

# Make Your Voice Heard



## Make Your Voice Heard at the Legislature

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*Updated March 2011*



## Lobbying the Legislature

Political action can take many forms. Contact with elected and appointed officials is one of the most effective ways citizens can influence policy and legislation. A personal visit with a public official is often the most effective kind of political action. The expressed wishes and desires of the electorate ultimately influence most governmental decisions. Direct, personal lobbying can make a significant difference in an official's vote or in an executive's action. The discussion provides an opportunity for exchange of information and clarification of complex or difficult points.

Although every public official is an individual with differing background and interest, there are some common guidelines for any lobbying effort. Three factors will determine effectiveness:

- Procedure used to approach the public official
- Knowledge of the issue
- Manner in which the issue is discussed

The procedure for contacting officials can be letters, telephone calls, emails, and personal visits. For talking with public officials there are some important guidelines. Knowledge about the issue, knowing your public official and the way you approach your public officials are as important as the content of your message.

You can be most effective by:

- Being familiar with your elected official's position, including the powers, limitations, and their areas of interest.
- Being informed, knowing your facts thoroughly and presenting your case succinctly. Officials appreciate relevant facts and research on the issues.
- Being brief. Since officials are busy, try to get your point across in 5 to 10 minutes.
- Being friendly, sincere and respectful.
- Being willing to admit it if you don't know an answer and finding the answer as soon as possible.
- Being a good listener. If the official is strongly opposed to your position, hear the other viewpoint and state your criticism in a positive way.
- Being direct. Tell the person exactly what action you wish taken on the issue.
- Being brief with your message and following up periodically. A large amount of written material can be overwhelming.
- Being aware of your official's position on the issue. Your approach can be adjusted accordingly.
- Being aware of arguments used by opponents. Prepare responses with counterpoints.
- Being familiar with the title, the number or the provisions of any specific bill you are discussing.
- Being confidential about what an official said during an off-the-record interview.
- Being prompt in following up on your visit with a thank you note of the time and attention given to your view point. A summary of your position and any new information that supports your position are very helpful.
- Being aware of how the official acted on the issue. If the individual votes the way you wish, send the person a thank you note. It will be appreciated and remembered.

Remember your communications with elected officials help to create a government that is truly of the people, by the people, and for the people.

## LOBBY TIPS

### **DO...**

#### **Be Timely**

But don't expect your legislators to be on time. Often they have hearings or meetings they cannot anticipate or leave.

#### **Be Brief**

Before the appointment, practice a three-minute statement of the information you want to present. This will force you to think about what you want and why you want it.

#### **Be Clear**

Identify the issue or bill you are concerned about and what you would like your legislator to do.

#### **Be Civil**

To both the legislator and staff.

#### **Be Grateful**

Thank the legislator when the meeting is finished and follow up in the next week with a thank you note.

#### **Be Accurate**

#### **Be Persuasive**

#### **Be Persistent**

### **USE YOUR COMMON SENSE**

The impression you make with legislators will influence their opinions of our organization.

## How to Testify Before a Legislative Committee

Committees are the heart of Oregon's legislative process. The committee process provides legislators more opportunity to closely study a measure than would be possible in a floor debate.

Committees may hear from many people who support or oppose the measure.

Giving public testimony before a legislative committee can be an exciting and fulfilling experience if you are prepared.

Your testimony may influence the committee's action. It also becomes part of the permanent record and may be used in future research.

Listed below are suggestions to help make your presentation successful.

### ■ **Know Your Audience**

The members of the committee are "citizen legislators." They care that you have taken time out of your day to come and testify before them.

- Be respectful.
- Don't accuse committee members of causing your particular problem.
- Resist the temptation to scold, put down, or insult the decision makers or other witnesses. This tactic will likely alienate them from your cause.

### ■ **Know the Issue**

Support your personal opinions with as many facts as possible. Be knowledgeable of the "other side of the story." You may be asked to discuss the differences. Draw from your own knowledge and experience.

