

# WSCADV GUIDE TO LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY



WASHINGTON STATE COALITION

**WSCADV**

AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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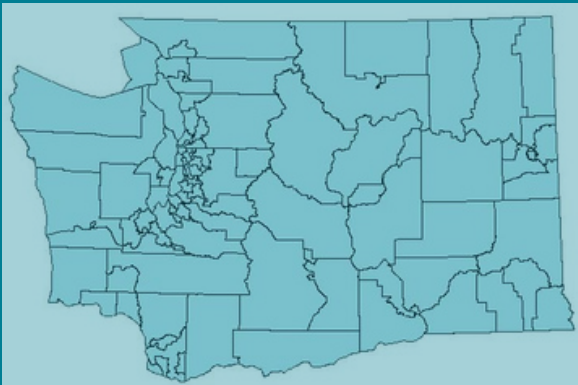
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# The Basics

There are 49 legislative districts in Washington. Voters in each district elect one senator to the Senate and two representatives to the House of Representatives. These two chambers make up the Washington Legislature.



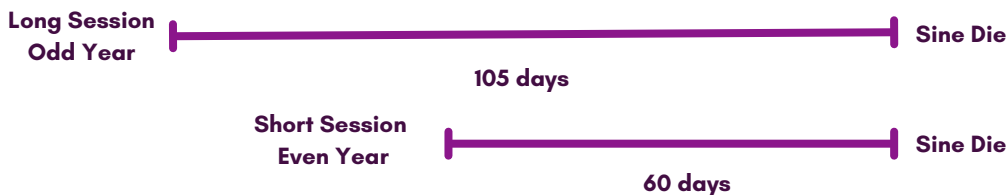
The Senate is comprised of 49 senators who serve 4-year terms while the House is comprised of 98 representatives who serve 2-year terms.

Anyone who lives or works in Washington is a constituent. Find out your district and your representatives at

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/districtfinder>

# Legislative Sessions

Legislative sessions run on a two-year cycle called a "biennium" that starts on odd-numbered years. Session begins on the second Monday of January each year. Odd-year sessions are 105 days and called a "long session," while even-year sessions last 60 days and are called a "short session." The last day of each session is called Sine Die.



The Governor may convene the Legislature for what's called a "special session" at any time outside of regular sessions - typically to address specific issues.

During legislative sessions, legislators convene at the Capitol in Olympia to create new laws, change existing laws, and enact budgets for the state.

# How a Bill Becomes a Law

## The Simple Version



**A legislator introduces a bill in their respective chamber.**



**The bill is assigned to a committee.  
The committee votes whether to pass or reject the bill.**



**If passed by the committee, the Floor votes whether to pass or reject the bill.**



**If passed by the Chamber of Origin, the bill moves to the opposite chamber for the same process.**



**If passed, the bill goes to the Governor.  
The Governor can either:**

● **do nothing**

● **sign the bill**

● **veto the bill**



The Senate can override a veto with a two-thirds majority vote.



**The bill becomes a law!**

# WSCADV's Policy Advocacy

WSCADV advocates for legislation that improves the lives of survivors and their families and increases their options for safety and liberation. We do this through tracking and analyzing bills, lobbying, and informing and mobilizing our membership to take action on important policy and budget issues.

## How You Can Get Involved

You are the expert in what is happening in your community and legislators want to hear from their constituents about issues that matter to you! You are a constituent in the legislative district(s) in which you work and live, and you can find out your district(s) by using the [District Finder form](#). Then, search this [roster](#) for your legislators and their contact information. Here are some ways you can get involved:



Call your legislators' offices



Email or write to your legislators



Meet with your legislators or their staff



Sign up for our [Policy Action Alerts](#)



Participate in our annual [Advocacy Day](#)



Learn more on our [policy website](#)

# Contacting Your Legislators

Whether you are dipping your toes into policy advocacy for the first time, or you've been advocating for years, you might feel nervous about contacting your legislators. Here are some tips to help you start the conversation.

