

BE HEARD MONTANA

HOW TO COMMENT ON A MONTANA STATE
LEGISLATIVE BILL



★ KNOW ★
YOUR
RIGHTS



The First Amendment

YOUR VOICE MAKES YOU PRESENT

As a United States citizen, you have the First Amendment right to “petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” This means that you may submit a complaint or seek assistance from our government **without fear of punishment.**

Submitting a written comment on a legislative bill is one way to exercise this First Amendment right and voice your opinion to the people who pass bills and enact laws. This guide will show you how to comment on a bill using the [Montana Legislature website](#), so you can support or oppose a bill before it has the chance to become a law!


FIRST, FIND A BILL

SEARCH FOR A BILL BY NUMBER OR SUBJECT

Navigate to the Montana Legislature [Bill Search](#) page, then search using one of the two methods below.


Search by **Bill Number**, if you know it.

Bill Type and Number: (example: HJ0157)

1. Select the Bill Type using the dropdown
Key: HB=House Bill / SB=Senate Bill
2. Type in the Bill Number.
3. Select Find.
4. Click on the  to the right of "Current Bill Text" to open the bill and read it.

OR, Search by **Bill Subject** if you don't have a number.

Select a Subject...

1. Click on the **Select a Subject...** dropdown to see a list of categories.
2. Select the subject category that relates to your bill or interest/issue.
3. Select Find.
4. View a chart of all bills related to the selected subject.
Note: If there are no current bills related to your subject, you will see a page that indicates that zero bills match the search criteria.
5. Click on the  to the right of a bill number to open a bill and read it.



THEN, WRITE YOUR COMMENT

SELECT THE BILL AND STATE YOUR POSITION

1. Navigate to the [Public Testimony](#) page.
2. Select your bill from the Select the Bill dropdown.

Note: Only bills to be heard in the next three days will appear as an option. If your bill isn't there yet, keep checking back!

Select the Bill:

Select One

I don't see the bill I want.

Select a committee to send testimony to:

Select a Bill

3. Select a committee to send your testimony.

Note: This box will autofill with the correct committee(s) from which to choose. If this bill is being heard in more than one committee, look at the committee hearing dates and select the next available date.

4. Select your position on the bill.
 - Select Proponent ("Yes") if you support the bill and believe it should pass.
 - Select Opponent ("No") if you oppose the bill and believe it should "die."
 - Ignore Informational Witness, as it only pertains to agency or state employees who can provide information on the bill without supporting or opposing it.

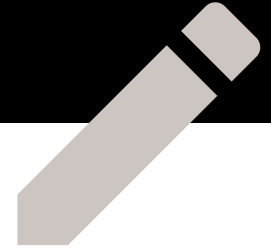
INPUT YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS

1. Select No to indicate that you are only representing yourself and your own opinion.
2. Input your Full Name, Email Address, and Phone Number.
3. Input the City and State in which you reside (e.g., Missoula, MT).

Note: Remember that it is your right to support, oppose, and comment on this bill without fear of punishment.



SUBMIT YOUR WRITTEN COMMENT



1. Type your comment into the text box under Write your Comment or Testimony in the Field Below. Optional: Add any supporting documentation that you have, in PDF form.
Tip: Check out the comment tips and template on the following page.
2. Select **No** to a Zoom link request, unless you'd like to verbally testify during the hearing via Zoom.
3. Review the page to make sure you have filled out the fields correctly.
4. If you do want to testify via Zoom during the committee hearing, see the optional step below. If you do not wish to testify remotely, hit **Submit**.

Note: You must submit a written comment by noon before the day of the hearing. Submitting a comment 1-3 days before a bill is heard will ensure a legislator will read the comment. Check back frequently as the hearing schedule often shifts without notice.

REQUEST TO TESTIFY REMOTELY VIA ZOOM (OPTIONAL)



1. Select **Yes** under “Would you like to request to testify before the committee via Zoom?”
2. Select **Phone** if you would like to testify via voice call. Or, select **Computer** if you would like to testify via Zoom on your computer.
Tip: See instructions for [how to join a Zoom meeting](#).
3. Choose **Submit**.
4. Check your email for a confirmation and further instructions.

On the day of the hearing:

- The Presiding Officer will call on you when it is your turn to speak.
- If you are not called on and want to speak, raise your hand to let the Remote Committee Coordinator know.

Note: You do not have to testify in order to submit a written comment. However, you must submit a written comment to ensure that your name will be entered into the record in the event of technical difficulties. Written comments received by the deadline will be distributed to all committee members.





TIPS ON WRITING YOUR COMMENT

- ✓ Formally Address the hearing committee (e.g., “Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee”)
- ✓ Tell the committee exactly what you would like them to do (e.g., pass the bill, kill the bill, amend the bill, etc.)
- ✓ Give specific reasons for opposing or supporting a bill
- ✓ Briefly summarize your points at the end
- ✓ Sign it (e.g., “Respectfully, Jane Smith”)

COMMENT TEMPLATE

Chairman *[Insert Committee Chairman's last name]* and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on *[Bill Type-Bill Number]*, which I *[support/oppose/believe should be amended]*. I am... *[1-2 sentences introducing yourself and any pertinent information.]*

I would like to *[raise concerns / inform you of new information / provide supporting evidence]* regarding *[Bill Type & Number]*:

- *[1 sentence describing first major point]*
- *[1 sentence describing second major point]*
- *etc...*

In summary, *[1-2 sentences summarizing your position on the bill]*.

Respectfully,

[Your Name]



FINALLY, ACCESS THE HEARING

1. Navigate to the Hearing calendar, do not alter any fields, and hit Submit.

2. Locate the bill by scrolling through the hearing calendar to see when the legislature will discuss it.

Tip: Make note of the hearing Chairman's name so you can address them in your comment.

3. Hearing schedules change rapidly, so check the hearing calendar frequently to make sure the schedule has not changed.

Note: If you are testifying in the hearing, see optional Zoom testimony steps on the previous page.

4. On the day and time your bill is being heard, you may open the Hearing Livestream and select the box that matches the subcommittee and room number for your bill.

If you'd like to learn more about the legislative process, please see [how a Montana State legislative bill becomes a law](#).

