

SECRETS *for* CITIZEN LOBBYISTS



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FORWARD

The actions of the Minnesota Legislature affect every everyone, so it is important to be involved in the legislative process. Every Minnesota resident has two legislators — one State Representative and one State Senator. Your elected representatives vote on thousands of issues each year. On most issues, legislators hear nothing from the people they represent. Legislators say they rely on input from their constituents and wish they heard more from them.

This booklet explains the legislative process to help the public feel more comfortable and communicate more effectively with their legislators. It encourages informed involvement with the people and processes of the Legislature to make a difference on the issues that affect individuals or the organizations in which they are involved.

Throughout this booklet, terms that are shown in italics can be found in the glossary, which begins on page 23.

Understanding the Legislative Process

The legislative process is based on law and tradition. Each legislative session spans a two-year period, or biennium. The first year of the biennium — the odd-year — is known as the budget year. The second year of the biennium — the even-year — is referred to as the “bonding year”. In bonding years, the Legislature acts upon legislation for infrastructure and other capital investments that are financed through the sale of state bonds. In some years, the Legislature may pass budgeting or bonding legislation in the non-traditional year.

An idea becomes a bill

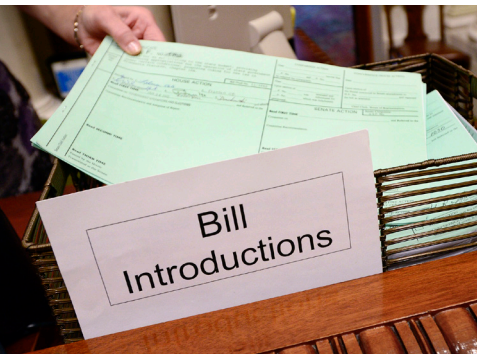
The legislative process begins with an idea: “There ought to be a law...” Anyone can develop these ideas. Legislators often have ideas of their own but also welcome suggestions from constituents, organizations, and state agencies.

Legislators serving as *chief authors*, of legislation often become the best advocates for their own legislation. Legislators’ reputations are built or damaged because of good or bad bills and the way they are handled by those who serve as their sponsors. Legislators work hard to implement good legislation and seek support from their constituents and the broader public.

A bill is drafted and introduced

Ideas are drafted into *bill form* in the offices of the *Revisor of Statutes* where attorneys specializing in specific areas of state law draft the bills. After approval by the legislators who requested them, they are printed and issued *jackets*: two copies for the Senate, with yellow

covers, and two copies for the House of Representatives, with green covers. The jackets are signed by legislators who become known as the *chief authors* and *co-authors*. There are five lines on each Senate bill, allowing for a maximum of a chief author and four co-authors. House bills may be introduced by a chief author and as many as 34 co-authors. A bill needs only a chief author to be introduced, but often many lines are filled to demonstrate that the bill has bipartisan and broad geographic support.



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When the chief author is ready to introduce the bill, it is placed in the “hopper” where the chief clerk in each body of the Legislature prepares the bill to be officially introduced.

On the next meeting date of the House or Senate, the bill is given a unique file number and referred to a standing committee. The chief author of the bill sometimes has a say about the committee to which their bill is referred but it is most often decided by staff in the office of the House Speaker and Senate Majority Leader. The bills will have different numbers in each body based on when they were placed in the hopper. HF indicates a *House File* and SF a *Senate File*.

House and Senate rules allow for the *introduction* of several pieces of identical legislation in the same house, called clone bills. This happens when many legislators want to be identified as authors of a particular idea. Identical bills are all referred to the same *standing committee* which then selects one bill to work on (almost always the one sponsored by a member of the majority party).

Committees hear and act on the bill

Committees meet during the legislative session to hold public hearings on bills and to act on them. During committee hearings, chief authors present overviews of their bills, followed by detailed descriptions. Individuals from outside the Legislature may testify on bills because of specific expertise, or to express support or opposition for an entire bill or just a portion of it.

