

# Process, Politics, & How to Communicate with Your Legislator





# Today's Presenters

Rep. Dan Noyes



Rep. Theresa Wood

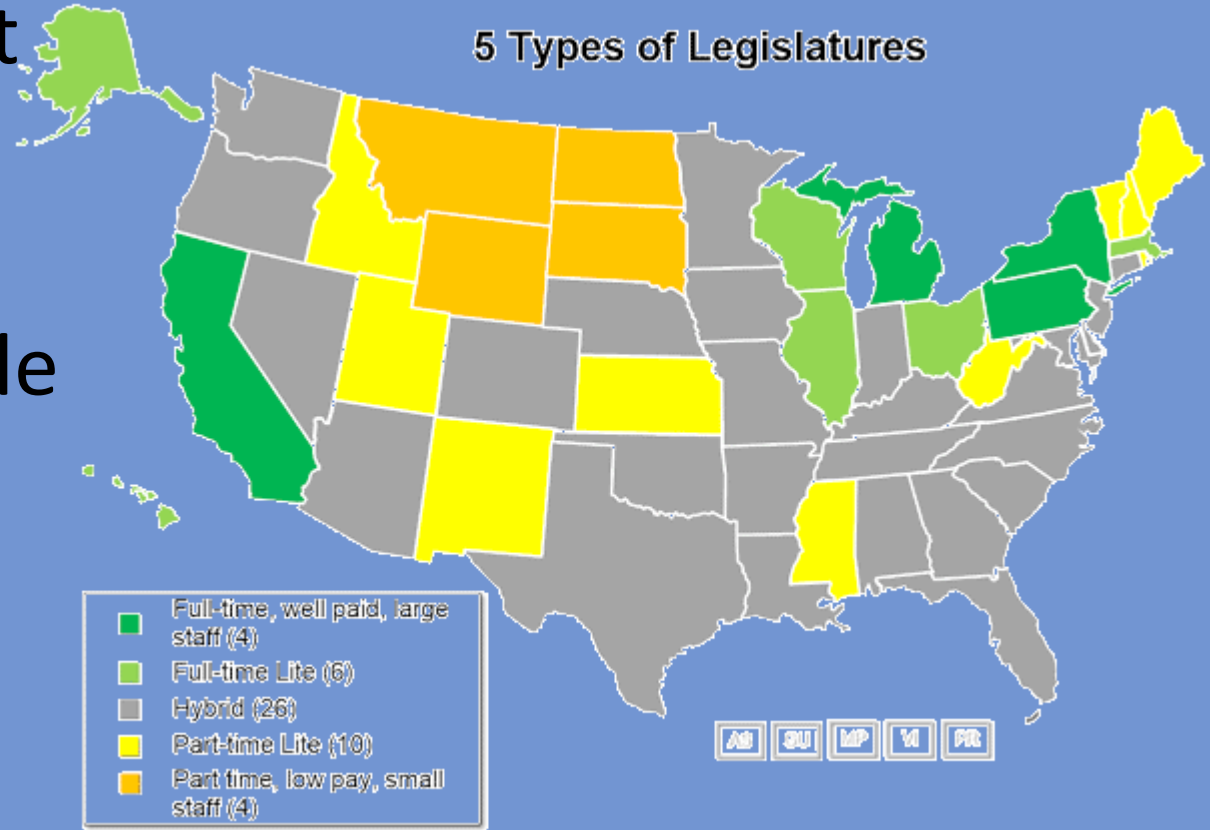


Falko Schilling, Esq.



# Why Get Involved in the Political Process?

- You can have a real impact on policy decisions that matter to you and your community.
- Vermont has a human scale democracy and an easily accessible citizen legislature.
- “If you’re not at the table you’re on the menu.”



# How to Have Your Voice Heard in Montpelier

Vote



Write



Call



Visit



# VOTE!!!!!!!

- Election day is Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>
- Voting has already started! You can request an absentee or in person ballot from your town clerk at any time. You don't need a reason.
- You can even register to vote on election day, there's no excuse not to vote!

