

the Legislative Process

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Introduction

“Advocacy is a tool to bring about change.”

Where do you want to be?

The ability of Hoosiers with disabilities to live meaningful, productive lives is in our hands. By joining with others who are advocating for positive change, we can help Indiana become a place where people with disabilities truly prosper.

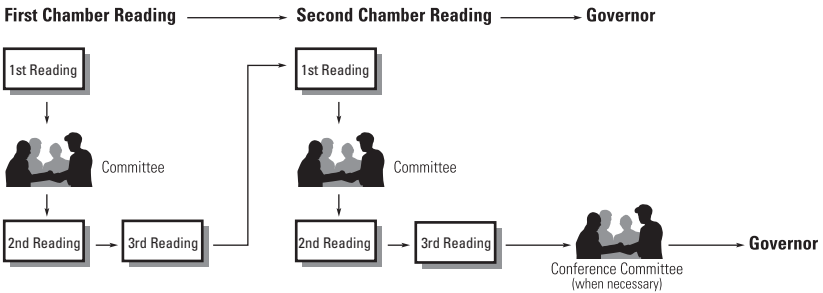
The Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities urges you to become involved in your local, state and national governments. This brochure provides basic and meaningful information so you, too, can initiate change.

Please refer to the glossary for clarification on words in **boldface** throughout the text.

The legislative process

The process a bill goes through to become a law doesn't have to be complicated, time consuming and full of red tape. Following is an outline of the steps by which a bill becomes a law in Indiana and the role you can play in the process. Keep in mind that this is a very simplified model.

This example applies to a bill originating either in the House of Representatives or the Senate.



Your bill starts here: The committee process

- You and other supporters present an idea for a new bill verbally or in writing to your legislator.
- The legislator from either the House or Senate decides to author the bill. The bill may originate in either **chamber**.
- Legal specialists from the **Legislative Services Agency** draft the bill's language.
- Once drafted, the bill is introduced by the legislator into his or her respective chamber and assigned to a **standing committee** by either the speaker of the House or president pro tempore of the Senate.

- Standing committees hold hearings where they may approve, amend or reject the bill. The chair of each committee controls which bills receive hearings, so it is sometimes necessary to lobby these committee chairs to ensure a bill is brought before the full committee.
- During the hearing, the chair of the committee should ask for public testimony or additional comments on the bill. This is your opportunity to stand up and voice an opinion. Your presentation should be well organized and brief.
- If you are interested in making a longer presentation, you will need to be included as a speaker on the committee hearing's agenda. To arrange this, call the committee chairperson to request a place on the agenda. The names of committee chairpersons can be obtained from the Senate or House or by visiting www.in.gov. Again, be sure to keep your presentation organized and brief. (See the Quick References section on page 21 for contact information.)
- A report of the committee's action (approval, **amendment** or rejection) is submitted to the **originating chamber**.
- The originating chamber (House or Senate) may agree or disagree with the committee's recommendation. Bills can be amended both in committee and on the floor of the House and/or Senate. If a legislator proposes a change in the language of the bill, a simple majority vote is required to pass the amendment.
- The bill is eligible for **second reading** in the originating chamber on the second calendar day following distribution to the members. At this point, legislators can propose amendments, which must be approved by a simple majority vote. If amendments are passed, the bill is reprinted with the new language.
- If the bill passes second reading, it is eligible for **third reading**. At this stage of the process, legislators may debate the bill's merits.
- During third reading, a **roll call** vote or voice vote is taken. A simple majority in either chamber is required for the bill to pass: 51 or more votes in the House, 26 or more in the Senate. Fewer votes than this results in the rejection of the bill in the originating chamber.

Your bill: The final steps

- If passed by the originating chamber, the bill is transferred to the other chamber, where a senator or representative will sponsor it.
- The bill is assigned to an appropriate committee in the new chamber and then repeats the same process as in the originating chamber (**first reading**, second reading and third reading). To become a law, a bill must pass both chambers. If it does not do so, it is “dead.”
- If the bill is amended during its consideration in the second chamber and a **concurrence** is not filed, the bill is referred to a joint House/Senate **conference committee**. The conferees meet to resolve the differences. If the conference committee reaches mutually acceptable bill language, the bill goes back to both chambers to be voted on again.
- The bill is then printed in the form in which it has passed both chambers. This is called an **enrolled act**. The enrolled act is signed by the speaker of the House and the president pro tempore of the Senate.
- The Office of the Attorney General reviews each enrolled act for constitutionality prior to the governor’s action.
- Each enrolled act is presented to the governor, who is required either:
 - ▶ To sign the act into law.
 - ▶ To allow it to become law without his or her signature, which happens after the act sits on the governor’s desk for seven days.
 - ▶ To **veto** it. (If vetoed, the House and Senate can override the veto by a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers. The bill then becomes law without the governor’s signature.)
- After passage, the enrolled act is printed, bound and included in volumes that become *Acts of Indiana*.

Your role in government

(Source: League of Women Voters Education Fund)

The citizen's role as a partner in government can be a challenging and rewarding one. There are many ways to be involved, ranging from being an attentive observer to becoming a candidate for office yourself.

Know the ropes

Knowing the basic processes of government is a good first step. But you may want more than general information; you may want to learn specifics about a program or find out how and to whom to voice concerns about a program that is not working as it should.

Follow through at the polls

The most basic way to make your voice heard in our political system is by voting. The timeless message is still appropriate: register and vote. Voting for the president occurs every four years, while voting for members of the House of Representatives occurs every two years and voting for members of the Senate occurs every six years. Indiana also has a primary election before the general elections for these offices. You should vote then, too. In fact, your vote may be especially important in primaries, because less than a quarter of the voting-age population turns out for a primary. Voting in local elections, for mayor and other local office holders, is important, too. Often, local government officials are in charge of implementing laws and policies adopted at the federal and state levels.

