



THE SECOND AMENDMENT

A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the **People** to keep and bear arms, **shall not be infringed.**





In America we may reasonably hope that the people will never cease to regard the right of keeping and bearing arms as the surest pledge of their liberty.

St. George Tucker 1752-1827



Connecticut Legislative Process

A brief overview

- **Bill introduction** - sent to Legislative Commissioners Office (LCO) for draft wording and number assignment. * Bill is a concept only at this point.
- **Assignment to relevant committee:** IE animal related bills may go to Environment Committee, Bills requiring criminal penalties go to General Law or Judiciary committees etc etc. (Bills can, and do, go through more than one committee).
- **Bill scheduled for public hearing.** *usually only maximum of 1 to 5 days advance notice.
- **Committee takes action (or ignores bill):** bill voted out of committee, not voted out of committee, or not raised for a vote at all—in which case the bill “dies in committee”.
- **Bills voted out of committee** are sent to either another relevant committee, or the House or Senate. Whether it heads to House or Senate first depends on if the bill was introduced as a House bill or Senate bill initially. Repeat of above: bill may be voted in favor, voted against, or not raised for a vote—in which case bill dies.
- **Bills completing all votes go to Governor.** Once a bill has had a public hearing, been voted through any relevant committees, and then voted through both House and Senate then go to the Governor for signature or veto.

**At any point during the above process-a bill may be amended. The amendment makes changes to the bill. Amendments must be “germaine”, and will also have a vote in order to be attached.

Public Hearings

- Advance notice of hearings is limited. 1 to 5 days maximum. This information can be found on the CGA website, under the committee tabs. www.cga.ct.gov
- There is a signup in order to testify at public hearings. Times/place of the hearings will be posted. As well as the time of the signup-which is usually at least one to two hours before the actual hearing.
- It is strongly recommended that you submit the required number of copies of your testimony at least two hours before the hearing. The requested number of copies can be found on the committee page of the CGA website. They most often request 45 to 60 copies. These will be added to the files of each legislator on the committee, and will also go into the bill file. Note: submitting the written copies is not required, you may testify regardless of whether you have submitted copies or have written testimony prepared.
- The first hour of the hearing is usually dedicated to legislators and other VIPS, if there are only a few legislators testifying, then the full hour will not be used.

Public Hearings

- ❖ When it is your turn to speak, your name will be called. You will be given 3 minutes. A timer will sound when your 3 minutes is up. Please wait a moment to see if any legislators have questions. Note, if your name is called, and you are not in the room, they will proceed to the next name on the list.
- ❖ Two people may go to the podium at once, but you will both only have 3 minutes to speak. When speaking at the hearing, also include the bill number & title, and state your name for the record.
- ❖ Your testimony will be recorded and will become part of the public record.
- ❖ You may submit written comments and not testify. **This is important, as legislators will still see your comments, even if you cannot attend the public hearing in person. If you know someone is attending the hearing, ask them if they will take the copies up for you.
- ❖ You may also email the members of the committees, as well as the chairs. Their contact information can be found on the CGA website.
- ❖ **Always be respectful and polite. Even if you disagree with a bill or a legislators position, it will do no good to be offensive.
- ❖ **TURN OFF CELL PHONES! Do not wear camo, or bring weapons to the Capitol.**

Submitting Written Comments & Testifying at Public Hearings

- Use as many **facts** as possible, and any items that can be verified.
- Limit to one page if possible. Legislators are limited for time and are reluctant to read pages of comments. TIP-bullet points are excellent tools.
- If it is useful, attach copies of articles or information that is relevant.
- If you are asked a question by a legislator during a public hearing and you do not know the answer, admit it. Never lie, it will be discovered, and then you lose credibility.
- Never make derogatory comments about other people or legislators when testifying or submitting comments.
- Always use the bill number and title—there are literally hundreds of bills that appear every session, and some are very close in content, so you need to be clear about which bill(s) you are referencing.
- Always be clear about whether you SUPPORT or OPPOSE a bill. (**if you are not clear on your intent, you cannot expect the legislators to guess*).

Letters to Elected Officials

- Use the bill name/number at the beginning.
- Be brief and to the point.
- Avoid industry “jargon”.
- Make use of Bullet points.
- Don’t threaten or antagonize.
- Always thank the person for their time.
- Provide contact information if there are questions.
- Always indicate your town so legislators know you are a constituent.

Committees

- There are typically 2 co-chairs, one Senator and one Representative. There will also be two vice chairs and two ranking members. A list of all members can be viewed on the CGA website.
- It is useful to see if your legislator is a member of the committee overseeing the bill.
- **TIP:** If your legislator is not on the committee, find a friend who has a legislator that sits on that committee. It makes a difference if legislators hear from their constituents.
- Bills are required to be voted through committees by a certain date. Each committee has its own deadline. Bills not voted out of committee by the closing date “die in committee”.
- Bills may travel through one or more committees. However, there will only be ONE public hearing. If a bill is voted out of one committee and sent to another, there will not be another public hearing. BUT you can still submit written comments to the committee members on that committee.



A Right Not Exercised Is A Right Lost

- Attend public hearings.
- Submit written testimony to public hearings you cannot attend.
- Email the committee chairs where bills are being heard.
- Vote (or at least register to vote).
- Write letters to the editor of newspapers.
- Write your own legislators.
- Forward information & emails alerts to all friends/family.
- Find people in other districts to do the same—if your friend is a gun owner in another town—have them get involved too!

Other things you can do to be successful:

- Have your club/organization host a charity event.
- Make yourself available to local officials as a resource for questions. (call and introduce yourself).
- Attend town meetings, or legislative hearings, check websites frequently.
- ***** Join those organizations that support your views: CCDL, NRA, SAF, NSSF, GOA, CCS, Sportsmen's organizations. Your dues help their work, and they can add your name to the total numbers of constituents they represent.** *(Helpful hint- some organizations are nonprofit and you might be able to write off dues on your taxes, check with your accountant).

RESOURCES

- Most states are online.
- Many towns are online.
- League of women voters: www.lwv.org
(note-the LWV is anti-gun, but their website contains very good information about the legislative process)
- Thomas website: www.thomas.loc.gov
- U.S Senate: www.senate.gov
- Firstgov online: www.firstgov.gov
- CT General Assembly www.cga.ct.gov
*Things you can find on the CGA site include: text & status of bills, voting record of each legislator, committee & public hearing information, directions to the capital, live streaming video of House & Senate.