# Voting Info

- Voter guides can help you find out more about statewide candidates and other useful info
  - VT Digger [vtdigger.org/vtdiggers-2018-election-guide/](http://vtdigger.org/vtdiggers-2018-election-guide/)
  - <http://digital.vpr.net/term/campaign-2018>
- Find out more about local candidates by visiting a candidate forum.
  - [action-circles.com/candidate-forums/](http://action-circles.com/candidate-forums/)
- To find your local polling place, learn how to request an absentee ballot, or get more info on voting visit
  - [sec.state.vt.us/elections/voters](http://sec.state.vt.us/elections/voters)



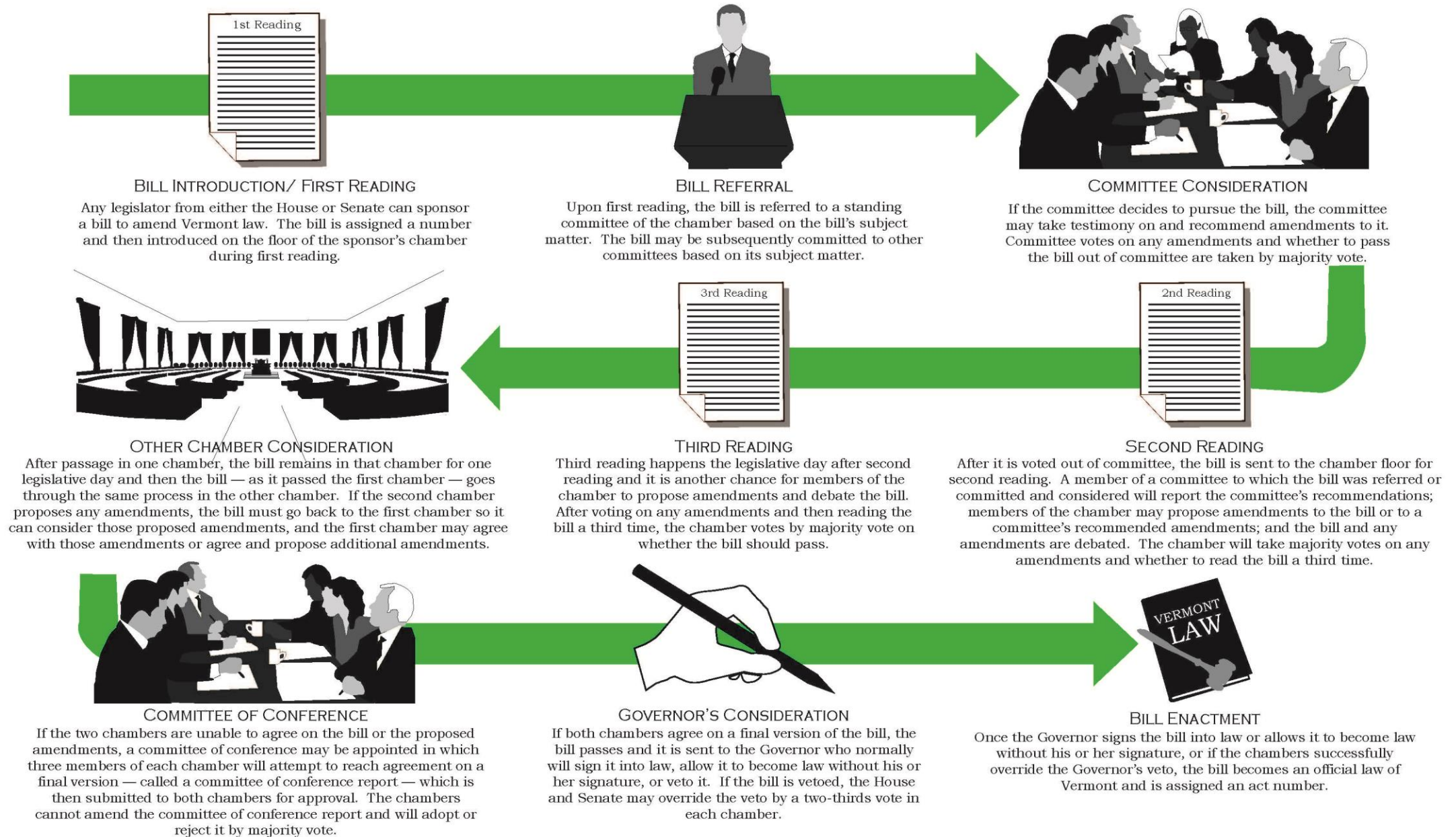


# Find Out What's Happening in the State House

- Connect with other people or organizations who care about the same issues as you.
- Many organizations send regular updates from the State House which can be a great way to stay up to date on the latest news and to find out how you can have the biggest impact on the discussion.
- Look at the legislative calendars and committee agendas at the Vermont Legislative Webpage <https://legislature.vermont.gov/>