### ■ **Be Familiar with the Committee Process**

- Know the location of the building, the meeting room, and the meeting time.
- Agendas will be posted outside the meeting room. Check to make sure the measure you are interested in has not been removed from the agenda. The measures may not be heard in the printed order.
- If possible, attend a committee meeting before you testify to become familiar with the process and room layout.
- When you arrive at the meeting, sign the witness registration sheet. Witnesses are not necessarily called in chronological order.

### ■ **Presenting Your Written Testimony**

When you are called to testify, give copies of your testimony to committee staff before you begin your presentation. The number of copies requested is printed on the bottom of the committee meeting agenda.

Begin your presentation by addressing the chairperson first, then members of the committee. "**Chair \_\_\_\_, members of the committee . . .**"

For the record, state your name, address, and the organization or group you represent.

State whether you support or oppose the legislative measure being heard and briefly explain. Do not read your testimony to the committee word for word. Prepare an outline.

Keep in mind you may have a ten minute version of your testimony--be prepared to summarize.

*(Continued on page 6)*

rise it in one minute--that may be all the time you are allowed!

Thank the committee members and offer to answer any questions. **"Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions."**

When a member asks you a question respond: **"Chair \_\_\_\_\_ , Senator/Representative (state name), the answer to your question is . . ."**

Relax! The members understand that this can be an intimidating experience--they don't expect a perfect presentation.

■ **Group Testimony**

- Select several people to cover different topics so the testimony is not repetitive.
- Address the problem, possible solutions, and your group's best solution.

**Special Needs**

**If you require special accommodation in order to testify before a committee, please contact the committee administrator or support staff 24 hours BEFORE the meeting with your request.**

Contact Numbers: (503) 986-1813 or (503) 986-1187

TDD (503) 986-1467 (inside Salem)

1-800-332-2313 (outside Salem)

Source: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/testify.html>

## TESTIMONY FORMAT SHEET

When you come to the State Capitol in Salem, you should be prepared to speak briefly (2-3 minutes maximum) and also bring about 15 copies of the written version of your comments (see below). A 2-3 minute testimony fits on one page single-spaced or two pages double-spaced. Please remember that unless you have approval of your local League president or the LWVOR Action Chair, you are presenting your testimony as an individual, not as a representative of the League.

### Heading

TO: (Full name of Committee, *e.g.*, Judiciary Committee-Civil Law)  
FROM: (Your full name)  
DATE: (Hearing date)  
RE: Testimony in support (or opposition) to HB (or SB) XXXX

### Testimony Content

First Paragraph: Introduction

1. Who you are
2. Why you're here and why you care
3. State your position on the bill

Second Paragraph: Body

4. Major Points/Concerns (limit to 3)
5. Examples of the potential impact of the bill
6. Data/Information supporting examples

Third Paragraph: Conclusion

7. Thank the committee for the opportunity to testify
8. Restate position on bill (*e.g.*, I urge you to oppose HB XXXX)

### TESTIMONY ETIQUETTE

1. Email your testimony, preferably attached in a PDF or DOC to the committee administrator three hours in advance, if possible.
2. Include the following in the body of your email:
  - a) Bill number to which the files relates;
  - b) Name of committee hearing the bill
  - c) Topic;
  - d) Date of the hearing; and
  - e) Name of person who is testifying.

3. Come 15 to 20 minutes prior to the start of the hearing.
4. Bring copies of your written testimony. (See the committee agenda or ask the committee administrator to find out how many copies to bring. Fifteen is a safe amount.)
5. Sign up to testify on sheet at back of the room. Be sure to double-check that you are signing up to testify on the correct bill. The bill number will be written at the top of the sheet.
6. When the chair calls you to testify:
  - a. Give your extra copies of testimony to committee staff sitting at the computer.
  - b. Be seated at the desk and adjust the microphone.
  - c. Wait for the chair to acknowledge you and then begin speaking.
7. Be considerate and aware of the overall timeline of the hearing. If it looks like it will run late and/or if there are many people waiting to testify after you, be prepared to condense your testimony to fit a tight schedule. For example, if others before you have already made one of your three points, just make the other two.

