

# Advocacy 101

The legislative process: How to effectively advocate with lawmakers



# Introduction

Heather Meshell is an attorney and lobbyist who has worked for over a decade in public policy and government relations on both local and state levels, collaborating with lawmakers, nonprofits, law enforcement, judges, and advocates with a focus on the criminal legal system.

Heather believes advocacy work should be grounded in trauma-informed and harm-reduction frameworks — and that no one is defined by their worst moments. Her previous work in the victim advocacy space cultivated her trauma-informed approach, and opened her eyes to the sexual assault to prison pipeline.

Heather received her Juris Doctorate from Nashville School of Law and holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology from Middle Tennessee State University.



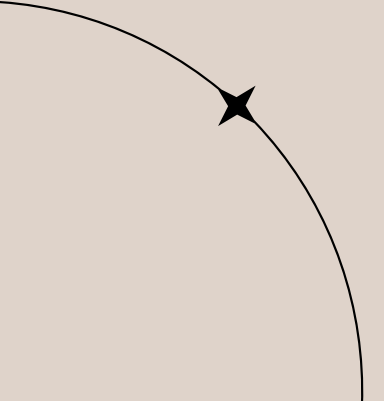
# What is Advocacy

- Public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy
- The act or process of supporting a cause or proposal
- Speaking and acting on behalf of yourself or others
- Every day people shape public policy through educating lawmakers on a particular issue



# What is lobbying



- A specific communication/ask of a member of the legislative body or other government representative to take a position, action or vote in a specific way on legislation.
  - Lobbying is primarily a relationship business. The role of a lobbyist is to build client relationships, know the key players, and position the subject matter experts in a strategic posture for successful advocacy.
  - A lobbyist acts as a government relations liaison advising clients on processes, strategy, and connecting them the appropriate agencies and decision makers.
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# Grassroots Advocacy

## Call to Action



**PETITION FORM**

Petition summary and background  
Action petitioned or We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to

Printed Name	Signature	Address	Comment	Date

Calls to action can include activities like asking the public to contact lawmakers by email /phone or signing an online petition.

## Education



Educating lawmakers on how proposed laws could impact the industry is critical and offers insight that lawmakers might not otherwise have.

## Organizing



Organizing a public demonstration or rally can help mobilize support of an issue and get people engaged on the matter.

## Media



Press and media coverage on a legislative issue can amplify a message and garner public support.

