

Northbound Public Affairs

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2023 Legislative Session Client Guide

This document is meant to serve as a client guide for the 2023 Legislative Session so you have all of the information you need at your fingertips throughout the session. It is my goal to ensure that you will receive comprehensive lobbying services and expertise to guide your organization, association, or business through the 2023 session.

Northbound Public Affairs Contact Information

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Lobbyist and Principal

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Montana State Capitol Contact Information

General Legislative Questions

406-444-3064

Technical Questions (i.e. website, streaming):

406-444-0912

Legislative Information Desk

406-444-4800

2023 Legislative Clients

- Montana County Treasurer's Association (MCTA)
- Montana Magistrates Association (MMA)
- Montana Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (MAAOM)
- Montana Association of Community Disability Services (MACDS)
- Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA)
- Montana Area Agencies on Aging Association (M4A)
- Billings Chamber

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2023 Lobbying Partners

- Warden and Associates, Bill Warden
- Amanda Cahill, Dynamic Public Strategies

Legislative Process

To begin the legislative process, a legislator must **request a bill draft** with an idea of a suggested change to law. Once the Legislature is in Session, the number of bill drafts a Legislator may request is limited. The Legislative staff then writes the language of the bill and submits it to the Legislator who requested the draft, the sponsor the bill.

The bill is then heard on First Reading on the House or Senate Floor and referred to a House or Senate Committee. Bills sponsored by House members (Representatives) will start in the House and those sponsored by Senate members (Senators) will start in the Senate. The bill is sent to a Committee based on the subject of the bill. Appropriation Bills must start in the House.

During a Committee Hearing, public testimony is heard by members of that Committee.

ACTION OPPORTUNITY

You can submit comments to support or oppose the bill: in-person during the Committee hearing, by letter or email to the lobbyist to give to the Committee members, or by phone or email directly to Committee members.

The Committee can vote to Pass, to Amend and Pass or to Table the bill with a simple majority vote. A tie vote will not pass the bill. A Committee may reconsider a tabled bill until the transmittal deadline.

See Committee Hearing information [here](#).

If the committee passes the bill, then the bill goes to the House or Senate Floor for Second Reading.

ACTION OPPORTUNITY

You should contact House or Senate members of the chamber the bill is in before 1 PM the day the vote is scheduled for second reading. Legislators will debate the bill on the floor before the Second Reading vote. They may use the comments you submit in their floor debate. If the vote fails, the bill can be reconsidered later.

If the bill passes Second Reading, then the bill will be heard the **next legislative day** on Third Reading.

ACTION OPPORTUNITY

You should again contact the House or Senate members to support or oppose the bill before 1 PM on the day the vote is scheduled for Third Reading.

If the bill fails on Third Reading, the bill may NOT be reconsidered.

See House and Senate Floor Agendas [here](#).

Once the bill passes through the first chamber, the bill then goes to the second chamber and repeats the process. (House bills go to the Senate and Senate bills go to the House).

ACTION OPPORTUNITY

You should contact legislators on the Committee in the second chamber and all members of the second chamber before the Second and Third Readings.

Some bills, usually bills that require funding, may have two hearings in each chamber. For example, a bill may have a hearing in House Business and Labor and a second hearing in House Appropriations. You can submit comments to both Committees.

For HB 2, the state budget, hearings will be held in the Appropriations Subcommittees and then House Appropriations. You may submit comments relating to the budget to these Committees. Once HB 2 passes the House, then it will go to Senate Finance and Claims Committee.

All bills will return to the first chamber if the second chamber amends the bill to approve the amendments. Once passed, the bill goes to the Governor for signature.

ACTION OPPORTUNITY

You may contact the Governor's office at any time through the process to show your support or opposition.

ACTION OPPORTUNITY

You may be asked to take action at many different points during the process. Please pay attention to action requests.

Coming to the Capitol

Parking

Do not park in spaces clearly identified and reserved for legislators. You can park in the upper parking lot on the South side of the Capitol, on side streets to the west of the Capitol or on 6th Ave in front of the Capitol.

