STATE HOUSE PROTOCOL

Finding Your Legislator

1. Check to see if the House or Senate is “on the floor” (meeting). Both of the House and Senate chambers are on the second floor of the State House. The doors to the chambers are usually kept closed when in session, to keep out noise. Unless a roll call vote is in progress, it is perfectly OK to open the door and go in, and to take a seat in the spectator’s gallery along the rear wall. You can also take a seat in the balcony on the third floor at any time. Check to see if your legislator is there by using the House seating chart (with only 30 members, the Senate does not have one).

2. If the House or Senate is not on the floor, check your legislator’s committee room(s). Again, a closed committee room door is only for noise control. It is perfectly OK to open the door and go in. You can take any available seat against the wall. Some committee rooms are very small and there won’t be a place for you to sit. It is perfectly OK to stand.

3. When meetings are in progress, communication by note is acceptable. In the House or Senate chamber, give a note addressed to your legislator to one of the Doorkeepers (in the green jackets) and he/she will give it to a page to deliver. In a committee room, hand it to your legislator or write your legislator’s name on it and ask anyone to pass it along.

4. If you can’t find your legislator, you can always send them a note telling them that you’d like to meet with them, where you are in the building, and when you are available. You can send it through the Sergeant-at-Arms office, which is located in the big entrance hall on the first floor, one of the Doorkeepers, or through a legislative page.

Committee Rooms

1. Senate Committee rooms are all on the first floor of the State House; most are off the main lobby.

2. House committee rooms are located on the second and third floors of the State House.

3. Ask anyone for help if you can’t find the committee room you are looking for, or ask at the Sergeant-at-Arms office off the 1st floor lobby. Click here for a map of the State House.

4. Except for bottled water, do not take food or beverages outside the cafeteria. The only other place where they are allowed is in Room 10, the smaller of the two big meeting rooms on the first floor.

5. When attending meetings of the House General, Housing & Military Affairs Committee, please use unscented body and cosmetic products and refrain from using perfume, aftershave, or cologne.

Written materials.

1. The most up-to-date committee schedules are posted on the door of each committee room. Click here for a complete weekly committee schedule or pick up a print-out at the Legislative Council office on the first floor at the back of the State House. All materials for committee testimony should be emailed in advance as they are all posted on the committee websites.

2. Click here to find bills, acts or resolutions. Hard copy is available outside of the legislative lounge on the first floor of the State House, as are the days’ journals and calendars. If there are no copies available of the bill you want, ask at the Legislative Council office.

3. The computers outside of the legislator’s lounge are for public use. You can use them to check schedules, status of bills, etc. The Legislature’s website provides a wealth of information, including weekly committee schedules, copies of bills, bill status, etc.
MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

General Tips

1. Plan ahead - make an appointment
2. Do your homework, prepare your comments
3. Arrive on time
4. Establish common ground
5. State your case concisely
6. Listen - figure out what concerns/fears need to be addressed
7. Make sure any information you give is accurate
8. Offer your assistance if more information is needed
9. Thank them for their time and consideration
10. Follow through with any promise you make to provide more information

Meeting with legislators in the “off season” is a good idea. They have more time to meet with you, and may not be as distracted by other things. This is a particularly good idea if you are looking for support for a program or service, rather than lobbying on a particular bill. If appropriate, have the meeting at the agency or office that provides the program or service.

Group meetings are often more effective than individual meetings. A group of people from different areas who are interested in the same issue can set up a meeting with a key legislator, or a group of people from the same area can set up a meeting with all of their representatives and senators. It depends on the issue.

If you decide to come to the State House to meet with your legislator(s) during the session, early morning (7:30-9:30), lunch time (12-1:30), or late afternoon (after 4:00) are the best possibilities.

*Always be prepared for last minute changes in the legislative schedule that might prevent legislator(s) from meeting with you, or committees from taking testimony, on time.*