



TEXAS FFA DAY AT THE CAPITOL

KEY FACTS ABOUT THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE

- There are 31 members of the Texas Senate and the 150 members of the Texas House of Representatives.
- The regular legislative sessions begin in January every odd-numbered year and convenes for not more than 140 days. The governor may call the legislature into special session as deemed appropriate. Special sessions are limited to issues specifically stated in the governor's call and may meet up to the 30-day maximum.

HOW LAWS ARE PASSED IN THE LEGISLATURE

- After a Senator or Representative introduces a bill, it is assigned to the appropriate committee, according to subject area, for mark-up. Here it is studied and rewritten. Hearings are held to solicit both public and special interest views.
- The committee considers the specific language of a bill and may amend or change it. When the bill clears the committee, it goes to the floor for general debate and action.
- Once both houses pass a bill, a conference committee made up of both Senators and Representatives work out any differences between the House-passed and Senate-passed versions.
- The final conference version must be approved by both houses, then the bill goes to the Governor to be signed into law. The Governor may veto the bill or allow it to become law without his signature. In the case of a Governor veto, a two-thirds veto override vote in both houses is required for the bill to become law.

WHEN TO LOBBY

- When a bill is introduced and assigned to a committee, you can contact your legislators to request that they cosponsor the bill. Obviously, the more cosponsors a bill has the more likely it is to gain support and move through the legislative process. If the bill is bottled up in committee and appears unlikely to ever emerge, you might contact your Representative or Senator and urge them to get the bill moving.
- When legislation is about to come up on the floor of the House or Senate, you could contact your legislators and urge support for the position you advocate.

IMPORTANT TERMS TO KNOW

- Advocacy: Working for change to improve the quality of life on behalf of one's self or others.
- Legislative Advocacy: Through persuasive reasoning, working to enact or change laws which will improve the quality of life for either a specific group or the general population.
- Bill: A proposed law during session for consideration by the legislature.
 - HB – House Bill; SB – Senate Bill; HCR – House Concurrent Resolution; SCR – Senate Concurrent Resolution; HJR – House Joint Resolution; SJR – Senate Joint Resolution; CSHB – Committee Substitute House Bill; CSSB – Committee Substitute Senate Bill.
- Types of Bills:
 - Local Bills – Bills limited to a specific geographical area of the state, e.g., local government unites such as cities, counties, school districts, precincts, etc.
 - Special Bill – Bills directed toward a select, special individual or entity. e.g., for blind but not other disabled persons.
 - General Bills – All other bills are "general" bills.