W4A would like to thank the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) for sharing this resource. Special thanks to Mike Hoover and Juliana Roe.

https://www.wsac.org/
Engaging With The Legislature: Systems & Tips

This general overview will be divided into two parts:

Part I will focus on general terms (jargon) and tips.

Part II will focus on using the online system & WSAC site to find, follow, and understand legislation.
PART I: Tips

Disclaimer: You are successful in your own field and know what works best for you! If any of these tips are at odds with what you know works, ignore them! These are general tips for interacting with members and staff at the Legislature. Vary them according to your own style, relationships, expertise, the weather, if you’re feeling lucky, etc.
Tips: Legislative Terms

What is a substitute, a second substitute, a title amendment, an amendment, a committee amendment, a striking amendment, a floor amendment, a line amendment, a folderol, a hot mess, a full-blown fiasco, and why are there so many terms?!?

You don’t necessarily need to learn each term! Essentially, they are the same thing: changes to the bill. The term only defines how and where (when) it happened. You’re better off ensuring you have the latest version than worrying about terms!

*Never be afraid to ask if you have the latest version!
Tips: Legislative Terms

What is a substitute, a second substitute, an amendment... (cont.)

• **A striker or striking amendment** is an amendment that strikes everything in a bill and replaces it with new language. A Floor striker is just a striker introduced on the Floor.

• **A substitute bill** is just like it sounds: this new language is substituted for the existing language. If adopted, it becomes the new bill. Can only be offered in committee, and only in the original chamber (only Senate can substitute Senate bill; only House can substitute House bills). A substitute is one form of a striking amendment.

• **A line and page or section amendment** makes specific changes to particular parts of the bill but doesn’t strike or replace all of it.

• **A title amendment** changes only the title of the bill (but is usually accompanied by a substantive bill amendment).
Tips: Legislative Terms

What is a substitute, a second substitute, an amendment... (cont.)

Regardless of its name or the term used, any amendment can change, delete, strike, or add language to a bill. Even a small change may drastically change the effect of a bill!

Examples:

- Changing “all counties” to “no county.” Two words, big difference!
- “…to be paid by the county and reimbursed by the state.”
- “…sections 1-15 shall not apply to rural counties.” Just one line, big change!
What is a companion bill?

A companion bill is just a term for when the same idea has been introduced in both chambers— that is, there is a House Bill and a Senate Bill.

Early on, it is advisable to track both versions. At some point, the Legislature typically chooses just one version to move and that is the one to follow from that point on.

You can check for these online.
Tips: Legislative Terms

What is a fiscal note and how is it different from an appropriation?

An appropriation is the state budget money (if any) the Legislature is directing toward a project or program.

A fiscal note is the expected cost to agencies, local government, and the public from a bill (that is, “If we do this, what will it cost and who will pay it?”). Fiscal notes are available online.

Math would dictate that a fiscal note always has an appropriation to go with it. Politics and math do not get along, however...
Tips: Legislative Handouts

“All Twitter posts and handouts should be brief.”
– @RealAbeLincoln

**GOOD HANDOUTS:**

- **Are brief!** If you can’t be brief—some topics demand more detail, no doubt—include a summary. Members are busy. They don’t need extra reading!
- **Make the point and then have backup!** Is this the same as be brief? Kinda, but it means make the point on one page and then have the backup materials for those who want them. Some members want the data, others only want the summary, so have both.
- **Define the issue or question!** What is the issue or question posed, and how are you addressing/answering it? (“Although counties pay for all elections, the state only reimburses them for half of the elections. SB 1234 would solve that by…”)
- **Use graphics wisely.** Graphics complement the text.
- **Include your contact info!**

**BAD HANDOUTS:**

- **Are too long!** They just are.
- **Make the reader go elsewhere for answers!** Links and references are fine, but at least give the general answer. Members won’t go enter https:/gohere/lazy/lookitupyourself/longrando mnumber3141/areyoustilltyping/lostthereader
- **Never get to the point!** This happens when you’re too close to the issue. Start forest, then go trees.
- **Overload with graphics or charts!** Where is the reader supposed to focus? Some people learn visually, some do better reading text.
- **Are too objective!** Sometimes, we are being neutral, but aren’t we always trying to persuade?
How do you get a meeting with a legislator?
Call or email the legislative assistant (most prefer email).

