

How the Legislature Works



Overview

- 192nd General Court
- Two year term
- Full-time, one of ten nationwide
- House has 160 members
- Senate has 40 members
- 6,664 bills filed



Session milestones

- February 19, 2021: deadline to file bills
- November 17, 2021: last day of formal session for first year
- February 2, 2022: deadline for committee reports (Joint Rule 10)
- July 31, 2022: last day of formal sessions 192nd Court

House Leadership



House Speaker Ronald Mariano



Majority Leader Claire Cronin



Minority Leader Bradley Jones Jr.

Senate Leadership



Senate President Karen Spilka



Majority Leader Cindy Creem



Minority Leader Bruce Tarr

How a Bill Becomes a Law in MA

- Filed in House and/or Senate: docket number
- Cosponsors requested
 - NEW this session: House deadline extended
- Assigned to a joint committee: bill #
- Receives public hearing

Committee Reports

- Favorably, ought to pass
- Sent to study
- Ought not to pass
 - Re-filed next session

If reported *favorably*

- Sent to *second* committee:
 - Ways and Means if it costs \$\$
 - Healthcare Financing if related to healthcare and it costs \$\$
 - Steering and Policy Committee if no \$\$

Second committee

- Moves to a floor vote of entire body
- Legislators can file, debate, and vote on amendments to the bill
- When a bill is scheduled for the “orders of the day” likely to get a floor vote shortly
- Moves to the other chamber to undergo same process

Conference committee

- Three House members
 - Two from leadership and ranking minority member
- Three Senate members
 - Two from leadership and ranking minority member
- Members cannot discuss negotiations with public
- Yes or No vote of entire final report by each branch
- No amendments can be added

Three readings recap

- First Reading
 - Committee Report delivered by House/Senate Clerk
- Second Reading
 - After Steering and Policy or Ways and Means and then
 - Placed in the Orders of the Day
- Third Reading: Committee on Bills in Third Reading
 - Final review for any legal issues
- Engrossment and Enactment
 - If the House and Senate pass the exact same versions of a bill, vote necessary in both chambers



Governor's Desk

- Sign it into law
 - Takes effect in 90 days without an Emergency Preamble
- Veto it outright
- Recommend changes
- Pocket veto: if he doesn't sign it as formal session ends
- Legislature can override veto with 2/3 majority
 - ROE Act
 - Climate



Bills Followed by LWVMA in the 2019-2020 Legislative Session, listed by subject area

The bill numbers listed are the numbers initially assigned. Those numbers will change many times during the legislative process. You can find the new numbers by clicking on the numbers below, then following the links under "Bill History" on a bill's page on the legislature's website.

Affordable Housing, Clare Gordon

Bill #	Topic	Bill Title	LWVMA Action
H1305/S797	Update state's rental voucher program	An Act codifying the Mass. rental voucher program	Support Testimony
H1288/S775	Provisions to expand housing for people with low and moderate incomes	An Act relative to housing reform	Support Testimony
H1264	Provide rent support to prevent families from losing homes	An Act to further provide a rental arrearage program	Support Testimony

Children and Family Issues, Palma McLaughlin

Bill #	Topic	Bill Title	LWVMA Action
H102	Set floor for welfare benefits	An Act to reduce deep poverty among kids	Support Testimony
S36		An Act to lift kids out of deep poverty	
H591/S267	Make breakfast available after school begins	An Act regarding breakfast after the bell	Support Testimony
H104	Repeal family cap on welfare benefits	An Act to lift the cap on kids	Support Testimony

Search the Legislature...

LEGISLATORS

 **SENATE**
[All Senators](#)
[Senate Clerk](#)



 **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**
[All Representatives](#)
[House Clerk](#)

HEARINGS & EVENTS

Date	Time	Event Title	Location
★ Upcoming Tuesday, Mar. 30	1:00 PM	Joint Committee on Ways and Means	Virtual Hearing
★ Upcoming Tuesday, Mar. 30	2:30 PM	House Committee on Federal Stimulus and Census Oversight	Virtual Hearing
★ Upcoming Tuesday, Mar. 30	3:00 PM	Study civil asset forfeiture policies and practices in the commonwealth	Virtual Hearing
★ Wednesday, Mar. 31	12:30 PM	Health Equity Task Force <small>Cancelled</small>	Virtual Hearing
★ Upcoming Thursday, Apr. 1	11:00 AM	Senate Session	Senate Chamber
Thursday, Apr. 1	11:00 AM	Informal House Session	House Chamber
★ Tuesday, Apr. 6	5:30 PM	Ellen Story Commission on Postpartum Depression	Virtual Hearing

[View all Upcoming Hearings & Events](#)

BILLS & LAWS

-  **BILLS**
-  **GENERAL LAWS**
-  **SESSION LAWS**
-  **CONSTITUTION**

FY 2022 BUDGET



Effective Advocacy

- Emails best during COVID
- Include bill number, title, your name and complete address
- Personal stories make an impression
 - Why is this bill important to you?
- “Ask” is related to specific stage in process
 - We request a hearing on this bill.



Advocacy cont'd.

- Current status of bill
 - How far along in the process last session?
- Constituent email system: *one issue per email*, not a list
- Count support/oppose correspondence
- Build a positive relationship
- Which staffer point person for bill?

Advocacy as an organization

- If in Ways and Means:
 - How does your bill fit into the big picture of MA overall?
 - What are implications statewide and not just Boston?
 - Find out policy staffer specific to topic area; e.g. climate/transportation
- Build coalition together with allied orgs; e.g. VOTES Act
 - Letter urging Legislature to do something from a large number of orgs
- Advocacy days on one issue more effective



Resources

- LWVMA Supported Legislation for 2019-20 session updated in April for 2021-22 session: <https://lwmma.org/advocacy/league-supported-legislation/>
- How the Legislature Works Featuring Beacon BLOC: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyQX6Y7MB5k&t=40s>
- Demystifying the State Budget featuring Beacon BLOC: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeoHKE6-QwY&t=16s>
- LWVMA Citizen Lobbyist Handbook: [https://lwmma.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Citizen-Lobbyist-LWVMA.FINAL .pdf](https://lwmma.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Citizen-Lobbyist-LWVMA.FINAL.pdf)



Resources cont'd.

- How a Bill Becomes Law documents
 - <https://malegislature.gov/Content/Documents/HowAnIdeaBecomesLaw/HowAnIdeaBecomesLaw.pdf>
 - https://www.masslegalservices.org/system/files/library/Legislative_Process2019.pdf
- House leadership
<https://malegislature.gov/Legislators/Leadership/House>
- Senate leadership
<https://malegislature.gov/Legislators/Leadership/Senate>
- Joint Ways and Means
<https://malegislature.gov/Committees/Detail/J39>

