



# Tool Kit for Easy Advocacy

Prepared for  
Chartered Prevention Councils  
of  
**Prevent Child Abuse** Indiana



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**Riley Hospital**

Community Education and Child  
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**ADVOCATE:** -n One who supports or defends a cause, or one who pleads on another's behalf.

There are lots of ways to help children, but one of the most effective ways to make our society better for children in the long term is legislative advocacy on their behalf. Quite simply, this means supporting laws and policies that are good for children and opposing those that aren't.

As a Division of The Villages, **Prevent Child Abuse** Indiana serves as a catalyst for preventing child abuse in all its forms and thereby enhancing the quality of life for children and families in Indiana.

The vision of **Prevent Child Abuse** Indiana is to live in a state where children flourish, free from abuse and neglect. Therefore, child abuse and neglect should be prevented before the pain has been inflicted.

**Prevent Child Abuse** Indiana works with community, state and national groups to expand and disseminate information about child abuse prevention. Further, Prevent Child Abuse Indiana translates that information into action through the development of sound child- and family-oriented policies, community-based prevention activities, public awareness and educational initiatives.

We often ask for help from members of Chartered Prevention Councils who want to be informed about the legislative issues that affect children. With our support, our Council members write letters to their legislators and newspapers, make phone calls, and even visit legislators personally to tell them about issues they care about.

Here are a couple of interesting statistics. State legislators say it only takes about 12 letters or phone calls to get their attention on an issue. And, on average, you only need five to 12 legislators backing your issue to pass a bill out of committee or kill it. ***That means your single phone call or letter really can make a difference!***

# Being an Effective Advocate

Advocacy can be both fun and easy. Though the topics and issues we deal with are usually very serious and often complicated, we do our best to make your job as advocates as simple and effective as possible.

Some of the actions an advocate can take are:

- ✓ Writing a letter to your legislator
- ✓ Making a phone call to your legislator
- ✓ Attending a rally with fellow advocates to demonstrate support to legislators
- ✓ Attending a “Children...Our Best Investment” event and visiting legislators at the Statehouse
- ✓ Telling other advocates about an issue to increase awareness and support

When an issue comes up for which your voice is needed, we’ll notify you by fax, e-mail or mail. We’ll give you clear, brief background information and tell you how you can help — either by writing a letter to your legislator or newspaper, making a quick phone call or sharing information or stories with us. We will contact you periodically to keep you abreast of the legislative issues we are working on. We look forward to working with you and involving you in our efforts.

## Easy Advocacy Tactic #1: Write a letter

Letters are an important, even critical, way to influence legislation. Legislative staff members have estimated that for every letter they receive on an issue, there are 200 other constituents who feel the same way, but don’t write. You can mail, fax, or e-mail your letter (see page 5 for a special note on e-mail).



Letters to your own senator or representative are especially important. You have three federal legislators (two senators and one representative) and two state legislators (one senator and one representative). To find your legislators, try the following:

- Call your county clerk to find out who your state legislators are.
- Visit <http://www.votesmart.org/index.htm> and type in your zip code to find your legislators and their contact information.

When we ask you to write a letter, we will often provide sample text for you to use. Always use your own stationery or letterhead for your letter, and try to add your own words or thoughts. ***A personal story about how legislation affects you or your family can be incredibly effective.***

### **Here are a few guidelines:**

- Introduce yourself as a constituent (if you are one).
- If you are part of a group or coalition, say so, along with how many people your group represents.
- Keep it to one page if possible — short letters have the greatest impact.
- Make your position clear, and say exactly what you want your legislator to do.
- Tell how the legislation will affect you and others like you.
- Don't worry if you're not an expert. Your personal experience is the best evidence.
- Don't threaten, browbeat, or get nasty.
- Refer to bills or policies by name or number.
- Ask for the legislator's view on the issue.
- When a legislator does what you asked (such as vote for a bill), send a thank you note.

### **A great letter includes:**

- Who you are
- What you want done
- A little bit about the issue or bill
- Who supports it, if you know
- What you want done, again, in slightly different words
- Your name, address and telephone number

### **Addressing your letter**

During the legislative session, you can send letters directly to the Statehouse, addressed like this:

The Honorable (Full Name)  
Indiana State Senate  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

or

The Honorable (Full Name)  
Indiana House of Representatives  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Senator/Representative Smith:

## WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT THIS LETTER?

First of all, it's just one page!

Identifies Jane as a constituent, someone Rep. Smith is interested in hearing from.

Explains a little bit about the issue in a short, easy-to-read format

Tells a quick personal story that shows how this issue affects Jane

Asks for a response explaining Rep. Smith's views

Says what Jane wants Rep. Smith to do again, in slightly different words

Includes Jane's full contact information

January 1, 2009

The Honorable John Smith  
Indiana House of Representatives  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Representative Smith:

I am a constituent in your district, and I am writing today to urge your support for expanding the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) by voting for H.R. 1234. I am deeply concerned about making sure that all of our children have health insurance and can get medical care when they need it.

Today, one in seven children is without health insurance, 154,181 in our state alone. Of those, 78 percent live in families where parents work. Expanding Medicaid to include uninsured children and parents will help thousands of families.

Both my husband and I work hard to support our two boys. My younger son and my husband both have severe asthma, and without proper health insurance we are not able to seek treatment for them.

I look forward to learning about your position on this issue and hope that you can help expand health care coverage for children. Please call me if I can answer any questions for you.