If you can't arrive at the Capitol by about 7:30 for a morning hearing, you will have a difficult time finding a parking spot.

Capitol Building

House Floor — Watch the House debate and vote on bills from the House Gallery located on far west end of the third floor.

Senate Floor — Watch the Senate debate and vote on bills from Senate Gallery located on the west end of the third floor.

Committee hearings are heard in rooms throughout the Capitol. Information and maps are available at the Information desk on the first floor.

Virtual Opportunities

At this time, there is both in-person testimony and virtual/remote testimony opportunities. Please note that in person testimony remains the preferred option by most legislators and tends to be more effective. That being said, virtual testimony has proven effective when necessary. Please utilize your lobbyist when weighing whether or not to testify in person or virtually.

Written Testimony - If you plan to provide written testimony, you will need to submit it by noon the day prior to the scheduled hearing. You can submit written testimony two ways:

1. Via the new public testimony [“Have Your Say Montana” Form](#)
2. Through the [Legislator/Committee Contact Form](#)

*Please note that hardcopy handouts this legislative session will be extremely limited and are being discouraged.

Virtual Testimony – Remote testimony will be an option in most cases, though specific requests, timelines, and protocols will likely be put into place by committee chairs. If you plan on testifying via Zoom, you will need to complete the [on-line testimony](#) form **by noon the day prior to the hearing**. You will be sent a confirmation email and a separate email with a zoom link specifically for you to log-in and participate remotely. The instructions explicitly state NOT to share the link you are given.

If multiple people from your organization intend to provide public comment via zoom, each individual must complete the on-line form.

*As part of the public comment form, you must submit your testimony in written form to account for any IT issues, dropped calls, or internet disruptions.

Watch or listen to a Committee Hearing – You can tune in and listen to any committee hearing live, or you can view the recorded hearing afterwards. You can find this tool on the legislature website under the tab [‘Watch and Listen’](#) along the top of your screen. Once you click on the dropdown tap, click on ‘streaming schedule’ which will take you to a page with a listing of all upcoming hearings.

The Legislative Services Division is working hard to ensure staff are able to communicate and effectively run committee meetings while remaining safe and healthy. We will continue to provide updates as new tools, tips, or resources become available.

Remember that all public comments and written testimony become part of the public record.

Tips for Zoom

- **BEFORE** the meeting, ensure you have the ZOOM app downloaded on your phone or device and that all updates have been installed.
- Log-in 15-20 minutes before the meeting to make sure the technology is working.
- You can EITHER use your computer audio or call in. You CANNOT do both.
- If you are not talking, be sure to mute yourself. If you are connected using your computer there is a microphone icon which allows you to do so.
- You cannot have two devices connected in close proximity or your voice will be distorted and there will be feedback.
- If you are calling in using a desk phone number, use *6 to mute and unmute yourself and *9 to raise and lower your hand.
- For the purposes of providing public testimony, you will be attending as a passive participant, meaning that you will not have the option to start/stop your video or mute/unmute yourself UNTIL prompted by the legislative staff when it is time for public comment.
- Use the raise hand function to indicate you want to provide public comment. The committee person will call you by name when it is your turn to speak and prompt you to unmute your device.
- When testifying via zoom, remember that the committee cannot see you; they can only hear you.
- Remember to speak slowly and clearly.
- Committee etiquette remains while testifying remotely; address the Committee Chair and members before speaking or answering questions.
- Remember to remain in the waiting room after you've completed your testimony should any questions for you arise.

Providing Public Testimony

Be sure to reference the guidelines above for providing testimony remotely.

Whether you are attending the committee meeting in person or virtually the information below is applicable.

While the committee hearings follow rules and decorum, we have a citizen legislature in Montana and our legislators fully understand that citizens who come to testify are not professional lobbyists.

Guidelines for Testifying

- Committee hearings follow a basic structure.