#### **ORAL TESTIMONY GUIDELINES**

- Begin by saying the following:

*“Mr./Madam Chair, Members of the Committee, my name is \_\_\_\_\_  
and I represent \_\_\_\_\_  
(or I am a volunteer with \_\_\_\_\_).…”*

- Begin presenting your written testimony, but try not to read it word for word.
- When members ask you questions, address your response to the Chair and then to the member asking the question. For example:

*“Mr./Madam Chair, Representative Devlin, the answer to your question is \_\_\_\_\_”*

- Relax and enjoy yourself. Remember, you have an absolute right to share your opinions in this setting. The purpose of a hearing is to HEAR people's analysis of a proposed piece of legislation - organizations, citizens, experts, etc. Keep in mind that you've elected these legislators to represent **your** views. They need your input and appreciate the time you've taken to testify.



## Legislative Measures

### **There are six types of measures:**

**Bill:** A measure that creates new law, amends or repeals existing law, appropriates money, prescribes fees, transfers functions from one agency to another, provides penalties, or takes other action.

**Joint Memorial:** A measure adopted by both houses and used to make a request of or to express an opinion to Congress, the President of the United States, or both. It is not used to commemorate the dead.

**Joint Resolution:** A measure used for proposing constitutional amendments, creating interim committees, giving direction to a state agency, expressing legislative approval of action taken by someone else, or authorizing a kind of temporary action to be taken. A joint resolution may also authorize expenditures out of the legislative expense appropriations.

**Concurrent Resolution:** A measure affecting actions or procedures of both houses of the Legislature. A concurrent resolution is used to express sympathy, commendation, or to commemorate the dead.

**Resolution:** A resolution used by the House or the Senate (a measure used by both would be a *joint resolution*) to take an action that would affect only its own members, such as appointing a committee of its members, or expressing an opinion or sentiment on a matter of public interest.

**Measure:** A written document used by the Legislative Assembly to propose a law or to express itself as a body. A measure may be a bill, a memorial, or a resolution.

**Memorial:** A measure adopted by either the House or the Senate (a measure adopted by both is a *joint memorial*) to make a request of or express an opinion to Congress or the President of the United States, or both. It is not used to commemorate the dead. (*See Concurrent Resolution*)

## Online Resources

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Senate members: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/senate/>

House members: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/house/>

Printable legislative quickcard: [http://www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide/legislator\\_quickcard.pdf](http://www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide/legislator_quickcard.pdf)

Committee assignments: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/>

Committee staff: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/commsrvs/staff.htm>

### AUDIO AND VIDEO

Main page: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/listn/>

Senate Chamber video (live activity): <http://www.leg.state.or.us/listn/asx/SEN.asx>

House Chamber video (live activity): <http://www.leg.state.or.us/listn/asx/HSE.asx>

Live audio: [http://www.leg.state.or.us/cgi-bin/make\\_today.cgi](http://www.leg.state.or.us/cgi-bin/make_today.cgi)

Audio archives: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/listn/faq.htm>

### HOW TO

Testify (document): <http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/testify.html>

Testify (video): <http://www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide/testify.ram>

Submit digital exhibits for hearings: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/commsrvs/exhibitsFAQ.html>

Find your legislator: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/>

### MISCELLANEOUS

Current bills: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/measures11.html>

Citizens' Guide to the Legislature: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide/>

The Legislative Process (LWVOR): <http://www.lwvor.org/documents/TheLegislativeProcess.pdf>

Glossary of Legislative Terms: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/glossary.html>