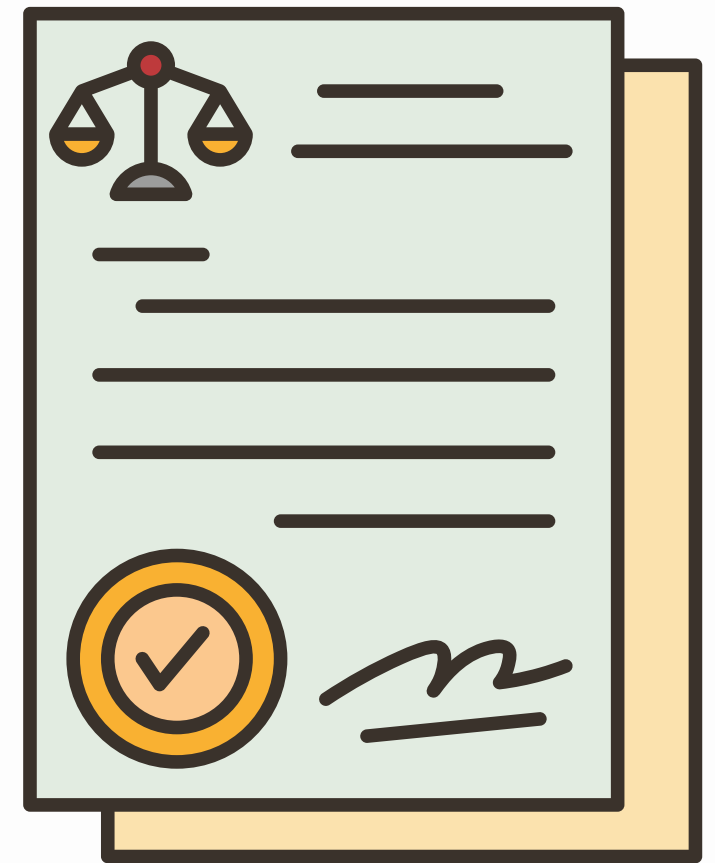
# How an idea becomes law

- After identifying a solution to problem or an idea, you need to research the issue, draft legislation and find legislators to sponsor the bill. Once filed, the legislation will be introduced in both the House and Senate chambers.
- The bills will be introduced to standing committees in both chambers where they will hold a hearing and hear public testimony on each bill. During the hearing they will debate the legislation and may approve, amend, delete or reject a bill.
- Once the bill passes through appropriate subcommittees and full committees, it will reach the chamber floors. On the House and Senate floors, it will be discussed, voted on or sent back to the committee.



# How an idea becomes law

- If the bill comes out of both chambers as different versions, the bill will be sent to **conference committee** to work out the differences between the two chambers.
- Once the House and Senate versions have passed both chambers in the same version, or a conference committee report is adopted by both chambers, it will be sent to the Governor for his signature.
- The Governor has three options: 1) sign the bill into law 2) veto the bill or 3) allow the bill to become law without his signature.
- The Governor then has 10 days to sign, veto or allow the bill to become law without his signature





# Overview of Tennessee State Government

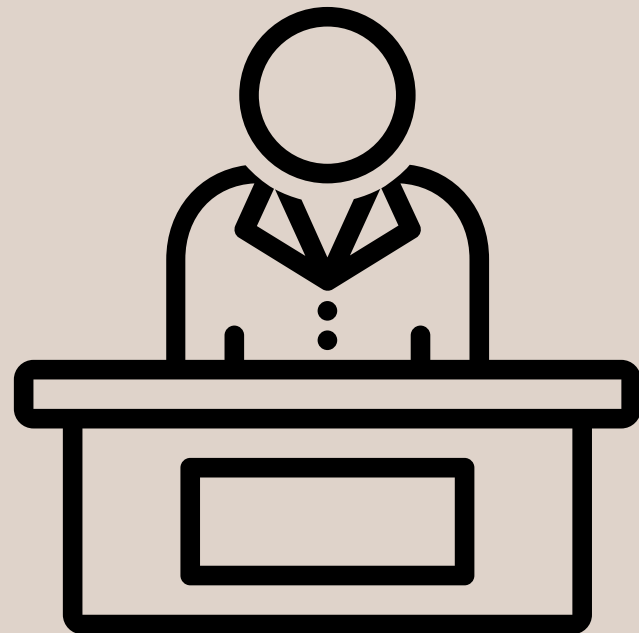




# Branches



Under the Constitution of Tennessee, the powers of Tennessee State Government are divided into three distinct or separate, but equal, branches: the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial.



**Executive**  
Governor and  
Executive  
Agencies

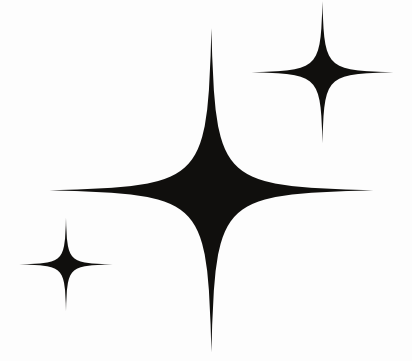


**Legislative**  
The Senate and  
The House of  
Representatives



**Judicial**  
The Supreme  
Court and lower  
courts

# Executive Branch



Governor Bill Lee

- 50th Governor of TN
- Member of the Republican Party
- From Franklin, TN
- Took office in 2019

There are 22 departments directed by the Governor and the Governor's appointees, or "commissioners." All the commissioners make up the Governor's cabinet. Each department has a specific role to help the Governor carry out his responsibilities and policy initiatives. Governors frequently add or merge departments once they take office. These departments help develop programs in their field of expertise and enforce the law.