Sincerely,

*Jane Q. Public*

Jane Q. Public  
Jane's Home Street Address  
Anytown, Any State 12345  
(000) 555-1234

Says right up front what Jane wants Rep. Smith to do.

Offers to personally provide any further information.

### A Word About e-mail

E-mail is received differently by individual legislators. Some prefer e-mail above all other communication; some don't read e-mail for days or not at all. It's a good idea to call your legislator's office first and simply ask, "Does Senator Smith read e-mail? Would that be a good way to send information to him?"

If you do send an e-mail, always include your FULL name and your HOME address at the end. This helps the legislator know that you are a real, live, voting person in his or her district.



## Easy Advocacy Tactic #2: Make a Phone Call

When the General Assembly is in session, you can call legislators or their staff at their offices at the Statehouse. Lists of members' names, office addresses and telephone numbers are available on the Internet at [www.state.in.us/legislative](http://www.state.in.us/legislative)

When we ask you to make a phone call, we will provide background information on the issue and usually a sample script you can use.

Remember, you can always call PCA Indiana at 317-542-7002 if you have any questions.

### Here are a few tips for calling your legislator:

- Identify yourself by name and address.
- Identify the bill or issue you wish to talk about by name and number (if possible).
- Briefly state your position and how you'd like your legislator to vote.
- Ask for your legislator's stance on the bill/issue and for a commitment to vote for your position.
- Don't argue if the legislator has an opposing view or hasn't yet decided.
- Don't guess at answers to questions. If you don't know, say so, and then get back to them with correct information.
- If your legislator or their staff needs more information, supply it as quickly as possible.
- Never be abusive or use threats.
- Follow up your call with a note restating your position and thanking them for their time.

**Warning:** Legislators are often away from the office, in committee meetings, or on the floor of the chamber, so you may end up talking with a staff person instead. That's great. Use the same basic rules. Staff are very reliable and will pass along your message.

## Tips for using voice mail

- State your name and address.
- Identify the specific bill you're calling about; use the bill number if you know it.
- Briefly state your position — either support, opposition, or some combination.
- Keep the message simple.



**For example:** “Hello, this is Jane Smith at 123 Main Street in Anytown. I’m calling to let you know that I fully support H.R. 1234, which would expand health care for children in my state. I urge you to vote yes. Thank you.”

## Easy Advocacy Tactic #3: Go visit your legislator

Personal visits are a highly effective way to help legislators understand your position on an issue. Legislators welcome visits from constituents. They want you to be involved. However, they are busy people, so time is extremely valuable. Plan ahead and use the time well.

If you make an appointment when Congress or the General Assembly is in session, remember that there is no guarantee that the legislator will be able to keep it. Legislative schedules change at a moment's notice. Don't take this personally — it's just how it is.



### BEFORE THE MEETING

- ☑ Make an appointment in advance, and expect to get about 15 minutes. You can call the Statehouse or Capitol to get your legislator's number, or it may be in your local phone book.
- ☑ Make it easy for your legislator to meet with you. Offer several possibilities and do your best to accommodate them.
- ☑ Prepare a good fact sheet about your issue. (See page 10 for more information about fact sheets.)
- ☑ Try to learn in advance where your legislator stands on your issue.
- ☑ Be prepared to explain how the bill or issue will affect you and other voters in the legislator's district.
- ☑ Dress appropriately for an appointment in the legislature — normal business attire is appropriate.

### DURING THE MEETING

- ☑ Be on time; be prepared; be polite; and be brief.
- ☑ Start with your 90-second speech (see box, on next page).
- ☑ Give the legislator the fact sheet on your issue.
- ☑ Be firm, but friendly. A commitment on how your legislator will vote should never be forced; however, once your legislator is aware of the issue and your position, it isn't too soon to start asking for a commitment.
- ☑ Attack the issue, not the person. Remember, you may be asking for this person's support on a completely different issue sometime in the future.
- ☑ Don't disparage government or politics.
- ☑ Don't use jargon, technical terms, or acronyms (unless you're certain you'll be understood). Be prepared to go over the basics of your issue if necessary.
- ☑ Don't underestimate public officials. With very rare exceptions, they are honest, intelligent, and want to do the right thing. Your job is to inform them about what you think is right and why.

- ☑ If you don't know the answer to a question, say you will find the answer and get back to them — and then DO.
- ☑ Be realistic. Remember that controversial legislation and regulations usually result in a compromise. It has always been so and it will always be so in a democracy.
- ☑ Before leaving, ask how you can be of help to them (get more information? Talk with others?).
- ☑ Thank them for their time and/or for anything they've done recently with which you agree.

## AFTER THE MEETING

- ☑ Follow up with a thank you note and any information that was requested.

## The crucial 90-second speech...

Memorize a little speech before your meeting. It's not only handy for talking to legislators, but it will serve you well when explaining your issue to anyone.

Your speech should include:



- ☑ **Who you are** and any group or coalition you belong to
- ☑ The **topic** you came to talk about
- ☑ What you want them to **do**
- ☑ Reference to the **fact sheet** you've brought along (see pg. 10). Your fact sheet is critical —if your meeting gets interrupted, you'll still have gotten your point across, and the legislator will know how to find you or your group if s/he has any questions. If not, you can elaborate on the points in your fact sheet.

