

How To Navigate The Legislative Session:

THE STEPS:

1. Bill filing.

Depending on the length of the legislative session, the deadline for filing bills is either Jan. 9 or Jan. 10.

2. First reading.

This is a procedural step. Bills are typically moved forward in big groups together. From here, a bill is assigned to one of 25 House committees or one of 22 Senate committees.

4. Committee hearing.

This is where Hoosiers, businesses and other stakeholders may testify to the committee about the bill. Even if the bill passes its initial committee, it may be reassigned to another depending on the content or the potential fiscal impact of the bill.

5. Second reading.

Anyone in the chamber can offer an amendment, which must be approved with a simple majority.

6. Third reading.

The bill's overall merit is voted on in the chamber. Depending on the length of the session, House bills must be heard for third reading by Feb. 3 or Feb. 25 and Senate bills by Feb. 4 or Feb. 26.

7. Send to opposite chamber.

Bills go through the exact same process in the opposite chamber.

8. First reading.

9. Committee hearing.

10. Second reading.

11. Third reading.

Depending on the length of the session, House bills must be heard for third reading in the Senate by March 3 or April 16, and Senate bills in the House by March 3 or April 15.

12. Conference committee.

If changes were made in the opposite chamber, either the bill's author agrees to those changes and sends it to the governor, or the bill is sent to conference committee. The largely private group of representatives and senators reconcile the changes made to legislation. If they come up with acceptable language, it's voted on by both chambers again, and then sent to the governor.

13. Governor's desk.

Very rarely, the governor may veto legislation. But since Gov. Eric Holcomb took office in 2017, he's only vetoed one piece of legislation.

GETTING INVOLVED:

Call your legislator.

There is a representative and a senator that represent you. Go to the Indiana General Assembly's website iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/ to learn who your legislators are, and how to contact them and their staff.

Testify at a committee.

There are two points in the process where you can make your voice heard. It is very rare for a bill to advance without at least some public testimony.

The Indiana General Assembly's website has a calendar updated one week in advance. Committee hearings are always held during business hours. You can sign up via a form right before the meeting starts. The committee chair will call your name during public testimony.

SESSION LENGTH:

Indiana has two regular sessions, the first or the budget-writing session is the longest of the two, running from January until the end of April. The second, or the short session, runs from January until about mid-March.

Even years are short sessions, and odd years are budget-writing sessions.