Don't overlook your political party

Participation in your political party can give you a voice in the selection of candidates. Begin by getting in touch with your party's precinct chairperson or by contacting your city or county party office and volunteering to help by making phone calls, distributing information or setting up meetings. A dependable track record as a volunteer will help you to play more substantive roles in the future.

Join organizations working on public policy

Many organizations in Indiana are working to pass laws and promote policies that will benefit people with disabilities. Contact these organizations (see listing beginning on page 21) to learn how to get involved with the issues you care about.

How to be a lobbyist

(Source: Justice For All, a disability-focused lobbyist group organized by the late international advocate Justin Dart. Prepared by Terry Roth.)

You don't need to have lots of money or a political action committee behind you to be an effective lobbyist. You have other things that your legislator needs, such as:

- Information
- Praise and constructive criticism
- A sense of community sentiment
- Identification of special community groups
- Votes

What does it mean to lobby?

All of us lobby every day when we try to influence other people's decisions. In the legislative realm, lobbying occurs when a person or group of people tries to persuade an elected or appointed official to make decisions that benefit that particular person or group. Some people are paid to try to influence legislative decisions.

What is good lobbying strategy?

Paid lobbyists must follow specific legal requirements. The rest of us need to use our knowledge and concern about issues in addition to common sense and courtesy. Some basic lobbying strategies are:

1. *Never give bad information.* If you lose your credibility, you lose your power. If you can't answer a legislator's question, say you'll find out and reply by a specific time.
2. *Plan in advance and be concise.* Legislators are very busy, so schedule meetings in advance and be on time. Introduce yourself, describe the group (if any) that you're representing and the number of members, explain what your issue is and why you want his/her support and explain what action you want him/her to take. Arrange for follow-up and leave all your contact information and any written information on the issue.
3. *Do your homework.* Remember that legislators review thousands of bills each session. Think about arguments against your position and prepare to respond to them. Learn more about the legislator (his/her profession, business interests, legislative and community committees, voting record on related issues, etc.).
4. *Develop working relationships with legislative staff members, including secretaries.* Don't make the mistake of ignoring people who can be very helpful.
5. *Be positive.* Confrontations aren't usually useful, except as a last resort. If your legislator won't support your position entirely, would he/she be willing to go partway? Be willing to compromise your position, but not your principles.
6. *Get supportive legislators to talk to other legislators for you.*
7. *Don't always call legislators just when you need something.* As often as possible, call just to say hello or thanks.
8. *If you're doing media work or community meetings, offer to include supportive legislators.*
9. *Develop both quantity and quality of contacts.* Some legislators value 100 postcards on the issue. Others prefer one or two well-written letters. The key is to generate both.
10. *Get involved in the political process.* As an individual (or if possible, as a group), work for the re-election of your legislative supporters. Get involved in party policy committees and even consider running for office yourself.

Identifying your legislators

If you're not sure who your state or U.S. senator or representative is, visit www.in.gov, select "Who Are Your Legislators?," choose an elected office and enter your five-digit zip code. Or, call the Indiana League of Women Voters at (317) 241-8683 (voice) or your county Bureau of Elections. Your voter registration card will tell you your "ward" and "district" numbers.

Key Indiana legislative committees

The legislative committees most likely to review legislation concerning individuals with disabilities include:

Indiana Senate

- Criminal, Civil and Public Policy
- Education and Career Development
- Elections and Civic Affairs
- Finance
- Health and Provider Services
- Insurance and Financial Institutions

Indiana House

- Education
- Elections
- Human Affairs
- Insurance, Corporations and Small Business
- Public Health
- Public Policy, Ethics and Veterans Affairs
- Ways and Means

After a bill becomes a law in Indiana

Responsibility

Once a bill becomes law, the state or local agency with primary responsibility for the law must implement it. Generally, the law includes a provision naming the agency charged with this task. This responsibility is important to the law because crucial elements of a program can be changed in its implementation.

Your role

Concerned citizens must monitor this process. Sometimes, as the guidelines of the law are being written and implemented, they may vary from the original scope of the law. Concerned citizens can call the appropriate state agency to request information about what is being done and what opportunities there may be for public input.

Implementation

Implementation of a law, especially one that has an impact on services, usually involves changing rules and regulations and/or changing policy. Often, the public is able to change the drafts of these rules and regulations by attending and voicing opinion during the state agency's public hearing process.

The preparation of the rules and regulations for actual enforcement is called **promulgation**. The promulgated rules and regulations must receive public notice by being published in the Indiana Register. A copy of the Indiana Register is available at any public library or online at www.in.gov/legislative/iac/ and click on "Current IR" under Indiana Register.

