative/senate_republicans/homepages/S28/

From State Senator Beverly Gard

Dear Friends:

Just about every law in Indiana is on the books because a citizen recognized a need and told their legislators, "there ought to be a law...." But the process of making laws, from committee hearings to first, second and third bill readings, can be confusing.

"A Pocket Guide to the Indiana General Assembly" provides some basic information about the legislative process in Indiana, as well as information on how to contact your state legislators.

As your state 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 I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Beverly Gard

Beverly Gard
State Senator

State Senator
Beverly Gard

A Pocket Guide to the Indiana General Assembly

How a bill becomes a law in Indiana

IDEA DEVELOPED

A legislator decides to sponsor a bill, sometimes at the suggestion of a constituent, interest group, public official, or the governor. Other lawmakers in the same house may be asked to join as co-sponsors.

BILL DRAFTED

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

BILL INTRODUCED

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

COMMITTEE REFERENCE

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

COMMITTEE ACTION

Committee chairmen schedule bill hearings. Because of the high volume of bills and the time constraints, not every bill receives a hearing. Committee meetings are open to the public and anyone may ask to speak on a bill.

SECOND READING

After committee approval, the bill is printed and legislators have at least two days to review it. A bill may be amended by a majority vote of the legislators.

THIRD READING

On third reading, the bill is eligible for passage in its house of origin. At this stage, it cannot be amended unless two-thirds of the legislators agree to changes. Otherwise it passes or fails without changes.

VOTE

The bill passes when approved by a majority of the members (26 in the Senate, 51 in the House).

SECOND HOUSE

The bill goes through the same process in the second house. If it is amended, the first house must approve the changes before the bill may be sent to the governor.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

If the house of origin disagrees with the amendments, the bill goes to a four-member bipartisan conference committee. If an agreement is reached, both chambers must again approve the bill before sending it to the governor.

GOVERNOR

Once the governor receives a bill, he may sign it, veto it, or let it become law without his signature. Vetoed bills still may become law if the veto is overridden by a majority vote in both the Senate and the House.