



metropolitanTM
family services

families **m**powered

Advocacy Toolkit



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Introduction

The Government Affairs department has developed this toolkit to educate and inform Metropolitan Family Services' (MFS) staff about advocacy. This toolkit will provide you with background information on the agency, information about the Government Affairs department, and how you as an employee can advocate for your clients, for MFS and for yourself. If you have questions or comments regarding this toolkit, please feel free to reach out to us at Advocacy@metrofamily.org.

History of Metropolitan Family Services

Since 1857, Metropolitan Family Services has empowered families to learn, to earn, to heal and to thrive. Founded as the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, our organization has helped families get through the devastating hardships of poverty, world wars, epidemics, and natural disasters.

Throughout our long history we have reached out to help the young and old, unemployed, and working poor, long-time citizens, new immigrants, and those challenged by changing economics, troubled relationships, inadequate education, and mental health issues. We've supported them with financial aid, counseling, education, and legal services. But most of all, we have bolstered the strength that lies within each person, provided hope for a brighter future, and helped individuals and families reclaim their dignity and purpose.

4E's

Metropolitan centers its programming and services around 4 pillars known to staff as the 4 E's. These E's are Education, Emotional Wellness, Economic Stability, and Empowerment. These four service areas guide Metropolitan's work, and therefore, also guide our advocacy efforts.

Government Affairs Office

Mission

The Government Affairs team ensures that state, local, and federal decision-makers understand the agency's values and consistently provide the resources and environment needed to support our families. Government Affairs is an agency-wide venture that involves the executive team, leaders, and staff at community sites, and many other internal and external supporters.



This work includes:

1. **Mobilizing resources** within the agency and the communities it serves to advocate for legislation and policies that create better outcomes for families.
2. **Providing leadership and strategic support** to the agency's leadership on strategies and tactics to influence state government on behalf of families.
3. **Identifying and addressing high-leverage opportunities** to address agency goals through public policy, strategic partnerships, and coalitions within the broad human services community.

Organizing Principles

- *Outward orientation, built on internal assets.* Metropolitan aggressively pursues strong working relationships with the elected officials and public agencies who impact our communities. Our people are the vanguard -- every leader, employee, and partner are encouraged to contribute.
- *Hybrid of grassroots, high-altitude, and coalition tactics.* No single approach fits every situation or opportunity. Metropolitan creates and wields influence at multiple levels – in our communities, at the upper echelons of policymaking, and as a leader of the Illinois human services field.
- *Knowledge is power.* Metropolitan is respected as a source of expertise, knowledge, and leadership. Our mobilization goes beyond talking points and marching orders – from top to bottom, our people are well-informed about the issues and as skilled at advocacy as they are in their day-to-day work.
- *Energetic, opportunistic, and focused.* Our actions and attitudes convey urgency and a sense of possibility. We actively explore promising ideas and leadership opportunities aligned with our strategic goals but have the discipline to say 'No' to interesting work that falls outside our focus.

The Government Affairs team develops Metropolitan's official policy agenda and advocacy positions, in consultation with our senior executives, program leaders and our Springfield-based counsel. We actively monitor issues and legislation and develop strategies and materials for leaders and staff who are authorized to directly represent us to policymakers. The visibility we pursue varies according to each situation -- in some cases, a "quiet strategy" works best.

Government Affairs at Metropolitan originated back in 1971, then called the Social Advocacy Department. The Social Advocacy Department was formed in response to the government's newly created Department of Children and Families, as a way to hold the government accountable in the provision of family services. The agency felt that the provision of high-quality services was not enough to meet the needs of families, and that Metropolitan also had an important role in the development of public solutions to pressing social issues.



Advocacy Task Force

The Advocacy Task Force (“Task Force”) empowers clients, staff, and other participants (“members”) to engage in policy advocacy that advances positive change on behalf of families and communities served by Metropolitan Family Services. The Task Force achieves this goal by:

- Equipping members with tools and training for grassroots advocacy,
- Supporting members in building personal relationships with elected officials,
- Encouraging members to seek coalition leadership roles and enhance collaboration with community partners, and
- Mobilizing internal and external networks to positively impact policy development and implementation.