## Here's an example:

*“Hi, I’m Janice Jones. I’m a volunteer at Prevent Child Abuse Indiana, a division of The Villages of Indiana, which serves over \_\_\_\_\_ children every year. I’d like to talk to you about health care coverage for children. I’m hoping you’ll vote yes on H.R. 1234 that expands the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to cover families making up to 200% of the federal poverty level. This will help insure many additional needy children in our state. Here’s a sheet with some more information — my phone number is there if you have any questions.”*



## Easy Advocacy Tactic #4: Prepare a Good Fact Sheet

### What's a fact sheet?

Fact sheets introduce an issue in a format useful to busy people. If we ask you to take action on an issue, we will provide a fact sheet or quick background information for you.

Good fact sheets recognize that busy people (like legislators) need something short and punchy to grab their attention. A good fact sheet says, "Read me! I'm a painless way to get acquainted with an issue." Anything long and complicated may not simply be ignored; it can actually be counter-productive. Keep it **short, accurate** and **interesting**.

### Fact sheets can...

- Identify a group with a particular issue.
- Set out the facts — key statistics, figures, or comparisons.
- Provide answers to common questions about the issue. Fact sheets are often in a Q&A format.
- Show information using graphs, charts or pictures.
- Inform, persuade or educate.
- Make an argument for a particular course of action.

### Good fact sheets:

- Are only one or two pages long.
- Don't use long sentences or wordy paragraphs.
- Are easy to read, with sub-heads, bullet points and often graphics.
- Include only the most compelling, useful statistics.
- Arrange information to make an argument targeted to a particular audience.
- Use stories, examples or other simple ways to convey complicated points.
- Reflect careful thought about the audience and facts important to them.
- Draw a conclusion or suggest something the reader can do.
- Include the name, address, telephone number, Web site address and/or e-mail address of the organizing group.
- Are honest and factual, and do not exaggerate.

## Resources for Advocates:

**Prevent Child Abuse America:** [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)

Since 1972, **Prevent Child Abuse America** (PCA America) has led the way in building awareness, providing education and inspiring hope to everyone involved in the effort to **prevent the abuse and neglect of our nation's children**.

Working with state chapters, they provide leadership to promote and implement prevention efforts at both the national and local levels.

**Prevent Child Abuse Indiana:** [www.pcain.org](http://www.pcain.org)

As a Division of The Villages, **Prevent Child Abuse** Indiana serves as a catalyst for preventing child abuse in all its forms and thereby enhancing the quality of life for children and families in Indiana.

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**USA.Gov:** [www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov)

A search engine that focuses on online federal government services and resources with direct links and directories provided.

**U.S. House of Representatives:** [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

Direct links to every federal member of Congress and their Web sites, congressional committees and the daily and weekly schedule of the U.S. House of Representatives.

**U. S. Senate:** [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

Direct links to the Web sites of United States senators, the senatorial schedule and Senate committee listings.

**Write Rep:**

Interactive database that enables constituents to write e-mails to their representative and to determine who their correct legislator is in the U. S. House of Representatives.

**Thomas:** <http://thomas.loc.gov>

Searchable database of legislative information that permits users to search federal legislation by bill number, title or topic area. Contains the text of committee reports and the daily Congressional Record, the transcript of Senate and House proceedings.

**Roll Call:** [www.rollcall.com](http://www.rollcall.com)

This subscription only bi-weekly newspaper of Capitol Hill, covering the elected officials, news and information of Congress.

**Indiana Legislature:** [www.in.gov/legislative](http://www.in.gov/legislative)

Web site of the Indiana Legislature, which allows users to access bill information, committee calendars and hearings, and contact information for the Indiana House of Representatives and the Indiana Senate.

**The Children's Coalition of Indiana: 1800 N. Meridian St. Suite 402, Indianapolis IN 46202**

Over the last fifteen years the Children's Coalition of Indiana has been a principal advocate for children across the state at all levels of government. With membership spanning the spectrum of children's services and advocates around the state, Children's Coalition has and will continue to speak out for the welfare, education, and well-being of our children in the following issue areas:

- Abuse, Neglect and Family Violence
- Adoption and Foster Care
- Early Childhood Care and Development
- Economic Self-Sufficiency
- Education
- Financing Appropriate Child Welfare Services
- Physical and Mental Health
- Juvenile Justice
- Youth Development

# Government Glossary

- **Amendment** -- A change to one of the bills the House or Senate is considering. **Author** -- The representative or senator who introduces a bill.
- **Bill** -- The actual proposal legislators introduce.
- **Chamber** -- One of the two legislative bodies in our state; either the Senate or the
- House
- **Committee** -- A group of lawmakers chosen to study bills about a specific subject. For example, the House Education Committee looks at all bills addressing Indiana schools.
- **Districts** -- The area a lawmaker represents. Indiana has 100 House districts and 50 Senate districts.
- **Governor** -- The chief executive of Indiana.
- **House of Representatives** -- Also known as the House. One of the two bodies of the General Assembly. The House has 100 members.
- **Interim** -- The time between sessions of the General Assembly.
- **Laws** -- The rules we live by.
- **Legislature** -- Also referred to as the General Assembly. This is made up of the House and the Senate.
- **Lieutenant Governor** -- The second-in-command to the governor. Also the first-in command of the Indiana Senate.
- **President Pro Tempore** -- The second-in-line of the Senate. (The first-in-line is the Lieutenant Governor.) This person presides over the Senate.
- **Quorum** -- The minimum number of members required to be present for the House or Senate to conduct business.
- **Recess** -- A break in the daily legislative business.
- **Representative** -- One of the 100 members elected to a two-year term in the House of Representatives.
- **Senate** -- Refers to one of the two bodies making up the state legislature. There are 50 members of the Senate.
- **Senator** -- One of the 50 members elected to a four-year term in the Senate.
- **Session** -- The two-year term for each General Assembly. In odd-numbered years, session (known as a long session) must end by April 29. In even-numbered years, the short session must end by March 14.
- **Speaker** -- He or she presides over the House. The Speaker is always from the party in control of the House.
- **Sponsor** -- This is the person in the House who signs on to Senate bills and the senator who signs on to House bills to make sure they get through the other chamber.
- **Veto** -- When the governor refuses to allow a bill to become a law.
- **Vote** -- How bills are approved.