Budget Hearings: Legislative Fiscal Division Overview, Comments from the Agency, Questions from the Committee, Public Comment. The Agency presentation and public comment may be scheduled on different days.

Policy Legislation: Opening by the Bill's Sponsor to explain the background and purpose of the bill, Proponents, Opponents, Informational Witnesses and Questions from the Committee.

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- When testifying in-person, sign-in on the form at the back of the hearing room or just outside the hearing room. Identify yourself as a Proponent or an Opponent. If you have an opinion on the bill or budget do not try to identify as an informational witness.
- When testifying virtually, the on-line form you submit will suffice for signing-in.
- When you get to the podium or are called on to testify, address the chairperson and the committee members, state your name, who you represent, your position on the bill and/or your comments concerning the budget.
- Plan and practice expressing your thoughts in two minutes or less. If the hearing draws a large crowd of witnesses, the chair of the committee will typically limit testimony so it's a good idea to get in the practice of delivering a sharp, polished, testimony.
- It's a good idea to write down your testimony or talking points so you have organized, complete thoughts, but DO NOT read prepared testimony. Speak to the committee and share your thoughts/comments. You can submit your written testimony for the record, but do not just read what you have written.
- If you would like us to look over your testimony, we are happy to do so.
- Do not be repetitive in your testimony. If someone has already covered points you intended to make, do not repeat the same items.
- All questions are directed through the chair. If you are asked a question, go to the podium, address the chairperson and the legislator who asked the question and then do your best to answer the question.
- If you do not know the answer, that is okay. It is always appropriate to say you are not sure of the answer, but that you will follow-up with information.

Examples

When your turn to testify comes, begin by addressing the presiding officer and committee members (for example, "Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is _____ and I represent _____. I am here today because I have worked in the early childhood education system for the past 15 years....."). Be specific, confine your remarks to the subject at issue, and indicate clearly your reasons for supporting or opposing the bill.

If you are asked a question, go to the podium and start by addressing the chair and the legislator who posed the question, "Madam Chair, Senator Jones" and then do your best to answer the question. If you DO NOT know the answer to a question, that is fine. You can always ask to defer to someone else if you know a colleague has the answer or you can say that you don't know the answer, but will find out and follow-up with the committee. It is critically important to follow-up with the information.

General Logistics

- Once again, if you plan to testify remotely, you must complete the on-line form by 12 Noon the day prior to the bill hearing.
- If you are virtually testifying, you will log-in via the individual zoom link. You will be a passive participant (you will not be able to activate you video) and you will only be given the opportunity to unmute when it is your turn to speak. When the committee is on the bill that is of interest to you, use the **raise hand feature** in zoom to indicate you want to provide public testimony. The staff person will call on your when it is your turn.
- If you are testifying in person, plan to arrive at least 30 minutes early. Committee rooms fill up fast and you may need to wait in the hallway if the room has filled up. Most committee rooms have tv's outside in the hallway allowing for you to hear and see the bill being discussed.
- On the first floor of the Capitol there are coat racks for guests. Go past the information desk toward the north doors.
- Always be sure to silence your cell phone.
- Be aware that all committee meetings are recorded either via video and/or audio. Your comments and conduct become part of the public and will be recorded, broadcast, and archived.

Your Lobbyist

Your Lobbyist works for you. My top priority is your legislative goals. In order to get this done, I ask a few things of you.

- Let the Association Executive Director and/or lobbyist know if you do not support the position of the Association on a bill and if you plan to personally take a public stance against the Association's position.
- Let your lobbyist know when you have talked to a Legislator about one of the bills. Also, make us aware of any close relationships you have with legislators that may be useful.
- Don't agree to support, oppose or amend any legislation without notifying the Association or your lobbyist.
- Relay any discussion about the bills you are hearing from legislators and other lobbyists to support or oppose priority bills.

2023 Legislators

See the full list of legislators (including contact information) and committees provided in excel document and shared via email.