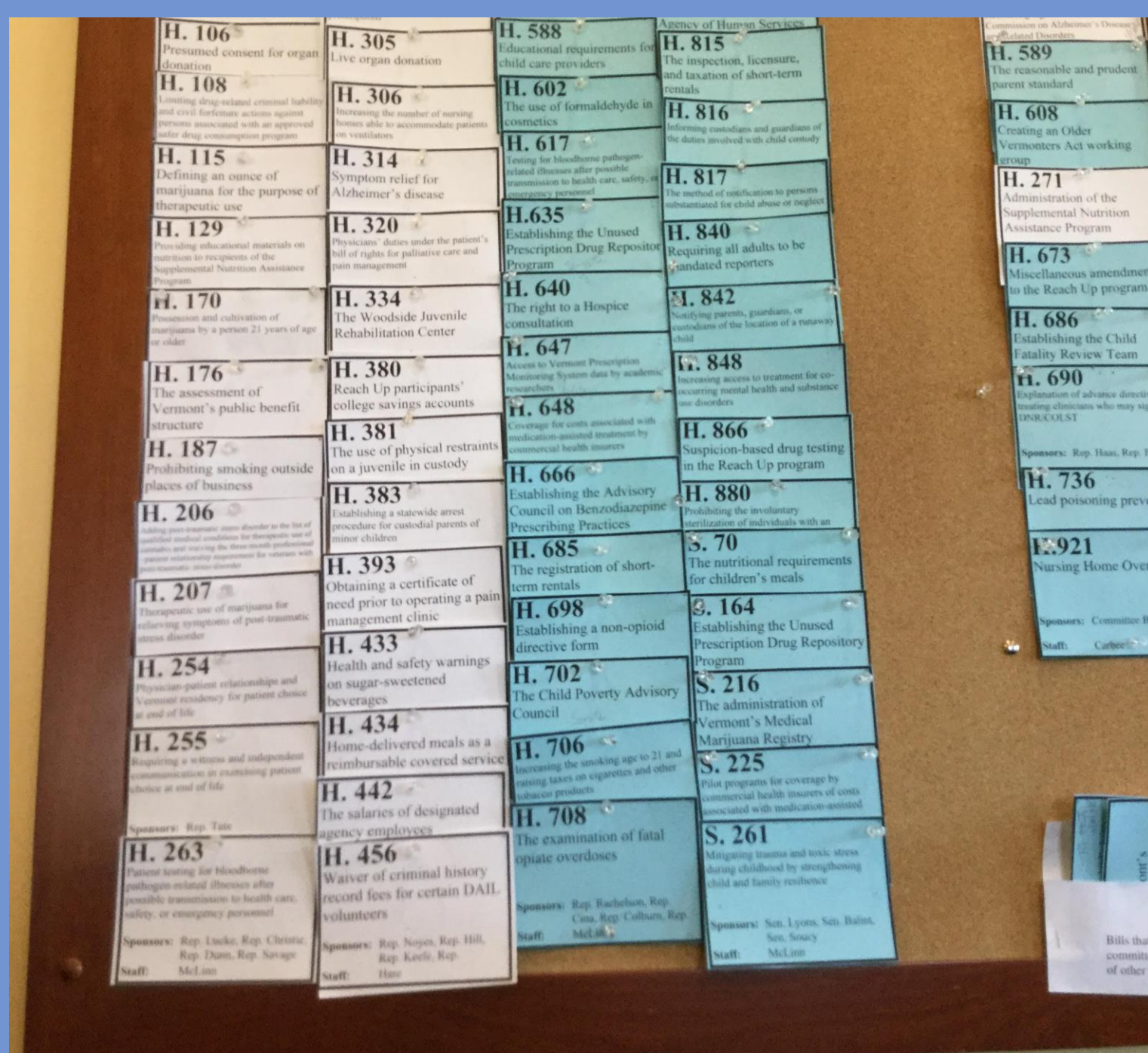


# HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW



# The Wall

- Over a thousand bills are introduced each biennium
- A small portion receive legislative hearings
- An even smaller number actually become law