**What To Do At The Meeting:**
- **Say why you’re there** (topic, bill)! These are busy people with lots of meetings!
- **Say what you want from them**! Tell them the result or action you want them to take. Say it several times!
- **Leave them a handout** (a brief handout)! The handout is a lasting reminder of the meeting for them after you’re gone. Include how to contact you.
- **Follow-up**! Tell them you’ll get back to them with info. Encourage this— it’s more contact for you.
- **Offer to help**! Don’t just ask them to do stuff; offer to do it (“I’d be happy to talk to her if you’d like…”).
- **Get their opinion/intel**! Members like to share! They know stuff you don’t!

**What Not To Do At The Meeting:**
- **Don’t surprise them**! Members hate surprises!
- **Don’t pin them down**! This varies depending on the issue and relationship, but pushing too hard usually gets them to no.
- **Don’t talk past the sale**! When you’ve given them info and they’re with you, stop! More could inadvertently be a reason to change sides.
- **Don’t give them chores**! Where possible, do it yourself (“I’d be happy to get some language for you on that amendment…”).
- **Don’t omit or hide “bad” info**! They’re gonna find out! Instead, acknowledge and explain it.
PART II: Using the Online System

Disclaimer: There are many great third-party sites and systems available. If you prefer to use those, or if your organization makes those available, please use them! We’re using the state system here because it’s free to everyone and (should!) always have the most current and complete information. Use whatever system works best for you! The steps outlined here should be very standard regardless of system.
Using the Online System

**Step 1(a): Find the member roster.**

1. Go to leg.wa.gov, click on “House of Representatives”
2. Then go down to “House Member Roster”
3. You can find the Senate member roster here as well
Using the Online System

Step 1(b): Go to the site! It’s at: https://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/
Using the Online System

Step 2(a): Find your bill! If you know the number...

...then enter it right here

Tip: It’s always a four-digit number!
Number <5000 = House Bill
Number >5000 = Senate Bill
Using the Online System

**Step 2(b):** Find your bill! If you don’t know the number, you can do a search. You can search by topic or sponsor.

If you know the sponsor, click here, select the year/chamber/person, and it’ll bring up a list.
Using the Online System

Step 2(c): Find your bill! If you don’t know the number, you can do a search. You can search by topic or sponsor.

To search by topic, click here, type or scroll through the topics, and click the subject of your choice to bring up a list.
Using the Online System

Step 2(d): Find your bill! If you don’t know the number, you can do a search. You can search the text of documents.

To search bill text, click here, choose your search terms, years (current biennium is default), and document class.

Tip: Searching bill reports may yield the best results (they’re in plain English). The goal is to get the bill #!
Using the Online System

Step 3(a): Once you have your bill number, pull up its history (bill search, very first box on the screen)!

Tip: The bill history is the easiest way to get right into the status, history, and documents relating to that bill!
Using the Online System

**Step 3(b):** Once you have your bill number, pull up its history:

Shows where the bill is now (in this example, signed into law).
Using the Online System

Step 3(c): Once you have your bill number, pull up its history:

**Bill History**

**2019 REGULAR SESSION**

- Dec 31: Prefiled for introduction.
- Jan 14: First reading, referred to State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections.
- Jan 16: Public hearing in the Senate Committee on State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections at 8:00 AM. (Committee Materials)
- Jan 23: Executive action taken in the Senate Committee on State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections at 8:00 AM. (Committee Materials)
- And refer to Ways & Means.
- Jan 24: Referred to Ways & Means.
- Feb 5: Public hearing in the Senate Committee on Ways & Means at 3:30 PM. (Committee Materials)
- Feb 26: Executive action taken in the Senate Committee on Ways & Means at 1:30 PM. (Committee Materials)
- Mar 1: Passed to Rules Committee for second reading.
- Mar 5: Placed on second reading by Rules Committee.
- 1st substitute bill substituted (WM 19). (Final 1st Substitute)
- Rules suspended. Placed on Third Reading.
- Third reading, passed: yes, 42; nays: 5; absent: 0; excused: 4. (Final Roll Call)