2023 Senate

Rs = 34

Ds = 16

**Super Majority in both chambers*

2023 House

Rs = 68

Ds = 32

Role of Legislative Leadership

Senate President

The Senate president is elected by a majority of senators voting for the office to serve as chief officer of the Senate and as party leader. The president:

- may administer the oath of office to senators and to officers and employees of the Senate;
- is responsible for preserving order and decorum in the Senate chamber;
- presides over Senate proceedings and recognizes members who wish to speak on the floor;
- makes initial rulings on questions of procedure; determines who will preside during second reading of bills when the Senate convenes as a Committee of the Whole;
- approves the calendar for each legislative day;
- assigns all bills to standing committees;
- serves as an ex officio member of all standing committees;
- appoints conference committee members;
- controls access to the Senate floor, including media access and placement;
- has general control over room assignments for members and staff.

President Pro Tempore

The president pro tempore is elected by a majority of Senate members voting for the office. The president pro tem:

- serves as president of the Senate during the absence of the president;
- may administer the oath of office to senators and to officers and employees of the Senate.

Speaker of the House

The speaker is elected by a majority of House members voting for the office. The speaker serves as the chief officer of the House and as party leader. The speaker:

- may administer the oath of office to representatives and to officers and employees of the House;
- is responsible for preserving order and decorum;
- presides over House proceedings and recognizes members who wish to speak on the floor;
- makes initial rulings on questions of procedure;
- determines who will preside during second reading of bills when the House convenes as a Committee of the Whole;
- serves as an ex officio member of all standing committees;

- appoints House members to standing, select, and conference committees, taking into consideration the recommendations of the minority leader for appointment of minority members and vice chairs;
- decides how many members from each party will sit on the Rules Committee (each party appoints its own members);
- assigns bills to committees;
- arranges the agenda for second and third reading of bills;
- Supervises House employees.

Speaker Pro Tempore

The speaker pro tem is elected by a majority of House members voting for the office. The speaker pro tem:

- serves as speaker during the absence of the speaker;
- may administer the oath of office to representatives and to officers and employees of the House;
- performs other duties as assigned by the speaker.

Majority Leaders

The majority leader is the leader of the majority party (party with the most members). One is elected for each chamber by each party caucus. The majority leader:

- helps the speaker or president develop the calendar;
- monitors committee work to ensure a steady flow of bills for floor debate;
- helps the presiding officer to calendar bills;
- is the lead speaker for the majority party in floor debate;
- helps the speaker or president with program development, policy formation, and policy decisions;
- presides over majority caucus meetings.

Minority Leaders

The minority leader is the leader of the party with the second most members. A minority leader is elected for each chamber by the respective party caucuses. The minority leader:

- develops the minority position;
- negotiates with the majority party;
- directs minority caucus activities on the floor;
- directs floor activity for the minority party;
- leads floor debate for the minority party.

Whips

A majority and a minority whip are elected for each chamber by their respective party caucuses to assist their respective leaders. The whip is the agent through whom the party machinery works to influence the business of the legislative body. The whip:

- generally communicates the majority position;
- ensures that party members are present for important votes;
- counts votes (and may arrange pairing).

2023 Legislative Leadership

House

Speaker of the House: Matt Regier, R – Kalispell

Majority Leader: Sue Vinton, R - Billings

Speaker Pro Tempore: Rhonda Knudsen, R - Culberton

Majority Whips

Brandon Ler, R - Sidney

Terry Moore, R - Billings

Jennifer Carlson, R - Manhattan

Neil Duram, R - Eureka

Steve Gist, R - Cascade

Denley Loge, R - St. Regis

Minority Leader

Kim Abbott, D – Helena

Minority Caucus Chair

Alice Buckley, D – Bozeman

Minority Whips

Derek Harvey, D – Butte;