Proponents of a bill are usually heard first, then opponents. Committee hearings are more informal than they first appear, and although debate on controversial or complicated issues can cover several days, hearings are usually interesting to watch. Until the final crush of committee deadlines, advance public notice is usually given regarding committee hearings. The best way to learn about committee schedules and agendas is to check the Minnesota Legislature (www.leg.mn) website to view current schedules and subscribe to committee listservs.



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Committees attempt to follow agendas developed by committee chairs with the assistance of their staff. Even when the process is moving without time pressures, it is difficult to predict when specific agenda items will be taken up. Because the legislative process is responsive to the public, it is sometimes difficult for the committee chair to control the amount of time spent in hearing and debate.

Committee actions begin with a motion by a committee member to pass, postpone, table, or amend. Voting is conducted by a voice vote unless a committee member requests a roll call. In hearings, many bills are amended and may emerge from a committee looking totally different than their initial form. One type of amendment, if adopted, removes all language from a bill and inserts new or significantly modified language while retaining the bill's original number and authors. Such amendments are known as delete-all amendments. If adopted, delete-all amendments can cause individuals or organizations to completely reverse their previous support or opposition to specific proposals. Delete-all amendments are often the result of compromise between stakeholders on the bill.

Bills that are tabled or indefinitely postponed in committee usually do not return to the full body for consideration.

Often, bills must be heard by more than one committee in each house. They may start in a *policy committee* and be passed on, for example, to the Tax Committee if a new tax is required; to the Finance Committee if passage of the bill requires an expenditure of state funds; or to the Governmental Operations Committee if the organization or functioning of state government would change with bill passage.

Once debate is finished on a bill, committees make recommendations to their respective bodies. Those recommendations may include:

- ▶ Pass in its original form;
- ▶ Pass as amended;
- ▶ Re-refer the bill to another standing committee or to a sub-committee for further study, or;
- ▶ Lay the bill over for possible inclusion in an *omnibus bill*.

Bills that are *tabled* or indefinitely postponed in committee usually do not return to the full body for consideration.

The bill may become part of an omnibus bill

Omnibus bills are larger bills encompassing many changes to state statute. Generally, omnibus bills deal with major finance issues but they may also be policy bills or both. Individual pieces of legislation that are heard early in the session may be amended into an omnibus bill which is then submitted to either the full House or Senate for debate, amendment and passage to the other body for its consideration. Floor debates on omnibus bills often last many hours.

The bill is heard on the floor of the House and Senate

In each house, the final committee to consider a bill will, if favorably inclined, refer it to the full body for consideration. The process for dealing with bills is nearly identical in both houses, and all bills must pass through both houses in identical form before they become law.

When a bill is passed by a committee and sent to the floor, it is listed on the General Register in the House, and on General Orders in the Senate. Bills that are non-controversial or contain only minor technical changes may be placed on a *Consent Calendar* and receive immediate final action. The House and Senate Rules Committees determine which bills will make it to the floor to be debated. In the House, the bills are scheduled on the Calendar of the Day, and in the Senate they are scheduled on Special Orders.

Bills are often passed by the House and Senate containing different language. Frequently these differences are resolved by amending the versions into identical form on the House and Senate floor. When the differences are too great to be resolved that way, a conference committee must be appointed.

Differences in bills are worked out in conference committees

Major tax and spending bills (and many other bills) are passed by the House and Senate containing different language, and those differences cannot be resolved easily on the floor. To resolve the differences, the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader appoint a Conference Committee charged with meeting to resolve all differences. A *Conference Committee* is comprised of an equal number of legislators (either three or five) from the House and Senate. A Conference Committee Report, containing the final version that has been approved by the conference committee, is sent back to both the House and Senate for consideration and a vote to pass or not pass. A conference committee report may not be amended on the Senate or House floors.