# Legislative Branch

## Senate

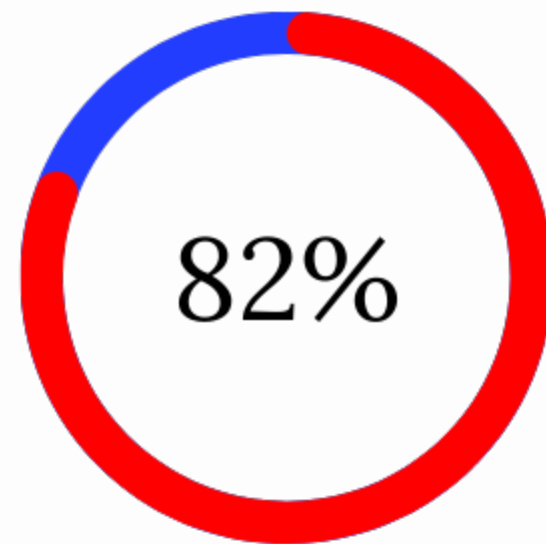
33 Members

4-year Terms

Lt. Governor, Speaker of  
the Senate

27 Republicans

6 Democrats



## House of Representatives

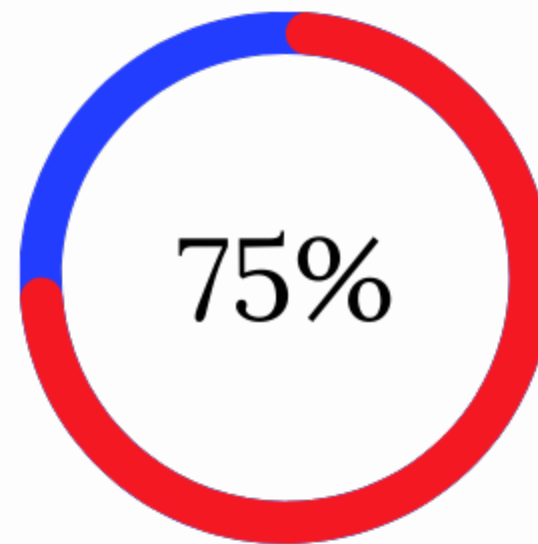
99 Members

2-year Terms

Speaker of the House

75 Republicans

24 Democrats

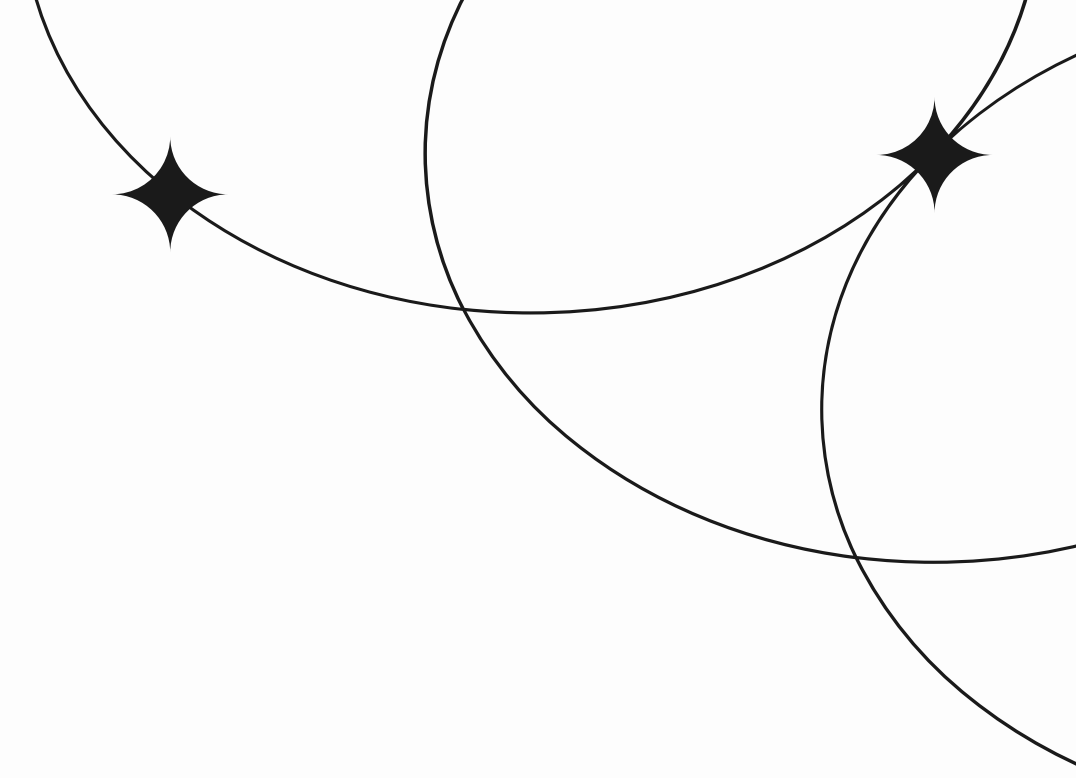




# Judicial Branch

The judicial power of this state shall be vested in one Supreme Court and in such Circuit, Chancery and other inferior courts as the Legislature shall from time to time ordain and establish...” – Article VI, Section I, Constitution of the State of Tennessee

The judicial branch serves as a check on the powers of both the legislative and executive branches. With the power of judicial review, the courts may rule on the constitutionality of legislation passed by the General Assembly and consider the legality of policies and regulations. The attorney general represents the interests of the state in litigation.



# How can you use your voice to advocate for change within these systems?



- Building relationships with your legislators & cultivating champions
- Being bi-partisan while being true to yourself
- Becoming a trusted source of information
- Building relationships with key players who have influence