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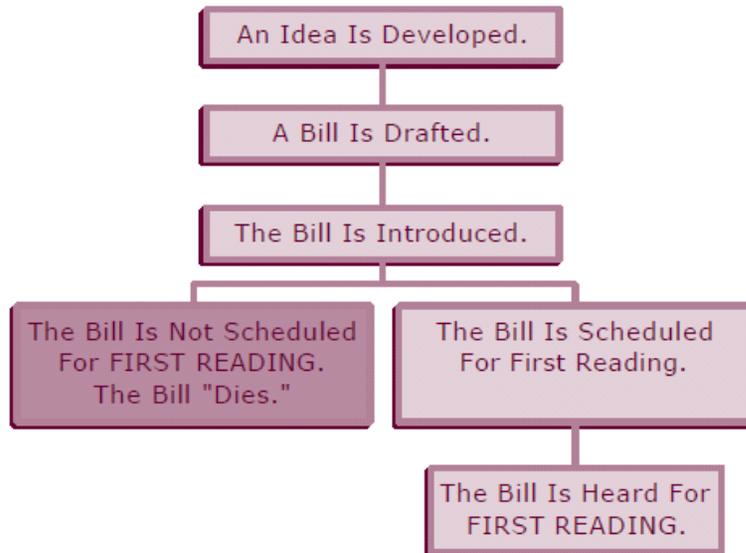
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## State House Tour Office

# How a Bill Becomes Law



### An idea is developed.

A legislator - either a Representative or a Senator - decides to sponsor a bill. This could be an original idea, or it could come as a suggestion from a constituent, an interest group, a public official, or the Governor. Other lawmakers may be asked to join as co-sponsors. The co-sponsors may or may not be of the same political party as the sponsor.

### A bill is drafted.

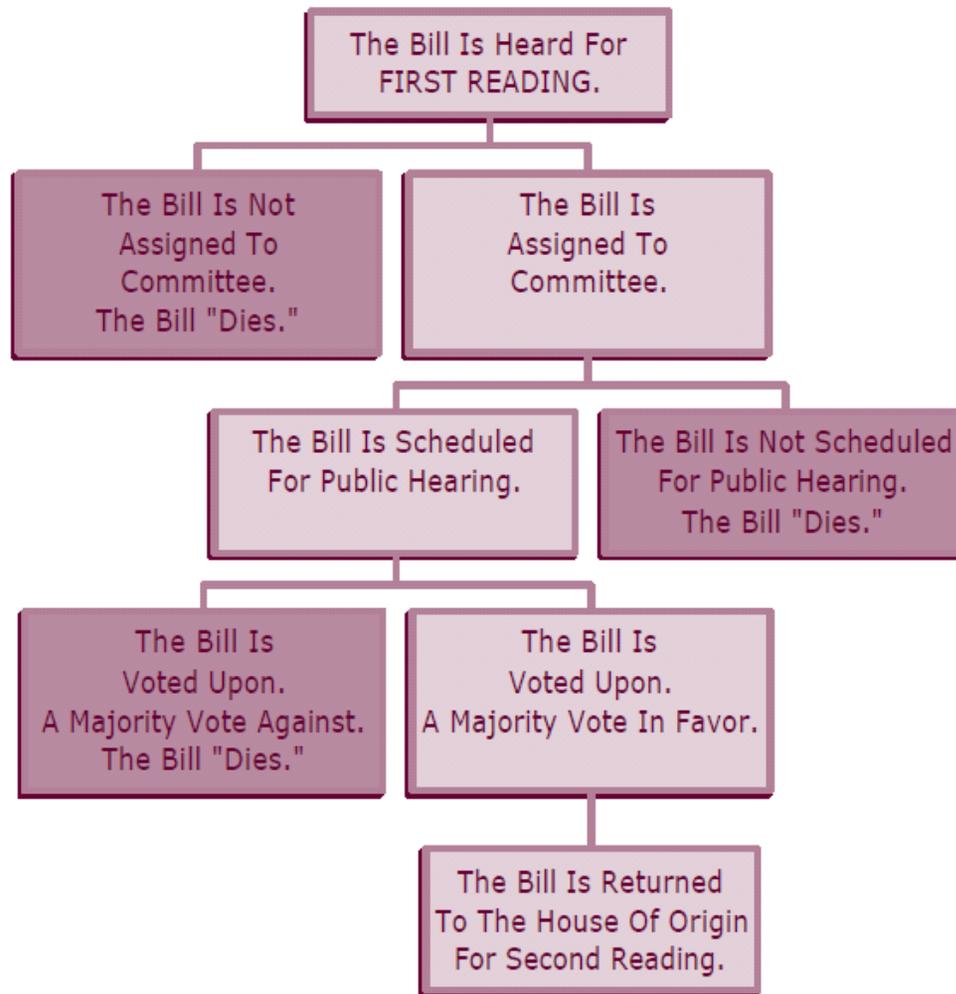
At the sponsoring legislator's direction, the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency (LSA) provides research and drafting assistance. LSA prepares the bill in proper technical form.

