2013-2014 House Committees:
Agriculture Policy
Capital Investment
Civil Law
Commerce and Consumer Protection Finance and Policy
Early Childhood and Youth Development Policy
Education Finance
Education Policy
Elections
Energy Policy
Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Finance
Environment and Natural Resources Policy
Ethics
Government Operations
Health and Human Services Finance
Health and Human Services Policy
Higher Education Finance and Policy
Housing Finance and Policy
Jobs and Economic Development Finance and Policy
Judiciary Finance and Policy
Labor, Workplace and Regulated Industries
Legacy
Public Safety Finance and Policy
Rules and Legislative Administration
State Government Finance and Veterans Affairs
Taxes
Property and Local Tax Division
Transportation Finance
Transportation Policy
Ways and Means

*Capitol Quotes
Quotes can be found painted on the walls throughout the Capitol building. Gathered by Elmer Garnsey, chief Capitol decorator, they are meant as inspiration to elected officials and citizens who pass through the state house.

The quote featured on the front of this brochure can be found in the House of Representatives Retiring Room. It is from George Campbell (1719-1796), who was born in Scotland. As a minister, theologian and professor of divinity, he became a philosopher of rhetoric and is remembered for his work, “A Dissertation of Miracles.”

“Free and fair discussion will ever be found the firmest friend of truth.”
— George Campbell
The committee’s role

It would be impossible for any legislator to be familiar with and understand each of the thousands of bills that are introduced in any given session. Therefore, House committees on various subject matters, such as health and human services, education or agriculture, act as filters deciding which bills should be heard, or if they should be approved and then moved on through the process.

The committee holds public hearings on bills to put each bill into its best form. During the bill’s hearing, the committee can take testimony from the bill’s sponsors, the general public and experts in the areas the bill affects.

The committee has several courses of action it can take:
• amend the bill;
• combine two or more bills under one file number;
• recommend a bill to pass as introduced;
• recommend it be passed as amended;
• send it to another committee for consideration;
• vote not to approve the bill; or
• table it, which in essence delays action.

Even if a bill is voted down by a committee it can be resurrected. In addition, a bill defeated in a committee can be amended into another bill in another committee or on the House floor.

Committee appointments

Committee chairs are appointed by the Speaker of the House. These positions are generally reserved for senior caucus members. Before session begins in the first year of the biennium, members of the speaker-designate’s caucus request assignment to certain committees and the minority leader-elect submits to the speaker a list of desired committee appointments for his or her caucus members. The speaker then makes the appointments. Generally, committee memberships reflect the balance of DFLers and Republicans in the House.

If you want to testify at a committee hearing . . .

Contact the committee administrator.

Each committee has an assigned committee administrator. It is best to contact that person at least a day or two before the hearing. Provide your name and organization affiliation, if any, tell them which bill/issue area you would like to comment on and indicate if you are for or against the proposed legislation. You should also ask how much time you will be allowed for testimony. Committee and administrator contact information can be found on the House website.

Arrive to the committee hearing early.

Getting to the meeting early will give you a chance to meet the committee administrator, identify legislators and generally get comfortable in the room. Be sure to turn off your mobile device, as these devices can interfere with audio in the room.

When you testify.

When you are asked to testify, you should be seated at the testifiers’ table and begin by identifying yourself and the organization you represent, if any. Speak slowly and clearly into the microphone.

Speak through the chair.

All questions and answers during committee hearings are routed through the committee chair. Address the chair as “Madame Chair” or “Mr. Chair.”

Be brief.

Make your key points as concise as possible. Most committee hearings are limited in time, and there are generally several bills on the agenda.

Be prepared to answer questions.

The best way to make your case is to provide straightforward answers to the legislators’ questions. If you don’t know the answer, just say so.

Show respect.

Your views are important and you have a right to be treated courteously by all members and staff. Likewise, legislators are more apt to respond to polite treatment than to browbeating. There are meritorious sides to every issue. Understand the difficult position legislators have in reaching their decisions.

Provide written summaries.

A concise and clearly written letter or summary can be an effective way to help legislators understand your point of view. Notify the committee administrator beforehand of any handouts you would like to provide.