

Building a Guide to the 69th Montana Legislature

(Revision 3) Please forward to your group.

NOTE: I am asking that you TEXT me at 406-672-9207 or email me at rapence45@gmail.com by the Jan. 20th (if you have not) if you want to help or I will assume you're not interested and remove your name from this Contact List.

- (Legislative tutorial below)
- Find updates at <https://www.bigskyworldview.org/library>

Building a Network:

I am working to **build a small group who will help us communicate effectively** with the legislature about key Bills. When voting time comes for a bill, we often have only a few hours to make our voices heard. For this list, I will try to avoid overlap and/or swamping people. With that said, there are scores of committees and hundreds of bills so this is a task. From **MY list**, I am asking this group to forward the information to an **email list that they build**. This has the potential to reach hundreds of Montanans in real-time.

Options for Influence:

Option #1. Go to Helena and testify in person on a bill. While I am a HUGE advocate of this, many of the committee hearings are in the morning and that may mean an over-night stay. So, pick your battles.

Option #2. By signing up at least **two hours before the bill** is heard in committee, you can **testify remotely**. This a Zoom type platform – more info on that later. (See HOW TO BELOW)

Option #3. Call the Capitol switchboard at **406-444-4800** between the hours of 7:30am and 5pm Monday through Friday before the bill is heard. You can leave a message for a specific committee or for up to 5 legislators.

- **This takes only a minute or two.** In most situations, this is the **fastest and is better** than writing letters. Unless you are

referencing YOUR LEGISLATOR, it may not get read. (See detail below for 2025 changes)

- You can ask a **particular committee** to vote FOR or AGAINST a bill.
- Or, you can leave a message for **up to 5 legislators**.
- **NEW in 2025:** The KEY is to call the day before or **at least two hours before** the committee meets. For bills being heard on a Monday, that means call on Friday because many committees meet at 8am.
- IF, you call at least **two hours before**, each legislator on the committee you address (or the 5 you leave a message for) will get an **electronic message** about that bill, with your name and comment **and** a **tally of numbers** for and against. If you call **inside** of two hours, they will **not get the tally** as I have had it explained to me. **And, often, numbers count!**
- You want to give the operator your name, location, phone number, the **number and title** of the bill, what it pertains to, and why you want the legislators to vote yes or no – **BRIEFLY!**

Legislative Webpage Tutorial:

(This is a *work in progress* until the Legislature goes live for a few days and we see what is working and what needs to be tweaked. You will find multiple ways to search and this website will also evolve a bit)

Getting Information off of the Montana Legislative Website:

Getting Started: Legislature Home Page: Found at <https://www.legmt.gov/> I strongly recommend formularizing yourself with this page, it is complex and has changed a lot since the last session.

Alternative to Calling the Legislative Help Desk:

- In this process, you will be asked to **sign up and create an account**. Only takes moments.
- At the [home page](#), Hit the **Committees** tab and go to **Publica Participation**

- Hit the tab **Public Participation** in this center of the page.
- Chose **Standing Committees** and hit **Submit Testimony and Exhibits**
- Fill in the circle **Regarding Bills**
- Below you will see a **list of bills** in a dropdown list
- Click on the Bill you want to send a message about.
- Fill in the circle **Proponent or Opponent**
- Work you way down to and fill in the information and hit **Submit**. You can add a comment. A letter or testimony has to be submitted as a PDF by hitting **Select Files** and that will take you to the PDF in your computer.

How do I find my Montana Legislators – House and Senate?

- Follow this LINK <https://www.legmt.gov/> to the Legislative webpage
- Find the Tab **Legislators** drop down list at the top.
- Click on the **Find Your Legislators** tab on the left (this gets a little convoluted at the point)
 - **Find your legislator by entering your address!** Click the magnifying glass in the top right corner of the map and enter any of your **address** details in the black box *Find addresses or place* (I suggest your mailing address) to identify your state representative and senator.
 - **Click in the map** and your Senator will come up with their phone number, address and **District**.
 - **Find your House Representative:** In the upper right corner of the Senator info box, you will see **1 of 2** – click on it. Your House Representative will show up. Click on their name and his pic and info will come up.

Contacting Legislators (Yours) Back at the [home page](#), click on **Legislators** tab at the top. find **Search Legislators tab**. This will show you all of the legislators. In the **Search** box, put in your legislators **last name** and it will give you their email and phone number – often their Cell number.