### The bill is introduced.

The bill is filed by the legislator in her/his own chamber, which could be either the Senate or the House of Representatives. If the chamber leadership does not call the bill for First Reading, it "dies." If the bill is called, it is scheduled for First Reading.

### The bill has its First Reading in the house of origin.

The bill is read by title for the first time to the full legislative body.



### The bill is assigned to committee.

The President Pro Tempore of the Senate or the Speaker of the House of Representatives can choose not to refer the bill to a committee. In this event, the bill "dies."

If the bill is to advance, it is referred to a committee for review.

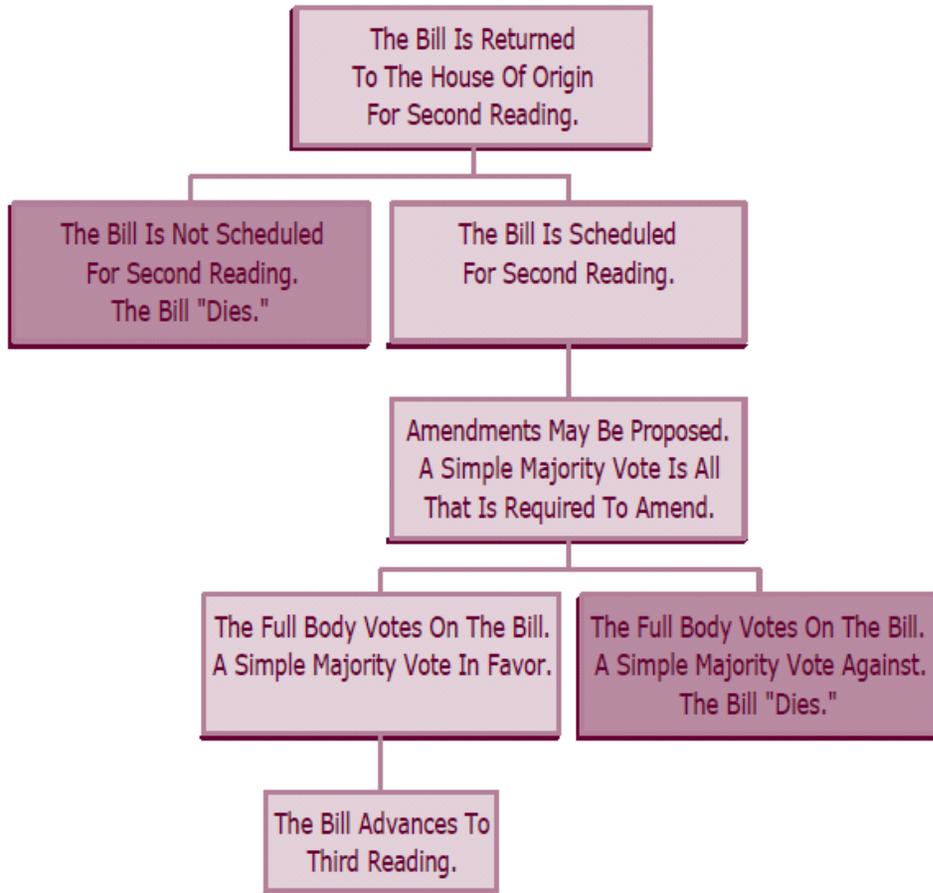
### The committee takes action on the bill.

The committee chairperson may choose not to schedule the bill for hearing. In this event, the bill "dies."

If the bill is to advance, it is scheduled for a public hearing. At that hearing, the committee discusses the merits and disadvantages of the bill, and any interested party may ask to speak to the committee. Interested persons may speak in favor of or in opposition to the bill.

Following this hearing, the bill can be voted upon or tabled. If the bill is tabled, it may or may not come back for a vote. If it does not come back for a vote, the bill "dies".

If the committee casts a vote on the bill, the bill can be defeated or it can advance.



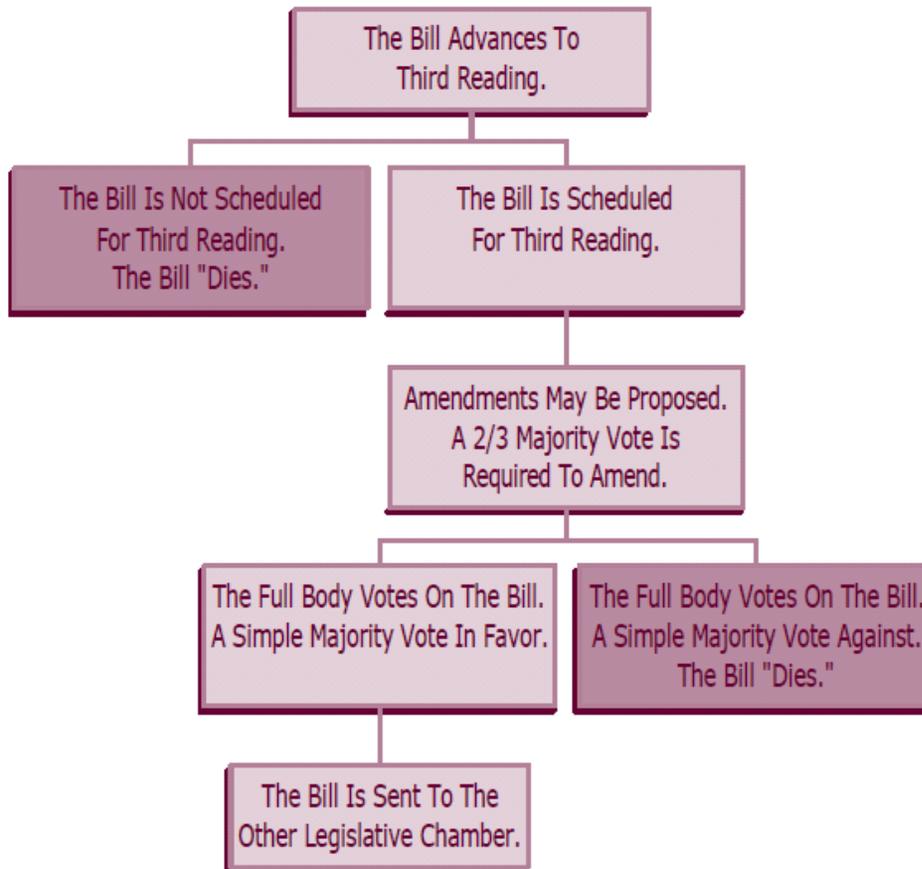
The committee sends the bill back to the house of origin for Second Reading.

