



Adam Tager testifies with Representative Schofield.

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The Budget Process

The budget is an enormous document that lays out, in fairly general terms, how the state's money will be spent. It is the topic of extensive negotiation between the Governor's office and the leadership of the House and Senate. The final product of those negotiations is then presented to the full House and Senate for an "up or down" vote. Amendments can be introduced to change line items, but any increase in expenditures in one area must be balanced with a decrease (or a revenue increase) in another. ***A legislator ultimately must decide how to vote on the entire package. I cannot, for example, vote for the increases in education aid but not for the tax increase. This means that we inevitably vote for components we don't like or against components we do like.***

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State Representative **Linda Schofield** *16th District - Simsbury*

Guide to the Legislative Process



The Importance of Staying Involved

Constituent input is important to legislators. It helps us to know your priorities and gives us an opportunity to communicate information on various issues. I have been impressed with the volume of mail and e-mail I receive from constituents. I try to respond within 24-48 hours. In talking with my colleagues, I know I get more communication than most legislators, which I take as a positive sign that **Simsbury residents are more attentive and engaged** than many folks.

Keeping you informed is part of my job. I am able to send out 500 newsletters per week on ongoing issues of concern. To provide more timely updates, I send out an occasional e-mail newsletter. ***If you want to be added to my e-mail list, just e-mail me at Linda.Schofield@cga.ct.gov.*** I also post my newsletters and other information on my website, at www.cga.ct.gov/hdo/016. For a more in-depth review of selected issues, I invite you to watch my show on SCTV, which explores a particular policy topic each month.

Constituents are welcome to contact me for help with various issues. My legislative aide and I have been able to resolve some problems for people, and we are always happy to help. If you need to contact me or my aide, my number at the Capitol is 240-8547.

Constituents can also come to testify at hearings on bills or to talk with me in person. The photos in this newsletter show a few towns-folk who testified with me on matters of importance to Simsbury residents.

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Frank Haviland, Maura Wertheimer, Laura and Chet Matczak, and John Nagy all attended a legislative hearing to support a bonding bill, sponsored by Representative Linda Schofield (left), to provide funding to upgrade Tariffville's Green and Park.

Understanding the Legislative Process

Understanding the legislative process is a challenge – especially from the outside looking in. I thought I would share a few “secrets” with you!

Over 4,000 bills were introduced this year. They can die a thousand different ways.

- Bills are assigned to committees based on the subject of the bill. For example, a bill dealing with electric rates is assigned to the energy committee. There is never enough time to hear every bill, so the **committee chairs prioritize the bills** within the available time. Bills that are not heard are dead for the session.
- After a public hearing, the **committee chairs decide whether or not to raise a bill for a vote** in the committee. A bill will die if no vote is held or if the vote is unfavorable.
- After a favorable vote in a committee, a bill is reviewed to determine whether to refer it to another committee, send it to the House or Senate floor for

a vote, or “hold” it for further negotiation or to let it die.

- If the bill is sent to another committee, the chairs of that committee decide whether or not to vote on it. So, again, a bill can die either from inaction or by an unfavorable vote in a second committee. **Some bills are sent to multiple committees.** If they don't make it through each committee to full votes of the House and Senate before the session ends, they die.
- Any bill that has a monetary impact must go to the Appropriations or Finance Committee. If it is not funded in the budget, it will also die.
- If a bill gets through all the committees, the **House or Senate leaders decide if there is enough time and interest to bring the bill up for a vote of the full House or Senate.** There, it can be killed in either chamber by an unfavorable vote or from inaction.
- Any bill that dies has to start from scratch in a future year, if someone wants to re-introduce it.

It's not always so grim, though, for a bill. Bills can survive in various ways, even after dying. **If a bill dies** in committee anywhere along the way, **it can be resurrected as an amendment** to another bill that is moving. So, often a bill that dies ultimately gets passed under a different bill number or in the budget, making it a real challenge to track bills.

Voting records can also be confusing. Sometimes a legislator will vote for something in committee that they oppose, based on an expectation that it will be fixed later or because they feel that further debate on the concept is warranted in the next step of the process. If they are still not happy with the bill when it reaches the floor, they may then vote against it. Sometimes a legislator may vote against a bill in committee, but for it on the floor because the content changed.