Budget

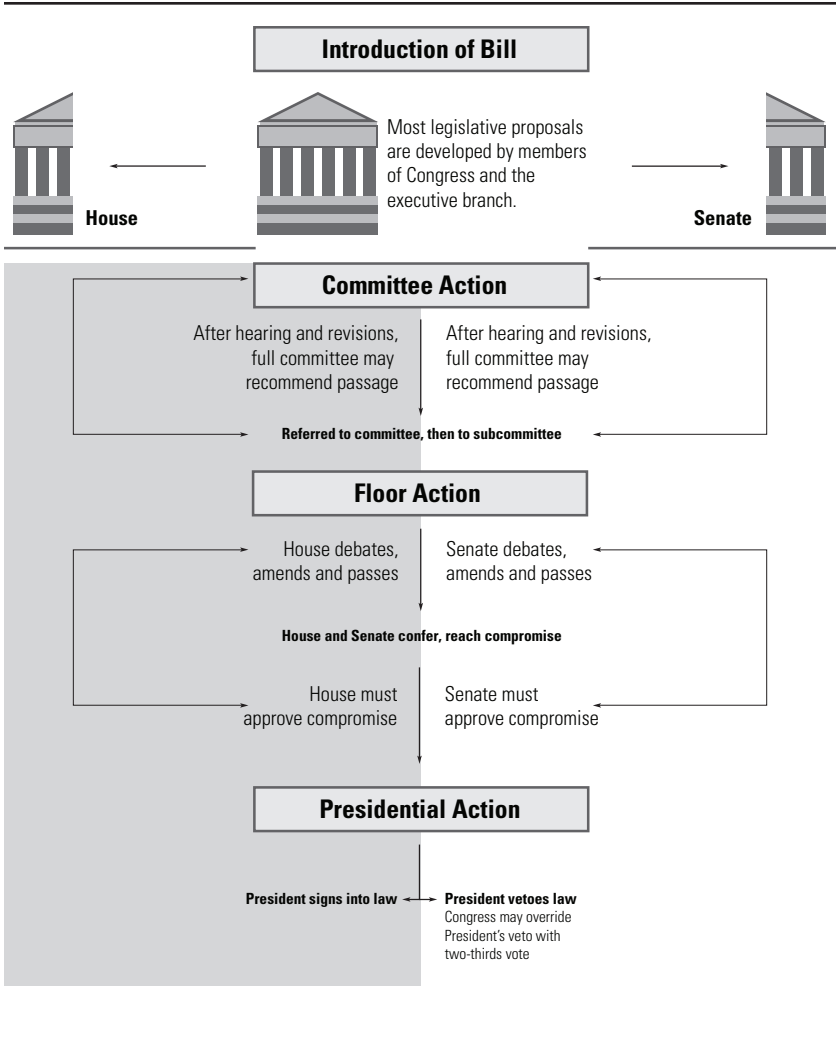
It is imperative that adequate funding be allocated to enforce the law and support the program. Without adequate funding, a program will not work effectively.

Final steps

It is also critical to notify any individual or group affected by the law. For example, if the law creates a new service program, any individual affected by the law needs to know who is eligible for the program's services and how to access those services. The public also must be aware of any law that requires changes in everyday procedures.

How a federal bill becomes a law

The federal process is much like Indiana's. Please refer to the chart for a simplified description.



Government rules and regulations

Federal Register

Published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the Federal Register is the official daily publication for rules, proposed rules and notices of federal agencies and organizations, as well as executive orders and other presidential documents. It is available at www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/.

Code of Federal Regulations

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is the codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the federal government. It is divided into 50 titles that represent broad areas subject to federal regulation. It can be found at www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/.

Indiana Administrative Code

The Indiana Administrative Code is published on the General Assembly Web site and includes the text of all permanent rules. It is updated through the Indiana Register as new rules become effective. Organized by state agency, division or board/commission name, the Code is available online at www.in.gov/legislative/iac/ and click on “Latest Update.”

Indiana Register

The Indiana Register is published on the first day of every month and acts as a supplement to the Indiana Administrative Code. This online document is updated daily as new administrative rules are promulgated and other official administrative action takes place. It contains proposed and final rules, notices of public hearing, governor’s executive orders, proclamations, attorney general decisions and non-rule policy documents. It can be found at www.in.gov/legislative/iac/ and click on “Current IR” under Indiana Register.

Executive orders

Executive orders are a president's or governor's declaration that have the force of law, usually based on existing statutory powers, and requiring no action by the Congress or state legislature to become effective.

Until the 1950s, there were no rules or guidelines outlining what the president could or could not do through an executive order. However, the Supreme Court ruled in *Youngstown Sheet and Tube Co. v. Sawyer* that Executive Order 10340 from President Harry S. Truman placing all steel mills in the country under federal control was invalid because it attempted to make law, rather than to clarify or act to further a law put forth by the Congress or the Constitution. Presidents since this decision have generally been careful to cite which specific laws they are acting under when issuing new executive orders.

Several executive orders have impacted people with disabilities. Perhaps the most influential is Executive Order 13217, issued by President George W. Bush in 2001 as part of the New Freedom Initiative. This order requires federal agencies to evaluate their policies and programs to determine if any can be revised or modified to improve the availability of community-based living arrangements for persons with disabilities.