If the committee advances the bill, it is printed and the full body of legislators has at least two days to review it.

Chamber leadership may choose not to schedule the bill for Second Reading. In this event, the bill “dies.”

If the bill is scheduled, any legislator of the house of origin can suggest amendments to the bill. The amendments can be approved by a majority vote of the full body of legislators.

Following a vote on amendments, a vote is held on the bill itself. The bill may “die” at this point, or it may advance.

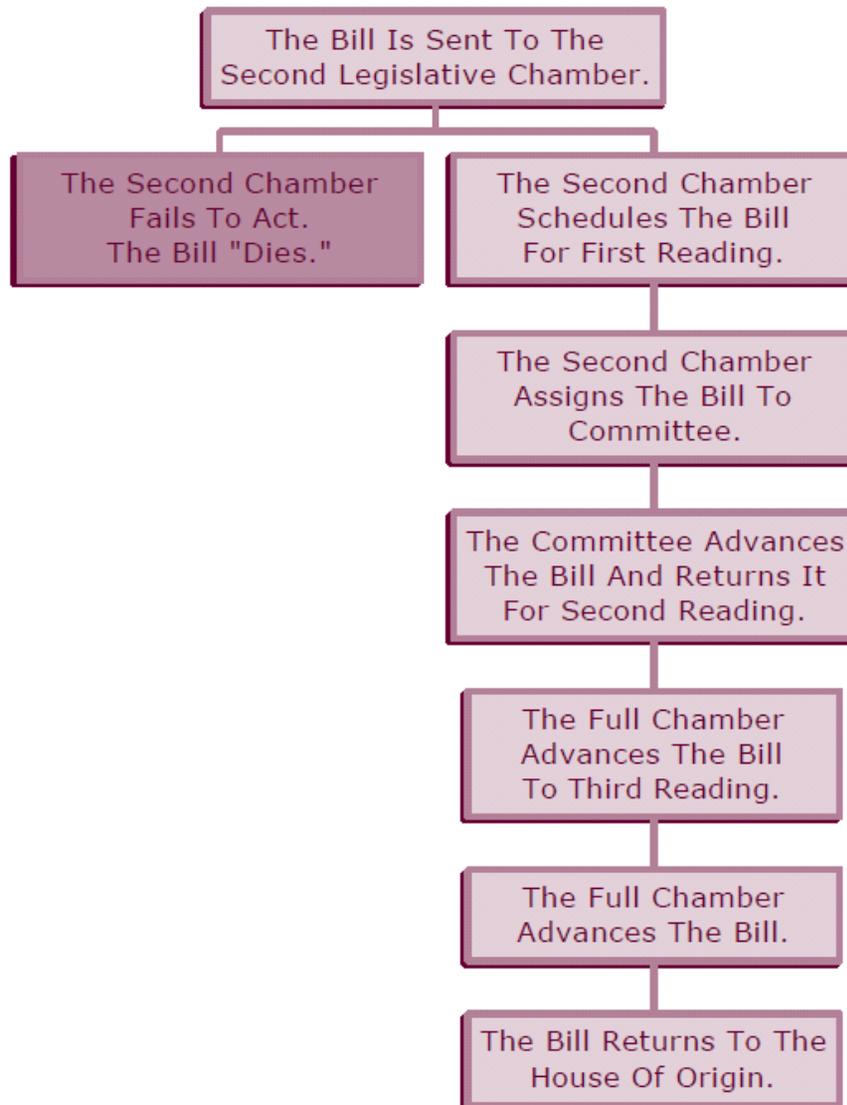


The house of origin holds the Third Reading and the bill is voted upon by the full chamber.

Again, chamber leadership may choose not to schedule the bill for Third Reading, and the bill “dies.”

If the bill is scheduled, amendments can once again be made. However, on Third Reading, the amendments cannot be approved unless two-thirds of the legislators agree to the change.

Following a vote on amendments, the bill once again comes to a vote by the full body. A simple majority of the full house can advance the bill. If a majority vote is not received, the bill “dies.”



