

Important Telephone Numbers:

Clerk of the House of
Representatives:

(850) 488-1157

420 The Capitol

Secretary of the Senate

(850) 487-5270

405 The Capitol

Legislative Information

(850) 488-4371

It is imperative that citizens make their elected officials aware of their opinions. You can do this by contacting your Representative and Senator in their district offices or in Tallahassee. Local numbers for your officials are listed in your telephone directory and at www.leg.state.fl.us

A Citizen's Guide



This Information

is Provided to you by:

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www.fortreport.com

**to the
Legislative
Process in
Florida**



The Legislative Process

Florida has an open legislative process. All business, including committee action on bills and amendments, is conducted “in the sunshine” or in open meetings. You may attend any of these meetings.

House and senate Committees meet on a regular schedule during the session in committee rooms located throughout the House, Senate and Knott Office Buildings and in the Capitol. When a bill is introduced by a Representative or a Senator, it is referred to the relative committee or committees for study and consideration. The committee chairman determines when a bill will appear on a meeting agenda.

Copies of bills are available in House Documents (326 The Capitol) or in the Senate Document Center (304 The Capitol). During session, journals and calendars are available in these offices also. The calendar will show which committees are scheduled to meet and which bills will be heard. You can find out the status of a bill by calling legislative information at (850) 488-4371 or toll free at (800) 342-1827.

Public testimony is permitted at most committee meetings. To testify before committees of the Florida Legislature, please note the following suggestions:

Before the Meeting

- You should find out when and where your bill will be heard.
- Plan your testimony.
- If other citizens are testifying on your bill, try to work with them to coordinate testimony prior to the hearing to avoid duplication.

At the Meeting

- Let the staff know you want to speak. Appearance cards should be filled out and given to committee staff just prior to the start of the meeting. The chairman will call on speakers based on the appearance cards submitted. Sometimes there are large turnouts at meetings and not everyone has a chance to speak. You may be merely asked if you favor or oppose the bill.
- When you are announced by the chairman, begin testimony by addressing the chairman and committee members. Give your name, say where you are from, and your reason for testifying. For example: *“Mister (or Madam) Chairman and members of the committee, my name is John Q. Public from Clearwater. I am in favor (or I oppose) of this bill because...”*
- Be courteous

- Be brief and do not repeat what others have said.
- Do not be nervous or worried about doing something wrong. Legislators are elected to represent you and they want to hear what you have to say.
- There may be questions from committee members. Respond to the questions as well as you can. You need not be embarrassed if you cannot give a specific or complete answer.
- While sitting in the committee room, do not clap, boo, cheer, or otherwise disrupt the meeting

After the Meeting

If a bill is voted “unfavorable” by the committee, it has “died in committee”. If a bill is amended by the committee, it may become “Committee Substitute for House/Senate Bill XXXX” which simply incorporates the amendments adopted into the bill. If a bill or a committee substitute is voted on “favorably”, it has been “voted out of committee”. If there are second or third committees of reference, the bill will be passed on the next committee for review. However, after being voted favorable by at least one substantive committee, it may be taken up by the full House or Senate. A bill must be passed by both houses of the Legislature and signed by the Governor before becoming law.