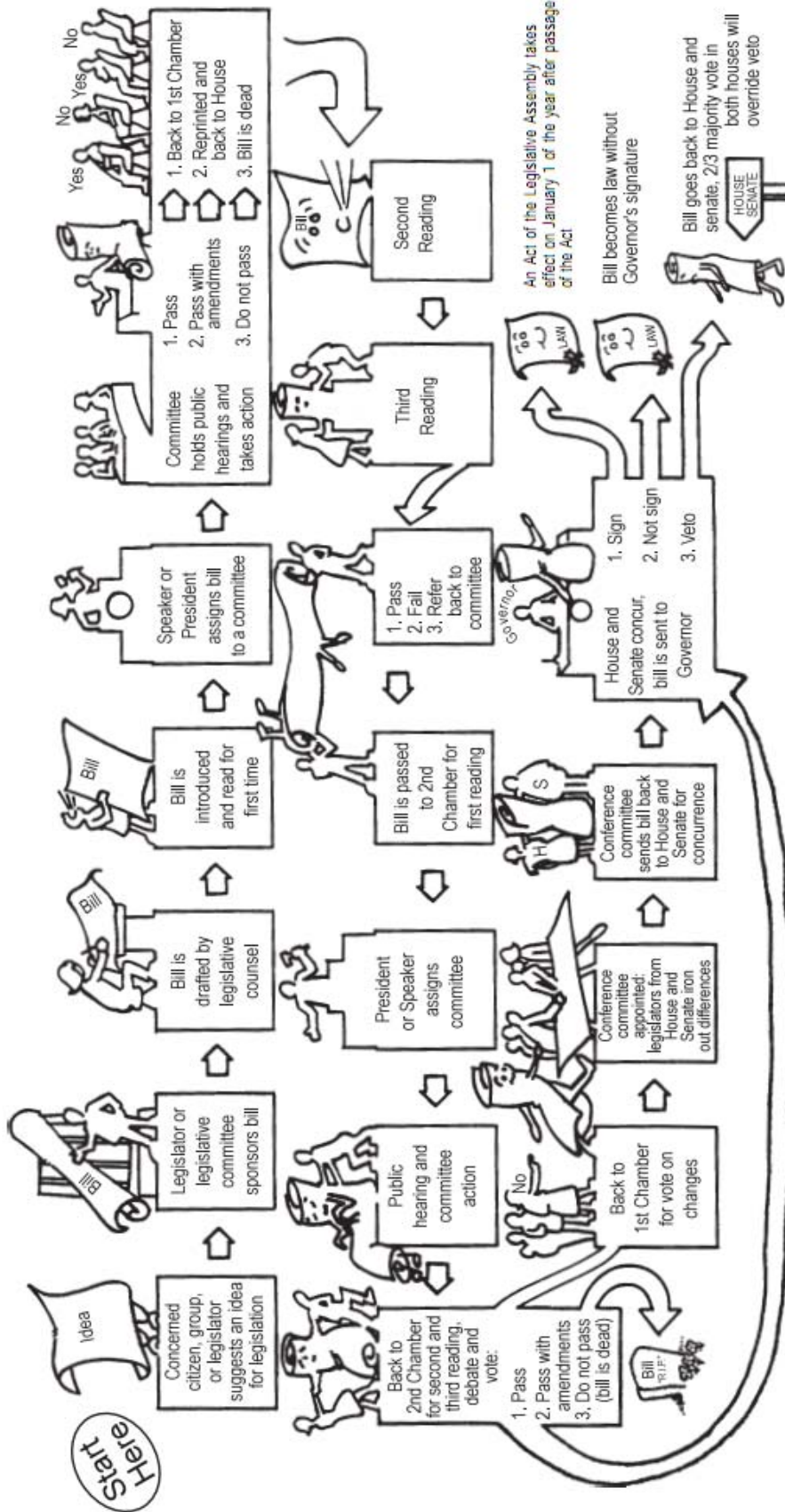
Oregon Revised Statutes: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/ors/home.htm>

Oregon Blue Book: <http://bluebook.state.or.us/>

Historical information about Oregon's Capitol: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/history/capitolhistory.htm>

