

Basics About the Oregon Legislature

The Oregon Legislature is now in session and will continue to meet until at least June. It's made up of the House (60 members) and the Senate (30 members). You can learn more about them on the website <http://www.leg.state.or.us/> If you want to find out who your legislators are, [you can go to the Legislature's Find Your Legislator page](#).

The Oregon **Senate** is made up of 18 Democrats and 12 Republicans. 16 votes are needed to pass any bill. The Oregon **House of Representatives** is made up of 33 Republicans and 27 Democrats and requires 31 votes to pass legislation. Any Constitutional Amendment (or any *change to Measure 11, even though it is not a Constitutional Amendment*) requires a 2/3 vote in both the House (40 votes) and Senate (20 votes) to pass. (Note: When Measure 11 passed, Measure 10 also passed, requiring a 2/3 vote of the legislature to change any sentencing law passed by voters.)

Legislators will make up their minds about how to vote based on a number of factors, including what they hear from their constituents (the people who elected them). There are several ways to let your Legislator how you feel. Write, call, fax, or email. We will be scheduling a lobby day later this session, where a number of people will be able to go in pairs to meet with Legislators face to face and explain in real terms why we need to change Oregon's criminal justice system. **If you are on our Action Alert list, you will get a notice about Lobby Day.** If you are not already signed up, you can [sign up for Action Alerts here](#).

Committees

Prior to bills being voted on by the full Senate and House, they will be "in committee." Committees hammer out many of the most important parts of bills before they are voted on. Several key committees will be meeting during the legislative session to debate issues such as the **Corrections budget, mandatory minimum sentencing, and other sentencing issues**. All meetings are open to the public, although you cannot generally offer *effective* testimony unless you do some advance planning.

All meetings are held at the Capitol in Salem. To see what the agenda is for a particular meetings, you can check: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/05reg/agenda/webagendas.htm>. Here's a quick summary of key committees that we will be monitoring:

Senate Judiciary Committee meets every Monday and Thursday at 1 PM.

House Criminal Law Subcommittee (Judiciary) meets every Tuesday and Thursday at 8:30 AM

House Judiciary meets every Friday at 8:30 AM

Public Safety Subcommittee (Ways and Means) meets every Monday and Thursday 1-4 PM (as of January 18, this committee had not yet begun to meet).

WPP staff and volunteers will often be in attendance at these meetings. Come and find us!

Key Legislators in 2005:

It's the votes of Legislators that determine which bills will become Oregon's laws. Here's some key Legislators who will be working on criminal justice related bills this session.

State Senate:

State Sen. Avel Gordly has been named chair of the Public Safety subcommittee of Ways and Means, the committee that will craft the eventual DOC budget.

State Sen. Ginny Burdick is chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, the group of legislators who will consider bills like earned time expansion, M11 reform and other key pieces of our legislative agenda.

State House of Representatives:

State Rep. Wayne Krieger is chair of the House Judiciary Committee.

State Rep. Jeff Barker is heading the Criminal Law Subcommittee of House Judiciary.

Another key Legislator in the House of Representative is **State Rep. Greg McPherson**, vice-chair of House Judiciary.

Other key legislators:

Senate President Peter Courtney, House Speaker Karen Minnis, Senate Democratic Leader Kate Brown and House Democratic Leader Jeff Merkley will all be key players in the upcoming legislative sessions.

If one these Legislators is your Legislator, please be sure that whenever you are in contact with them, you let them know that they represent you and that you support safe and sensible criminal justice reform. If your not sure, you can [go to this page to find your legislator.](#)