



The Vermont Legislature: What You Need to Know

VT House

150 members

VT Senate

30 members

ABOUT THE VT LEGISLATURE

The Vermont legislature operates on a biennium, a two-year term with which bills are presented and can move through the legislative process into enactment. Sessions begin each year in January and typically go through May or June. Work is primarily done through legislative committees, which consider bills put forward by representatives and recommend further action to be taken by the House and Senate.



PRIMARY COMMITTEES FOR PREVENTION ISSUES

House Committees

- Health Care • Human Services • Judiciary
- Corrections & Institutions

Senate Committees

- Health and Welfare • Institutions • Judiciary

• *These committees meet regularly each week Tuesday-Friday while the Legislature is in session to discuss bills that have been referred to them from the House or Senate floor, and hear testimony from community members and organizations that are impacted by the bill's content. These public discussions offer an opportunity for community members to listen in on the direction the committee is headed with a given piece of legislation.*

• *As a note, the House is typically granted more time to review bills as they are allotted full working days for committee discussions, whereas the Senate is only granted 3 hours per day. Because of this, you will often see duplicate "companion" bills presented to each chamber, to give more time for each side to ask needed questions and hear from stakeholders.*

ACCESS COMMITTEE MEETING REMOTELY

- Go to the [statewide legislative page](#)
- Select the option "Committees" at the blue ribbon on the top of the page
- Click on a committee to go to its summary page.
- Click on a name on the left to get the legislator's contact info.
- Select "Agenda" at the top of the page for a list of the week's testimony.
- Click "livestream" for the YouTube of all public testimony.
- Folders at the bottom contain materials related to testimony conversations.

[more >](#)



THE BUDGET

Each year the **Governor** proposes a budget for the next fiscal year, and refers it to the Appropriation Committees of the House and Senate. Only the Legislature is authorized to appropriate funds, which it does through a “Big Bill.” A **Budget Conference Committee** resolves any differences between the House and Senate.

If a budget is passed and vetoed by the Governor, the Legislature can override a veto with a supermajority vote. Otherwise the process starts over. A **Budget Adjustment Act** can be enacted through the regular legislative process at any point in the year.

CONSIDERATIONS

ENGAGE WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS.

Although testimony is typically offered only to representatives of organizations, associations, and state agencies, the public has many opportunities to impact the legislative process. Your goal is to build a relationship, so you can be heard.



Build Relationships with Legislators

- Contact your legislators and let them know the issues that you care about; take a solutions-based approach
- Request a quick 15 minute meeting
- Provide short communication in writing over email
- Try to understand their views or the views of people who may oppose you
- Share your story as the focal point (your values, your lived experience, etc.)
- Provide input to sympathetic lawmakers at critical moments

TIPS FOR TESTIMONY:

1. Introduce yourself to the Committee Assistant & Committee Chairs
2. Provide outreach via email sharing your personal story, one piece of relevant data highlighting the issue, and one solution to the problem
 - a. Common data sources:
 1. VDH SUD Dashboard
 2. VDH Report Page
 3. DSU Annual Report
 4. BRFS
 5. YRBS
 6. Social Autopsy Report
3. Review legislative process & current status of bill prior to testifying
4. Practice accessing zoom prior to sharing testimony
5. Provide verbal testimony sharing same information in step #2