# How An Idea Becomes Law

A Simple View of the Oregon Legislative Process



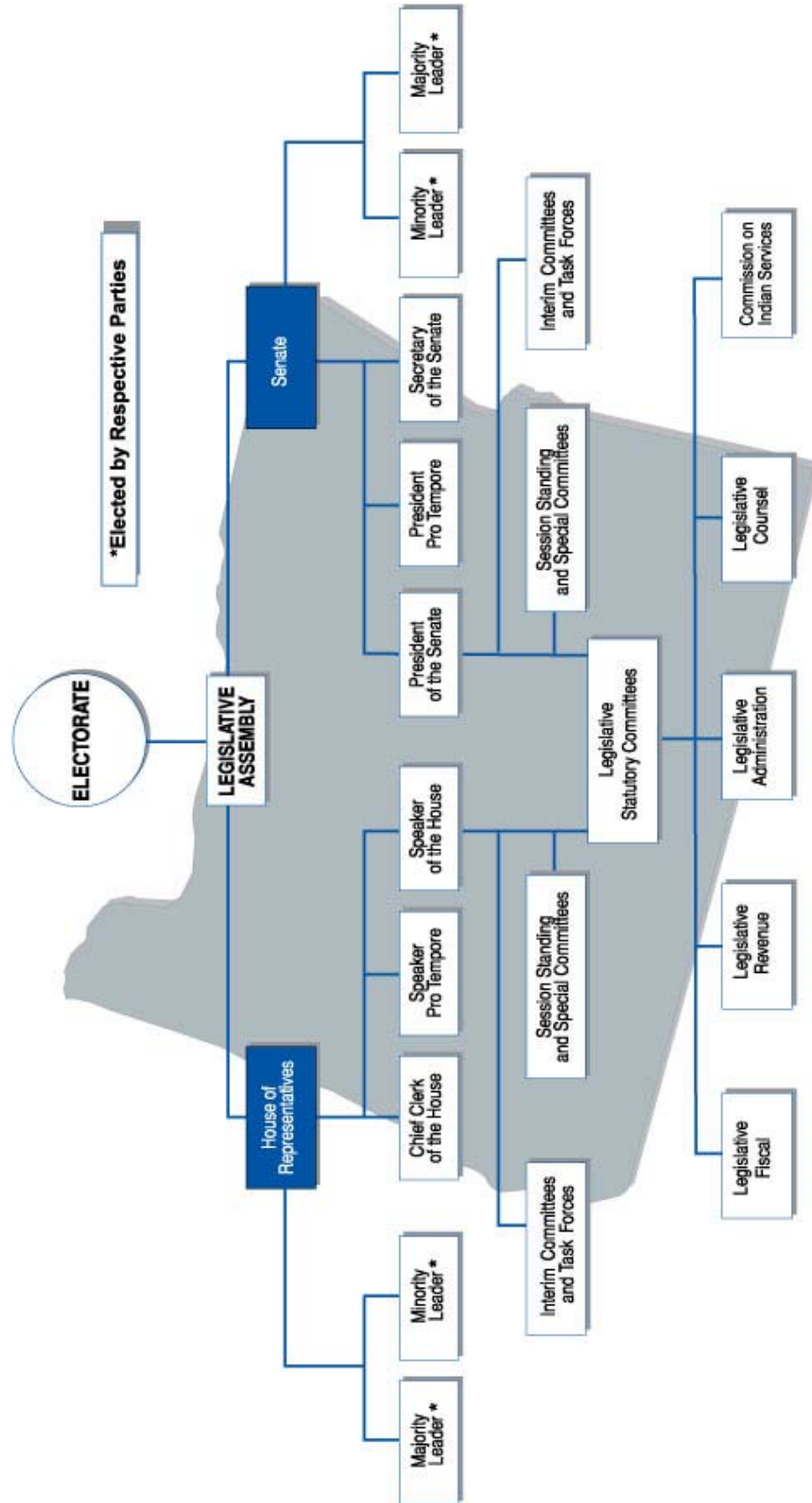
## THE OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The Oregon Legislative Assembly is state government's "board of directors." It is responsible for making laws dealing with Oregon's well-being, adopting the state's budget, and for setting public policy. The Legislative Assembly is made up of two bodies: the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate consists of 30 members elected for four-year terms. The House consists of 60 representatives elected for two-year terms. Each member of the legislature represents a district (an area determined by population). Every Oregonian is represented by one state senator and one state representative. Over 3,000 bills are considered each session. Relying largely upon work done in committees, the legislature enacts about one-third of the bills into Law. The Legislature convenes on the second Monday in January of every odd numbered year for approximately six months.

