



ADVOCACY 101:

LEGISLATIVE MONITORING at the STATE HOUSE

Going to the State House can seem overwhelming, but don't let that be a reason for you to stay home. There is no faster way to advocate for issues that matter to you than going up to Smith Hill and making yourself known. Here are some tips to help you feel more comfortable. For more, look for our Advocacy Training Days at the beginning of each year. The RI General Assembly meets every year during a regular session. The exact dates change annually, but the session starts the first Tuesday in January and usually runs until the end of June.

FIND AND TRACK LEGISLATION

- Everything you need to keep up with the legislature is online. The General Assembly posts original and amended versions of bills, committee hearing notices, schedules of votes for the floor, and the results of committee and floor votes.
- For information, including bill numbers, on the bills that the ACLU is monitoring, visit www.riaclu.org/legislation or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Bluesky](#), [Threads](#), or [X \(Twitter\)](#).
- To find when legislation will be heard or voted on in committee or voted on by the full House or Senate, and other up-to-date legislative information, visit: www.rilegislature.gov/pages/legislation.aspx.
- To find up-to-the-minute status updates on bills, or look for bills by title, category, sponsor or bill number, go here: <https://status.rilegislature.gov/>.
- Many committee hearings and the House and Senate floor sessions are televised live or recorded and posted online. Check your local TV listings or visit <https://capitolvri.cablecast.tv/>.
- If you would like email updates on the status of a bill, visit: www.rilegislature.gov/billtracker/pages/Register.aspx
 - Register as a user, and then enter the bill number into the “tracker,” and wait for email alerts on bill hearings and votes. In your account settings you can choose to be updated hourly, daily, or weekly on any changes to the status of a bill. In the final days of the legislative session, things can move very quickly, however, and you should not rely solely on hourly updates to let you know what is going on.

ATTEND A HEARING

- Hearings are located at the State House (82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903). Metered parking is available on Smith, Francis, and Gaspee Streets. Enter through the metal detectors on the Smith Street side of the building.
- Hearings are held on all floors of the State House. Room 35, Finance, is located in the basement. Rooms beginning with 1 are on the first floor, 2 on the second floor, and 3 on the third floor.
- The General Assembly is required to post hearing notices 48 hours before the hearing occurs. *NOTE: This rule is regularly suspended in the last week of the legislative session, at which point hearings may be posted only a few minutes before they happen or not at all. See more below about how to stay on top of the end of the session.*
- The exact time/room of the hearing will be listed on the Committee Calendar: https://status.rilegislature.gov/legislative_committee_calendar.aspx.
- Be prepared to wait. You are permitted to sit and wait in any hearing room unless they are filled to capacity. In those instances, you may be asked to go to an overflow room. Televisions will be made available and the hearings streamed live.
- Bring snacks, water, and something to pass the time.
- In June, the State House can be very hot, but a few committee rooms can be cold.
- If a revised version of the bill is approved (called a Sub A, Sub A/2, or Sub B), you may ask the committee clerk for a copy once the meeting is concluded.

MORE INFO ON CIVIL LIBERTIES-RELATED LEGISLATION:

www.riaclu.org/legislation

American Civil Liberties Union
of Rhode Island
www.riaclu.org
(401) 831-7171

MONITOR FLOOR DEBATES

- The House and Senate chambers are located on the second floors, but the galleries where you can view the proceedings are on the third floor.
- Voting boards will indicate the number of the bill being discussed and will display the vote counts.
- Make note of any approved amendments, as well as the final vote on the bill.

DAILY LEGISLATIVE SCHEDULE

- Daily sessions are generally Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Business is usually scheduled to begin at 4pm, but frequently begins much later. A loud bell will ring to call the legislators for a quorum; when the bell stops ringing, the business for that chamber has begun. You are permitted to enter the chamber and talk to legislators before or during the quorum call, but must leave when the bell stops ringing.
- Daily committee hearings begin at "the Rise," or the conclusion of floor business, usually after 4pm. Committee hearings that start at specific times will be otherwise noted on the committee calendars.
- Daily committee hearings end after agenda is completed.

END OF THE SESSION

- Once the budget is approved by the House in the middle or end of June, things move very quickly. The House and Senate generally "suspend the rules," which largely means that they stop adhering to requirements that they post hearing and vote notices 48 hours in advance. If there is a bill you are interested in, it is best to be at the State House during the final legislative days in order to keep on top of things.
- The House and Senate generally still post calendars online, and hearings and floor sessions are still televised and streamed via CapitolTV.
- Do not hesitate to contact your legislator on issues that are important to you, but be prepared they may not have time to respond.

GLOSSARY OF LEGISLATIVE TERMS: www.rilegislature.gov/Pages/generalterms.aspx

MAP OF THE STATE HOUSE: www.commoncauseri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/map3-1.pdf

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