

Everything You Need to Know about Maine's Legislative Process



Maine Women's Lobby

Key:



Citizen Action Alert



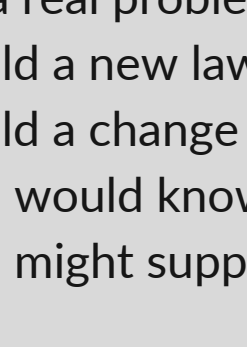
Learn More



Did you know?

Every day, our government makes decisions on laws and policies that affect our lives in both big and small ways. **Your education, your healthcare, your future** - everything we do is shaped in some way by our government. When you know how these systems work, you can get involved! Your unique perspective matters to policy-makers, and can have an impact on your life and future - and gender equity in our state.

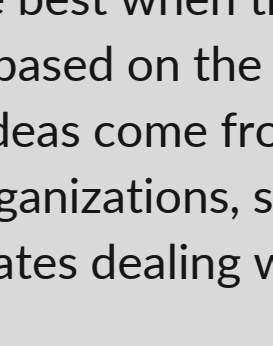
Take action by bringing your idea for a bill to a lawmaker



Questions to Ask

Is it a real problem?
Would a new law help solve it?
Would a change in the law help?
Who would know more about the issue?
Who might support it?

Idea



All bills begin with ideas from people like you. Ideas are best when they come from a real problem based on the experiences of real people. Ideas come from citizens, legislators, organizations, state agencies, and sometimes states dealing with similar issues.



Learn how to find bill information in MWL's online "How To" tutorial

Bills, Bills, Bills

Learn how to read a bill in MWL's online "How To" tutorial



Every bill needs a **sponsor**: a legislator who agrees to see the bill through the process (and can help with the bill drafting process). Other legislators may sign on as co-sponsors too. A sponsor can submit a bill title, and work with partners to make a bill draft.



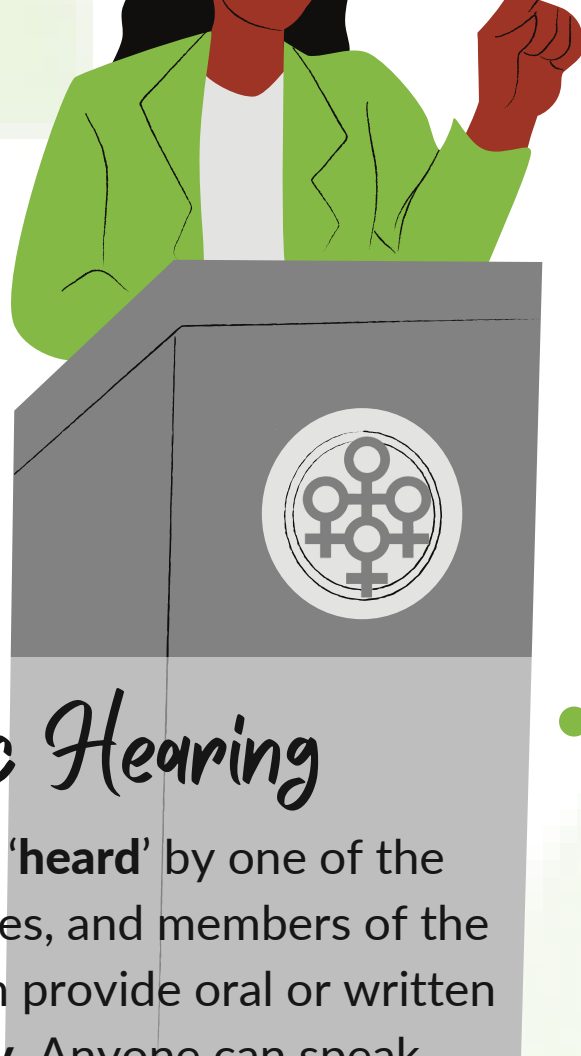
Learn how to find a bill sponsor in MWL's online "How To" tutorial

Reviser's Office

The **Reviser's Office** is staffed by nonpartisan government employees who help write and revise bills and find the best place to put them into the law.

Collaborating & Committee Work

Once a bill is drafted, it is assigned to a committee. There are many committees that focus on specific issues like **education, jobs, or health and human services**. Every committee includes legislators from both the House and the Senate.



Learn how to find a committee in MWL's online "How To" tutorial

Learn how to testify at a public hearing in MWL's online "How To" tutorial

Public Hearing

The bill is **'heard'** by one of the committees, and members of the public can provide oral or written **testimony**. Anyone can speak favor of, opposed to or 'neither for nor against' a bill.

Work Session

Following the hearing, the committee has a work session, where they look at a bill overview prepared by the committee's nonpartisan analyst (researcher), hear from experts, and ask and answer lingering questions.