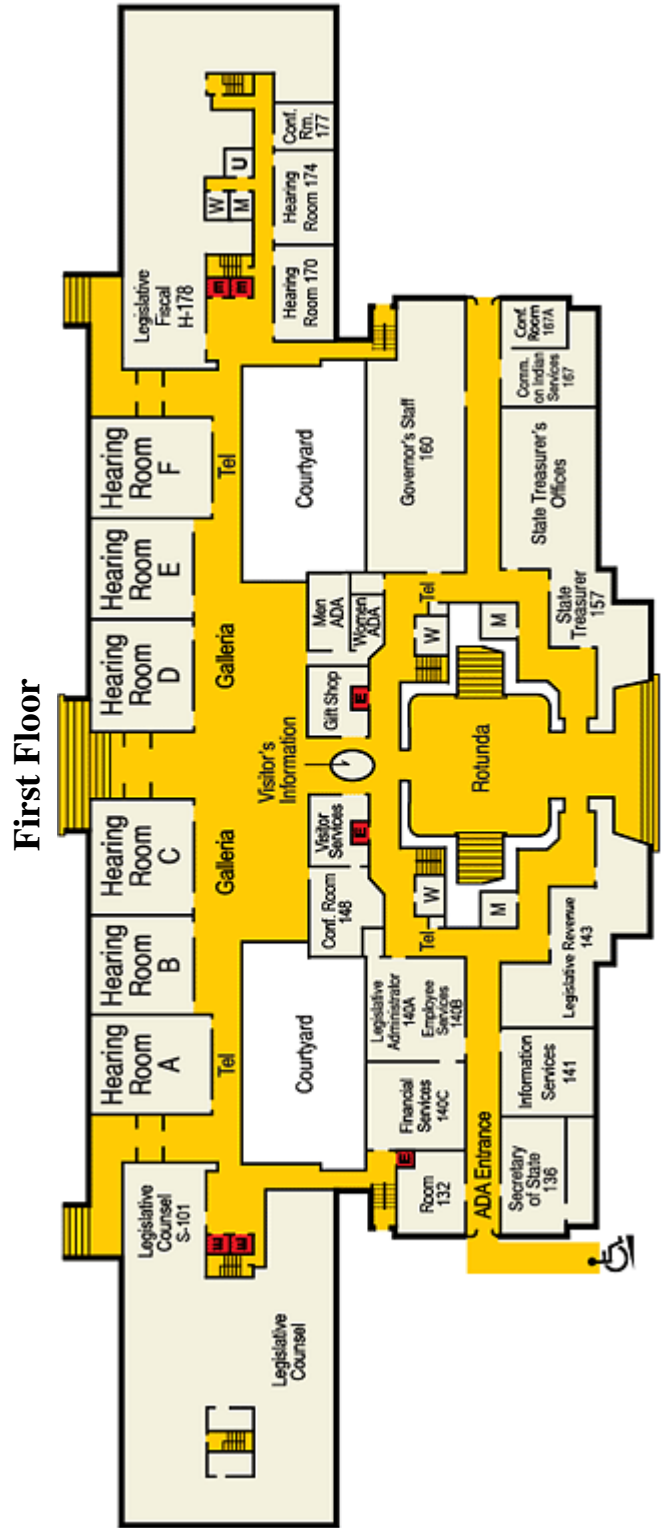
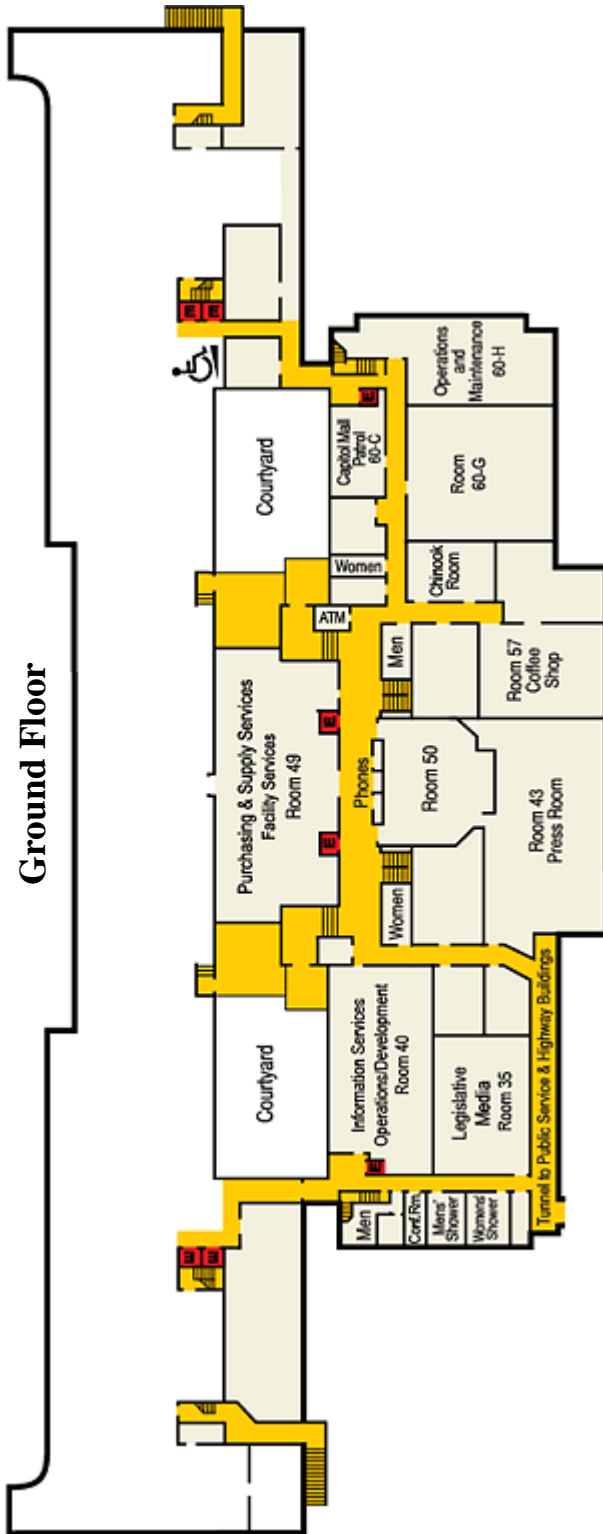
**INFORMATION SYSTEMS**  
Computer and Media Technologies

