

## The Legislative Process in Washington State

### A bill must answer four questions:

#### 1. *Is the bill a good idea?*

- Answered in Policy Committees (e.g. Education, Health, etc.)
  - Public testimony, legislators do some research, ask questions
- Executive session: public session wherein Committee members debate, amend, and vote on bill
- If 51% of Policy Committee members vote yes, bill moves on to a Fiscal Committee

#### 2. *Can we afford this bill? Is it a good use of tax dollars?*

- Answered in Fiscal Committees: examine costs and savings
  - Public testimony, hear from state agencies
  - Called Appropriations Committee in the House
  - Called Ways & Means Committee in the Senate
- Not enough state money to implement all good ideas
- Executive session: public session wherein Committee members debate, amend, and vote on bill
- If 51% of Fiscal Committee members vote yes, the bill moves on to the Rules Committee

#### 3. *Will the majority of legislators support the bill?*

- The Rules Committee determines whether or not a bill will be heard on the House/Senate floor
- If the bill is pulled from the Rules Committee, it will be heard on the floor of the chamber where the bill originated (House or Senate)
- Bill is debated, amended, and voted on
- If 51% of the full House/Senate vote yes, the bill moves on to the opposite chamber
- If different versions are passed out of the House and Senate, the bill will go to a Conference Committee to agree on the final version
- Ultimately, the identical bill must be passed by a majority in both the House and the Senate. If this happens, the bill moves on to the Governor's Office

#### 4. *Will the Governor support the bill?*

- The Governor can sign the bill, veto parts of it, or veto all of it
- If the Governor signs the bill, it becomes a law

### Advocates can influence the process at every step of the way:

- ◆ By suggesting IDEAS (or AMENDMENTS) for BILLS,
- ◆ When a bill is discussed in a POLICY COMMITTEE,
- ◆ When a bill is discussed in a FISCAL COMMITTEE,
- ◆ When a bill is discussed in the FULL HOUSE and FULL SENATE,
- ◆ When a bill comes out of CONFERENCE COMMITTEE with changes agreed to by both bodies,
- ◆ When a bill goes to the GOVERNOR for signature