



ALABAMA
Arise

LEGISLATIVE TOOLKIT

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Alabama Arise’s legislative toolkit, a resource designed to help you understand and engage in the Alabama legislative process. Most people recognize the vital role that voting plays in a democracy – even if they don’t vote. But fewer understand their ongoing role in shaping public policy. We hope this toolkit helps you recognize the influence you have to advocate for a better Alabama for all.

Because state legislators represent you, you are their constituents. Using your constituent power to influence legislators is called lobbying. And lobbying is one way to speak up about issues of concern to you and our communities. Speaking up and lobbying are important ways to participate in advocacy. It is critical to understand the Alabama legislative process if you want to strengthen your advocacy and be more effective.

WHAT THIS TOOLKIT COVERS

This toolkit includes information about the legislative process and how you can influence that process. It also includes tips for visiting the Alabama State House, legislators’ contact information and how to stay engaged throughout the legislative session and beyond. The digital toolkit includes links to resources, and we encourage you to share it.



UNDERSTANDING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

The Alabama Legislature has two chambers.

THE SENATE

The Senate has 35 members (senators) from the 35 Senate districts. The presiding officer is the Lieutenant Governor. In his or her absence, the role is filled by the President Pro Tempore (president “for a time”) – called President Pro Tem for short – who is elected from the Senate by its members at the start of each quadrennium.

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The House of Representatives has 105 members (representatives) from the 105 House districts. The presiding officer is the Speaker of the House, elected from the chamber by its members at the start of each quadrennium. The Speaker Pro Tem presides in the Speaker’s absence.

THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The annual period when the Legislature meets is called the legislative session.

State officers (Governor, Lieutenant Governor, etc.) and members of the Legislature **are elected every four years**. The four-year cycle is called a quadrennium.

Each year's legislative session begins on a date set in the Alabama Constitution. The regular session begins on the first Tuesday in March in the first year of a quadrennium, on the first Tuesday in February in the second and third years, and on the second Tuesday in January in the fourth year.

The Legislature meets (usually on **Tuesdays and Thursdays**) for a maximum of 30 meeting days within a period of 105 calendar days. Committees usually meet on Wednesdays.

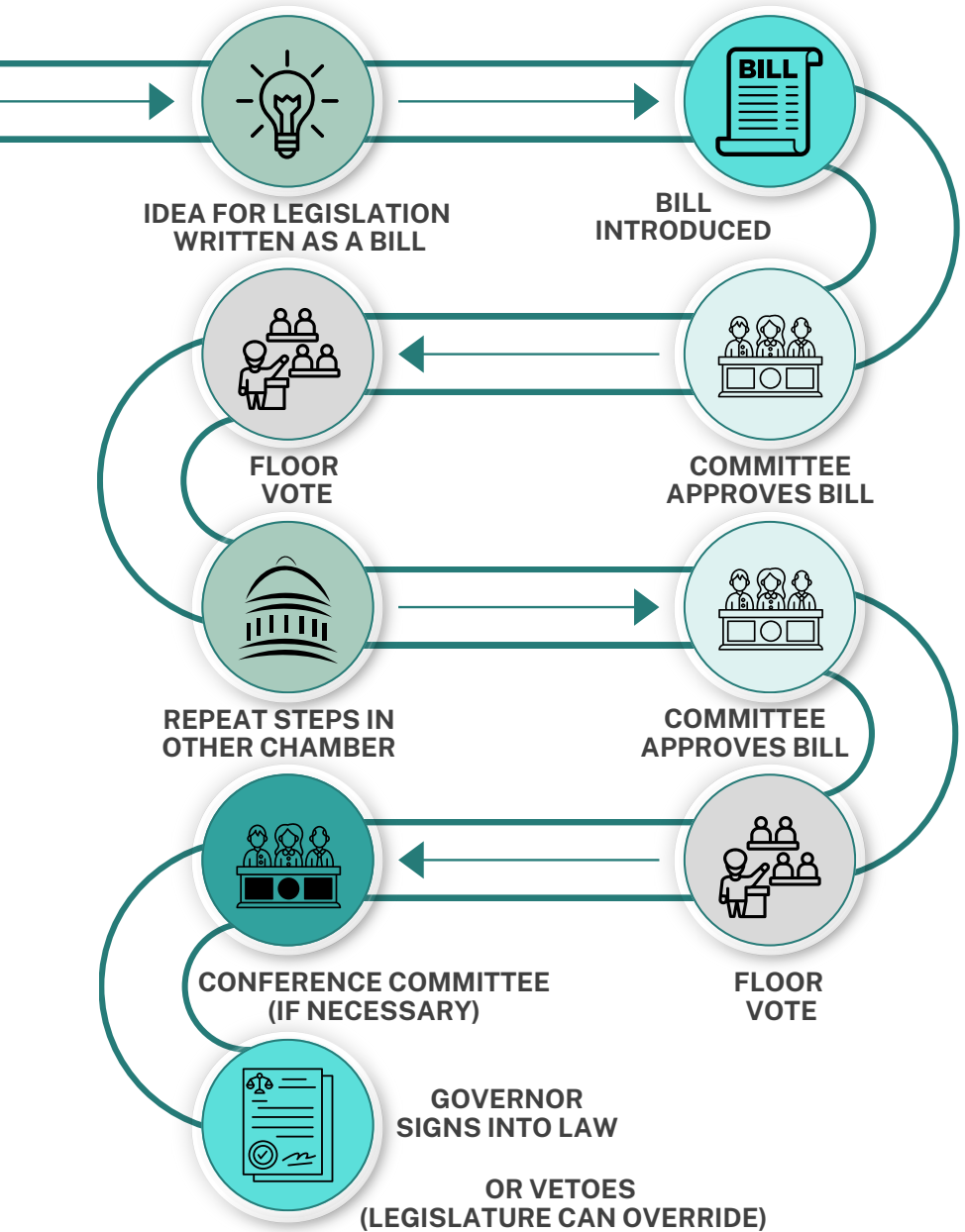
The Governor may call a special session, in a written "call" indicating the subjects to be considered. Legislators **may not enact legislation on other subjects during a special session** unless the legislation receives a two-thirds vote in both chambers. A special session may last up to 12 meeting days within a 30-day calendar span.