Conference committees often meet at irregular times — whenever the committee members can get together. Often, major conference committees meet for many hours over a period of days, nights and weekends. Technology has made schedules easier to follow, but there still may be little advance notice of a meeting being scheduled, or canceled. The only sure way to know when meetings will occur is to stay in continual contact with Committee Administrators, the House and Senate Information Offices, conference committee members or by subscribing to the committee listserv to receive email notifications.

The governor reviews and signs or vetoes the bills

After identical versions of bills are passed by the House and Senate, they are reviewed to correct minor technical errors by the Revisor of Statutes, then sent to the governor for final action. Staff specialists review the bills, refer the bills to state departments for comment, and advise the governor if the bill should receive a signature or veto.

The governor's office is often the focal point of intense lobbying through letters and phone calls, urging approval or veto of legislation.

Understanding the State Budget

To have the most impact on the legislative process, one must understand how the state's budget is created and approved. The biennial budget covers the state's spending for a two-year period. It is a budget that details all the state's spending plans for areas like state agencies, education, public safety, health care, agriculture, transportation, taxation, housing, natural resources, and economic development.

The budget process for the biennium begins in July in even-numbered years and ends in May in the odd-numbered year. Work on current and future projects is always underway and it is important to understand when this work occurs to have the best chance of success when proposing budget related items.

- ▶ September through December of the even year. The Minnesota Management and Budget Department (MMB) provides state agencies with budget instructions; the state agencies send their budgets to MMB and the governor to help develop state budget recommendations.

- ▶ Late November/Early December of the even year. The budget forecast is released by MMB and provides information on the current outlook for the state budget including shortfalls or surpluses in revenue, economic trends, and other information.
- ▶ January of the odd year. The governor announces budget recommendations to the Legislature and to the public in January of the odd year.
- ▶ January through May of the odd year. The budget bill, or a series of budget bills, goes through the legislative process, and the bill or bills are sent to the Governor for signature or veto. The Legislature must vote to approve an identical budget in each body. The Governor may use a line-item veto to strike specific appropriation items.
- ▶ February of the odd year. MMB releases another economic forecast providing additional information about the financial condition of the state.
- ▶ May of the odd year. As required by the Minnesota Constitution, the Legislature must conclude its business and pass the budget by the third Monday in May. If the Legislature does not complete and pass a budget, the governor may call the Legislature back for special session. If a budget is not passed by July 1 in the odd year (the beginning of the state's fiscal year), a full or partial government shutdown will occur, as happened in 2005.

In September of odd-numbered years, the supplemental budget process begins with the release of instructions to state agencies from MMB, much like the previous year. However, it is not the full biennial budget. Instead, adjustments are made by the Legislature to the budget already enacted the year before. Again, in November and February, economic forecasts are released by MMB and used to develop the supplemental budget, which is released to the Legislature in mid-March. The Legislature then passes one or more budget bills, usually by early May, just before the Legislature adjourns. However, unlike the year of the biennial budget, it is not necessary for a supplemental budget to be passed by the Legislature to prevent a government shutdown.

Preparing Your Messages

Citizen lobbyists must thoroughly understand the issues they are presenting. Legislators rely on people who are experts in their issues to give them good information and educate them on changes that are needed in law. Without knowledge of the issue, it is not possible to establish a legislative platform and formulate a strategy.

Legislators do not like surprises. Although it is a good idea to contact legislators far in advance of action on an issue, it is not always possible. If a good relationship is already established with a legislator and they have been informed about an issue over time, they are more likely to understand when an issue has reached a crucial decision-making point.

Citizen lobbyists must thoroughly understand the issues they are presenting.

What legislators want to know

- ▶ What is the specific need?
- ▶ What, if anything, has been done in other states and what were the results?
- ▶ What are the benefits and drawbacks?
- ▶ What other groups and individuals support the position?
- ▶ Who is expected to oppose the issue?
- ▶ What is the cost of the proposal?
- ▶ What is the effect on the public in terms of safety, health, and cost?
- ▶ How will it affect jobs and employment; specifically, within the legislator's district?

