

Northbound Public Affairs*Rebecca Meyers, Founder & Principal*

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rebecca@northboundpublicaffairs.comwww.northboundpublicaffairs.com**2025 Legislative Session Client Guide**

This document is meant to serve as a client guide for the 2025 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 2025 session.

Northbound Public Affairs Contact Information**Rebecca Meyers**

Lobbyist and Principal

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rebecca@northboundpublicaffairs.com**Montana State Capitol Contact Information**Legislature Website: <https://www.legmt.gov/>**[2025 Legislative Calendar](#)****[Live Streaming](#)****[Bill Explorer](#)**

General Legislative Questions

406-444-3064

Technical Questions (i.e. website, streaming)

406-444-0912

Legislative Information Desk

406-444-4800

NPA 2025 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
- Montana Beer and Wine Association (MBWDA)
- Confluence Public Health Alliance

2025 Lobbying Partners

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

2025 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.

[2025 Legislative Calendar](#)

Legislative Web Page Quick Links

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

[LAD Website](#) – Legislative Audit Division

[LSD Website](#) – Legislative Services Division

[OCC Website](#) – Office of Consumer Counsel

[Live Streaming](#)

[Statistics](#)

[Participation](#)

[Reference Center](#)

2025 Legislator Statistics

2025 Senate

Rs = 32

Ds = 18

2025 House

Rs = 58

Ds = 42

**Republican Majority in both chambers*

[Legislator Roster](#)

2025 Legislative Leadership

House of Representatives

Speaker Of The House: Representative Brandon Ler Savage, HD 33, Republican

Majority Leader: Representative Steve Fitzpatrick Great Falls, HD 24, Republican

Speaker Pro Tempore: Representative Katie Zolnikov Billings, HD 44, Republican

Minority Leader: Representative Katie Sullivan Missoula, HD 93, Democrat

Majority Whips

Representative Marta Bertoglio

Representative Steve Gist

Representative Jedediah Hinkle

Representative Braxton Mitchell

Representative Amy Regier

Minority Whips

Representative SJ Howell

Representative Jonathan Karlen

Representative Melissa Romano

Representative Tyson Running Wolf

Minority Caucus Chair

Representative Jennifer Lynch

Senate

President Of The Senate: Senator Matt Regier Kalispell, SD 5, Republican

Majority Leader: Senator Tom McGillvray Billings, SD 26, Republican

President Pro Tempore: Senator Kenneth Bogner Miles City, SD 19, Republican

Minority Leader: Senator Pat Flowers Belgrade, SD 32, Democrat

Majority Whips

Senator Dennis Lenz

Senator Barry Usher

Senator Sue Vinton

Senator Daniel Zolnikov

Minority Whips

Senator Shane Morigeau

Senator Laura Smith

Senator Susan Webber

2025 Legislative Committees & Schedules

[2025 House Committees](#)

[2025 Senate Committees](#)

[Committee Explorer](#)

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. Here you can find 2025 materials, interactive toolkits, and other information pertinent to the state budget.

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.

Budget Sub Committees

Section A – General Government

Section B – Health and Human Services

Section C – Natural Resources & Transportation

Section D – Judicial Branch, Law Enforcement and Justice

Section E – Education

Section F – Long Range Planning

Agency Profiles

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. If you want to view the committee schedules click on the committee of interest to find meeting times, locations, and scheduled bill hearings.

Contact Your Legislator

View the Legislative Roster

By Phone

During legislative sessions, which occur in the first 4 months of odd-numbered years, you may leave a message for a legislator by calling the Session Information Desk, (406) 444-4800. This service is available from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, and from 8 a.m. to adjournment on Saturdays.

By Mail

Address letters to: Senator/Representative (NAME)

Montana Senate/House

P.O. Box 200500 Helena, MT 59620-0500

By Online Message Form

Send a message to your legislator using the Legislative Branch online message form. This form is activated on the first day of each legislative session.

Other Ways To Participate

Phone Messages

Call (406) 444-4800 to reach the Information Desk to send a message to a committee or legislator.

Attend Legislative Meetings

The public is encouraged to attend meetings in person at the Capitol.

Watch/Listen

All legislative meetings are streamed online on the Legislative Branch's website. You can watch meetings both live or any time after the meeting.

Bill Explorer

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

Bill Tracker - Track and create Bill Lists

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 Bill Explorer to find Committee hearing schedules, Agendas for committee hearings & floor sessions, or House and Senate votes on bills.

Public Participation

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.

- You may sign up to testify remotely using Zoom up to two (2) hours prior to a meeting's scheduled start time. Once you successfully submit your information, you will be emailed the Zoom link for participation. That link is specific to you, so please do not share it.
- Through the Legislative Public Participation application you are able to sign up to remotely testify on both bill hearings and in front of committees on topics that are open for public comment.
- This application will also allow you to submit written testimony and comments on a bill, to a committee, or directly to a legislator.
- If participating remotely, rules of decorum must be followed and the Presiding Officer will let you know when they are accepting comments from those on Zoom. Follow the directions provided in your email and raise your hand to let the meeting coordinator know when you want to speak. Please be advised that there may be limits placed on how many people are allowed to testify remotely and what time restrictions are being imposed.

Create An Online Account

In order to participate virtually, submit public comment, or send a message to committee members, you will be asked to create an online account in three simple steps.

- Enter your email

- Verify your email
- Submit the short form

*****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.

- 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.

2025 Legislative Rules

The rules for the 2025 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 2023 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.

[2023 Legislative Rules](#)

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.

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).

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 Streaming 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.

Each day the Legislature is in session the House and Senate chambers meet on the floor at 1pm. House and Senate Floor Agendas can be found on the home page of the legislature [website](#). Scroll down and find floor session links under Legislative Meetings and Events.

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.

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.