The main work of the Legislature is passing laws.

Legislators usually introduce anywhere from 700 to 1,500 bills and resolutions during a session. Some of those bills apply statewide, but many others apply only to certain counties or cities.

Lawmakers also introduce many congratulatory resolutions. Legislation on new issues often takes several years to pass.

ALABAMA LEGISLATIVE PROCESS



THE PROCESS OF PROPOSING AND PASSING LAWS

Every new law must pass through a similar process in both chambers, the House and Senate. The graphic on page 7 shows you an overview of that process. Below are the initial steps in that process.

- A member of either chamber introduces (or files) a bill – a proposal for a new law. Sometimes bills with identical language are filed in both chambers by a member in each. These are called companion bills.
- The bill gets a first reading (usually by title only), and the presiding officer then refers it to a committee.
- The committee considers the bill – and may hold a public hearing on it, if the committee chair receives a written request for one. A bill that passes committee is “reported out” to the full chamber in a second reading (usually by bill number only) and placed on the General Calendar for the next meeting day.
- On the next meeting day, the bill becomes eligible for its third and final reading and for debate. The volume of bills, however, prevents most from being considered promptly. The Rules Committee places high-priority bills on the Special Order Calendar.
- The bill gets its third reading (by number only unless a member requests a full reading) when its number comes up in the assigned sequence on the Special Order or General Calendar. Debate in the full chamber begins. When debate ends, members vote on the bill.

Every new law must pass through a similar process in both chambers, the House and Senate. *The graphic on page 7 shows you an overview of that process. Below are the final steps in that process.*

- After the bill passes one chamber, it goes to the other chamber, and the process repeats.
- If the second chamber makes any changes to the bill's language, the bill must return to the first chamber. The first chamber can vote to agree to the changes (known as concurrence), or it can request a conference committee – with members from both the House and Senate – to resolve differences between the two versions of the bill.
- If a bill goes to a conference committee, the committee produces a version of the bill known as a conference report. Both the House and Senate must vote to approve a conference report before it can go to the Governor.
- Once a bill passes both chambers, it goes to the Governor to be signed or vetoed.
- If the Governor vetoes (or rejects) a bill, it goes back to the Legislature, where a simple majority vote by both chambers can override (or reverse) the veto.
- If the Governor signs the bill or if the Legislature overrides a veto, the bill becomes an act, or law.

LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERS

Here are members of legislative leadership and some select committee chairs for the Alabama Senate:

THE SENATE

President and Presiding Officer

Lieutenant Governor Will Ainsworth

President Pro Tempore

Sen. Garlan Gudger (Cullman, District 4)

Finance and Taxation Education Committee Chair

Sen. Arthur Orr (Decatur, District 3)

Finance and Taxation General Fund Committee Chair

Sen. Greg Albritton (Excel, District 22)

Senate Rules Committee Chair

Sen. Jabo Waggoner (Vestavia Hills, District 16)

Republican Majority Leader

Sen. Steve Livingston (Scottsboro, District 8)

Democratic Minority Leader

Sen. Bobby Singleton (Greensboro, District 24)

LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERS

Here are members of legislative leadership and some select committee chairs for the Alabama House:

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Speaker of the House

Rep. Nathaniel Ledbetter (Rainsville, District 24)

Speaker Pro Tempore

Rep. Chris Pringle (Mobile, District 101)

House Ways and Means Education Committee Chair

Rep. Danny Garrett (Trussville, District 44)

House Ways and Means General Fund Committee Chair

Rep. Rex Reynolds (Huntsville, District 21)

House Rules Committee Chair

Rep. Joe Lowvorn (Auburn, District 79)

Republican Majority Leader

Rep. Scott Stadhagen (Hartselle, District 9)

Democratic Minority Leader

Rep. Anthony Daniels (Huntsville, District 53)

INFLUENCING THE PROCESS

Remember, **you have power to influence your legislators in the policymaking process.** The most important thing you can do to influence the process effectively is to know the names of your representative and senator and how to contact them.

You can find that information at the Legislature's website at alison.legislature.state.al.us or the Arise website at alarise.org.

Now that you have information about the process, let's look at specific **points in the process where you have influence and what you can do.**



BEFORE A BILL IS INTRODUCED

- Be informed about issues that are important to your group or community.
- Work with organizations that research issues and recommend policy changes.
- Talk to your legislators about introducing bills on issues important to your group or community.
- Write letters to your local newspaper or other news outlets concerning issues that are important to your group or community.

WHEN A BILL IS IN COMMITTEE

- Contact committee members and ask them to support, reject or amend (change) the bill – especially if your legislator serves on the committee.
- Ask others to contact committee members.
- Find out about and attend public hearings.
- Testify for or against the bill. Arise can help line up people to show support or opposition.

WHEN THE BILL IS BEING DEBATED ON THE FLOOR

- Ask your legislators to support, reject or amend it.
- Ask family and friends to contact their legislators about the bill.
- Write letters to your local newspaper or other news outlets about the bill.

WHEN A BILL AWAITS THE GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE

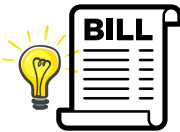
- Call or write, urging the Governor to sign or veto.
- Ask family and friends to contact the Governor.

OPTIMIZING YOUR INFLUENCE

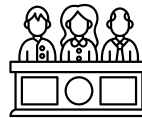
As you reach out to influence your legislators in the process, here are some additional things to remember.

- Extend relationship building to legislators' staff members. Some legislators have regional delegation offices. Get to know administrative support folks there, too.
- When you learn about legislators' concerns, frame your message in a way that speaks to their concerns.
- Be simple, clear and brief when stating your issue. Express your specific concern and what you want your legislators to do to help.
- Bring different voices to your cause. Show your legislators that others are concerned about the same issue as well.
- Thank them for their time, and remember: Today's adversary may be tomorrow's advocate.

You have influence...



**Before a bill
is introduced**



**When a bill
is in committee**



**When a bill is being
debated on the floor**



**When a bill awaits the
Governor's signature**

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS

You can call, write or meet with your legislators in person. Arise's Legislative Days are great, but it's even better to contact them in their home districts.

THE SENATE

To contact your senator at the State House, call **(334) 261-0800**.

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

To contact your representative at the State House, call **(334) 261-0500**.

You can find more contact information at alison.legislature.state.al.us.

TIPS FOR CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATORS

1 Make a call. Before contacting your legislator by phone, prepare for the call.

Here's how you can create an informal "script" to guide your call:

- Give your name and where you live and indicate you are a registered voter in that district.
- Identify the general reason for your call – for example, "I'd like to talk with you about Medicaid."
- Mention that you're a member of Arise and that our members are interested in the issue. (To the legislator, this means voters!)
- Refer to a specific piece of legislation, if there is one, including the bill number.
- Make it personal. Tell a brief story or say why it matters to you.
- Ask them to vote for or against the bill and at when (in committee, on the floor, etc.).
- Thank them in advance.
- If you get a legislator's secretary or voicemail, that's OK. Your message still will get through to the legislator.