Learn how to understand hearings and work sessions in MWL's online "How To" tutorial

Take action by providing testimony at a public hearing in person or in writing

Take action by calling or writing to legislative committee members

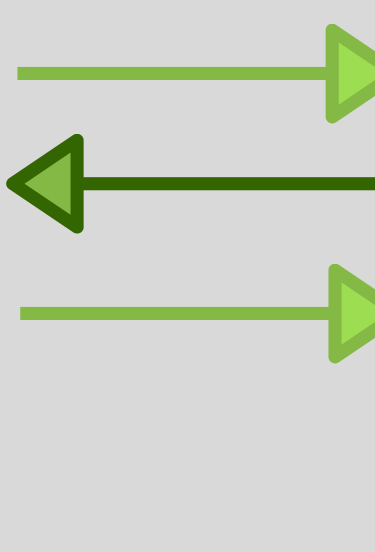
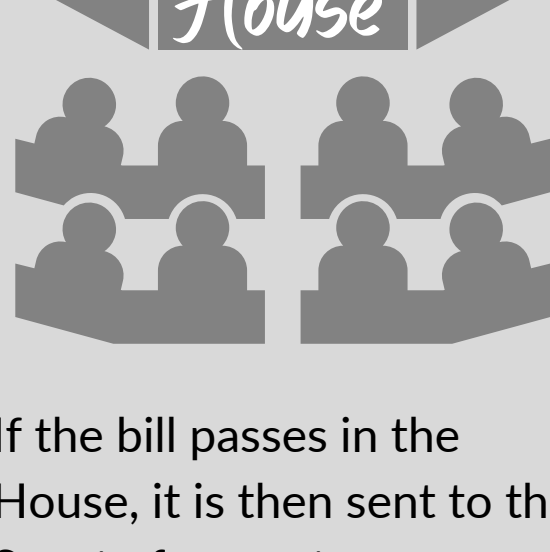
Committee Vote

The committee votes and makes a recommendation to the Legislature. Sometimes they amend (or change) it.



Legislature

The House and Senate each vote on the committee's recommendation. If the bill sponsor is a Representative, the bill will first go to the House (and vice-versa).



If the bill passes in the House, it is then sent to the Senate for a vote.

If the bill also passes in the Senate, it is then sent to the House for **'enactment'** before it is **'finally engrossed'** or passed.

Learn how to find your legislator in MWL's online "How To" tutorial

Voting

This can be confusing - if the recommendation is that the bill "ought to pass", a "yes" or "yea" vote means the bill should move forward. If the recommendation is that the bill "ought **not** to pass", a "yes" or "yea" vote means the bill should not move forward.



If the bill does not get a majority vote to pass in either chamber, it dies.

Learn how to connect with legislators in MWL's online "How To" tutorial

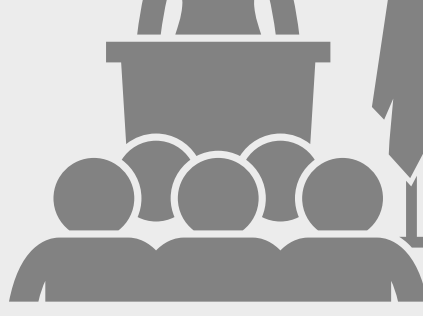
Take action by calling or writing to legislators and expressing your opinions!

Bill Funding

If the bill has a cost attached to it, it receives a **fiscal note**. This is the estimated amount of money needed for the proposed bill, and where the money should come from. If the bill passes out of the Legislature, it will go to the Appropriations Committee and the fiscal note will be reviewed and funded (or not!). Bills can be funded through the budget, the **Special Appropriations Table**, the **Special Study Table**, or other sources. The full Legislature will vote on the budget, including the funding for certain bills, at the end of the session.

Governor

If the bill passes both the House and the Senate, it goes to the Governor for a signature.



Veto!

Sometimes, the Governor will **veto**, or rejects a law. In that case, it goes back to the Legislature. If two-thirds of the House AND the Senate vote to overturn the veto, it becomes law anyway. If the bill gets less than two-thirds in either chamber, the veto is **'sustained'** and the bill dies.



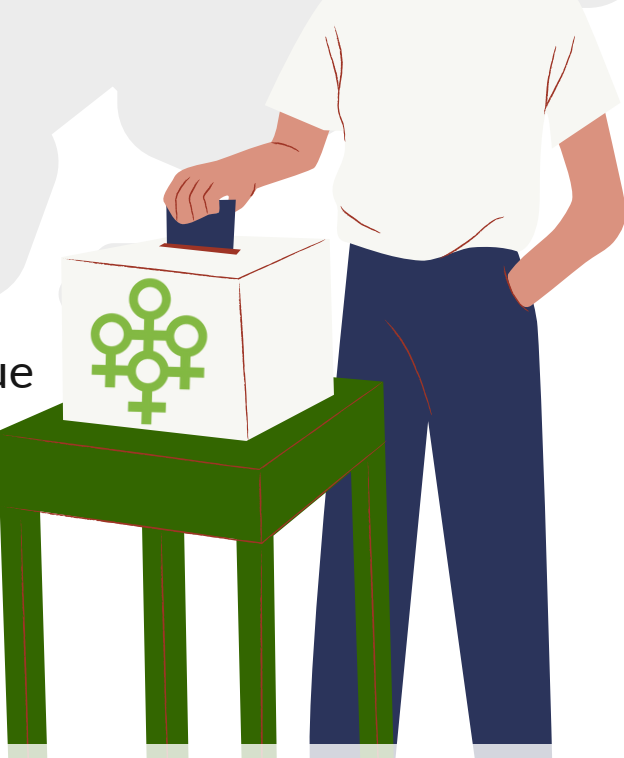
A new law is born

When the Governor signs a bill, it becomes a **Public Law** (usually 90 days later). Sometimes the Governor doesn't sign the bill... in that case, it becomes law without their signature.

Take action by voting candidates who you believe will best represent you!

Updates to the Law

After a bill becomes public law, improvements and updates will continue to be made by future Legislatures.



Express your opinions on social media, in a blog, in op-eds or letters to the editor!

Thousands of bills start this process, but only a couple of hundred become laws each session. At every point in this process, there are opportunities for **YOU** to get involved and create positive change and a more gender-equitable Maine.

Get Involved

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