A Guide to the California Legislature

EXERCISE YOUR POWER

WE THE PEOPLE
Debating the merits of bills
Voting to pass or kill bills
Drafting & introducing bills

California elects from two houses
120 LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS

40 SENATORS
Serve 4 year terms

80 ASSEMBLYMEMBERS
Serve 2 year terms

LEGISLATORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR

Drafting & introducing bills
Debating the merits of bills
Voting to pass or kill bills
CALIFORNIA LEGISLATOR INTRODUCES A BILL

If senator, moves through senate

If assemblymember, moves through assembly

BILL MOVES TO ASSEMBLY

BILL MOVES TO SENATE

BILL MOVES TO ASSEMBLY

BILL MOVES TO SENATE

COMMITTEE VOTE

PASS

FAIL

COMMITTEE VOTE

PASS

FAIL

SENATE FLOOR VOTE

PASS

FAIL

ASSEMBLY FLOOR VOTE

PASS

FAIL

BILL MOVES TO ASSEMBLY

Bill assigned to committee(s)

Bill assigned to committee(s)

BILL BECOMES LAW!

*If senator, moves through senate

*If assemblymember, moves through assembly

*Bills that start with "SB" are introduced in the senate

*Bills that start with "AB" are introduced in the assembly

BILL PASSES IN BOTH HOUSES

GOVERNOR

DOES NOTHING

VETOES

SIGNS

Generally, after 12 days, if bill neither signed/vetoed (rare)

Legislature can override veto with 2/3 vote (rare)
Senate & assembly budget committees & subcommittees review the gov.'s budget & craft their own version.

Governor releases revised budget proposal

Governor releases proposed budget for next fiscal year

Legislature must pass a balanced budget

Start of the next fiscal year

Budget passes & goes to governor for a signature

Legislative leaders meet with the governor to iron out any issues and finalize a budget.

The State Budget Process

- Governor releases proposed budget for next fiscal year by January 10
- Senate & assembly budget committees & subcommittees review the revised budget & work to finalize their version by May 14
- Legislative leaders meet with the governor to iron out any issues and finalize a budget by June 15
- Budget passes & goes to governor for a signature by July 1
- Start of the next fiscal year

Governor releases revised budget proposal by May 14

Legislature must pass a balanced budget by June 15

Start of the next fiscal year by July 1
Legislators’ job is to represent the interests of their constituents. That means they work for you. **Here’s how you can contact them:**

**CALL & WRITE THEM**

- **TIP 1** Know the name of your legislator.
- **TIP 2** Plan out what you will say. Be prepared to provide your home address.
- **TIP 3** Remember to mention the bill number & why you are contacting your legislator. (i.e. “Vote yes on SB xxxx!”)
- **TIP 4** Make it short and sweet.
- **TIP 5** Tell a personal story, if you have one.
- **TIP 6** Frame the problem, solution, & action.

**MEET THEM IN PERSON**

- **STEP ONE** Schedule your meeting.
- **STEP TWO** Be flexible & patient.
- **STEP THREE** Prepare, educate yourself, & establish a clear goal.
- **STEP FOUR** Make a clear ask (i.e. “Vote yes on SB xxxx”) & take notes.
- **STEP FIVE** Follow up & say thank you!

**RESEARCH YOUR LEGISLATOR**

- www.assembly.ca.gov
- www.senate.ca.gov
- Not sure who your legislators are?
  - www.findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov

**CONNECT WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS EARLY & OFTEN**

Make sure you sign up for our e-mail action alerts at aclu.org for timely opportunities to contact your legislators.
MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.

Your participation strengthens our democracy.