Specifically, the Task Force will:

- Set the agency policy agenda at the beginning of each calendar year.
- Drive and monitor ongoing one-time advocacy actions.
- Facilitate specific short-term and long-term issue-area campaigns.
- Organize and track agency participation in external coalitions and advocacy groups.



What is advocacy?

The term “advocacy” encompasses a broad range of activities intended to influence public policy. In simple terms, it means making the case for your cause or mission.

Advocacy v. Lobbying

Advocacy

Advocacy includes a large number of activities, from grassroots organizing, public education, policy research, lobbying, position paper or statements on issues, voter registration, coalition participating or building, and election activities. It also includes litigation and boycotts, along with direct action.

Think about advocacy as any activity that helps elevate the voice of the organization or individuals and groups with policymakers or the public.

For Example

Lobbying is speaking with elected officials about the formation or passage of specific legislation only, such as “SB1234”.

Releasing a statement about community violence in Chicago is not considered lobbying. It is advocacy.

Lobbying

Lobbying is narrowly defined by the IRS:

“Direct lobbying refers to attempts to influence a legislative body through communication with a member or employee of a legislative body, or with a government official who participates in formulating legislation.

Grass roots lobbying refers to attempts to influence legislation by attempting to affect the opinion of the public with respect to the legislation and encouraging the audience to take action with respect to the legislation.

In either case, the communications must refer to and reflect a view on the legislation.

That leaves a lot on the table for non-profits!

Advocacy can take many forms. When we talk about advocacy for nonprofits, we usually mean making your case in a way that will change public policy to help your cause. That means reaching audiences and individuals who are in a position to help make those changes. Advocacy could be any one of a number of things including research and public education to lobbying elected officials and voter engagement. These activities are especially important when you want to make sure that underrepresented communities have a voice in decisions that affect them.

Different types of advocacy

Self-advocacy: Taking action to represent and advance your own interests.

Peer advocacy: Taking action to represent the rights and interests of someone other than yourself.

Systems advocacy: Taking action to influence social, political, and economic systems to bring about change for groups of people.

Legal advocacy: Taking action to use attorneys and the legal or administrative systems to establish or protect legal rights.



Why is advocacy important?

Elected officials have a very small set of core issues for which they are hard pressed to sway one way or the other.

Therefore, they rely on hearing the experiences of frontline workers, and others with lived experience related to the issues they are voting on. That means you have the power to help shape policy to positively impact the people you serve. It is our role, as advocates, to take on an active role, and remain vigilant in our work with elected officials. Our continued work and collaboration are the means to success for our organization and the families we impact.

Advocacy at Metropolitan: Examples from the Past

- **Self-advocacy:** LCPC Clinicians advocating for pay equity and working to resolve barriers to reimbursement for services
- **Peer advocacy:** Southeast Center working with community partners to work towards environmental justice.
- **Systems advocacy:** Metropolitan Family Services advocating for the expansion of mobile crisis response services.
- **Legal advocacy:** Metropolitan Family Services Legal Aid Society legal assistance on domestic violence, family law, consumer and housing issues, elder abuse and financial exploitation, human trafficking, and victims of crime.

The Legislative Process

Metropolitan Family Services interacts primarily at the state and local government level, but we will provide public comments or other written communication to the federal government in effort to educate them on how laws or policies will affect MFS clients. At the state and local level, MFS will take a more active role by meeting with elected officials, advocating for legislation or policy change, and educating officials on the work that we do.

Every year, General Assembly leadership makes a calendar with deadlines that guide the legislative process. The dates of specific deadlines shift slightly with each new calendar, so the best place to access up to date information on current scheduling for the General Assembly is [here](#) for the Senate and [here](#) for the House.

