

## How to find information about a legislative bill online

The General Assembly's website is known as the Rhode Island Legislative Information Network: [www.rilin.state.ri.us](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us). (You can get there through the Medical Society's website, [www.rimed.org](http://www.rimed.org): click on "Links" at the top, then on "RI State Government" at the left, and finally on "Rhode Island General Assembly.")

Click on "Legislation" in the horizontal bar at top. The rest is fairly self-evident, except for the odd term "Public Laws," which has a special and limited meaning in Rhode Island. "Public laws" are recently passed laws that have not yet been incorporated into the General Laws of Rhode Island. (The "General Laws" are the full body of statutes that are currently in force in Rhode Island, excluding any "Public Laws" that have been enacted but have yet to be integrated into the General Laws.)

Finding a particular bill is easy if you know the bill's number, but it can be difficult if you do not. Also, quite a few days can pass between the introduction of a bill and the time it is assigned a number and thus becomes accessible. Bills can also be located under the name of their lead sponsor (click on "Bill Status") or by doing a search using key words, though this method can get tedious.

You can track the progress of a bill (hearings, votes, amendments) through the General Assembly website too. As bills are amended, the updated versions are posted on the website, often as "Substitute A" or "Substitute B" of the original bill.

The General Assembly website is also useful for identifying your own legislators (every Rhode Island resident is represented in the General Assembly by one State Representative and one State Senator) and communicating with them. ❖