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# Advocacy for Agriculture in Washington

How to Navigate, Instigate,  
and Speak Out in the  
Legislature



COALITION FOR ORGANIC AND  
REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE



Tilth Alliance Conference  
Spokane, Washington  
November 2025



For a pdf of today's materials or to follow along on your phone, please  
use the following QR code



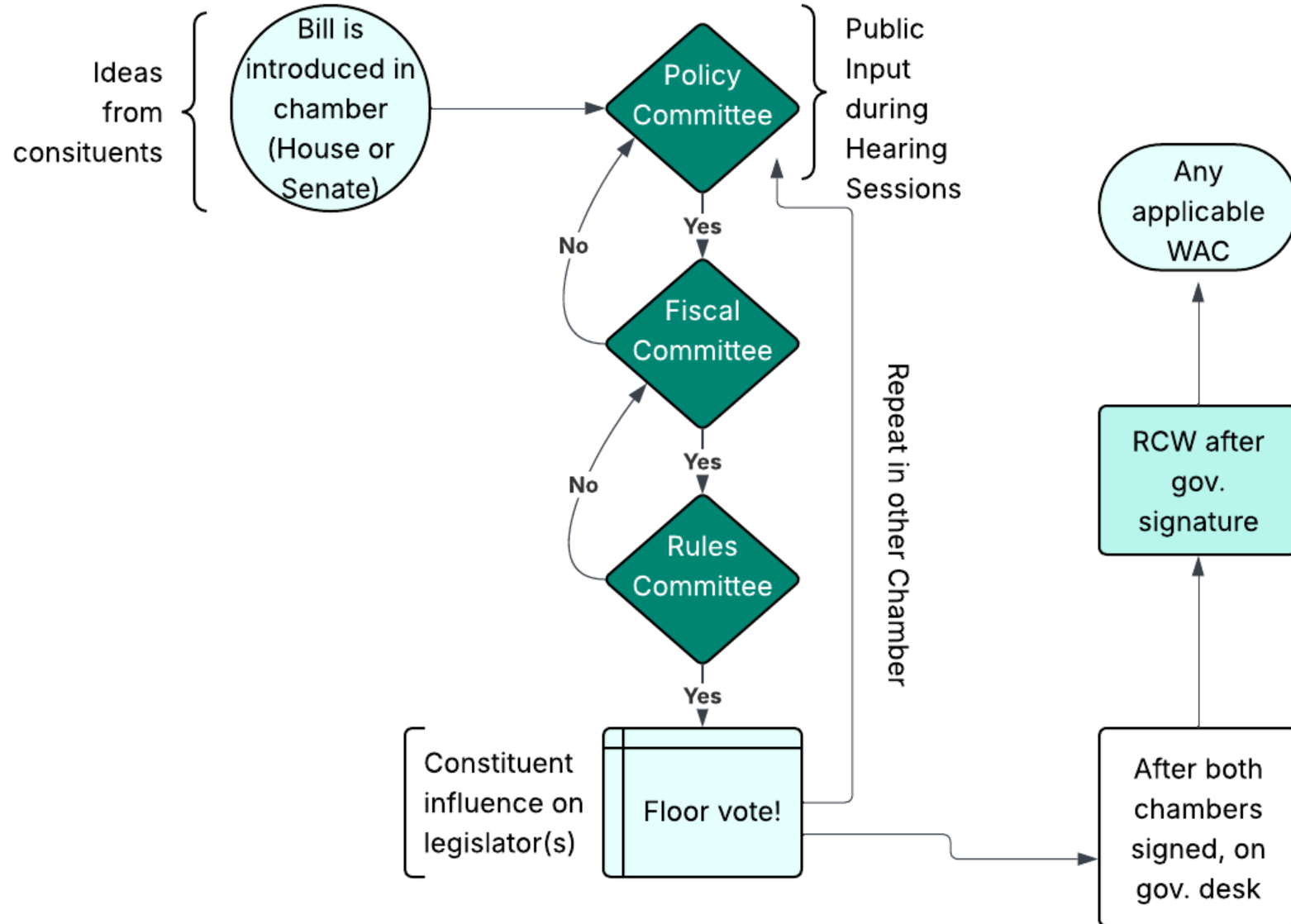
# Agenda for Today!

1. Introductions
2. Introduction to the Washington State Legislature (pictograph)
3. Where you can have influence in the system
4. Types of representation & how/where to access your legislators
5. Recent past bills in the legislature affecting food & sustainability
6. When to contact your legislators.
7. Committees & Testimony
8. Letter Writing (how-to)
9. Action Days
10. Meeting 1 on 1 with your legislators
11. Tilth and CORA (presented by Melissa)
12. Q&A

# Introductions!

- **Melissa Spear**, Tilth Alliance; CORA
- **Nils Johnson**, Lilith Moon Farm Ag. Org; Wizbang Research, LLC; Mountain J Ranch; Tilth Alliance
- **Melinda Lupe Johnson**, Lilith Moon Farm Ag. Org.; Washington Dairy Goat Association; Mountain J Ranch; Tilth Alliance

# Washington Legislative Process





# Types of representatives

## House of Representatives

- The House consists of 98 elected officials who serve two-year terms.
- Every legislative district in Washington has two representatives who live in and represent the district.
- Voters elect the 98 representatives in every even-numbered year's election.

## Senate

- Total senators: Washington has 49 state senators, one for each of the 49 legislative districts.
- County representation: A single county may be divided into multiple legislative districts, and therefore, may have more than one state senator.