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IN THE HOUSE

- Mar 7: First reading, referred to State Government & Tribal Relations.
- Mar 15: Public hearing in the House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations at 8:00 AM. (Committee Materials)
- Mar 22: Executive action taken in the House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations at 8:00 AM. (Committee Materials)
- Mar 26: Referred to Appropriations.
- Apr 6: Public hearing in the House Committee on Appropriations at 9:00 AM. (Committee Materials)
- Apr 8: Executive action taken in the House Committee on Appropriations at 9:00 AM. (Committee Materials)
- ARP - Majority: do pass with amendments(s) but without amendments(s) by State Government & Tribal Relations. (Majority Report)
- Minority: do not pass. (Minority Report)
- Apr 9: Referred to Rules 2 Review.
- Apr 11: Rules Committee relieved of further consideration. Placed on Second Reading.
- Apr 12: Held on Second Reading. Committee amendments(s) adopted as amended.
- Rules suspended. Placed on Third Reading.
- Third reading, passed: yes, 83; nays: 9; absent: 0; excused: 0. (Final Roll Call)

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IN THE SENATE

- Apr 18: Senate concurred in House amendments.
- Passed final passage: yes, 44; nays: 5; absent: 0; excused: 0. (Final Roll Call)
- Apr 23: President signed.

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IN THE HOUSE

- Apr 24: Speaker signed.

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OTHER THAN LEGISLATIVE ACTION

- Apr 25: Delivered to Governor. (Final Roll as Passed Legislature)
- Apr 29: Governor signed.
  - Chapter 161, 2019 LAWS. (Final Session Law)
  - Effective date 7/1/2019.
Using the Online System

Step 3(d): Once you have your bill number, pull up its history:

Shows every document available for that bill.

Shows every video/audio recording available for that bill.

Available Documents

For a complete list of documents, go to Online Reports Text of a Legislative Document.

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<tr>
<th>Bill Documents</th>
<th>Bill Digests</th>
<th>Bill Reports</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Original Bill</td>
<td>Bill Digest</td>
<td>Senate Bill Report (Orig.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitute Bill</td>
<td></td>
<td>Senate Bill Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill as Passed Legislation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Substitute House Bill Analysis 2019</td>
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<td>Session Law</td>
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<td>Substitute House Bill Report</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Substitute Senate Bill Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Final Bill Report</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Fiscal Note

Get Fiscal Note

Amendments

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Amendment Name</th>
<th>Num</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5063-S AMH APP H2855.1</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>Calder</td>
<td>Floor</td>
<td>Pg 3 Ln 3</td>
<td>ADOPTED 04/12/2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>5063-S AMH SGOV H2479.2</td>
<td>State Government &amp; Tribal Relations</td>
<td>Committee</td>
<td>Striker</td>
<td>NOT CONSIDERED 04/12/2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Available Videos

Live video is available at the stated time. Archived video becomes available approximately two hours after the close of the hearing or floor session.

- Jan 16, 2019 Senate State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections at 8:00 AM
- Jan 23, 2019 Senate State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections at 8:00 AM
- Feb 5, 2019 Senate Ways & Means at 3:30 PM
- Feb 26, 2019 Senate Ways & Means at 1:30 PM
- Mar 15, 2019 House State Government & Tribal Relations at 8:00 AM
- Mar 22, 2019 House State Government & Tribal Relations at 8:00 AM
- Apr 6, 2019 House Appropriations at 9:00 AM
- Apr 8, 2019 House Appropriations at 9:00 AM

Column 1 – Bill Documents: This is the actual bill text, at every major step of the process!

Column 2 – Digests: These are title summaries; generally, there is rarely a need to look at these! For our purposes, you can ignore them!

Column 3—Bill Reports: Very important guide, in plain English, as to what the bill does at every major step of the process!