Tyson Running Wolf, D – Browning; and

Katie Sullivan, D - Missoula

Senate

President: Jason Ellsworth, R - Hamilton

Majority Leader: Steve Fitzpatrick, R – Great Falls

Speaker Pro Tempore: Kenneth Bogner, R – Miles City

Majority Whips

Barry Usher, R – Billings

Dennis Lenz, R-Billings

Steve Hinebauch, R-Wibaux

Tom McGillvray, R-Billings

Minority Leader

Pat Flowers, D – Bozeman

Minority Whips

Sen. Shannon O'Brien, D – Missoula

Susan Webber, D - Browning

Contact Your Legislator

[View the Legislative Roster \(includes pictures\)](#)

Email or call your Legislator during the Session

Above is the list of legislators along with phone number and email address. They are responsive to their constituents. In the first line of a text or the subject line of your email write: Constituent Contact.

Use the On-line Form to contact your Legislator during the Session

[Contact Form](#)

This is a quick, easy way to contact your legislators and entire committees.

Leave a Message for your Legislator during the Session

Legislative Information Desk – 406-444-4800

You can call the Legislative Information Desk between 7:30 am and 5:00 pm on weekdays and from 8:00 am to adjournment on Saturdays to leave a message for legislators. You may leave messages for up to 5 individual legislators or one (1) committee per call.

Contact your Legislator IN WRITING during the Session

Senator XXXX
Montana Senate
PO Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Rep. XXXX
Montana House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

2023 Legislative Committees & Schedules

Finance & Claims, Appropriations, and Appropriation Subcommittees

To locate any information related to the State Budget, Reports, fiscal allocations, data, or state agency funding, please visit the [LFD](#) website.

Senate Finance and Claims, House Appropriations and the Joint Appropriation Subcommittees deal with the State Budget, all bills used for implementation and passage of the state budget and the fiscal aspects of policy bills.

The Joint Appropriations Subcommittees are broken into different sections dealing with all of the state agency budgets. They meet the first 45 days of the session to craft the budget for each of the individual agencies, divisions and programs.

HB 2 – [General Fund State Budget](#)

Section A – General Government -- [Calendar and Information](#)

Section B – Health and Human Services -- [Calendar and Information](#)

Section C – Natural Resources & Transportation -- [Calendar and Information](#)
Section D – Judicial Branch, Law Enforcement and Justice -- [Calendar and Information](#)
Section E – Education -- [Calendar and Information](#)
Section F – Long Range Planning -- [Calendar and Information](#)

Please note the above calendars are subject to change. Check the general [Agency and Budget Committee](#) page for updates.

Policy Committees

Policy Committees deal with every subject you can imagine and the bills are assigned to the appropriate policy committee for the subject matter.

[House Committee Members](#)

[Senate Committees Members](#)

If you want to view the committee schedules you have two options:

[Committee Schedule](#) (similar to the sheets available at the information desk)

[House Agenda](#)

[Senate Agenda](#)

[Customized Committee Schedule](#) (Specific Committees and/or date range)

Committee Reports

With a few exceptions, reports for the 2023 legislative session are dynamic reports. When you click a report link, the report will run and present itself on your screen -- in real-time, and up-to-date at the time it was run.

Legislative Web Page

Quick links to help you navigate the web page.

[LFD Website](#) – Budget and Revenue links and Fiscal Updates

[Budget Subcommittees and Agency Links](#)

[Bill Look Up](#)

[Committee Hearing Schedule](#)

[Tools](#) – 5 Session Summaries Broken down by issue areas

[Legislator Roster](#)

[Streaming Information](#)

[MPAN](#) – Links for live streaming and reporting

Track Bills using LAWS

You can find and track the progress of bills using a free online service called [LAWS](#).

Click on the link above and you can search for a bill by: Bill number, Bill sponsor, General subject matter, or Key Words.

You can also use LAWS to find: Committee hearing schedules, Agendas for committee hearings & floor sessions, or House and Senate votes on bills.

2023 Legislative Calendar

The link below will take you to the Legislative Calendar, which notes the following: legislative days, deadlines for bills to be requested, introduced, and transmitted, and legislative days in session and breaks. Please note that due to COVID-19, dates listed are subject to change based on public health protocols.