The process listed below will take place while the General Assembly is in session. In Illinois, there are two sessions that are reoccurring: *regular* session and *veto* session. For a list of other helpful legislative terms and definitions, visit the [Illinois Legislative Glossary](#)



Illinois Process: **How a bill becomes a law**¹

1. **Bill Drafted:** When a lawmaker has an idea for a bill—often at the suggestion of constituents like you—they pass the information on to the Legislative Reference Bureau to be written in proper technical form.
2. **Bill Introduced:** Every bill must be read in front of the legislative body on three separate occasions before it can be passed: when the bill is first filed; when the bill is assigned a bill number; and when the bill is read before the body for the first time.
3. **Referred to Committee:** The Rules Committee, which is made up of three members from the majority party and two from the minority party, refers the bill to the appropriate committee for review.
4. **Committee Hearing:** The bill's sponsor explains the legislation to committee members, who can then ask questions. Lobbyists (representatives of concerned groups and members of the public) can voice support for or opposition to the legislation. If a majority of the committee votes in favor of the bill, it moves forward.
5. **Second Reading:** The bill is read for a second time before the full legislative body. Changes, called amendments, can still be proposed at this stage.
6. **Third Reading:** The bill is read for a third and final time before the full chamber. After the sponsor explains the bill, members of the chamber may ask questions. When debate is completed, the chamber may ask questions then move forward with voting on the bill. A simple majority is needed—60 in the House, 30 in the Senate—for most bills to pass. Bills approved on Third Reading move to the second chamber where they go through the same process.
7. **Second Chamber:** If the second chamber approves the bill as it is written, it is sent directly to the Governor. If a bill is amended in the second chamber and then passed, it must return to the original chamber so the members can vote to “concur,” or agree with the change. If the vote to concur is successful, the bill is sent to the Governor.
8. **Governor's Action:** The Governor may sign the bill into law, veto it with recommendations for changes, or veto it absolutely.
9. **New Law:** The bill becomes law when the Governor signs it or if 60 days pass without any action by the Governor—whichever comes first. If a bill is vetoed, it can become law if both chambers of the General Assembly vote by a three-fifths majority to override the Governor's veto. If the Governor vetoes the bill with recommendations and the General Assembly accepts those changes, the bill becomes a law.

¹ Community Behavioral Healthcare Association of Illinois



How do I find my representative?

In order to be an effective advocate for your clients and your community, you need to reach out to the representatives who represent your district. Elected officials are accountable to their home communities. Therefore, they care deeply about the issues that affect constituents in their districts and weigh their opinions more than those who don't live in their district.

Fortunately, there is a simple tool you can use to find out who your representatives are.

[Illinois State Board of Elections District/Official Search](#)

Once you click the above link, you just enter your full address, and the page will provide you with a list of all elected officials representing your area.

Tips and Best Practices

Simply put, advocacy is sharing your point of view and ideas with legislators to generate their support for your work. It is also a great way to engage policy makers in discussion of issues that constituents like you, face in your communities.

As a constituent, you have the right to express your opinion to your elected official. By sharing information with them, you:

- Build relationships with policymakers
- Help them fulfill their promise to be informed
- Help them make decisions that are in the best interest of their communities
- Input is valued and sought
- Get a say on the rules and policies that impact your community

Lawmakers want to hear from their constituents about the issues that are important to them!

Dos and don'ts of interacting with lawmakers

DO:

- Keep it simple. A phone message or short note is highly effective.
- Feel free to share brief anecdotes about the potential impact on the people you serve, your work, your community, or your own family.
- Adapt your message and writing style to different communication formats. Adapt your letter for state Representatives and Senators.



- Keep track of your legislator's actions and follow up with a letter expressing thanks or disappointment. You can check the status of a bill at www.ilga.gov.
- **Know that timing matters. Action alerts are timed to respond to a particular deadline or strategy. If you decide to weigh in, do it as promptly as possible to make sure your voice is heard.**

DO NOT:

- Be rude or disrespectful. Avoid long letters, rambling messages, and spam.
- Get discouraged if you do not hear back. Lawmakers keep record of the number of contacts on any given issue. Your efforts *literally* count for something.
- Unless given explicit permission, do not use agency resources to directly advocate policy positions or votes. This includes MFS' computers, phones, and branded materials.