How Bills Become Law.pdf • Rev. 11/2000

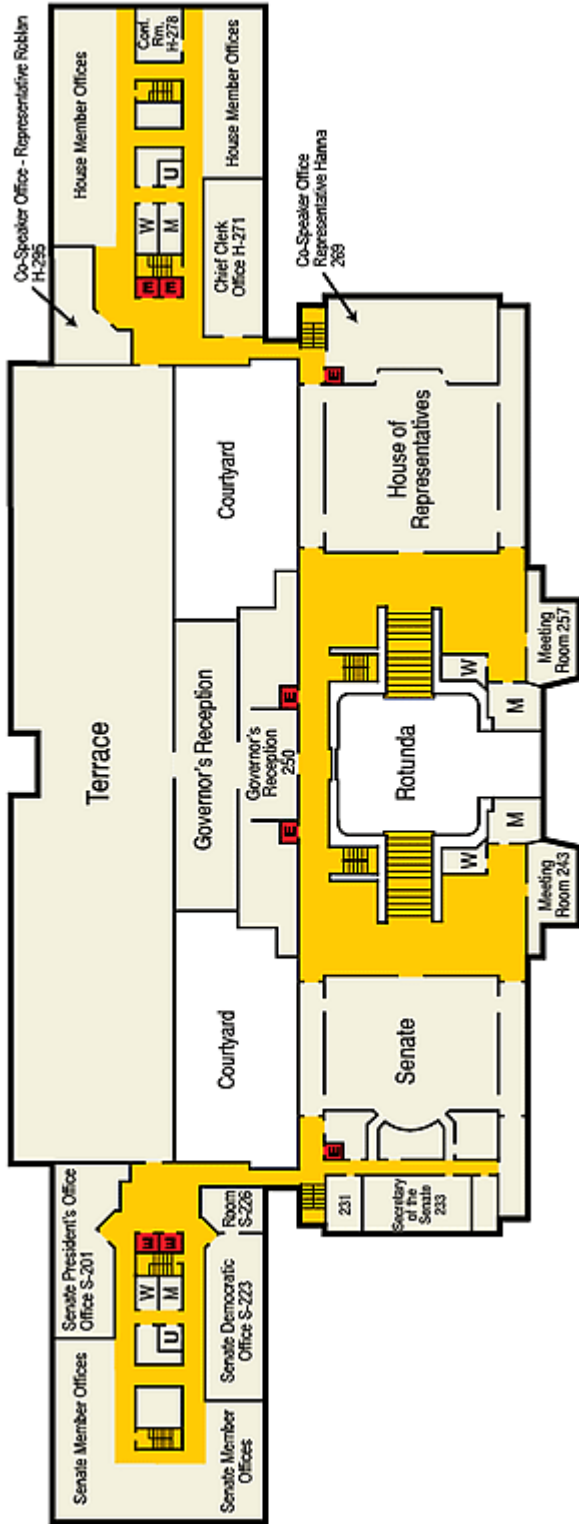
# Oregon Legislative Assembly Organizational Chart



