

You can lobby!

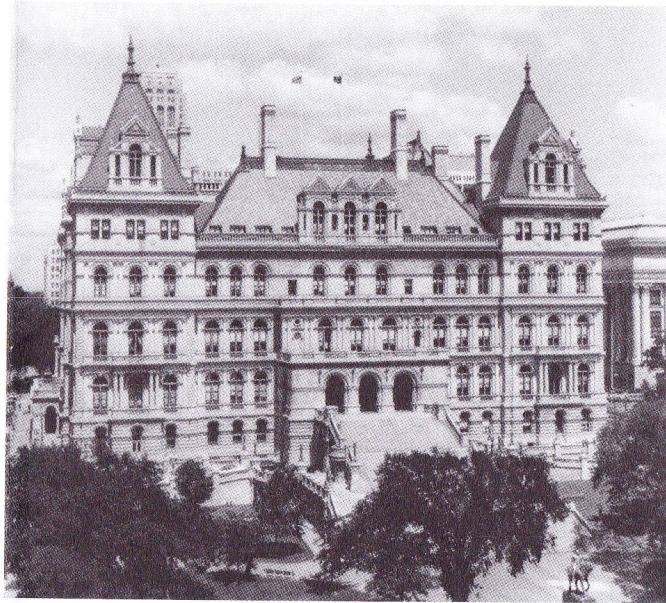
You can give your Assemblymember and Senator ideas for new laws. If you want to do that or if you hear about legislation that affects you, it's time to lobby in Albany! You can help pass or defeat legislation by making sure your legislators know your opinions.

It's important to know the official number of the bill and its sponsor. That way legislators will know what bill you're referring to.

When your bill gets assigned to a committee, write, phone, e-mail or visit the committee chair and other legislators who sit on the committee to give them your position on the bill. Remember, legislators always listen closely to their own constituents. Lobby your legislators and get other constituents to lobby theirs. Even one constituent letter or visit on a bill can have an impact on how a legislator votes.

Just before your bill comes up for a vote by the Assembly, organize a writing and calling campaign for or against the bill. If it passes and is sent to the Senate, be prepared to go through the same process there. Finally, it will go before the governor, who will either sign it into law or veto it. You can influence his action as well with calls and letters.

Remember, the best way for you to effect change is to make your views known.



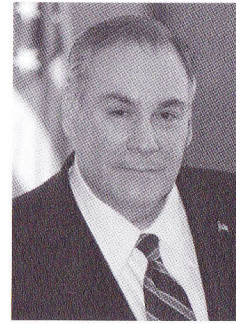
The Legislative Process and

YOU

A message from...

Assemblyman
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A message from... Robert J. Castelli

Member of Assembly

This brochure includes a brief description of the legislative process and gives an overview of how a bill becomes a law.

The key ingredient to our democracy is a knowledgeable and informed voting public. By following the news, knowing the issues and contacting your elected representatives, you can make a significant contribution to the legislative process.

As your elected representative in the New York State Assembly, I welcome your comments and suggestions. We have been entrusted with a great legacy—representative government. I hope you will take advantage of the many ways in which you can be an active participant in your state government.

Your state Legislature

In New York State there are three branches of government: the legislative, comprised of the Senate and Assembly; the executive, headed by the governor; and the judicial, comprised of the courts. This brochure focuses on the legislative branch and examines the process by which a bill becomes a law.

The Assembly, with its 150 members, and the Senate, with its 62 members, make up the New York State Legislature. Members of both houses are elected every two years.

In the Assembly, the member presiding over the legislative session is known as the Speaker. The Speaker is elected for a two-year term by his colleagues. In the Senate, the lieutenant governor presides, but the Senate Majority Leader is the person whose work most closely parallels that of the Speaker of the Assembly. One of the powers given to both the Speaker and the Majority Leader is

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1. Idea for a bill is submitted to Bill Drafting Commission where it is translated into formal language.

2. Then the bill is introduced, assigned the number it will be known by and printed.

3. The bill is assigned to an appropriate committee for discussion and analysis. If a majority of members on the committee support it, the bill is reported to the floor. If not, it is said to have "died in committee."

4. All bills requiring an expenditure of state funds must be sent to the Ways and Means Committee. They make sure the state can afford the cost of the bill. These bills won't reach the floor for a vote unless Ways and Means okays the expenditure. Similarly, bills which impose criminal and civil sanctions must go before the Codes Committee.

5. Final version of the bill is printed; it must be on members' desks for at least three days before being voted on.

9. The bill, once signed by the governor, becomes law.

8. The governor can sign a bill, veto it, or give it "pocket approval," which means if the governor fails to act on a bill within 10 days of receiving it, the bill is automatically approved. If the governor vetoes a bill, it can still become a law if a two-thirds majority of both houses votes in favor of the bill. This is known as an override.

7. Once a bill passes the Assembly, it is sent on to the Senate, where it goes through a similar process. If both houses pass a bill, it is then sent to the governor for his signature.

6. The bill reaches the floor for debate and vote.

How A Bill Becomes A Law

Your state Legislature

(continued)

the authority to create committees and to appoint legislators to serve on those committees.

The beginning of each legislative session is the first Wednesday after the first Monday of the new year. Its opening is marked by the governor's delivery of the "State of the State Message." This message outlines the priorities and the programs the governor wants the Legislature to address during the year ahead. The Legislature attends session in Albany until its business for that year is concluded. While session usually ends in June or July, legislators can be called back to Albany

for special legislative sessions, formal meetings, committee work or public hearings all year.

At the heart of the legislative process is the means by which a bill becomes a law. In the diagram on the left you can trace the key steps in that process. Ideas for bills come from many sources, not just from government agencies or officials. In fact, if you have an idea for a law, you could call your representative and discuss it with him or her. *See back panel.*

The committee system

It is important to understand the role of committees in the state Legislature, for it is through the committee system that work in both houses is accomplished. You can think of the committee system as a "screening process" conducted by both houses of the Legislature during which smaller groups of legislators closely scrutinize bills. The committees analyze the merits of the legislation, hold hearings for public input and vote on whether such bills should be advanced for consideration by their house.

Within the committees are subcommittees, which are established to study specific aspects of larger issues being reviewed by the full committee.

Bills are assigned to committees based on the subject they address. For example, a bill likely to have an impact on senior citizens would be sent to the Aging Committee, while a bill affecting

consumers would go to the Consumer Affairs and Protection Committee.

Each member of the Senate and the Assembly is appointed to serve on three to five committees.

Committees meet on a regular basis to discuss the bills referred to them. You may be interested in attending a committee meeting to actually see how the process works. These meetings are open to the public. If you would like to find out when and where a particular committee is meeting or what's on its agenda, you can call the Assembly's Public Information Office at: 518-455-4218.

Legislative sessions, where the bills are voted on and debated by the entire house, are also open to the public. The Assembly Public Information Office can also tell you when the Legislature is in session if you plan to visit.