In chronological order, so last is usually latest!
Using the Online System

**Step 3(e):** Once you have your bill number, pull up its history:

How do I know what’s important in all of this?!?

Match the major steps with the major documents! Remember: it’s chronological, so last is latest (most current) version (usually!).

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**Available Documents**

**Bill Documents**
- Original Bill
- Substitute Bill (LCRD 07)

**Bill Digests**
- Bill Digest
- Substitute Bill Digest

**Bill Reports**
- Senate Bill Report

**Fiscal Note (Available)**
- Get Fiscal Note

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**Major step!**

**Bill Digest**
- SB 5484 - 2007-08
  - Allowing dogs in bars.
  - Revised for 1st Substitute: Allowing dogs in designated outdoor areas of bars and coffee shops.

**History of Bill**
- Jan 22
  - 1st reading referred to Labor, Commerce, Research & Development. (View Original Bill)
  - Jan 31
    - Public hearing in the Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce, and Research & Development at 1:30 PM
    - Feb 27
      - Execution action taken in the Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce, and Research & Development at 1:30 PM
      - LCRD - Majority: 1st substitute bill be substituted, do pass. (View 1st Substitute Majority Report)
      - Minority: do not pass. (Minority Report)
      - Minority without recommendation. (Minority Report)
    - Mar 21
      - Senate Rules "K" File
      - 2008 REGULAR SESSION
      - Jan 15
        - By request, reintroduced and retained in present status.

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

SB 5484

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Labor, Commerce, Research & Development, February 27, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to allowing dogs in bars.

**Brief Description:** Allowing dogs in bars.

**Sponsors:** Senators Jacobsen, Kline, Murray and Poulson.

**Brief History:**
- Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 1/30/07, 2/27/07 [DPS, DNP, wkRec]

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT**

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5484 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Clements, Ranking Minority Member; Franklin, Holquist and Murray.
Using the Online System

Step 4(a): Reading the bill report.

Lots of info in the bill report!

**HOUSE BILL REPORT**

**SSB 5063**

As Passed House - Amended:
April 12, 2019

**Title:** An act relating to prepaid postage for all election ballots.

**Brief Description:** Providing prepaid postage for all election ballots.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Hasegawa, Billie, Carlyle, Cleveland, Conway, Dammeier, Froect, Palumbo, Hunt, Wilson, C., Pedersen, Keiser, Kuderer, Saldaña, Mullet and Takk, by request of Governor Inslee).

**Brief History:**
Committee Activity:
- State Government & Tribal Relations: 3/15/19, 3/22/19 [DPA];
- Appropriations: 4/6/19, 4/8/19 [DPA(APP w/o SGOV)].

Floor Activity:
Passed House - Amended: 4/12/19, 83-10.

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**
(As Amended by House)
- Requires that return envelopes provided to voters for all election ballots include prepaid postage.
- Requires the state to reimburse the county for the cost of providing return postage on return envelopes for all elections.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS**

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Gregerson, Chair; Pellicciotti, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Goehner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Dolan, Hudens, Mosbrucker and Smith.

**Staff:** Desiree Omili (786-7105).
Using the Online System

Step 4(b): Reading the bill report.

Lots of info in the bill report!

- Who voted how:
- Staff working it:
- Background:

Summary:

Cost money?:

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Majority Report. Do pass as amended by Committee on Appropriations and without amendment by Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, 2nd Vice Chair; Robinson, 1st Vice Chair; Stokesberry, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Rude, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Calder, Chandler, Cody, Dolan, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Hoff, Hodgson, Jankaus, Maron, Mosbrucker, Pettigrew, Pollart, Ryu, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Steele, Sullivan, Sutherland, Tackett, Tharinger and Ybarra.

Minority Report. Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Kraft.

Staff. Linda Merelle (786-7092).

Background:

All counties conduct elections by mail. The county auditor must send each voter a ballot, a security envelope in which to conceal the ballot after voting, a large envelope in which to return the security envelope, a declaration that the voter must sign, and instructions on how to obtain information about the election, how to mark the ballot, and how to return the ballot to the county auditor.