Administrative rules

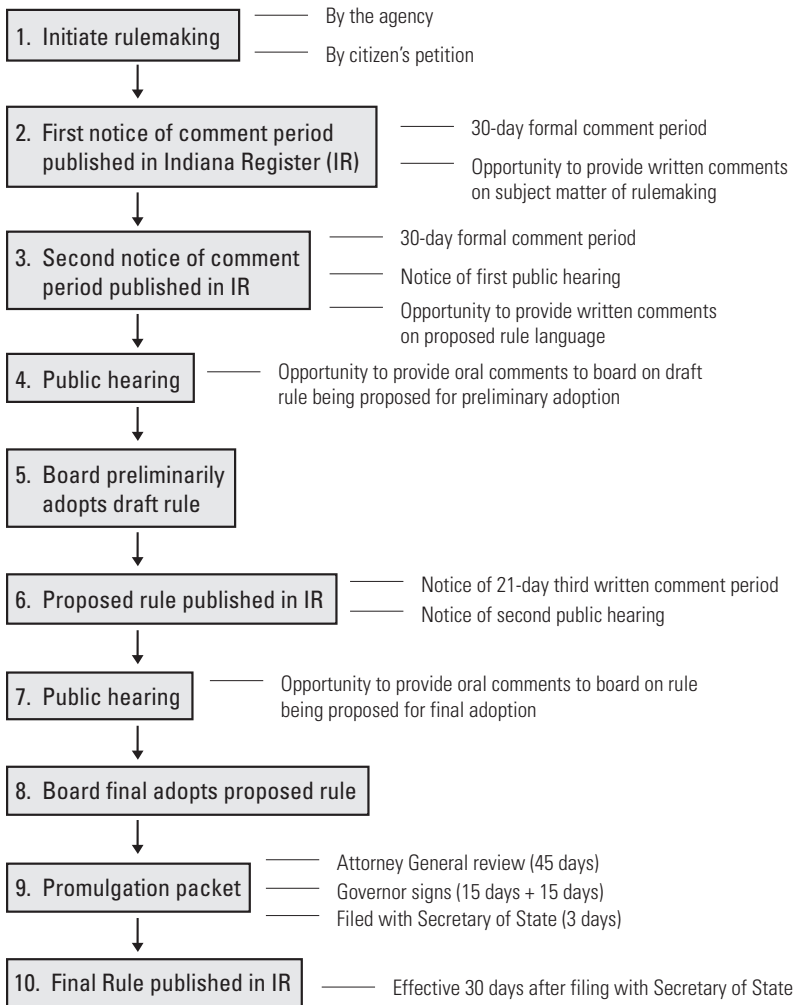
Administrative rules are issued by executive branch agencies on both federal and state levels.

These rules or regulations implement legislation that the state legislature has passed into law. This is accomplished through the process of promulgation, which provides the public with protection and an opportunity to affect the rule-making process. These rules then govern the roles of regulatory agencies as they carry out the law. For example, the Department of Insurance might propose a rule to control fees that can be charged for providing medical records, or the Office of Medicaid might request a rule clarifying how long a person must be disabled before he or she can qualify for Medicaid.

At the federal level, once the proposed rule is approved from within the government, the public is given the opportunity to comment on the proposal, and those comments are analyzed and considered in the development of the final rules. The process is important because the final rules will have the force of federal law. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is the codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the federal government.

At the state level, an administrative rule is an agency's written regulation, statement, standard, policy, ruling or instruction that has the effect of law. The Indiana rulemaking process is designed to allow for maximum public input, which also means that creating or adopting a rule can often take anywhere from a year and a half to several years from start to finish.

The following chart depicts Indiana's rulemaking process.



Public hearings

A public hearing is a meeting held by a committee or representatives of an agency at which members of the public, lobbyists, legislators and state agency representatives may speak or register for or against a proposal. Public hearings occur on federal, state and local levels and are often required by law.

The purpose of a legislative public hearing is to obtain public input on legislative decisions regarding matters of policy. Hearings may be held by legislators to solicit public input on a proposed law or to help them develop legislation.

Government agencies often hold public hearings to solicit public input on proposed rules to implement a law or government program. In addition, many agencies are required by law to hold public hearings as part of the process of adopting new policy direction, a new long-range plan or changing service priorities.

The Federal and Indiana Registers contain notices of public hearings related to the proposed issuance of rules and regulations by government agencies. These notices give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rule-making process prior to the adoption of final rules.

Public testimony during a hearing is usually limited as to the length of time a person can speak and the number of people who can provide testimony. Generally, people who want to testify sign in at the hearing site. Sometimes people will be contacted prior to the hearing and asked to provide testimony. Written testimony can be submitted in addition to or in lieu of spoken testimony.

Legislative public hearings are required by state law when a city or county addresses such matters as the annual or biennial budget. They do not involve the legal rights of specific, private parties in a contested setting, but rather affect a wider range of citizens. The result of legislative decisions reached as a result of such hearings are generally accepted by the courts; if challenged, they are reviewed only to determine if they are constitutional or violate state law.

Presidential signing statements

Presidential signing statements are proclamations added by the President of the United States to pieces of legislation he or she signs indicating how he or she intends to interpret and enforce it.

There is nothing in the U.S. Constitution which requires a president to issue any statement upon signing a bill presented by the Congress. Such a requirement applies only when a president vetoes a bill, as the Constitution asks that he or she clarify objections so that Congress can consider them. Nevertheless, presidents have issued statements elaborating on their views regarding signed legislation since President James Monroe, the nation's fifth chief executive.

Signing statements can generally be grouped into three categories:

- Constitutional — to assert that the law is constitutionally defective to guide executive agencies in limiting its implementation;
- Political — to define vague terms in the law to guide executive agencies in its implementation as written;
- Rhetorical — to use the signing of the bill to mobilize political constituencies.

These statements can sometimes help explain to the public, and particularly to constituencies interested in the bill, what the president believes to be the likely effects of its adoption. Other functions include directing others within the Executive Branch on how to interpret or administer the enactment, or informing Congress and the public that the president believes a particular provision would be unconstitutional under certain conditions.

Open Door Law

Indiana's Open Door Law, originally passed by the **General Assembly** in 1977, grants all citizens, regardless of occupation or status, access to public meetings. Depending on your area of advocacy, you can attend meetings for specific committees as another method of impacting your individual cause.

Generally, all meetings of the governing bodies of public agencies are open at all times for public observance and record. Public agencies are offices that exercise a portion of the state's executive, administrative or legislative power.

Not every group must hold open meetings under the Open Door Law. Only the "governing body" of the agency must comply. The definition of a meeting does not include social gatherings, inspection of a project, traveling to and attending meetings of organizations, or a caucus. And, while many public agencies allow the public to speak during meetings, the Open Door Law does not require groups to allow public testimony.

