

Public Access & Participation

WATCH OR LISTEN

All legislative floor sessions, committee meetings, and bill hearings are streamed live at <http://leg.mt.gov/>. Gavel-to-gavel coverage of House and Senate floor sessions are broadcast on cable television stations statewide and streamed online beginning Jan. 7, the first day of the 66th legislative session. Floor sessions generally begin at 1 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and 8 a.m. most Saturdays. The broadcasts are also archived for later viewing.

The Legislature broadcasts its proceedings on Montana Public Affairs Network (MPAN), a state government public-access network launched by the legislative branch in 2001.

To find out if MPAN programming is available in your area:

visit www.leg.mt.gov/mpan;

contact your cable or other video service provider (Charter Communications customers will find TVMT on channel 191 statewide); or

call the Office of Legislative Information Services at **444-0912**.

CONTACTING LEGISLATORS

There are several ways constituents can contact lawmakers during session to express their views.

Beginning Jan. 7, the public can leave messages for legislators at www.leg.mt.gov/legislator-lookup/contacting-legislators.

The public can also call the Legislative Information Desk at 406-444-4800. Messages will be taken and delivered to legislators. When leaving a message, callers should be prepared to provide:

- name and address
- the name of the legislator(s) or committee for whom the message is intended
- the number of the bill the caller wishes to support or oppose
- a brief explanation regarding the caller's position on the bill

Callers may leave messages for as many as five legislators or one legislative committee at a time. The service is available Mondays through Fridays from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to adjournment, while the Legislature is in session.

The Information Desk does not accept anonymous messages or blanket messages to all legislators.

If citizens aren't sure who their legislators are, they can contact their local elections office or visit the legislative website at www.leg.mt.gov and under the Legislators heading click on the "Find a Legislator" link.

Constituents can also write to Representative and Senators at the following addresses:

Representative _____
Montana House of Representative
PO Box 200400
Helena MT 59620-0400

Senator _____
Montana Senate
PO Box 200500
Helena MT 59620-0500

TRACKING BILLS AND ACCESSING INFORMATION ONLINE

The legislative process relies on the participation of informed citizens. The Legislative Automated Workflow System, or LAWS, is a free online service that provides legislative information before, during, and after sessions. With it, users can find:

- complete text of legislative bills
- up-to-date status of bills
- committee hearing schedules
- agendas for committee hearings and floor sessions
- House and Senate votes on bills

The LAWS website for the 2019 session can be accessed at www.leg.mt.gov/laws.htm. The LAWS Instructional Video Library is also available at this link to educate the public on how to use the LAWS system.

In addition to LAWS, a variety of legislative information can be found on the legislative branch website at www.leg.mt.gov. The branch also has a Facebook page containing legislative information in place for the 2019 session.

TESTIFY AT HEARINGS

One of the most important opportunities to become involved in the debate over a bill is when it's the subject of a hearing before a legislative committee. Constituents can communicate personally with legislators at any time about any bill, but the committee hearing is the occasion when anyone may publicly approve, oppose, or suggest changes to a bill.

Each committee of the House and Senate is assigned to a specific meeting room in the Capitol. Occasionally, if a hearing is expected to attract a large crowd, it may be moved to a larger room. Such changes are noted on hearing schedules, and notices are placed outside the regular meeting rooms.

The time and place of every committee hearing is posted several days in advance on the legislative Web site. People can also check with the Session Information Desk in the first floor hall of the Capitol, **(406) 444-4800** (during session only).