A voter may return a ballot by various methods, one of which includes by mail at his or her own expense. For a ballot to be counted, it must be received no later than 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election, or postmarked no later than the day of the primary or election.

The state must pay a prorated share of the cost of any primary or general election in odd-numbered years when state officers or measures are on the ballot. The state must also pay a prorated share of costs associated with elections held to fill a vacancy in the United States Senate or House of Representatives. In addition, the state is required to pay the costs of mandatory recounts for statewide measures.

For the 2018 primary and general election, the Governor allocated emergency funding to the Office of the Secretary of State to pay for grants to counties to cover the expense of prepaid postage.

Summary of Amended Bill

The return envelope for all election ballots provided to voters must include prepaid postage. "Prepaid postage" means any method of return postage paid by the county or the state. For all elections, the state must reimburse counties for the cost of return postage required to be included on return envelopes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.
Using the Online System

Step 5(a): Reading the bill.

Lots of organizational info in the bill!

- **Sponsors:**

- **Title:**

- **Findings:**

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S-2346.1

SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5063

State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session

By Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen,
Hasegawa, Billig, Carlyle, Cleveland, Conway, Dannehl, Frockt,
Palumbo, Hunt, Wilson, C., Pedersen, Keiser, Kuderer, Saldaña,
Mullet, and Takko; by request of Governor Inslee)

READ FIRST TIME 03/01/19.

1 AN ACT Relating to prepaid postage for all election ballots;
2 amending RCW 29A.04.420 and 29A.40.051; creating a new section;
3 providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION.  Sec. 1. The legislature finds that voting by mail
6 has many advantages. However, the legislature also finds that while
7 the cost of ballot return postage may only be a small amount, passing
8 the burden along to Washington’s citizens, many of whom no longer
9 need stamps in their everyday lives, is an unnecessary barrier to
10 fully participate in the democratic process. The legislature further
11 finds that in order to continue to increase participation in our
12 democracy, we must lower all barriers to participation in the
13 democratic process. The legislature finds that voting should be free
14 for all citizens.
```
Using the Online System

Step 5(b): Reading the bill.

- Language added to existing law is underlined. Deleted language is stricken and put in double-parentheses.

- Entirely new law always starts with a “NEW SECTION.”

Tip: Learn what you may not need to read in bill— for example, pages of existing law; just go to the changed language or new sections!
Using the Online System

Step 6: Create tracking lists.

**Tip:** Creating lists of bills and having the system track them for you can save time!

Once you create a (free) account, you can make as many lists as you’d like. They can show bill numbers, descriptions, sponsors, status, and whether there is a companion bill. The status updates each time you bring it up!
Using the WSAC Website

From WSAC’s main page, www.wsac.org, click the “Advocacy” tab and it will take you to everything you need to know about where WSAC stands on important legislative issues. From there, you can read about WSAC’s priorities or check out the bi-weekly Legislative Bulletin, which WSAC members should receive via email, or you can sign up online or by emailing info@wsac.org.
WSAC bi-weekly Legislative Bulletin email

At the bottom of the bi-weekly Legislative Bulletin email, you can review the positions WSAC has taken on a comprehensive list of legislation, by downloading the “Bills of Interest.” The legislation on the tracking list are hyperlinked to the www.leg.wa.gov website for full information about each bill.

### WSAC Priorities Bill Status Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill #</th>
<th>Abbrev. Title</th>
<th>Short Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SB 5063 (HB 1209)</td>
<td>Ballots, prepaid postage</td>
<td>Providing prepaid postage for all election ballots.</td>
<td>S State Govt/Tri</td>
<td>Nguyen</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB 5073</td>
<td>Election cost reimbursement</td>
<td>Concerning state reimbursement of election costs.</td>
<td>S State Govt/Tri</td>
<td>Hunt</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion & Questions...

- Process + Players = Success!
- Knowing where you are in the process and who can help you to the next step is crucial!
- Moving ahead can be a strange mix of policy and politics!
- Remember:

  It’s supposed to be hard to pass a law!