The Open Door Law also ensures Indiana citizens the right to a copy of a public agency's meeting agenda. Citizens attending these meetings also may record the proceedings.

The Access to Public Records Act of 1983 ensures citizens easy access to public documents. This law provides the public the opportunity to copy and review public documents, including any written document, map, photograph, tape recording or other materials used by a public agency.

Unfortunately, compliance with the Open Door Law and Access to Public Records Act is spotty, especially at the local level. If you have trouble obtaining public records, or if you believe you have been denied access to a public meeting, contact the state's public access counselor, who can help resolve these disputes. The contact information is (317) 233-9435 (voice), (800) 228-6013 (voice), (317) 233-3091 (fax) or pac@icpr.state.in.us (e-mail).

Contact information and complaint forms can also be found at www.in.gov/pac/.

The budget process

At the state level, the governor initiates the budget process, although the legislature has tremendous power to make additions or subtractions. Most states, including Indiana, have an executive budget, allowing the governor to make an initial budget proposal to the state legislature.

Indiana's budget serves as a guide of where funding comes from and how it will be distributed to state agencies and departments. The state budget process is as follows:

1. The governor's budget director sends budget guidelines to each state agency several months before the beginning of a fiscal year.
2. Agencies submit an estimate of their financial needs (with supporting evidence).
3. The budget director reviews agency requests, comparing them to previous budgets, and then submits them to the governor. Hearings with agency directors may be conducted.
4. The governor adjusts the budget estimates according to his or her policy priorities. The proposed budget is then submitted to the state legislature in bill form. The bill number is always HB1001.
5. The appropriations committees of both houses of the legislature review the bill, hold public hearings and make recommendations.
6. The final budget bill is sent to the governor, who signs or vetoes it. Once the budget is approved, state agencies and departments are authorized to spend money.

Gerrymandering and reapportionment

States are required to establish voting districts of equal populations. But a political practice known as **gerrymandering** can alter the percentage of voters in a certain political party within a district. Named for the Massachusetts politician Elbridge Gerry, gerrymandering is the practice of creating odd-shaped boundary lines in a district to favor a particular candidate or political party. It also can be used to reduce the voting power of a minority group. Gerrymandering along party lines benefits the majority party in the state legislature because it ultimately controls the redistricting, or **reapportionment**, process.

In Indiana's recent past, both of the major political parties have accused the other of drawing gerrymandered maps. In the 1980s, the Indiana Democratic Party sued the Indiana Republican Party over the maps drawn in 1981; the Democrats initially won that suit, but the decision was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1986. In the most recent round of redistricting, Republicans accused Democrats of drawing maps designed to retain control of the state House of Representatives, but no lawsuits were filed.

As shifts in the population occur, congressional representation for states also may be altered or reapportioned to ensure balanced populations.

Apportionment of a state's representation in the House of Representatives is based on a national census, conducted every 10 years by the Bureau of the Census in the federal Department of Commerce. Therefore, the Indiana General Assembly redraws the maps for legislative districts every 10 years.

Quick references

To contact your state legislators, look for Web sites and e-mail addresses at www.in.gov/legislative/ and click on Legislators, or call the following numbers:

Indiana Senate

(317) 232-9400 (voice)
(800) 382-9467 (toll free)
(317) 232-0404 (TT)
(800) 548-9517 (voice/TT)

Indiana House

(317) 232-9600 (voice)
(800) 382-9842 (toll free)
(317) 233-5733 (TT)
(800) 548-9517 (TT)

Indiana General Assembly

For up-to-date information on bills, amendments, roll calls, committee schedules, legislative calendars and other pertinent materials, visit www.in.gov/legislative.

You can also watch the general assembly online at that same address. Print materials can be obtained from the *State House Bill Room*, 200 W. Washington St., Room 230, Indianapolis, IN 46204
(317) 232-9856 (voice)

Bill Watch

Stay informed during the session about Indiana bills scheduled for action on the House and Senate floors. Track up to 10 bills at a time. Receive daily e-mail notifications of any action taken on these bills as

updates are made to the Legislative Services Agency database. Sign up at www.in.gov/apps/lisa/session/billwatch.

U.S. Senate and House Cloakrooms

Provides up-to-the-minute reports of what is happening on the floor of the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.
(202) 224-8541 (voice)

Democratic Senate

(202) 224-8601 (voice)

Republican Senate

(202) 225-7400 (voice)

Democratic House

(202) 225-7430 (voice)

Republican House

Thomas

Federal legislative information on the Internet, including how federal bills become law, Senate and House calendars, committees and committee reports, bill summaries and text, roll call votes, public laws and more. Updated every 15 minutes at thomas.loc.gov.

Indiana Lobbies/Advocates

AARP Indiana

One N. Capitol Ave., Suite 1275
Indianapolis, IN 46204 - 2025
(866) 448-3618 (toll free)
(317) 423-2211 or 2299 (fax)
inaarp@aarp.org
www.aarp.org/states/in

The Arc of Indiana

107 N. Pennsylvania St., Suite 300
Indianapolis, IN 46204
(317) 977-2375 (voice)
(800) 382-9100 (toll free)
(317) 977-2385 (fax)
thearc@arcind.org
www.arcind.org

**Citizens Action
Coalition of Indiana**

5420 N. College Ave., Suite 100
Indianapolis, IN 46220
(317) 205-3535 (voice)
(317) 205-3599 (fax)
staff@citact.org
www.citact.org

Fifth Freedom

227 E. Washington Blvd., #304
Fort Wayne, IN 46802
(260) 426-8789 (voice)
(260) 426-8790 (fax)
info@fifthfreedom.org
www.fifthfreedom.org