Things legislators like to hear

- ▶ We have done thorough research on the issue.
- ▶ There is either no opposition to this measure or the opposition is minimal.
- ▶ We met with the opposition and worked out a compromise.
- ▶ Our proposal will save the state "X" dollars.
- ▶ This bill is revenue-neutral; it won't require a tax increase or a spending cut elsewhere.
- ▶ We have checked with the appropriate state department and they support (or do not oppose) this approach.
- ▶ This bill will create "X" new jobs.

- ▶ This bill is supported by the following major organizations in your district.
- ▶ Similar bills have been enacted in other states with positive results.

Things legislators don't like to hear

- ▶ The industry (or the field, or profession, etc.) is divided on the issue. If this statement is true, it is good to be honest up front rather than letting a legislator hear it from someone else.
- ▶ One way to pay for this measure is to cut spending in another area.
- ▶ We don't know how much it will cost.

Communicating with Legislators

Legislators need information

Much of the responsibility for an informed Legislature falls upon Minnesota residents. It is important to become familiar with the process and the people. Most legislators are readily accessible — but few people take advantage of the opportunities to inform them.

The average legislator is bright and committed to doing a good job. Proud of their work and reputation, they work hard to represent their constituents. Most also want to run for re-election. Legislators are interested in authoring and passing laws they can highlight as their legislative achievements. Constituents are their top priority and legislators enjoy hearing from the people they represent, so take advantage of this opportunity to connect to legislators. Legislators generally know what will — and will not — sell in their districts and at the Capitol.

Legislators make excellent advocates for issues

If they are familiar with and committed to an issue, legislators can work on it at times and in places that would be impossible for others. They spend many hours serving on committees and in meetings with other legislators. This gives him the opportunity to lobby legislators on issues that they care the most about. Also, state departments are aware of legislators' abilities to affect their operations and generally cooperate with them.

Many ways to communicate

Here are the most common forms of communicating with legislators:

1. Personal visits with legislators in their districts

Best carried out prior to legislative sessions, these meetings allow legislators to visit with constituents in a relaxed setting and might include a visit by the legislator to a business or association meeting. At these meetings, it is a good idea to present legislators with position papers on major concerns, including the results of research, surveys and other supporting information. Provide complete contact information so the legislator can get additional information later.

2. Legislative district meetings

Most legislators have regular public meetings with constituents in their districts. Local newspapers, legislator and individual caucus social media pages will carry notices of times and locations of such meetings. These are effective opportunities to communicate with state legislators. Arrive early and bring copies of issue papers/talking points.

3. Personal visits in St. Paul

Capitol visits with legislators can be effective and many trade and professional associations sponsor Capitol visits. Time pressures facing legislators may limit their attention. Call ahead or email to schedule an appointment, although sometimes it might be possible to drop in to see if they are available. You may find that legislators have had meetings added to their schedules and are behind in their appointments. Be prepared for them to invite others to attend the meeting: including staff members, other constituents, or legislators. Plan to make a brief presentation supported by a position paper, then respond to legislators' questions.

When meeting with a legislator, the first stop is to locate their legislative assistant to check in for the appointment. If the legislator's office is located in the State Office Building, ask, or look at signs to find the assistant's desk, as they are not always located directly outside of the legislator's office. Schedules can change quickly, and the meeting might need to take place while walking with a legislator as they go from meeting to meeting. Offices in the Senate Office Building flow more naturally, and their assistants sit right outside their Senator's office.

Tips for meeting with a legislator during session:

- ▶ Be brief, get to the point and stick to it.
- ▶ Prepare a one-page issue paper with talking points to leave behind.
- ▶ Don't argue.
- ▶ Be prepared for interruptions.
- ▶ Ask for specific action on your issue – or ask how the legislator intends to vote.
- ▶ Offer to help in the future.
- ▶ Don't overstay your welcome.
- ▶ Thank them for their time.
- ▶ Follow up after the meeting with a personal thank-you note via email letter. Very briefly reinforce the main point of your meeting in your thank you note.

