



Dear Friend:

Government can be defined as the political direction and control exercised over the actions of the members, its citizens or inhabitants of communities, societies and states. What many people do not realize is that you can be, and should be, an active participant in your state and local government.

In this mailing I will detail to you just how you can work with me – your Senate representative – to enact new and meaningful local laws to benefit our community.

As always if you have any questions or comments, I encourage you to contact my office. Everyone can make a difference!

Yours In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Parker". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kevin Parker

THE LEGISLATURE An Overview

The Senate is comprised of 63 Senators and 150 Assemblymembers. Together they form the New York Legislature. The Legislature is the law-making branch of state government. Each legislator is elected from districts throughout the State for two-year terms. The Constitution reserves varied and extensive powers for the Legislature. The most important permits the Senate and Assembly to propose laws. These laws first take the form of bills, which may be introduced in either house. A bill passed by one house must be passed in the same form by the other before it can be sent to the Governor for a signature or veto.



HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

Bills may come to a legislator in one of many forms. Participation by a citizen or group of citizens is as easy as making a call, writing a letter, or signing a petition being sent to your Senator, any other legislator or the Governor. Stated in the simplest of terms, the job of the Senate is to work with the Assembly and the Governor to enact, amend or repeal statutes which make up the body of laws within which we live. This involves drafting, discussing and approving bills and resolutions.



START WITH AN IDEA

This is the starting point in the process, and the first point at which a citizen or group has a chance to have a say in the writing or rewriting of a law. Ideas for legislation come from many sources. There is no monopoly on ideas for legislation. Often, one person's idea on how to solve a problem has resulted in legislation to help solve the problems of many people. Sometimes the most effective laws are those which impact you in a very meaningful way on a local level. Common examples of a local law are one that would:

- Provide civil service exam credits for police officers in certain cities
- Provide tax exemptions for improving historic local properties
- Provide property owners an exemption from tax increases due to installation of a wind energy generating system

PUT IT IN WRITING

Once an idea for a new law has been settled on, it must be put into bill form before it can be considered by the Senate. The actual drafting of legislation requires a specialized type of legal training and is usually done by the staff of the Legislative Bill Drafting Commission. Sometimes, however, an interest group may have its own attorneys draft a bill, and lawyers working in various state agencies and the executive branch often submit their ideas for legislation in bill form.

GET IT INTRODUCED

No law may be enacted in New York State unless it has been adopted by the Legislature in bill form. And to be adopted, it must first be introduced. With a single exception, bills can be introduced only by legislators or by standing committees of the Senate and Assembly. That exception is the Executive Budget, which is submitted directly by the Governor.

Committee members in the Senate evaluate bills and decide whether to "report" them (send them) to the Senate floor for a final decision by the full membership. The committee system acts as a funnel through which the large number of bills introduced each session must pass before they can be considered. And the system also acts as

"Everything Begins With An Idea"

-Earl Nightingale



a sieve to sift out unworkable ideas. After consideration, the committee may report the bill to the full Senate for consideration, it may amend the bill, or it may reject it.

GET IT PASSED

After discussion, a vote is taken. If a majority of the Senators approves, the bill is sent to the Assembly. In the Assembly, you again have a chance to influence the bill as it moves through a process basically the same as that in the Senate. It is referred to a committee for discussion, and if approved there, it goes to the full membership for a vote. If the bill is approved in the Assembly without amendment, it goes on to the Governor. However, if it is changed, it is returned to the Senate for amendments. The reverse procedure is followed if the Assembly first passes a bill identical to a Senate measure or if the Senate amends an Assembly bill.

GET IT SIGNED

While the Legislature is in session, the Governor has ten days (not counting Sundays) to sign or veto bills passed by both houses. Signed bills become law; vetoed bills do not. However, the Governor's failure to sign or veto a bill within the 10-day period means that it becomes law automatically. Vetoed bills are returned to the house that first passed them, together with a statement of the reason for their disapproval. A vetoed bill can become law if two-thirds of the members of each house vote to override the Governor's veto.

If a bill is sent to the Governor when the Legislature is out of session, the rules are a bit different. At such times, the Governor has 30 days in which to make a decision, and failure to act (pocket veto) has the same effect as a veto.



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DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA THAT YOU THINK
WOULD BE A GREAT LAW?