**Indiana Association for
Home and Hospice Care**

8604 Allisonville Road, Suite 260
Indianapolis, IN 46250
(317) 844-6630 (voice)
(317) 575-8751 (fax)
tstallings@ind-homecare.org
www.ind-homecare.org

**Indiana Association of Rehabilitation
Facilities (INARF)**

615 N. Alabama St., Suite 410
Indianapolis, IN 46204
(317) 634-4957 (voice)
(317) 634-3221 (fax)
inarf@inarf.org
www.inarf.org

**Mental Health America
of Indiana**

1431 N. Delaware St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202
(317) 638-3501 (voice)
(800) 555-6424 (toll free)
MHAI@mhai.net
www.mhai.net

NAMI Indiana (Mental Illness)

P.O. Box 22697
Indianapolis, IN 46222-0697
(317) 925-9399 (voice)
(800) 677-6442 (toll free)
nami-in@nami.org
www.namiindiana.org

United Senior Action

324 W. Morris St., Suite 114
Indianapolis, IN 46225
(317) 634-0872 (voice)
(800) 495-0872 (toll free)
info@usaindiana.org
www.usaindiana.org

Federal Lobbies/Advocates

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

1629 K St., NW, Suite 503
Washington, D.C. 20006
(800) 840-8844 (toll free)
aapd@aol.com
www.aapd-dc.org

The Arc of the United States

1010 Wayne Ave., #650
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 565-3842 (voice)
info@thearc.org
www.thearc.org

Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities

1660 L St., NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 783-2229 (voice)
info@c-c-d.org
www.c-c-d.org

Disability Rights Education Defense Fund (DREDF)

Government Affairs Office
1730 M St., NW, Suite 801
Washington, D.C. 20036
(800) 348-4232 (toll free)
dredf@dredf.org
www.dredf.org

Families USA

(Health Care/Long-term Care)

1201 New York Ave., #1100
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 628-3030 (voice)
info@familiesusa.org
www.familiesusa.org

League of Women Voters

1730 M St. NW, Suite 1000
Washington, D.C. 20036-4508
(202) 429-1965 (voice)
lww@lww.org
www.lww.org

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)

Colonial Place Three
2107 Wilson Blvd., #300
Arlington, VA 22201
(703) 516-7222 (voice)
(703) 516-7227 (TDD)
(888) 999-6264 (toll free)
info@nami.org
www.nami.org

National Disability Rights Network (Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities)

900 Second St. NE, Suite 211
Washington, D.C. 20002
(202) 408-9514 (voice)
(202) 408-9521 (TTY)
gen.inquiries:info@ndrn.org
www.ndrn.org

**National Coalition
for Disability Rights**

1201 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20004
(202) 661-4722 (voice)
info@adawatch.org
www.ADAWatch.org

**Mental Health America (formerly
Mental Health Association)**

2000 N. Beauregard St., 6th Floor
Alexandria, VA 22311
(703) 684-7722 (voice)
(800) 969-6642 (toll free)
(800) 433-5959 (TT)
www.nmha.org

Paralyzed Veterans of America

801 18th St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20006-3517
(800) 424-8200 (voice)
info@pva.org
www.pva.org

TASH

29 W. Susquehanna Ave., Suite 210
Baltimore, MD 21204
(410) 828-8274 (voice)
info@tash.org
www.tash.org

**United Cerebral
Palsy Association**

1660 L St. NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036-5602
(202) 776-0406 (voice)
(800) 872-5827 (toll free)
(202) 973-7197 (TT)
info@ucp.org
www.ucp.org

How to communicate with your legislators

Letters

Letter writing is the most convenient and common way of communicating with your legislators. Although legislators sometimes receive hundreds of letters each week, your letter can have an impact. Most of our Indiana lawmakers read a significant portion of their mail personally. Some offices keep a periodic count of how their mail is running on particular issues.

Be sure to write on printed personal or company stationery. This will eliminate any doubt about your name and address. If stationery is not available, type your name and address at the end of the letter.

Your letters count!

How to address your letters and where to send them

President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable _____ (name) _____
Indiana Senate State House
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Dear Senator Doe:

The Honorable _____ (name) _____
Indiana House of Representatives State House
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Dear Representative Doe:

Chairman/Chairwoman,
The _____ (specific) _____ Committee
(Senate or House) Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Dear Chairman/Chairwoman Doe:

E-mail/Internet

Sending e-mail to a legislator is a quick and easy way to communicate your questions, thoughts and concerns on a particular political issue or proposed legislation. The e-mail addresses of individual legislators are available by calling their offices or at www.house.gov/writerep.

E-mail addresses and contact information also are available through Indiana's government Web site at www.in.gov/legislative/contact.

E-mail also is a good way to inform others who share your areas of advocacy about current legislation and updates on proposed legislation. Several e-mail groups exist to keep members in constant communication with one another. One example is the Justice for All e-mail network (www.jfanow.org).

Telephone calls

Telephone calls also can be very useful to a constituent who wants to make his or her views known to a member of the Indiana General Assembly. Phone calls can be used when there isn't time for a letter. A phone call also is more personal than an electronic message and usually has more impact.

Personal calls also can be used to learn where a legislator stands on an issue. Frequently, members of the Indiana General Assembly will have two responses to an issue, one for supporters and one for opponents of an issue.

Be sure to do your homework before you make the telephone call. You may end up talking with an expert!