4. Personal phone calls

Phone calls are effective if a legislator is familiar with an individual and his or her issues. If a relationship has been developed, a legislator is more likely to accept or return the phone call. Keep calls brief, well-organized and get to the point.

5. Mailed letters

If a relationship has been developed, letters with talking points are effective. Legislators almost always read correspondence from constituents, regardless of an existing relationship. Generally, it is a waste of time to send personal letters to other legislators unless a relationship has been established or unless they are on a committee that is dealing with the issue of concern.

6. Email Messages

Legislators receive thousands of email messages. Emails can sometimes be missed because of the number of spam and listserv mailings they receive. When sending email, include an address in the subject line so they know that you are a constituent. For non-constituents corresponding about a particular bill, include the bill number and topic in the subject line.

7. Mailed postcards

The least effective communication is a bulk-mailed postcard. While this method can demonstrate support or opposition to an issue, a pre-printed postcard gets less attention than other means of communication.

Testifying Before Legislative Committees

The best idea is no more than an idea if it is poorly presented in committee while developing and presenting messages effectively is the key to moving an issue forward.



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Count the votes

In the Legislature, victory often goes to the person or group who works hardest before a hearing takes place. There is no reason to bring an issue to a hearing if a “nose count” of legislators shows that most will vote against the issue. In the Legislature, there is nothing unfair about having the fight decided before it starts. It happens every day.

Choose messengers carefully

Select your spokesperson carefully. He or she should be articulate and knowledgeable about the issues at hand and must be available at unpredictable times to present testimony or answer questions from committee members.

Be creative

Share a personal story; find anecdotes that explain the case effectively and simply; or think of other ways to make the information more tangible for legislators. Practice the presentation with someone else to see if they understand the message, or if they can spot jargon that might be difficult to understand for someone outside the organization.

Make presentations brief and factual

Legislators appreciate solid facts because they help make the case for their policy position. Inaccurate or inappropriate use of facts does the opposite. Legislators are busy people and do not have time to read a detailed two-page email or listen to an hour of testimony. They appreciate short communications that get to the point. Have additional information ready in case they have questions.

Use terms the committee will understand

Legislators are smart people, but they won't know all the details of every subject. Eliminate jargon or technical details that cloud the message. An acronym that is unfamiliar to a legislator confuses the message that is being communicated.

It's never over till it's over

A loss one day may be turned around the next. If you lose the vote on your issue, it may be possible to amend it somewhere else in the process. Similarly, when your organization opposes a provision, just because you have been successful one day to stall a provision, it does not mean the provision will not show up somewhere else on another day.

Preparing to testify

- ▶ Verify the agenda and testifier list with the committee administrator and/or the chief author of the legislation ahead of time.
- ▶ Be prepared to answer all possible questions from committee members who may or may not be supportive.
- ▶ Practice, practice, practice.
- ▶ Prepare sufficient copies of a one-page issue sheet summarizing the testimony for committee members and staff. Refer to it — but don't read from it.
- ▶ Arrive at the hearing room a few minutes before the hearing is scheduled to begin.
- ▶ Check in with committee staff prior to the start of the committee.
- ▶ Watch and listen to others presenting testimony — and notice the reaction of legislators. This is a good way to learn the process.
- ▶ Be prepared to be approached by legislators or lobbyists after your testimony who may ask questions about your testimony or issue.

The best idea is no more than an idea if it is poorly presented in committee.

When testifying

- ▶ Be brief.
- ▶ Resist attempts at humor. It is easy for an offhand remark or intended joke to be taken differently than it was meant.
- ▶ Avoid dramatic, emotional approaches.
- ▶ Direct your testimony through the committee chair, addressing the chair as “Madame Chair” or “Mr. Chair.”
- ▶ When asked a question, wait for the committee chair to recognize you before you answer.