Templates and Tools

In-Person Meetings

By far the most effective way to communicate your views to your representatives is by speaking to them in person. You can engage with your representatives face-to-face at a local town hall or by scheduling a sit-down meeting at their local office.

Lawmakers receive multiple communications a day, so it is important that when asking for support you do so in a way that respects their time. The more concise and direct you can be, the better. Most in-person constituent meetings will be 10 minutes at most. **You want to come prepared with a specific “ask” or call to action that you want them to take. A good ask includes the following:**

- Identify yourself as a constituent (and a voter!).
- Be polite, positive, and professional, address them as “Senator X” or “Representative Y”.
- Be specific in your ask—to propose a bill, vote yes/no on legislation, speak publicly on an issue, etc.
- Include a personal story or anecdote that connects you with the issue you are discussing and if your position has more widespread support in your community (faith community, school, organizations, etc.).
- Ask for their position on the issue or piece of legislation,
 - If they are unable/unwilling to state their position, ask when you should follow up with them.
- ALWAYS thank them for their time.



Sample in-person talking points

In-person visits are a conversation. You should be prepared with three main points you want to leave them with. Remember to have written materials with your supporting facts to leave with the lawmaker. These materials (e.g., a fact sheet) will contain all of the background information and facts to support your ask, so don't feel the need to try to say everything during the conversation.

Remember **three main talking points** to guide your conversation:

- Who you are
- What you are advocating for
- Your ask

Leave your materials with them (e.g., fact sheets, impact statements, etc.)

Email Template

A letter/email to your State Senator or Representative should include the following:

Heading:

The Honorable (full name)
Illinois State Senate/Illinois House of Representatives
District Address (if letter)

Salutation:

Dear Senator (last name)/Dear Representative (last name):

Opening Paragraph:

- State the subject of your letter
- Use the bill number or name, if available
- Identify yourself and your organization

Body of Letter:

- Explain the issue simply and factually in a way the senator or representative will understand. They're not experts!
- Give a personal/local, example of the of the issue impact to make the legislator care
- State your position on the bill or provision, whether you support it or oppose it
- Be polite. There's always another issue to fight another day and burning bridges will harm you in the long run
- Thank the senator or representative for their attention to the issue
- Let the senator or representative know you are a resource for more information
- Ask for a reply



Sample Email

Dear Senator Villanueva

My name is Amy Brown, and I am a constituent of your district. I am emailing to urge you to support critical youth development programs and services. These programs provide children and young people in our community the opportunities and services they need to become connected, educated, employable, healthy, safe, and thriving adults. I ask that you support holistic positive youth development in Illinois by funding the Teen REACH afterschool program, funding the Healthy Communities Inventive Fund, supporting Juvenile Redeploy Illinois, and voting in favor of SB 2407. As a young person growing up in your district, the Teen Reach program was integral to my development into adulthood.

Your support on this issue would be much appreciated by teens and parents in your district. Thank you for your work on behalf of your constituents, and your attention on this issue. If you have any further questions about the youth development programs mentioned in this email, feel free to reach out to me.

I look forward to hearing back from you,

Best,

Amy Brown

Telephone Call Template

Keep in mind that when you call a lawmaker's office, you will likely be speaking to a staff person. They may ask you to email them information about what you are calling about. You can send a brief email communicating the same talking points as you would have in the conversation and attach any supporting materials like fact sheets.

Please be aware that they may not give you a yes or no answer right away. If this happens, make sure that you follow up!

Staff Member:

Thank you for calling Representative Ortiz's office. How may I help you?

Caller:

Hello, my name is Amy from Chicago, and I am calling in regard to SB 2407 and the need for support of positive youth development programs and services

Staff Member: Wonderful, what can I do for you?



Caller:

As a constituent, I urge you/Rep/Senator X to support positive youth development programs that provide kids in our community opportunities they need to become connected, educated, employable, healthy, safe, and thriving adults. I ask that you vote in favor of SB 2407. I would like to know whether Representative Ortiz plans to vote yes to SB 2407.