House of Representatives Telephone Center

(317) 232-9600 (voice)
(800) 382-9842 (toll free)
(317) 233-5733 (TT)
(800) 548-9517 (TT)

Indiana Senate Telephone Center

(317) 232-9400 (voice)
(800) 382-9467 (toll free)
(317) 232-0404 (TT)
(800) 548-9517 (voice/TT)

General tips on communicating

(Source: Indiana Chamber of Commerce)

DO

- Identify clearly the subject or subjects in which you are interested, not just House and Senate bill numbers. The legislator may be more familiar with the content than the number.
- Write on your own personal stationery. If you are the spokesperson, write on the organization's letterhead and give an approximate number of people in the organization.
- State why you are concerned about an issue or issues. Your own personal experience is excellent supporting evidence.
- Restrict yourself to one or maybe two topics.
- Concentrate your arguments and avoid rambling.
- Put your thoughts in your own words.
- Try to establish a relationship with your own representative and senator. In general, you'll have more influence as a constituent.
- Communicate while legislation is being considered by committees as well as when it is on the House or Senate floor.
- Find out the committees on which your legislators serve. Members of the Indiana General Assembly have much more influence over legislation within their committees' jurisdiction.
- Ask for the legislator's position on the issue in addition to urging specific action. Ask for a commitment.
- Be as positive as you can. If you disagree, make constructive suggestions on how the bill or problem can be improved or eliminated.
- Write follow-up letters if necessary to confirm the legislator's position, to ask questions if his/her letter was unclear, etc.
- Always write a thank-you letter when your legislator has taken the right position or done something you appreciate.

DON'T

- Threaten a legislator with the prospect of not voting for him or her again. Instead, present the best arguments in favor of your position and ask for his or her consideration.
- Pretend to wield vast political influence. Write or call your legislator as an individual constituent, not as a self-appointed spokesperson for your neighborhood, community or industry organization. However, if you do represent such a group, be sure to mention it.
- Use trite phrases or clichés in your written or verbal correspondence. They can make your communication sound mass-produced.
- Become a pen pal. Some legislators won't bother to read correspondence from seemingly tireless letter-writing constituents.

Helpful Web sites and publications

The Indiana Chamber of Commerce offers the following publications to help you or your organization with legislative work. Discounts are available for quantity. Contact the Chamber to order these two publications.

Indiana Chamber of Commerce
115 W. Washington St., Suite 850 S.
Indianapolis, IN 46204
(317) 264-3110 (voice)
inchamber@indianachamber.com
www.indianachamber.com

Here is Your Indiana Government

This is a comprehensive book describing all aspects of state and local government. (\$19.50 plus shipping)

Indiana Legislative Directory

Published annually, this is a Who's Who in the General Assembly. This easy-to-read-and-carry handbook provides information on each legislator, including a biographical sketch, photo, seat number, district number and the counties he or she represents. (\$6)

The following publications may be found in your public library or online, or may be ordered by mail.

The Almanac of American Politics *and* Politics in America

These reference books contain profiles of each senator, representative and governor and voting records on key issues. Available at most libraries and bookstores.

Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest

An organization working to dispel the myth that lobbying by charities is unimportant, inappropriate or illegal by providing information on the important role of lobbying in achieving an organization's mission. The Web site, www.clpi.org, provides detailed information on why lobbying is important, lobbying laws for 501(c)(3) and (4) organizations, how to lobby and how to motivate others to lobby.

Creating Communities of Inclusion

Highlights lessons learned on how to create a broad-based community coalition. Offers models and guidance to organizations and community activists on what works. For a copy, contact the League of Women Voters of the United States at (888) 287-7424 (voice), pubsales@lwv.org (e-mail) or www.lwv.org. Free online. Publication #1077

Gavel to Gavel, a Guide to the Televised Proceedings of Congress

In video format, information on the televised proceeding of Congress; how a federal bill becomes a law; where to go for more information; and a glossary of key congressional terms. For a copy, contact C-SPAN at Suite 412, 444 N. Capitol St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20001; or (202) 737-3220 (voice).

**The Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Non-profit Organizations:
Shaping Public Policy at the State and Local Level**

This guide will help you understand your role in shaping public policy and show you how to assess the benefits of lobbying to fulfill your mission and develop and carry out an advocacy plan. Available at bookstores and libraries or at www.wilder.org/pubs. (\$37.95)

Personal Political Power

Discusses how to begin and carry out a legislative program from pre-session planning to post-session evaluation. For a copy, write to the American Society of Association Executives, 1575 I St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. (\$24.95)

The U.S. Congress Handbook

This annual guide to Congress includes members' pictures, biographies and information on Cabinet officers. For a copy, write to P.O. Box 566, McLean, VA 22101. (\$5.95)

The following publications are available from the U.S. Government Printing Office (USGPO):

These publications are available online at www.gpoaccess.gov/database.html. Or, write to the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, 732 N. Capital St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20401.

Congressional Directory

Biographies of each member of Congress, committee assignments, maps of the nation's congressional districts and a listing of all federal departments and agencies make up this excellent reference tool.

Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report and National Journal

Two highly respected magazines covering congressional activities and major events in government. Published weekly. Check your local public library.

Congressional Record

Issued daily when Congress is in session. Records all public proceedings of both houses. Available in public libraries or online at www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord.

Federal Register

Issued daily. It lists government regulations, legal notices, presidential proclamations, executive orders and other documents required to be made public. Available in public libraries or online at www.gpoaccess.gov/fr.

U.S. Government Manual

Published annually. The manual briefly describes all agencies of the government and their functions. It contains lists of agency publications, sources of information and addresses and phone numbers helpful in writing or calling for information about a specific government activity. Available in public libraries or online at www.gpoaccess.gov/gmanual.

Glossary

Amendment – Any alteration to an original introduced bill proposed by either a committee or a legislator.

Apportionment – The distribution of representatives among the state based on population.