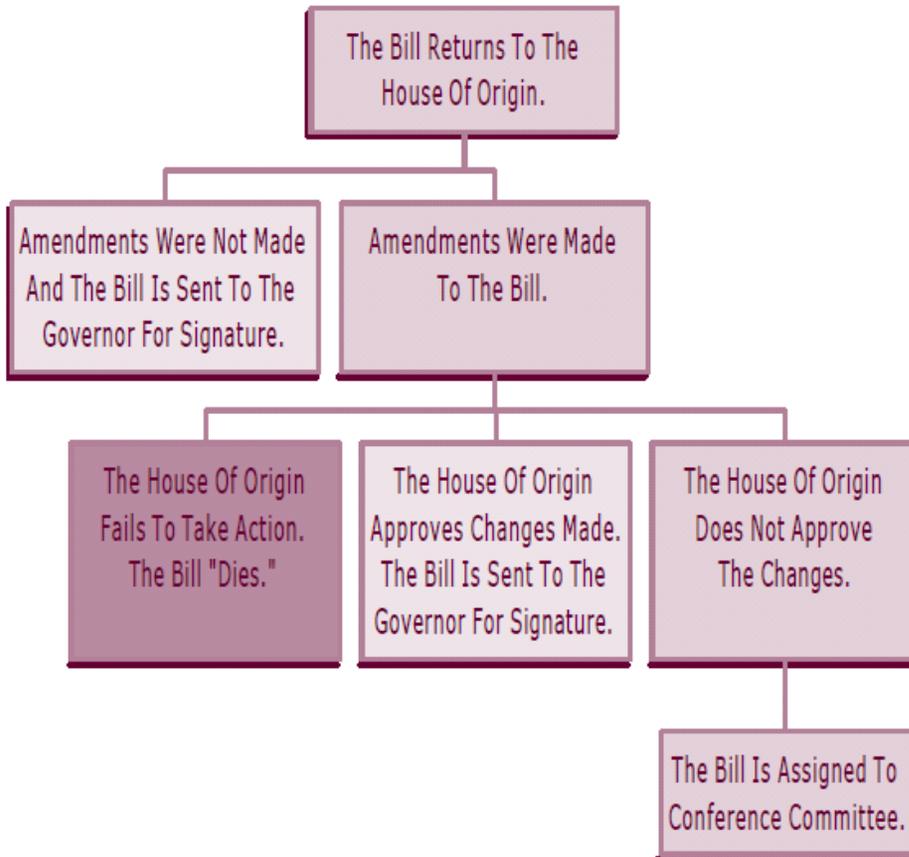
**The process repeats in the other chamber.**

Once the bill has advanced through the house of origin, it is sent to the second house, where the process repeats.

The second chamber may fail to act on the bill, in which case the bill “dies.” If action is taken, the bill must pass through First Reading, Committee, Second Reading and Third Reading.

The bill can “die” at any step of the way, just as it can in the house of origin.

At the same stages as in the house of origin, as long as the bill is advancing, amendments may be proposed and accepted.



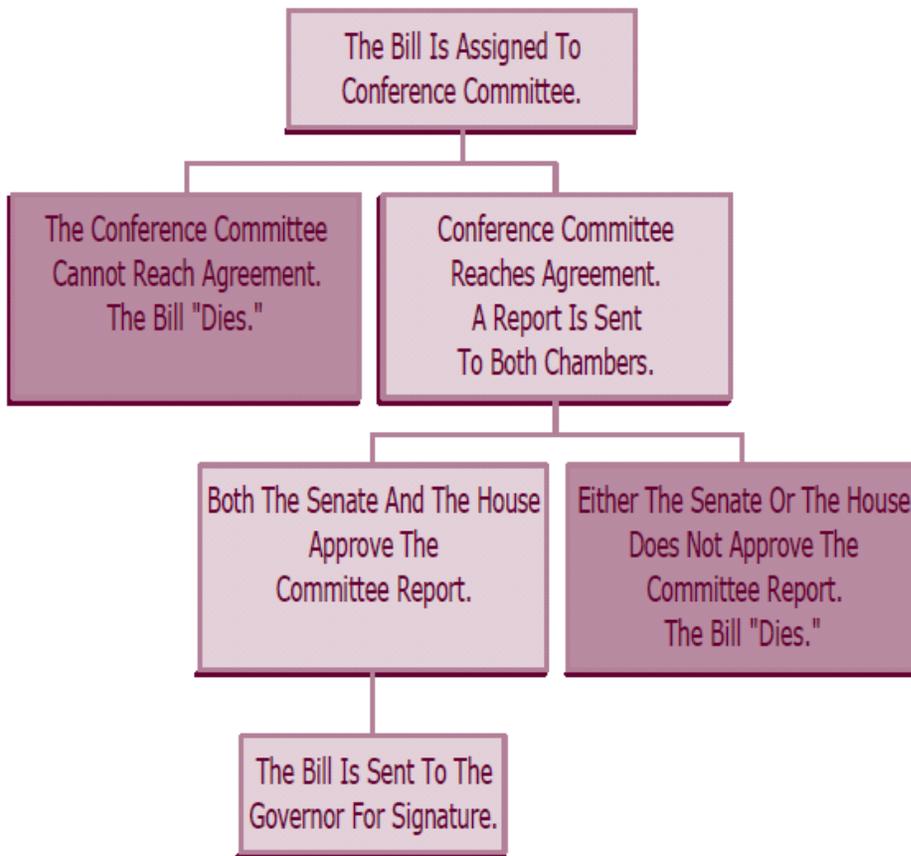
The bill returns to the house of origin.

If the bill advances through the second chamber without amendments, the bill is sent to the Governor for signature.

If the bill advances with amendments, it returns to the house of origin.