Staff Member:

I will relay all of this to Representative Ortiz, let him know about your support. Would you please share your contact information?

Caller:

Yes, you can call me back at 123-456-7891 or reach me at amy@email.com. Please let me know if you need any more information on this and I will be more than happy to send it over.

Staff Member:

Great, thanks for taking the time to reach out. You have a great day.

Caller:

Thank you for your time, you do the same.

Letter to the Editor

The Letters to the Editor (LTE) section of newspapers is one of the most widely read sections of any periodical. This section offers you a chance to reach a broad audience and provide readers with information on unfamiliar issues and inspire readers to act.

To make the most of your letter to the editor:

- **Make connections: find out the name of the editor and the policy for acceptance (e.g., number of words and submission instructions).**
- **Be professional and identify yourself: establish yourself as an expert on your topic or as a representative of a larger organization. Be sure to include your signature and contact information- the publication will need to authenticate the letter and may reach out to you to verify.**
- **Keep it brief and get to the point: most published letters are 100 to 300 words and should be written in response to a previous article or LTE. Quickly describe your role and expertise, then state your case clearly and with powerful details. There should be a balance between statistics and personal anecdotes within the letter. Don't make statements that can't be backed up with facts.**



- Relate it to home: readers care about how an issue will affect them or their families locally. Including local facts or references will increase your chances of publication and draw in readers' interest. **Again, there should be a balance between statistics and personal anecdotes.**
- End with call to action: **Conclude the LTE with solutions as well as action steps the readers could take. Encourage the readers to contact policy makers to address the issue you're presenting.**

Letter to the Editor template

<Date>

<Name of media outlet or publication>

Attention: <Dr./Ms./Mr. editor's first name and last name or Editor>

<Address 1>

<Address 2>

<City, State/Province, Zip/Postal Code>

Dear <Dr./Ms./Mr. last name of editor or Editor>:

[Introduction]

<State your reason for writing here. If you are responding to articles or editorials by the media outlet, use the first sentence to reference the name of the publication (in italics), the title of the article, author's name and date when it appeared.>

[Case]

<State your case here. Include facts, references, or research here to establish credibility. Mention your expertise on the issue. Keep length in mind. Acceptable letter length will vary. Look at the newspaper's or periodical's letters section to get a feel for an appropriate length. Include a call to action, asking readers to follow up with some activity, such as calling on policymakers to address the issue.>

[Conclusion]

<End with a strong, positive statement in support of your case.>

Sincerely,

<Writer's signature>

<Name of writer>

<Writer's title>

<Writer's organization's name and address>

<Daytime contact information>



Witness Slips

A witness slip is an important tool in the Illinois legislative process. Filling out a witness slip allows for individual stakeholders and advocates to have input on a piece of legislation they are passionate about. This form of advocacy is a direct method of voicing your opinion on issues that impact your life and community. Below is a simple guide on creating a witness slip. Click [here](#) to access a detailed guide on completing a witness slip from Illinois General Assembly website (pictures included).

The screenshot shows the 'Illinois 101st General Assembly Witness Slip' form. It is a 'RECORD OF COMMITTEE WITNESS - STATE SENATE' form. The form includes sections for I. IDENTIFICATION, II. REPRESENTATION, III. POSITION, and IV. TESTIMONY. It contains fields for name, address, city, state, zip, email, and phone, as well as checkboxes for 'I Agree to the A-11 Terms of Appearance' and 'Record of Appearance Only'. A 'Create Slip' button is at the bottom right.

HOW TO CREATE A WITNESS SLIP

There is a box at the end of the line for the bill number that has a pencil ("Create Witness Slip"), for each committee hearing. Click the box to create a witness slip.

Section I, IDENTIFICATION

Complete with your identifying information: name, address, business, and phone number.

Section II REPRESENTATION

If you are completing the witness slip **as** an individual, please write "self" in Section II.