Find a single document listing all **House Committees 2025**

<https://archive.legmt.gov/content/committees/2025HouseCommitteesCondensed.pdf> Here are a couple of commonly used committees:

- House Judiciary Members and Bill Status
<https://committees.legmt.gov/#/standingCommittees/11>
- House Education Members and Bill Status
<https://committees.legmt.gov/#/standingCommittees/6>

Find a single document listing all Senate Committees 2025 (I will also attach a PDF of all the Senate Committees)

<https://archive.legmt.gov/content/committees/SenateCommittees2025.pdf>

- Senate Judiciary Members and Bills:
<https://committees.legmt.gov/#/standingCommittees/31>
- Senate Ethics Members and Bills:
<https://committees.legmt.gov/#/standingCommittees/26>
- Senate Education members and Bill Status
<https://committees.legmt.gov/#/standingCommittees/32>

How do I TESTIFY REMOTELY: First, you will be prompted to set up an account. I strongly suggest that you do that **in advance**.

- Back at the [Home Page](#), click on the **Legislators** tab at the top and then **Contact Legislator** Tab.
- This takes you to a **PARTICIPATE** page
- This is **HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY VIRTUALLY**.
<https://www.legmt.gov/participate/> This is how you can testify remotely. Read and follow the instructions here. You have to sign up **at least 2 hours before** the committee hearing.
- Hit the **Public Participation** tab and follow instructions (when this goes live)
- **You can Watch and Listen:** Using the instructions above click on the **Watch/Listen Now** tab
 - Select the date and committee you want to watch.

Finding All Committees: From the [home page](#), use the **Committees** Tab at the top, go to the **Committee Explorer** (or this LINK here at <https://committees.legmt.gov/>) you will find a list of all the committees. In the **Search**, you can go right to the committee if you know abbreviations.

Here is a list of **commonly used with the abbreviation** to search with:

- Judiciary - JUH or JUS
- Ethics – ETH or ETS
- House Appropriations – APH
- Local Government – LOH or LOS
- Business and Labor - BUH or BUS
- Education – EDH or EDS
- Taxation – TAH or TAS
- Human Services House – HUH
- Public Health, Welfare and Safety – PHS
- Agriculture - AG

Otherwise, may have to go through the multiple tabs at the bottom. I have not found a list of the abbreviations.

How to Find Bills Coming up in Committees: (This is a work in progress. The website changed since the last Legislature and we are working to find where everything is. We will update, stay tuned, for now use this procedure)

- Use the procedure above and find the committee you want to search
- Example, lets put in JUH for House Judiciary
- Below you will see tabs Meetings, Bills, etc.
- Click on Bills and you will see an agenda that lists the Bill, Title, Hearing date, Sponsor and Current status
- AS of 01/09/25 it shows for example **HB30** that will be heard in this committee on Wed. Jan. 15th at 8 am. Understand that there may be several bills to be heard and the list and time will be available that morning. In this case, the Bill is carried by Rep. Lee Deeming and the title is *Requiring the Supreme Court to apply a burden of proof for challenge to constitutionality of legislative act*
- On the left, click on the Bill
- The procedure just below helps find, read, and download any Bill.

How do I look up a Bill? You can look up a bill and **download the PDF**. On the [home page](#), click on the **BILLS** at the top, go to **Bill Explorer** and in the search, window put in the bill number. You can also use this LINK <https://bills.legmt.gov/>

- This is under the **Bill Explorer** tab: Use the Dropdown list under **COLUMNS**: Here you have several choices to search under. You can filter in the BOX under bill number, or requester, or primary sponsor etc. Also, House or Senate.
- Or, in the big **SEARCH window** you can put in the number of the Bill. Click on the Bill number and Under **Bill TEXT** tab you can download a PDF of the bill. By the magnifying glass on the right, you will see three dots. Click on them and print or download.
- **You can find a bill your legislator is carrying** by clicking on the **FILTERS TAB** and on the left fill in the dropdowns and use **SPONSOR** and put in the Legislators last name or use the dropdown list. Or in the **Select Legislator** window, put in their last name.
- Example, let's use SB 52. We see Sen. Tom McGillvray is carrying this bill. We can see who requested the bill – often a standing committee. Now we click on **BILL TEXT**. In the margin, there is a magnifying glass that will help you increase the font size. To **DOWNLOAD** it, hit the three little dots – mid left across from the title SB52 pdf you can choose **PRINT** or **Download**. This will go to your computers **DOWNLOAD** files or you can choose where it goes.

How to Find Bills Coming up in Committees:

Go to the Legislative Website home page at <https://www.legmt.gov/>

- At the top, click on **Committees** and find **Committee Explorer** and hit it.
- At the far right, click on **EXPORT**
- Fill in the **Future meetings, Filtered, and PDF** Circles
- Hit **Download**
- A PDF file will be sent to wherever your **DOWNLOADS** are sent to on your computer. (Not sure how this works on a phone)
- Or, it appears in the upper right on the page and you can open it, hit the little arrow upper right and download or print it.
- This will give you: (as of the date you're working)
 - The Committees name and the several bills they might have on a day
 - The date the bill is heard (be careful, this can change)
 - The room number

- The BILL NUMBER, and the short title of the bill
- The name of the legislator Sponsoring the bill