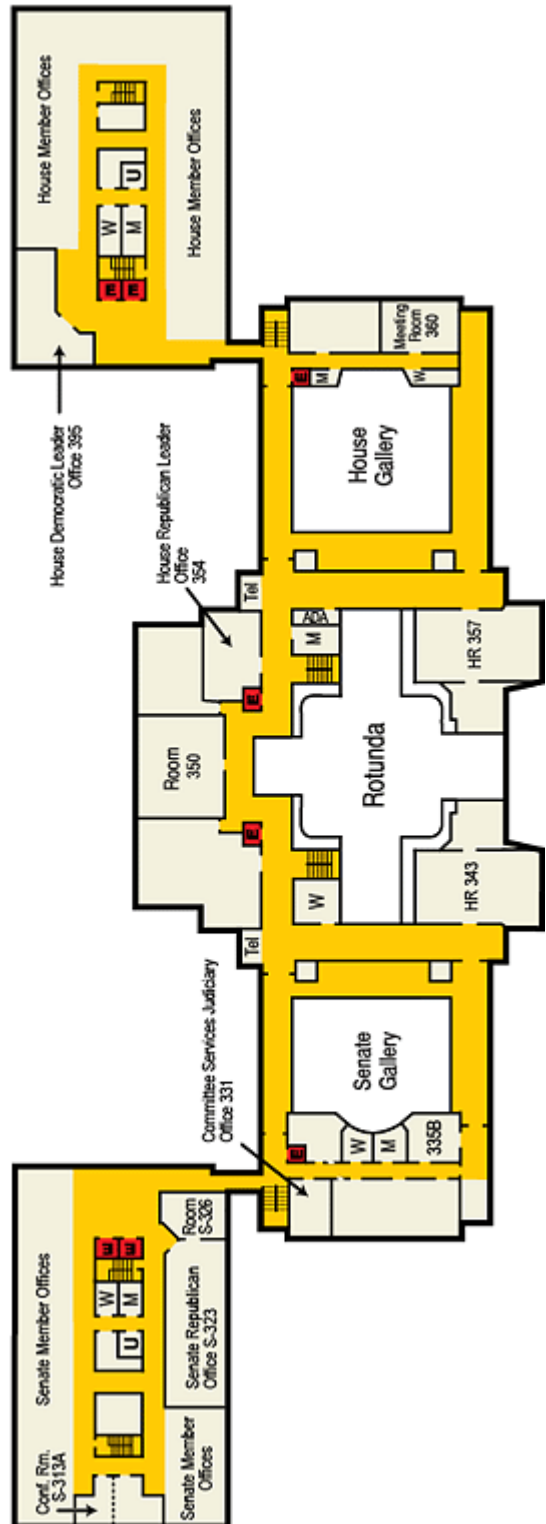
# Oregon State Capitol Floor Maps



## Second Floor



## Third Floor







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