Chamber – Another word for House of Representatives or Senate. Also refers to the actual room where legislative action takes place.

Citizen legislature – Indiana’s General Assembly is classified as a citizen legislature. Lawmaking is not a full-time profession for the state’s legislators. The most common occupations of Indiana legislators are attorneys, teachers, business owners and farmers.

Concurrence – Essentially, agreement. The Senate and House must approve identical versions of a bill before it can become law. When a version of the bill has passed one house, it is sent to the other house for approval. The second house either concurs with the bill or makes its own amendments. If the Senate and House do not agree on an identical version, the bill is sent to a conference committee.

Conference committee – For a bill to become law, it must be passed by both the House and Senate in the same form. If amendments are added to a bill in the second house and passed, a conference committee consisting of members of both houses is appointed to resolve the differences. If the conferees reach a compromise, the chambers vote on whether to accept the conference committee’s decision. Generally, conference committees are comprised of two legislators from each chamber appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate and the speaker of the House. If the committee is unable to reach a compromise, the bill dies.

Enacted – A bill is enacted when it is signed into law by the governor.

Engrossed bill – After a bill has passed second reading it is “ordered to engrossment,” or authenticated as the correct and genuine bill to be considered on third reading.

Enrolled act – After a bill has passed both houses in the same form, it is considered an enrolled act and ready for consideration by the governor.

First reading – When a bill is introduced, it is read for the first time and then referred to a standing committee to be considered.

First regular session or long session – The first session of every new General Assembly can last up to 61 working (session) days. Beginning in early January, this session cannot extend beyond April 30. Occurring in odd-numbered years, the first regular session is often called the “long session” because of the legislative approval process of Indiana’s biennial budget.

General Assembly – This refers to the joint meeting of the Senate and the House of Representatives during two consecutive years. General Assembly is also used as a synonym for the combined houses of the Indiana legislature.

Germane – Committee action and amendments to a bill must be germane (relevant) to the subject matter of the original bill in which they are inserted. Amendments or committee actions ruled not germane are disregarded and do not receive consideration by the House or Senate.

Gerrymander – To draw district boundary lines in a way that favors a particular candidate or political party or reduces the voting power of a minority group.

Interim study committees – Meeting during the months between sessions (interim), these committees study relevant issues and recommend legislation, if the committee members deem it necessary. The subjects often are suggested by legislators in the form of resolutions, but the committees are created by the Legislative Council.

Legislative Council – Comprised of 16 legislators, this body was created by the General Assembly to coordinate the study of relevant issues between sessions and to recommend legislation for upcoming sessions.

Legislative Services Agency (LSA) – A non-partisan state agency whose duties include bill drafting, research, code revision and fiscal, budgetary and management analysis. Employees of the LSA assist interim and standing committees, as well.

Originating chamber – The chamber, either the Senate or House of Representatives, in which a bill is first introduced.

Promulgation – Refers to the preparation of the rules and regulations under which a law shall be enforced. Normally, the agency responsible for the law’s enforcement writes the rules and regulations.

Reapportionment – The redistribution of legislative seats.

Resolution – Generally used for congratulatory or honorary purposes, resolutions are introduced and voted upon by the Senate or House of Representatives. Although they do not have the force of law when passed, resolutions also can suggest possible subjects for study in interim study committees or recommend future legislation. Most resolutions are considered symbolic and, when passed, denote the approval of the subject matter by the legislative body. Joint resolutions also can be introduced and considered by both the Senate and House of Representatives.

Roll call – This refers to the voting procedure. Before electronic voting machines were installed in the House and Senate chambers, a clerk would read the roll call and the legislators would register their decisions by voice votes. Today, an electronic board lists the names of the legislators. Individual votes are registered when legislators select “aye” or “nay” votes via buttons on their desks.

Second reading – After the bill has been printed, adding any amendments proposed by the standing committee, it is eligible for second reading. All legislators are allowed to offer amendments to the bill at this time.

Second regular session or short session – Occurring in even-numbered years, the second regular session (“short session”) can extend for up to 30 working (session) days, but not beyond March 15.

Session day – A session day constitutes a working day for the Indiana Senate and House of Representatives. Not necessarily consecutive calendar days, legislators may recess for varying periods of time between working days. It should also be noted that, under certain circumstances, a session day may span more than one calendar day.

Special session – A special session may be called by the governor if he or she feels “the public welfare shall require” such a meeting of the legislature. A special session is limited to 30 session days during a period of 40 calendar days.

Standing committees – These committees consider bills after they have been introduced. The committees, which exist in both houses of the legislature, cover specific fields of interest such as agriculture, education, labor, public health and the judiciary. Committee meetings are open to the public so interested citizens and affected organizations can offer arguments for or against proposed legislation.

Stripping a bill – Occasionally, the original contents of a bill are taken out and replaced with new language. This can be done in committee or by amendment. This procedure is only allowed, however, if the new contents are relevant to the original subject matter of the bill.

Third reading – This refers to the point at which a bill undergoes final passage or rejection by a roll call vote of the members of the House or Senate. A floor debate to discuss the merits of the legislation generally precedes the final vote.

Veto – After a bill has been passed by both houses in the same form, it is eligible to go to the governor to be signed into law. If the governor rejects the bill, he issues a veto. A vetoed bill can be overridden by a constitutional majority (two-thirds) in both houses.



Indiana Governor's Council
for People with Disabilities

150 W. Market St., Suite 628

Indianapolis, IN 46204

(317) 232-7770 (voice)

(317) 233-3712 (fax)

GPCPD@gpcpd.org (e-mail)

www.in.gov/gpcpd

**This publication is available
in accessible formats upon request.**