[Legislative Calendar](#)

2023 Legislative Rules

The rules for the 2023 session have not yet been finalized or had a vote. Once the rules are posted on the web page, you will receive a link. To date, the legislature will work off of the 2021 Rules until new rules, if any, are adopted.

These rules are critical in order to follow the process, understand the structure of the session and track major policy initiatives throughout the process.

[2021 Legislative Rules](#)

Tips for Developing Relationships with Legislators

Remember that old adage, “all politics is local”? It’s famous for good reason: because it’s true. Your legislator is responsible for crafting policies that impact you professionally and personally. Once you develop a strong relationship with him or her, they will turn to you for input on matters you are most knowledgeable about and almost always vote the way of those he or she is most close to in their district.

Montana Legislature

Many people confuse their Members of Congress with their Montana State Legislators, but they are completely different. Every Montana resident is represented in the Montana Legislature by 1 Senator in the Senate and 1 Representative in the House of Representatives. Both your Senator and your Representative are determined by the Senate and House district in which you live.

Make That First Contact

Send an email or call your legislator. We recommend that you try to meet him/her throughout the interim months (May – November of non-session years) when he/she is less busy with the stress of the legislative session. He/she will have more time to spend with you and learn about your concerns and issues. He/she will nearly always respond outside of session. During session, unless you know him/her well enough, it can be challenging to hear back from him/her directly.

Crafting a Letter

A well-written letter is one of the best ways to let your legislator know your thoughts and opinions about a particular issue. Here are some tips for getting your message across effectively:

- **Be brief.** Legislators have many demands on their time. They appreciate letters that are short and to the point.

- **Put the message in your own words.** Form letters and petitions don't have the same impact as personal, informed opinions.
- Address your letter to a specific legislator or legislators. Depending on your message, you may want to write to the sponsor of a bill, certain members of a committee, or your own legislators. **Don't address your letter to the entire Legislature.**
- **Identify bills** by their number, title, and sponsor when relevant.
- Explain your position on the bill and ask for the legislator's support or opposition.
- Give any sources of information that you use to make your point.
- Include your name, address, and a little about who you are (for example, where you work or what school you attend).

Legislative Do's and Don'ts

Get to know your legislator in advance of asking for his/her help. Send emails, letters, or make a phone call introducing yourself.

- DO:** Invite your legislator to personally visit your department, agency, or business in his/her district.
- DO:** Be on time for appointments.
- DO:** Have one chief spokesperson who will manage all discussion during meetings with legislators.
- DO:** Keep the "bottom line" in mind. Be concise, clear, and to the point in your remarks to legislators. Time is limited.
- DO:** Be (and sound) convinced of the essential value and importance of your role and the programs you offer in your community. You will never convince anyone else if you are not convinced yourself.
- DO:** Emphasize local examples of good work by local agencies, and the local impact of any legislation.
- DO:** Write letters to your legislators. Constituent mail is strongly considered. Letters should be two pages or shorter, with the issue and bill number in the first paragraph.
- DO:** Leave material with your legislator, and provide information about how to get in touch with you later.
- DO:** Let your legislator know if you do not know the answer to their question. Tell them you will follow up with the information they requested.
- DO:** Let Smith and McGowan or Northbound Public Affairs know if your legislator had any questions you were unable to answer or concerns you were unable to address adequately.
- DO:** Write a thank you note to your legislator for meeting with you, and be sure to thank him/her if s/he supports your position on a bill, or an issue.

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- DON'T:** Mislead or give your legislator false information. If you do so unknowingly, go back and admit your mistake.
 - DON'T:** Send form letters; they are usually disregarded.
 - DON'T:** Use jargon or acronyms.
 - DON'T:** Get drawn into any confrontation with a legislator that appears to be "dead-ended."
 - DON'T:** Belittle those who disagree with you. On the next issue, they may be on your side.