- ▶ If you don't know an answer, offer to find it and get back to the legislator or chair of the committee. Follow up with an email or phone call as soon as possible.
- ▶ Be honest and don't stretch the truth. Legislators will find out. If you do not immediately know the answer to a question, simply state you do not know but will provide a follow-up answer as soon as you can.
- ▶ Thank the committee chair and members for the opportunity to testify.

Organizing for Action

Create processes and structures

Organizations should develop internal processes to work with the Legislature. Establish a legislative committee consisting of interested and knowledgeable members. This is an important step to provide information to an organization to create a process to make decisions on legislative issues. If there is no legislative committee, this responsibility can be handled by the organization's Board of Directors. The body serving as the legislative committee should:

- ▶ Be able to speak for the organization and be empowered to act for it on the spot when asked how the organization would feel about a specific issue, bill or amendment.
- ▶ Be familiar with the organization's issues and the legislative process.
- ▶ Develop and maintain positive working relationships with key legislators and staff members.
- ▶ Commit the time to meet with legislators in their home districts and at the Capitol.

Build support

Start identifying all known allies — those who will support your issues. Include legislators, staff members, administrative department personnel, allied organizations, industry groups, and trade associations. No issue ever had too many supporters.

Once the list of proponents is exhaustive, identify the opponents and how they can either be converted or made as silent as possible. Be prepared to respond to arguments or questions your opponents may raise. Few issues move through the legislative process without controversy. At times like these, there is nothing like a friend to give it a nudge forward or an acknowledged enemy who decides to remain silent.

Some organizations spend their entire existence fighting everything — and they quickly become recognized for this. It is also important to support and work on positive issues or positions. Supporting issues with other organizations reflects positively on an organization and will pay future dividends.

Work between sessions

The time between sessions — Interim — is the best time to prepare for the coming session. Government budgets are being developed and legislative programs for state agencies are under way. Legislators are hearing from their constituents — whose concerns may or may not coincide with your position — so it is important to stay involved.

Interim is a good time to evaluate the status of an organization's legislative program:

- ▶ Where are we vulnerable?
- ▶ How can we correct the situation without government help?
- ▶ Which legislators are antagonistic toward our issue? How can they be turned around?
- ▶ What groups are negative toward us? How can we minimize the friction?
- ▶ What legislative proposals could hurt us the most? What information would we need to defend against them?
- ▶ Who are our best human resources — legislative and other?
- ▶ Who are the legislators who know us best? Which ones treat us best?
- ▶ What other resources do we have?
- ▶ What must we do to be prepared for anything?

The time between sessions is the best time to prepare for the coming session.

It is important to stay involved.

Become involved in district activities

Legislators appreciate opportunities to learn of their constituents' concerns while at home. Some opportunities to interact with legislators and educate them include:

- ▶ Inviting them to tour a facility;
- ▶ Inviting them to speak at an event;
- ▶ Attending legislators' town hall meetings; and
- ▶ Volunteering to help on their campaigns and/or attend their fundraising events.

These tactics will help an organization be effective all year round by preparing for upcoming legislative activity and keeping the organization's issues on the minds of legislators.

Participate in the electoral process

Elections are an excellent way to get attention for issues. Candidates seek opportunities to talk to voters and understand their concerns. Campaign season provides a good opportunity to educate candidates about issues in order to influence the outcome because every vote counts. Here are some ideas:

- ▶ Discuss issues when a candidate is campaigning in the community.
- ▶ Seek out the candidates — call or email candidates and tell them about legislative concerns and what is happening in the community.
- ▶ Ask candidates to tour your company, facility or program.
- ▶ Learn about the candidates. Check out their websites, read their campaign literature, legislative score cards and local media coverage.
- ▶ Be prepared to discuss issues with candidates when they are out campaigning.
- ▶ Volunteering on a campaign is another way to get involved. Candidates are always looking for dedicated volunteers and appreciate any help they get.