- Identifying who the key legislative staff and committee chairs around your issue

# Why your voice matters

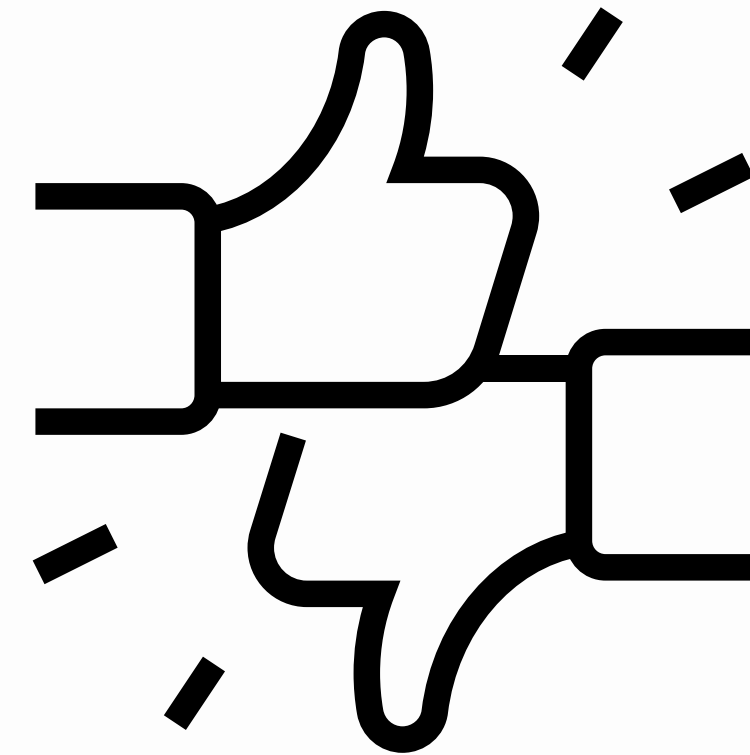
- You have important reliable information. They're not an expert in the field – YOU ARE!
- You're a trusted source based on professional background, community status or personal knowledge.
- You are a representative of a group they want to support!
- You may be personally affected by the issue.
- Your voice is even stronger when you're a constituent of the legislator you are speaking to.





# Do's and Don'ts

- Do schedule a meeting
- Do be polite & friendly
- Do be concise and to the point
- Do include personal relevance
- Do mention that you are a voting constituent
- Do thank them & follow up afterwards



- Don't be angry
- Don't be hostile
- Don't threaten
- Don't have too much information or take up too much time
- Don't lose credibility
- Don't be dishonest or exaggerate

# Helpful Tips

- Remember, legislators can see over 1000 bills a year. Be prepared with talking points and materials.
- Be a source of knowledge for them!
- If you don't know something, say so, and then get back to them with the information!

“Never doubt a small group of concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead