

Intimidated by the complexity of government? Does the political process seem too unwieldy? Rest assured. You're not alone if you feel overwhelmed. But there are several government agencies that can help you find information.

Who is my legislator?

If you're unsure who your legislator is, call House Public Information Services at 651-296-2146 or 800-657-3550. To locate your legislator, all that's required is your address.

You can also go onto the Internet to determine your legislators. Simply go to www.leg.mn.gov, look for "Who represents me?" at the bottom of the page. Click, and then insert your address.

Does my legislator have email?

Email is one way to contact your legislator. If you have a specific issue or concern, you may address it to your legislator or send it to the chair of a committee that may have jurisdiction over the topic area.

However, it is not a good idea to send email messages to all 134 representatives and 67 senators. Given the volume of email each legislator receives, an email addressed to a specific legislator from a constituent will get attention. A mass email likely will not.

Each member's email address is listed on the Legislature's website. It is based on his or her title, first name, last name and whether they are members of the House or the Senate. Generally, email addresses are rep.firstname.lastname@house.mn.gov or sen.firstname.lastname@mnsenate.gov. You can also call House Public Information Services to obtain email addresses.

What's going on in the Legislature?

Each year, thousands of bills are introduced in the Legislature, but not all become law. Through the Minnesota Legislature's website (www.leg.mn.gov), users can find the text of bills, bill status, biographies of the bill sponsors and a wealth of other legislative information.

Another way to keep abreast of legislation is through daily email updates on action in the House at the Session Daily website (www.house.mn.gov/sessiondaily/).

Where in the process is the bill I'm following?

You can easily track any bill making its way through the process by going to www.leg.mn.gov. Once there, click the words "Bill Search & Status" where you can begin your search by bill number, sponsor, committee of origin or keyword.

You can also call House Index at 651-296-6646 for bill status information.

Need a copy of a bill? Call the Chief Clerk's Office at 651-296-2314 with the bill's file number.

For Senate bill information, call Senate Information at 651-296-0504 or 888-234-1112.

When are committee meetings scheduled?

House committee schedules are updated on the Internet throughout the day. Go to www.house.mn.gov/schedules/info. For Senate committee schedules, go to www.senate.mn/schedule.

Those wishing to receive the schedule by email, can sign up by going to www.house.mn.gov/maillist/maillinglist.asp and clicking on "House Schedule." To sign up for Senate email notifications, go to www.senate.mn.gov/schedule/subscribe.php.

Can I watch or listen to meetings?

The Minnesota House and Senate produce hundreds of hours each year of nonpartisan, unedited, gavel-to-gavel coverage of floor sessions, committee hearings, issue-oriented press conferences, member interviews and other special events. This live and taped coverage is broadcast statewide on your local PBS station's digital Minnesota Channel.

In addition to live coverage, Internet viewers can also watch additional coverage not provided on the broadcast channel, including evening, weekend and interim coverage.



MINNESOTA STATE
GOVERNMENT SERIES
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State Legislative Information

All television production is archived, including on YouTube. Video archives go back to 1998.

Live video is available from all House and State Capitol committee rooms at www.leg.mn.gov/leg/multimedia.

House Public Information Services
Third Floor, Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-2146
800-657-3550

Chief Clerk's Office
211 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-1622
651-296-2314

House Index Department
211 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-1622
651-296-6646

Senate Information
231 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
651-296-0504
888-234-1112

Legislature
Website: www.leg.mn.gov

How did my legislator vote?

There are hundreds of votes taken each legislative session. The *Journal of the House*, available at the Chief Clerk's Office, and the *Senate Journal*, available from the Secretary of the Senate, contain a complete record of floor votes taken in the respective bodies on any given day. House members' floor votes on specific bills can be accessed from the House main web page by clicking on "Recorded Roll Call Floor Votes." Most committee votes are not recorded. Both the House and Senate journals are also available online.

How do I let my legislator know how I feel about an issue?

Give your legislator a call. But, at the same time, remember that an organized telephone campaign is the least effective way of making a point. The best way to get his or her attention is with a short, well-reasoned letter. Here are a few do's and don'ts on how to write an effective letter to your legislator:

Do...

- Be brief — try to keep your letter to no more than one page.
- Make your letter neat and easy to read.
- Identify the issue at the top of the letter and cover only one issue per letter. If you have more than one issue that needs to be addressed, write separate letters for each issue.
- Remember — you're the expert; make your letter informative.
- Identify yourself and the reason for your expertise.
- Get right to the point. For example, you may wish to begin your letter like this: "I hope you will support (oppose) HF___."

Give your reasons for supporting or opposing the measure. Tell your legislator why you think the bill, if it becomes law, will help or hurt you, your children, your business or your community. Explain what it means to you.

- Use terms they will understand and avoid using abbreviations.
- Offer to be of assistance. Offer to testify if there is a hearing regarding the issue with which you're concerned.
- Ask for a reply if you want one. However, keep in mind how many meetings and hearings your legislator must attend.
- Be polite and reasonable. Lawmakers can't please everyone. They may disagree with you. Try to respect their views. Don't lose your temper, even on paper. Tell your legislator what you think and why, but be polite.
- And finally, be sure to say "thanks."

Don't...

- Don't use form letters or postcards. Use your own words. Legislators say, "I'd rather get one short, simple, handwritten letter than a hundred form letters that organizations urge people to write. The letters come in stacks 300 deep. Even if they're handwritten, they're word for word the same." Also, use personal or business stationery, or a plain sheet of paper.
- Don't threaten legislators. Legislators say, "Some folks don't know how you stand on an issue, but they'll attack you right off the bat. They'll say, 'Vote for HF___ or else,' and you may already think it's a wonderful idea. Or they'll write, 'Why aren't you supporting this bill, you fool?' and you're the sponsor of the bill. Threats and insults don't work."
- Don't address a legislator as "Congressman."

This is the proper way to address your letter:

Representative _____
Minnesota House of Representatives
658 Cedar St.
St. Paul, MN 55155
or
Senator _____
Minnesota Senate
95 University Ave. W.
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

The salutation should read:

Dear Representative:
or
Dear Senator:

Here are a few more tips on how to get in touch with your representative:

- Make an appointment. It's best to let your representative know when you're going to be at the Capitol so he or she can arrange to spend some time with you. Call or write.
- If you're calling about a specific piece of legislation, find out the House or Senate file number and status before you contact your legislator. For help, call House Index at 651-296-6646.