Before reaching out, outline what you want to say. To make your message effective, consider including:

- 1.** An introduction of your name, your district, and your connection to domestic violence
- 2.** The bill number (if you are reaching out about a specific bill) or the issue you are concerned about
- 3.** Your personal story and/or connection to the bill or issue
- 4.** How you would like them to vote on the bill or to act to solve this issue
- 5.** Your contact information if you would like to request a response
- 6.** End your message or meeting by expressing your gratitude for the work they've done or for listening to you

Remember, legislators often can offer only 15 minutes for a meeting, especially during the legislative session. It's quick, but you'd be amazed how much you can accomplish in a short amount of time! Keep in mind that we can always be a resource to you. You can find our Public Policy Director's contact information on our [website](#).

Lastly, remember that wherever you are at in your policy advocacy journey, you are enough! You don't need to be a policy expert. Whether you are working on the ground with survivors, are a survivor yourself, or just someone who is passionate about ending domestic violence, your perspective and stories are so valuable to lawmakers.

# Sharing Your Story

When contacting your legislators, sharing your story is the most impactful part of your message! Your story as a survivor or advocate is what puts the issue into perspective for policymakers who may not have a clear understanding of domestic violence. It also creates an opportunity to build or maintain a relationship with your representatives, and serves as a reminder that policies impact real people in our community.

Contacting your legislators is not the only way you can share your story! During the legislative session, you can also:

- “Sign in” on a bill to indicate your position
- Submit written testimony on a bill
- Testify on a bill at the Capitol in Olympia
- Testify on a bill remotely, from home or wherever!

**To sign in on a bill or submit written testimony**, just find the [bill’s information page](#). **To testify**, find the bill’s assigned [committee](#) from its information page, and then sign up to testify in the [House](#) or in the [Senate](#). If you’re testifying in person, learn about [visiting the Legislature](#) and [accessibility information](#) before you go.

**Reach out to us if you’d like us to guide you through how to share your story, voice your opinion, or connect with your legislators.** You can also consider participating in our annual [Advocacy Days event](#), which is typically held in January or February at the Washington State Capitol in Olympia. We also mobilize our supporters to take positions on certain bills through our [Policy Action Alerts](#).



# How a Bill Becomes A Law

## The Detailed Version



### A legislator introduces a bill in their Chamber of Origin.

Bills are assigned a number following this naming convention:

If introduced in the House: HB 1XXX-2XXX

If introduced in the Senate: SB 5XXX-6XXX



### The bill is assigned to a policy committee.

If the committee decides to move the bill forward, they will schedule a public hearing and then an executive session where they will vote on the bill. If the majority of the committee votes to pass the bill, then it moves on to either a fiscal committee or the Rules Committee.



If the bill would either bring in revenue or cost money to enact, then **the same process occurs in a fiscal committee** before moving on to the Rules Committee.



The **Rules Committee** decides whether to pull the bill for floor consideration. If the committee decides to move the bill forward, the bill is placed on a **Second Reading**, where all legislators in the chamber have the opportunity to propose amendments and debate on the bill on the floor.



Then, the bill may be placed on a **Third Reading** to be voted on by the Floor for final passage by a simple majority. Read on to find out what happens to the bill in the opposite chamber!

# The Detailed Version cont.

The bill moves to the **opposite chamber** to repeat this process.

If the opposite chamber passes the bill without amendments, then it moves on to the Governor's desk.

If the opposite chamber passes the bill with amendments, then the chamber of origin can either:

1

**concur** with the amendments by a floor vote.



The opposite chamber can choose to **recede** by a floor vote.



2

ask the opposite chamber to **recede** from the amendments.



If the opposite chamber refuses, then a conference committee is formed with legislators from both chambers to reconcile the bill language.



Both chambers vote whether to pass the reconciled bill.



The bill moves on to the Governor's desk to be signed into law. If the Governor vetoes part or all of the bill, the Senate can override the veto with a two-thirds majority vote. If the Governor takes no action, the bill becomes a law. The Governor has 5 days to take action on a bill that passes the legislature 5 days prior to Sine Die, and 20 days to act on bills passed within the last 5 days of session.

# Resources

**Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

<https://wscadv.org>

**WSCADV Public Policy Project**

<https://wscadv.org/projects/public-policy>

**Washington State Legislature**

<https://leg.wa.gov>

**Washington State Elections**

<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections>



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