Section III POSITION

This represents your position on the legislation. Proponent means you are in favor of the legislation. Opponent means you are opposed to the legislation. If there is an amendment that you are taking a position on, you can indicate this by selecting the amendment from the pull-down menu next to "description" under Section III.

Section IV TESTIMONY

You are submitting a position as an individual. Check the box for "Record of Appearance Only".

Submit the witness slip by checking the box agreeing to the terms, completing the Captcha, and clicking on the box which says, "Create Slip".



Submitting Testimony

Written and oral testimony is a powerful tool in advocacy. Once a bill is moved to committee, a group of legislators on that committee will hear public testimony on the proposed legislation.² For individuals or groups who will be impacted by the bill, providing written or oral testimony is their chance to voice their support or opposition and potentially influence how legislators may vote.

Oral Testimony

Keep in mind, if you decide to give oral testimony, it is a good idea to submit written testimony as well. Legislators who were not there to hear you speak should be able to read about your position on the legislation. Other things to keep in mind include:

1. In order to submit oral testimony, you will need to first fill Record of Committee Witness form
2. As you prepare for your oral testimony, it is important to create your lobbying message. This should be a one sentence punchline of sorts that encompasses the main point of your message (e.g., "HB1234 creates barriers for youth seeking mental health services").
3. Begin your testimony by stating your name, your affiliation with the issue at hand, and clearly state your position. Try and keep your remarks under 5 minutes.
4. When presenting evidence for your support or opposition of a bill, emphasize the impact to your group, or community. Legislators may already understand impacts of a bill on the state or federal level, so they are looking to understand community specific impact. Since you are deciding to voice your opinion on this issue, it is likely you have a unique and specific understanding of it—that is what you should share with legislators!
5. It is critically important to be well-prepared and rehearsed with the important points you would like to make. **After delivering oral testimony, legislators may have questions for you so be prepared to answer confidently.**
6. Remember that regardless of whether the legislation's outcome is what you'd hoped for, your testimony will become public record. Therefore, no matter what your voice will be used to impact the way legislators' approach ever-changing policy issues!

² Lobbying Illinois



Written Testimony

For many organizations, written testimony is an efficient way to state their position on a piece of legislation. Written testimony often demonstrates impact with statistics, analysis, and input from those directly impacted. Things to keep in mind when creating written testimony include:

1. Be brief and impactful. Try to keep your statement under one page.
2. It is helpful to begin your statement with a bit of background on you or your organization. In this section explain the context for your interest in the legislation.
3. After describing the context, clearly state your position (e.g., “we ask you to vote yes on HB1234 to secure funding for critical youth outreach program.”)
 - a. It may help **to use bolded text for the sentence where you state your position.**
4. Once you have stated your position, use 1-2 paragraphs to provide your evidence and reasoning for your chosen position.
5. To conclude your statement, remember to thank the legislator(s) that you are writing to for their service to the community, and time.
6. Remember to leave your contact information to extend the opportunity for continued dialogue and relationship building with you and your organization.
7. Feel free to attach supporting documentation (e.g., reports, fact sheets, etc.). Be careful not to overdo it and attach too many things. If your attachments are overwhelming, they may be left unread.



Helpful Terms and Definitions

Definitions are provided from the Illinois General Assembly Website

Access the full glossary [here](#)

Act

An enforceable law of the State. A bill that has passed both houses of the General Assembly becomes an Act through the Governor's approval, inaction, or a veto procedure.

Amendment

Formal proposal to change the language of a bill or resolution after it has been introduced.

Amendment, Committee

An amendment adopted by a committee when a bill is before that committee.

Amendment, Floor

An amendment adopted by the full House when the bill is on the order of second reading.

Approval by the Governor

Signature of the Governor on a bill passed by the General Assembly. At this point the bill becomes an Act.

Caucus

An informal meeting of a group of legislators, most often called on the basis of party affiliation or regional representation.

Consent Calendar

A listing of non-controversial bills and resolutions. No debate is in order for any item on the consent calendar.

Effective Date

Date on which a Public Act takes effect. The effective date of a law is the date it becomes generally enforceable.

Enacting Clause

The phrase in a bill that formally expresses the legislative sanction of the General Assembly. The enacting clause follows the title and is a necessary part of every bill. The phrase is "Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly".



Lobbyist

A person who represents a particular interest or group of interests before the General Assembly.

Majority Leader

In both the House of Representatives and the Senate, the member who is the second-ranking official. The Majority Leader is appointed by the Speaker or the President and is the key advisor to the Speaker or the President and the majority Caucus.

Minority Leader

In both the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Minority Leader is selected by the minority party and is formally elected by all members. The Minority Leader's responsibilities include appointing members to serve on committees, selecting assistant leaders and staff, and serving as spokesperson for the minority party.

Public Act

A bill that has been passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor (or otherwise has become law). After a bill has been signed by the Governor or otherwise becomes law, the Secretary of State assigns the bill a Public Act number, which is subsequently used to refer to the measure rather than the bill number. The Public Act number consists of the number of the General Assembly followed by a dash and then a number showing the order in which the law was filed with the Secretary of State (e.g., Pub. L. 107-006). Public Acts for a particular year are bound into volumes referred to as the Session Laws of Illinois.

Quorum

The required number of legislators present to transact business. In the General Assembly, a majority of the members elected to a house constitutes a quorum.

Reading

Presentation of a bill before either house of the General Assembly by reading its title; a stage in the enactment of a law. **Each bill introduced must be read by title on 3 different days in each house before it is passed. The first reading introduces the bill. The second reading allows for floor amendments. A bill is voted on when called for third reading.**

Resolution

Action, in the form of a formal legislative document, is taken by the Senate alone, the House of Representatives alone, or both the Senate and House acting jointly. Usually, a resolution is used for one or both houses to express an opinion or solution on an issue. A resolution does not change statutory or constitutional law and is not approved or otherwise acted upon by the Governor (and thus is not a law).



Session

The period of time during which the General Assembly meets.

Session, Daily

Each day's meeting.

Session, Joint

A meeting of the two houses of the General Assembly together.

Session, Perfunctory

Session in which the Secretary of the Senate or the Clerk of the House may read into the record any legislative measure, committees may meet and may consider and act upon legislative measures, and the Secretary or Clerk may receive and read committee reports into the record. No further action may be taken with respect to a legislative measure during a Perfunctory Session, and legislators are not required to attend a Perfunctory Session.

Session, Regular

A Session convened on a regular basis based on a schedule laid out in the constitution. During this time all legislative measures are considered. The General Assembly convenes Regular Session each year (beginning in an odd-numbered year) on the second Wednesday in January and usually adjourns at the end of May.

Session, Special

A Session convened by the Governor or both presiding officers for a specific purpose set out in a proclamation.

Session, Veto

A Session held after adjournment of a Regular Session when the General Assembly reconvenes to consider the Governor's vetoes.

Speaker of the House of Representatives

The presiding officer of the House of Representatives, elected by the House from its membership.

Sponsor

The legislator who introduces a bill (or resolution). Other legislators may show their support by signing on as co-sponsors. The principal sponsor of a bill controls that bill.

Veto

The action of the Governor in disapproval of a bill sent to him or her by the General Assembly.



Veto, Amendatory

The Governor returns the bill to the General Assembly with specific recommendations for change. The General Assembly may do nothing and the bill dies; the General Assembly may override the veto; or the General Assembly may accept the Governor's proposed changes.

Veto, Item

The Governor vetoes an item in an appropriation bill. The General Assembly may do nothing and the item dies, or the General Assembly may override the item veto. In either event the remainder of the bill becomes law.

Veto, Reduction

The Governor reduces the amount of an item of an appropriation bill. The General Assembly may do nothing and the reduction stands, or the General Assembly may restore the item to its original amount. In either event the remainder of the bill becomes law.

Veto, Total

The Governor vetoes the bill in its entirety. The General Assembly may do nothing and the bill dies, or the General Assembly may override the total veto.