

How the game is played.

When a bill is introduced, it goes to a committee. There is no requirement for committees to do anything at all with bills. In fact, most bills simply die in committee.

Sometimes Representatives will introduce a bill, or cosponsor someone else's bill, then forget about it. Sometimes they will say they can't influence a bill once it goes to a committee, especially if the chair of the committee doesn't like the proposal.

But your Representative *can* influence what happens in committees. Here's how:

Your Representative can ask the chair of the committee to hold hearings on a bill and permit your Representative to testify about the bill.

Even when there are hearings, sometimes a committee chair won't allow further action on the bill. But your Representative can ask the chair to schedule a vote.

If the chair won't schedule a vote, your Representative can organize a discharge resolution. With only 24 other signatures, your legislator can ask the entire House to vote on the bill.

At every step in the process, the leadership of each party can influence what happens. Since leaders are elected by the members, your Representative can hold leadership accountable by publicly asking leaders for their support.

How your Representative votes is the ultimate test. However, committee votes often are not recorded or made public. Your Representative can get recorded votes and post them on his or her official web site.

Finally, nearly every law requires the Governor's approval. So your Representative can work to get the Governor's support and leadership.



Is your legislator making the grade?

A Check List for Your Representative

Writing letters, participating in vigils, and visiting legislators are important ways to hold your legislators accountable for giving Pennsylvania one of the best school funding systems in America.

Use this checklist to keep track of what your Representatives are doing. It contains a step-by-step guide to the things Representatives will do – both in your community and in Harrisburg – when they're really trying to get the job done.

When filling out the checklist for your Representative, remember that only *public* actions count. We can only measure what we can see.

See the back of this checklist for insights into the legislative process.

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Legislator Checklist

Below are questions to ask your Representative to find out whether he or she is really committed to improving our system of school funding. Each action on the list earns points for the Senator. Use the score card to the right to see whether your Representative's service is:

Advanced – 85-100 points

Proficient – 75-84 points

Basic – 65-74 points

Below Basic – 0-64 points

In your community, does your Representative...

1. Answer surveys by groups like Good Schools that inform their members about a legislator's views?
2. Feature the funding issue prominently on his or her official web site?
3. Feature the funding issue in his or her official newsletters?
4. Issue news releases and other public statements about the issue?
5. Sponsor town meetings to educate the public?
6. Urge the media to give the issue more attention?

In the General Assembly, has your Representative...

7. Introduced or co-sponsored a bill to create an adequate and equitable funding system for public schools?
8. Publicly asked the committee chair for hearings on school funding proposals?
9. Publicly asked committee chair for a vote on school funding proposals?
10. Publicly ask legislative leaders to support the proposal?
11. Organized a discharge resolution to force a vote by the Senate?
12. Publicly disclosed how they voted on every procedure or amendment, whether at the committee level or otherwise, and posted recorded vote on his or her official web site?
13. Worked with state Representatives to prepare for passage in the House when the bill passes the Senate?
14. Publicly called on the Governor to provide leadership in creating an equitable and adequate system of funding for public schools?

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In your community, is your Representative making the grade by:

1. Answering surveys and publicly releasing position statements
2. Featuring the issue on the official web site
3. Featuring the issue in official newsletters
4. Issuing a news release or commentary about the issue
5. Holding or taking part in town meetings on the issue
6. Publicly encouraging media to cover the issue

In the General Assembly, is your Representative making the grade by:

7. Introduced or co-sponsored a bill to create an adequate and equitable funding system for public schools
8. Publicly asking the committee chair for a hearing
9. Publicly asking the committee chair for a recorded vote
10. Publicly asking caucus leaders for support
11. Organizing a discharge resolution
12. Voting for the bill and publicizing votes
13. Working with legislators in the other chamber to achieve passage there
14. Publicly asking the governor for leadership on the issue

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