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

Special thanks to Nancy Amidei for providing this information! © Forefront 2015