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# Where to find your legislators' information

<https://leg.wa.gov/legislators/>



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## Recent past bills in the legislature affecting food & farming (Part 1)

**SB 5391:** Deals with the sustainable farms and fields grant program, passed both houses and delivered to the governor for signature.

**HB 1912:** Expands exemptions for agricultural fuels under the Climate Commitment Act and establishes procedures for verifying them.

**HB 1588:** Aims to expand opportunities for organic, regenerative, climate-smart, and sustainable producers.

**HB 1309:** Addresses the impacts of burrowing shrimp on bottom culture shellfish farming through integrated pest management research.

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## Recent past bills in the legislature affecting food & farming (Part 2)

**HB 1497:** Includes phased requirements for solid waste collection and management for jurisdictions and collection companies, focusing on organics collection and standardizing bin colors.

**Food Assistance:** The state legislature funded food banks with \$93.25 million for food assistance programs.

**School Meals:** Funding was provided for state matching money for federal nutrition programs, which supports the Meals for Kids program and the elimination of co-pays for eligible public-school students for breakfast and lunch.

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# When to contact your legislators

## ✓ *When to Contact Legislators*

- Before Key Votes or Hearings
- Early in the Legislative Process
- During Legislative Sessions
- During Recess or District Work Periods
- When Your Issue Is Imminent
- Budget and Appropriations Season
- After Public Announcements or News
- Early in a New Term





# Committees & Testimony

How to testify before a committee on a specific bill

<https://leg.wa.gov/bills-meetings-and-session/session/how-to-testify-at-a-committee-meeting/>



## Ways to Testify

- You can participate in committee hearings by:
- Testifying in person
- Testifying remotely via Zoom
- Submitting written testimony
- Signing in to note your position (PRO, CON, OTHER)

# Committees & Testimony

## ✓ Steps to Testify

### 1. Find the Hearing

- Check the committee schedule
- Subscribe to email updates or call the Legislative Information Center: **(800) 562-6000**

### 2. Prepare Your Testimony

- Keep it **brief** (2–3 minutes for oral testimony)
- Use an **outline** or bullet points
- Share **personal stories** or data to support your position
- Avoid repeating others' testimony—coordinate if possible

### 3. Sign In

- Use the Committee Sign-In page
- Sign in opens when the bill is scheduled and closes **1 hour before the hearing**
- You'll receive a Zoom link if testifying remotely (don't share it)

### 4. Deliver Your Testimony

- Be on time and wait to be acknowledged by the Chair
- Introduce yourself and your position (support/oppose)
- Be respectful and professional
- Expect questions from committee members



# Letter Writing

## DO

- **Be Clear and Concise**

State your purpose in the first paragraph (e.g., support or oppose a bill, request action).

- **Use Your Own Words**

Personalized letters carry more weight than form letters.

- **Identify Yourself as a Constituent**

Include your name, address, and ZIP code to show you live in their district.

- **Reference Specific Legislation**

Mention bill numbers or titles if applicable.

- **Explain Why It Matters to You**

Share a brief personal story or local impact.

- **Be Respectful and Professional**

Maintain a courteous tone, even if you disagree.

- **Request a Specific Action**

Ask them to vote for/against, co-sponsor, or take a position.

- **Keep It Short**

One page is ideal; focus on one issue per letter.

- **Follow Up**

Thank them for their time and ask for a response.



# Letter Writing (pt 2)

## ***DON'T***

- **Don't Threaten or Use Aggressive Language**

It undermines your credibility and may be ignored.

- **Don't Overload with Data or Jargon**

Stick to clear, understandable points.

- **Don't Send Identical Form Letters**

Legislators notice mass-produced messages.

- **Don't Forget Contact Information**

Without it, they can't confirm you're a constituent.

- **Don't Discuss Multiple Unrelated Issues**

Focus on one topic per letter for clarity.

- **Don't Assume They Know Your Position**

State it explicitly and clearly.

- **Don't Use Emotional Appeals Alone**

Combine personal impact with facts for credibility.





# Letter Writing (pt 3)

Submit Written Testimony to a committee (Optional or in addition to committee testimony)

Up to 5,000 characters plus optional PDF attachment

Can be submitted before or up to 24 hours after the hearing



# Action Days!

- Beef on the Hill in Olympia (Washington Cattleman's Association)
- Washington Potato Day (Washington State Potato Commission)
- Hunger Action Day (Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition)

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# Meeting 1 on 1 with your legislators

## Step 1: Schedule the Meeting

- Find your legislators
- Contact their legislative assistants
- Request the meeting early
- Specify your format

## Step 2: Prepare

- Know your legislator
- Choose your issue
- Craft your message
- Bring materials

## Step 3: Conduct the Meeting

- Be on time
- Introduce yourself
- Make your pitch
- Listen actively
- Be respectful

**Make sure to send a follow up thank you letter!!**



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# Tilth Alliance and CORA

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## CORA's legislative agenda:

- Fund outreach for a Washington Organic Action Plan
- Establish a permanent Inspection Cost Credit program
- Support sustainable farmers through direct grants





# What we accomplished today!

- Explored how the Washington State Legislature works and where constituents can influence policy.
- Learned when and how to contact legislators for maximum impact.
- Practiced effective testimony techniques for committee hearings (in-person, remote, written).
- Reviewed best practices for writing persuasive letters to lawmakers.
- Highlighted key Action Days for agricultural and food system advocacy.
- Prepared for one-on-one meetings with legislators, including scheduling, messaging, and follow-up.
- Shared CORA's 2026 legislative agenda

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# Question & Answer Time