# Connecting with Your Legislators

- Make sure they are your legislator; legislators represent *everyone* in their district.
  - Don't waste your time talking to legislators that don't represent you. To find your state legislators visit [legislature.vermont.gov](http://legislature.vermont.gov)
- Don't forget legislators are people too!
- Get to know them, say hi, introduce yourself and talk about something other than politics
- Write, call, visit

# Writing Your Legislator

- Identify Yourself as a constituent; say what town you're from; give your address and/or phone number
- Make personal connection – “We met at Be-longing for Justice” or “I know you from...”
- Keep it short and to the point. When possible keep it to one page or less.
- Address only one issue in each letter or email.
- Identify the bill you are interested in and what it will do.
- Explain what you would like your legislator to do and why.
- Assume that your legislator is not immediately familiar with the issue; legislators cannot be experts on all topics.
- Explain how proposed legislation will personally affect you, using specific examples and putting the issue in human terms as much as possible.

# Writing Your Legislator

- Avoid using form letters
- Tout your experience. If you are writing about a bill that could have an impact on your profession, let your legislator know you have experience in the field. This will lend credibility to your letter.
- Use just enough facts; figures or examples to further enhance your statement and only make statements that you can back up with evidence.
- Don't be afraid to offer a solution or better idea.
- Ask a question or ask for a response if you want a reply
- If you don't get a response (and you clearly asked for one) within a reasonable period of time – it's OK to resend the e-mail.



# Letters to the Editor

Send your letter to the paper that covers the area where you live or to a paper that covers statewide issues. Send your letter by email, and only send it to one paper at a time. Do *not* cc (or bcc) multiple newspapers.

Write a 3-paragraph letter:

- **Paragraph One:** State the issue that you want to discuss, and that action is needed.
- **Paragraph Two:** Write 2 or 3 short sentences about why you support action on a particular issue. Speak from the heart, why does this issue impact you.
- **Paragraph Three:** Ask the legislature to take action on the issue and be specific with your ask.

Your completed letter should be no more than 5 or 6 sentences. Be sure to include your full name, town, and phone number email address.

# Making a Call

- Elements of a successful call
  - Who you are and where you are from (including your town)
  - Why you are calling
  - What you want your legislator to do
  - If you are leaving a message say if you your legislator to call you back
- If you are calling a legislator at home or at the State House, it is important to keep your conversation brief, know what you want to say, and know what you want your legislator to do.
- Sergeant at Arms Office: [802-828-2228](tel:802-828-2228)
- Legislators' Home Numbers: Search by town or legislator at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/>

# One-on-One Visits

- Are you coming to the State House? Call or email 2 days before.
  - Good meeting places are committee rooms or cafeteria.
  - Have a Legislative Page help you find your legislator.
  - Closed doors on committee rooms can be opened without knocking.
  - Early in the morning or at lunch are some of the few times legislators have to meet with constituents during the legislative day.
- Invite legislators to your community event.
  - Connect the day before or day of via e-mail or text to confirm.
- Ask them to meet you for coffee or come to a meeting.



# Questions



# Resources

- Legislative information:
  - [legislature.vermont.gov](https://legislature.vermont.gov) Who represents you, what committees are they on, what is happening in the legislature, committee agendas
- Elections:
  - [sec.state.vt.us/elections](https://sec.state.vt.us/elections) The Secretary of State's office has information on your local polling place, how to get absentee ballots and election results.
  - [action-circles.com/candidate-forums/](https://action-circles.com/candidate-forums/) Action Circles works to create a calendar of candidate forums where you can find out more about state and local candidates
- Statewide Political News and State House Coverage
  - [VTDigger.org](https://vtdigger.org)
  - [VPR.net](https://vpr.net)