2 Write a letter or email. Most legislators read their mail.

You can write to any legislator at this address:

Alabama State House
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

Remember:

- Use your own words. Form letters are easy to recognize and are less effective than personal statements.
- Both handwritten and typed letters are fine.
- Include the same information you would cover in a phone call, as noted above.
- Limit your letter to one page in most cases. Shorter is better.
- Put letter writing on your group's agenda. Keep paper, envelopes, pens, stamps and addresses handy.
- Many legislators also use email, and many legislative web pages list an address.
- Be sure your subject line is simple and informative so it won't resemble junk mail.
- Follow your legislators on Twitter/X or contact them via Facebook or other social media platforms if these options are available.



3 Make face-to-face contact. Legislators like to talk to voters. Make it a point to greet them when you see them in public.

- It's good to meet with them to introduce your group as active constituents.
- Invite them to your meeting – but remember how busy they are.
- Praise them when they deserve it, and respectfully disapprove when they don't.

4 Participate in the Arise Legislative Day. Amplify your voice by joining others from around the state and attend the annual Arise Legislative Day. Hundreds of constituents come together at the State House to visit legislators and speak up about Arise's legislative priorities during this event.

If you want to visit the State House on your own, contact the Arise office and we can help you plan your visit.

TIPS FOR VISITING THE ALABAMA STATE HOUSE

The State House is located at:
11 South Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36130

Everyone must go through the front door of the State House and through the metal detector. Your personal belongings, such as a purse, wallet, cell phone, coins and anything metal, must be placed on the conveyor belt and X-rayed. Objects that are not allowed, such as knives, nail clippers, pepper spray, etc., will be confiscated.

On the following pages are tips to help you get the most out of your visit.



TIPS FOR VISITING THE ALABAMA STATE HOUSE

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- **The House of Representatives is on the 4th and 5th floors.** Individual members' offices are on the 4th and 5th floors. You may go by their office and leave notes or information. They may be on the House floor, and office doors may be locked. You can push information under their doors or tape it to their doors.
- **You can write a note to your representative if he or she is on the House floor.** The note should be brief. Say you are with Alabama Arise, give your name and town, and ask that they come out and speak with you. Give the note to a page (young volunteer) at the front desk located on the 5th floor. You may be allowed to stay on the 5th floor behind the ropes or be asked to wait on the 6th floor.
- **The House Gallery is on the 6th floor, and you are welcome to go there to watch the proceedings.** There is also a big lobby outside the gallery where legislators may come meet with you if you sent them a note.

TIPS FOR VISITING THE ALABAMA STATE HOUSE

THE SENATE

- **The Senate Chamber and the senators' offices are on the 7th floor.** If you go to the offices, please be mindful not to block the halls. If your senator is not in the office, you may leave a note and information with the secretary.
- **If your senator is on the Senate floor, you may write a note asking him or her to come out and speak to you.** Give the note to a page at the end of the lobby near the entrance to the chamber. Wait behind the roped-off walkway, and if possible, your senator will come out to speak with you.
- **To observe the Senate, you must go to the 8th floor** either by the steps or by a small elevator at the left side of the Senate lobby. Use the steps if possible.

HOW TO STAY ENGAGED

Ideally, this toolkit will help you plan your advocacy strategy and be better prepared to move beyond voting to embrace your role in shaping public policy. We want to ensure that you have the information and resources you need to continue your engagement throughout the legislative session and beyond.



If you are a member of Alabama Arise:

You will continue to receive regular updates related to our legislative priorities. You also can keep track of our bills by visiting the Arise website at alarise.org and clicking “Bills of Interest” under the “Get Involved” tab.

If you want to see live and recorded video footage of legislative meetings:

Visit the Alabama Channel’s website at thealabamachannel.org. It’s a simple, searchable video database that lets you find exact moments when bills or issues of interest were discussed in the Legislature.

If you’re not a member of Alabama Arise:

Please visit our website at alarise.org or call us at 334-832-9060 to learn more about Arise membership and ways to stay involved.

Thank you for your support!



Together, we will continue working to build a better Alabama for all.



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