Other Important People

Legislative staff

Some of the most important people in the legislative process are legislators' legislative assistants. Each legislator has one, although an individual's services may be shared by one or two other legislators. Legislative assistants can solve many problems and answer countless questions. They are committed to their legislators' efforts — and constituent services are always at the top of the priority list. They know legislators' schedules and can arrange meetings with them and with other legislators.

Committee Administrators are also important. They work with committee chairs and are responsible for setting committee hearing agendas, scheduling testifiers, and assisting chairs with committee bills and amendments. They also can provide important information on their committee; give advice on legislators to talk to and ideas or challenges in the committee.

Governor's staff

The governor has a team of policy analysts who advise the governor on legislation and help negotiate issues with legislators. They help gauge the governor's support for an issue. They also want to hear from constituents about legislation that may be problematic to help negotiate changes, or to advise the governor to support or veto legislation.

Administrative agencies

State employees are generally readily accessible and committed to helping. A phone call or email is all that is needed to obtain information and/or inform them of concerns. Many of them have been in their positions for a long time and are some of the most knowledgeable people at the Capitol on specific topics.

Campaign Finance Laws for Citizen Lobbyists

Citizen lobbyists may need to register as a lobbyist with the *Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board*. The following general points may help:

- ▶ Discuss issues when a candidate is campaigning in the community.
- ▶ Seek out the candidates — call or email candidates and tell them about legislative concerns and what is happening in the community.

It is easy to register as a lobbyist, but it also requires regular and detailed reporting to the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board. There is no benefit to registering if it is unnecessary under the law. If questions about whether you need to register or not, you can contact the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board at cf.board@state.mn.us.

RESOURCES

The Internet plays an increasing role in the daily operations of the Minnesota Legislature. The Minnesota Legislature's homepage can be found at www.leg.mn. From there, one can access the Senate and House websites and locate other information regarding the Legislature.

The public may also use the Minnesota Legislature's homepage to track bills moving through the process using the "MyBills" tab on the homepage. The system is updated daily and users may sign up to

receive an alert when action has been taken on a bill. The Senate and House web pages are also useful tools for checking the daily calendar, signing up for email alerts or reviewing bills and amendments. Most committee and floor debates can be watched live from this site, and many committee hearings and press conferences are archived to view later.

The governor's website (www.governor.state.mn.us) contains the Governor's Bill Log that includes information on bills that have been presented for signature, bills that have been signed, and vetoes. When the governor vetoes a bill, it is accompanied by a veto letter to the Legislature explaining the reason for the veto.

Social Media

Members of the public, staff, and legislators use social networking tools to quickly share and broadcast information. These tools include Facebook, Twitter, and sometimes LinkedIn. These public online networking sites act as their own media outlet used to inform followers about votes taken, press conference details and floor happenings.

Contact information

Sometimes the answer to a question cannot be found online. Here are some useful phone numbers:

House of Representatives

- ▶ House Information Office (651) 296-2146, 800-657-3550
- ▶ Chief Clerk's Office (651) 296-2314
- ▶ House Index (651) 296-6646

Senate

- ▶ Office of the Secretary of the Senate (651) 296-2344, 888-234-1112
- ▶ Senate Index/Information Office (651) 296-0504, (651) 296-2887, 888-234-1112

State Agencies/Departments

Much useful information about state agencies and elected officials is available on the Minnesota Northstar website. The web address is www.state.mn.us. There are links to all the state agencies, legislative offices, and constitutional officers, as well as a directory for all state employees.

GLOSSARY

Bill Form

The legal form in which legislative proposals for laws must be drafted to be introduced in the House and Senate.

Calendar for the Day (House)/Special Orders (Senate)

Bills on the *Calendar for the Day* or Special Orders may be considered for final passage by the House today. Each bill has had two prior *readings*, has been acted upon by one or more *standing committees*, and has been printed. Bills are placed on the *Calendar for the Day*/Special Orders by the House and Senate Committees on Rules and Legislative Administration. Amendments may be offered to these bills and each bill is given a Third Reading prior to its final passage.

Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board

The mission of the Board is to promote public confidence in state government decision-making through development, administration and enforcement of disclosure and public financing programs which will ensure public access to and understanding of information filed with the Board.

Caucus

All members of a particular party in either House or Senate. A caucus may also be formed to acknowledge other alliances. For example, a caucus may be based on regions of the state or by issues.

Chief Author

A legislator whose signature appears in the first blank on a bill and who assumes major responsibility for its passage.

Co-Authors

Legislators who “sign on” bills in the positions other than those for *chief authors*. Although co-authors are not required, bills may have up to four, plus the *chief author*, in the Senate; and up to 35, including the chief author, in the House.

Commissioner

The title given to heads of state administrative agencies appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Legislature.

Companion Bills

House and Senate versions of the same original bills.

Conference Committee

Committees of three to five members from each house appointed to resolve differences in House- and Senate-passed versions of *companion bills*.

Consent Calendar

Lists of bills in both houses that are local or noncontroversial. Bills are placed on the Consent Calendars by House and Senate Committees. They receive their third reading at time of passage.

Delete-All (or Strike Everything) Amendment

A type of amendment that removes all original language from a bill and inserts completely new language which may, or may not, include parts of the original. When so amended, bills retain their original numbers and authors.

General Orders (Senate)/General Register (House)

The initial list of bills passed by either House or Senate which have had their second reading. Bills are debated, amended and acted upon — usually by voice vote, by the full body acting as a committee.

House File (H.F.)

A bill introduced in the House of Representatives, followed by its number in order of its *introduction*. Thus, House File 100 was the one hundredth bill introduced in a biennium.

Introduction

The initial presentation, or first reading, of a bill in House and Senate.

Jackets

The actual, original bill cover. There are two copies for *introduction* in the House and two for the Senate. Jackets contain spaces for recording names of authors and all legislative actions.

Majority

The political *caucus*, in either House or Senate, having the most members and that controls committee assignments, bill referrals, and decides which bills will be scheduled for a vote on the floor.

Minority

The House or Senate political caucus that has the fewest members.

MSB

Common abbreviation for the Minnesota Senate Building. All state senator offices are located in this building.

Omnibus Bill

A bill that is a compilation of several different bills or ideas. It is common to have omnibus legislation for the budget bills, and for significant policy areas.

Policy Committees

Standing committees in House and Senate that address specific issue areas such as Health or Transportation, and whose prime consideration is not a finance, or tax-related, issue.

Reading

The process of announcing bill numbers before the full House or Senate. Pursuant to the Constitution, each bill must have three such *readings* on three different days before final passage in each body. Bills are not read in their entirety during *readings*.

Revisor of Statutes

The office of the Revisor of Statutes is responsible for drafting bills and amendments and placing new laws into existing Minnesota statutes.

Senate File (S.F.)

A bill introduced in the Senate, followed by its number in order of its *introduction*. Thus, Senate File 100 was the one hundredth bill introduced in a biennium.

Sine Die

Final adjournment of a legislative session; the final day of an even-year session or a special session. (The Latin translates literally to “without days.” If you are a Latin scholar, you’ll be surprised at the pronunciation: sigh-nee dye)

State Office Building

Commonly referred to as the SOB, this building houses all members of the House of Representatives and their staff, as well as committee rooms and the Secretary of State.

Standing Committees

Committees of legislators in both houses which are established at the beginning of a biennium, and which meet on a regular basis throughout the biennium.

Tabling

The action of “tabling” or “laying on the table” requires a vote by a majority of the committee or group considering a bill. Tabling a bill officially kills it or delays it until another majority vote returns it to the table for further consideration. The motion to table is not debatable.

ABOUT EWALD CONSULTING

Ewald Consulting was founded by former State Representative Doug Ewald in 1982 and has since grown steadily by attaining outstanding results for its clients. Ewald Consulting's Public Affairs division provides a full range of services including government relations, public relations and grassroots management.

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