The house of origin may fail to take action, and the bill “dies.” The legislative body may vote to approve the changes made by the second chamber. If this happens, the bill is sent to the Governor for signature.

If the first chamber does not approve the changes made by the second chamber, and both houses want the bill to advance, the bill is assigned to a Conference Committee.

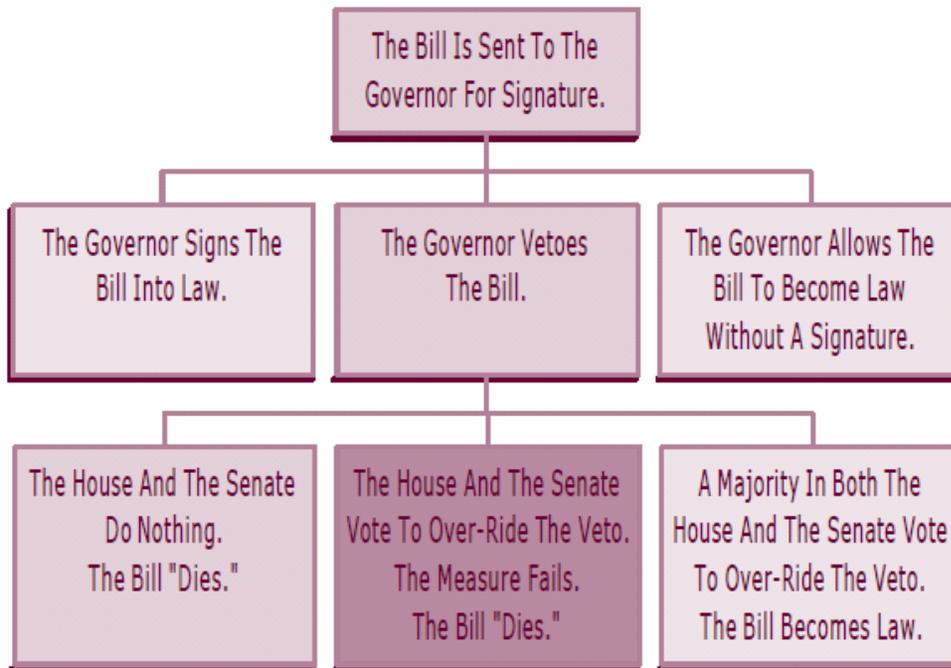


### Conference Committee.

Conference Committee is made up of two members from each of the legislative bodies. Each chamber sends one member from both major political parties. The four members attempt to reconcile differences between the chambers.

If agreement cannot be reached, the bill “dies.”

If agreement is reached, the bill returns to both chambers. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives must approve the bill before it can be sent to the governor for signature.



The bill is sent to the Governor.

Once the governor receives a bill, he can sign it, veto it, or do nothing. If he signs it, the bill becomes law. If he does nothing, the bill becomes law without his signature.

If he vetoes the bill, and the Senate and House of Representatives do nothing, the bill “dies.” If he vetoes the bill and the Senate and the House of Representatives attempt to over-ride the veto, the bill may still become law.

If less than 26 Senators and less than 51 House members do not vote to over-ride the veto, the bill “dies.” If a simple majority of both chambers vote to over-ride the veto, the bill becomes law.

The bill becomes law.

The bill becomes law at a date specified in the body of the bill. It could be the date of the actual passing or a date at some point in the future.

## For More Information, or to Schedule A State House Tour

State House Tour Office, State House, Room 220

200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204

(317) 233-5293 (317) 233-9565 Fax

[captours@idoa.state.in.us](mailto:captours@idoa.state.in.us)

Please visit our web site again at: [www.IN.gov/statehouse](http://www.IN.gov/statehouse)

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# Ways to Advocate for Kids

Being an advocate doesn't necessarily mean demonstrating for (or against) an issue or testifying before a legislative body. There are many behind-the-scenes activities that you can do to work toward making positive change for children. Here are some ideas!

## Personal Advocacy

- Get others interested in your cause
- Meet with others who share your interest
- Encourage a young person to get involved
- **Get the facts** so you can be persuasive
- **Contact state and national resources**
- Read the newspaper
- Wear a button
- Put a sign in your yard
- Design a new message for your personalized holiday cards
- Find a service project that your family can do together

## Community Advocacy

- Call in to a radio talk show
- Write a letter to the editor or station manager
- Attend a public meeting
- Organize a meeting or rally
- Display a bumper sticker on your car
- Find out what the other side really thinks
- Find common ground with the other side
- Set up a telephone tree or participate in one
- Speak to service clubs, PTO's, etc.
- Encourage your bookstores and libraries to carry **materials** on children's issues
- Plan a fundraiser
- Join a coalition of others concerned about children

- Stuff envelopes or answer phones
- Serve on a task force to work for change
- **Support a cause financially**
- Produce a flyer or newsletter
- Include an "advocacy thought for the day" on your meeting agenda
- Lead a discussion group at your place of worship
- Add **facts about children's issues** to your church bulletin or your organization's newsletter

### **Legislative Advocacy**

- Stay informed and VOTE
- Register others to vote
- Work the election
- Campaign for a candidate
- Clip articles and send them to friends or [to your legislator](#)
- Sign a petition
- **Write a letter to your federal, state or local officials**
- Volunteer for an advocacy organization
- Become part of a legislative network
- Testify at a hearing
- Host a candidate's coffee or luncheon

Adapted from "A Guide to Resources in Advocacy: Facts, Strategies and Information," Indiana Youth Institute, 1992.