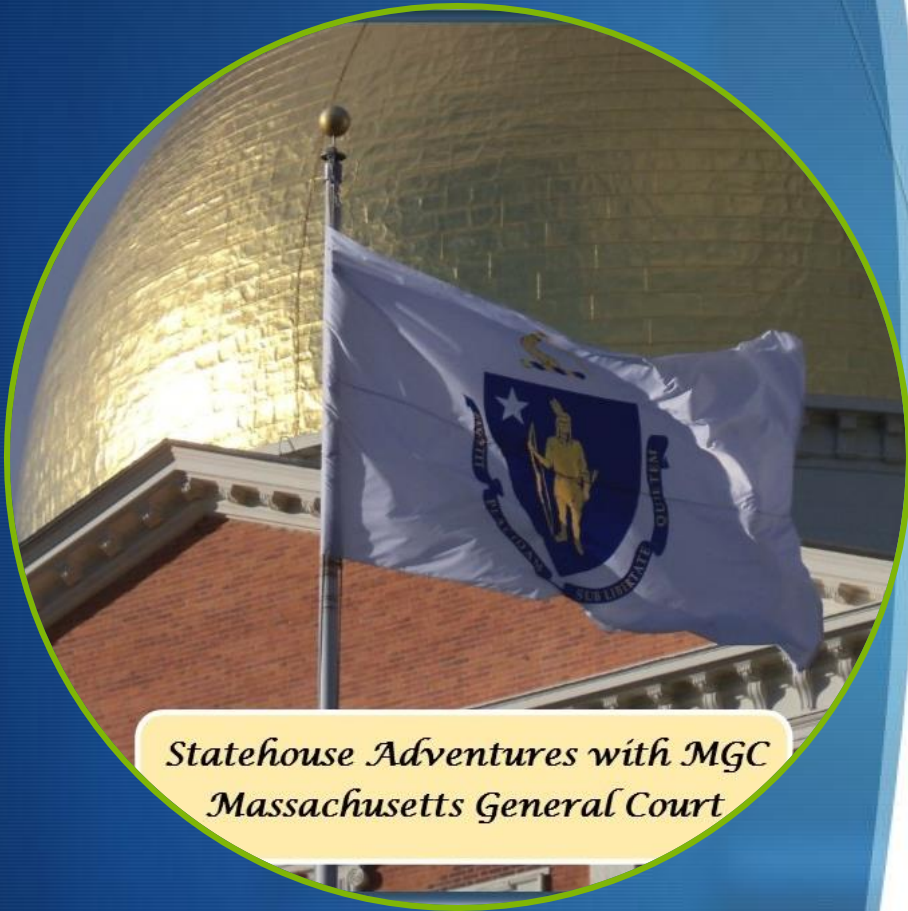


The background of the slide is a photograph of the Massachusetts State House. The large, golden dome is the central focus, partially obscured by the text. In the foreground, a white flag with the blue and gold seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is flying on a pole. The building's red brick facade and classical architectural details are visible below the flag.

*A Workshop for Genealogists:
Keeping Records Open in
Massachusetts*

*Statehouse Adventures with MGC
Massachusetts General Court*



*Statehouse Adventures with MGC
Massachusetts General Court*

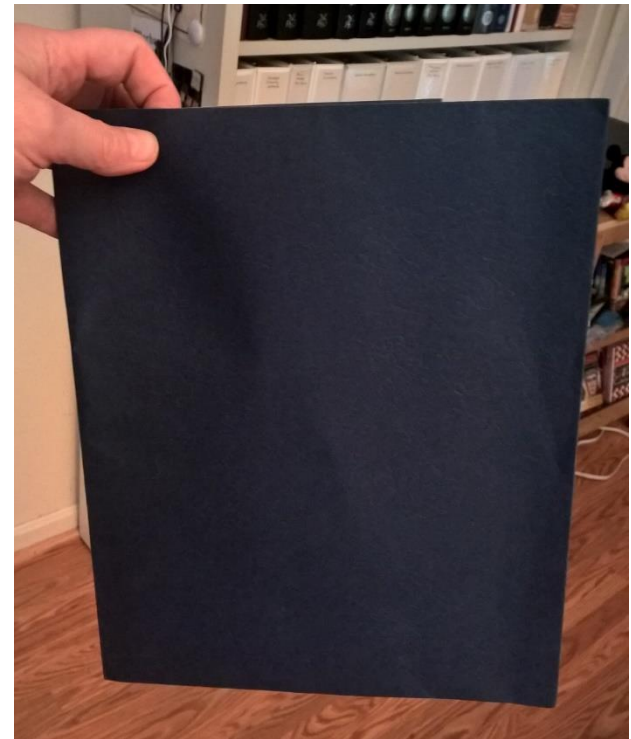
Workshop

By the end of the hour, you will learn the legislative process, be able to search for bills, determine bill status, and find legislators.

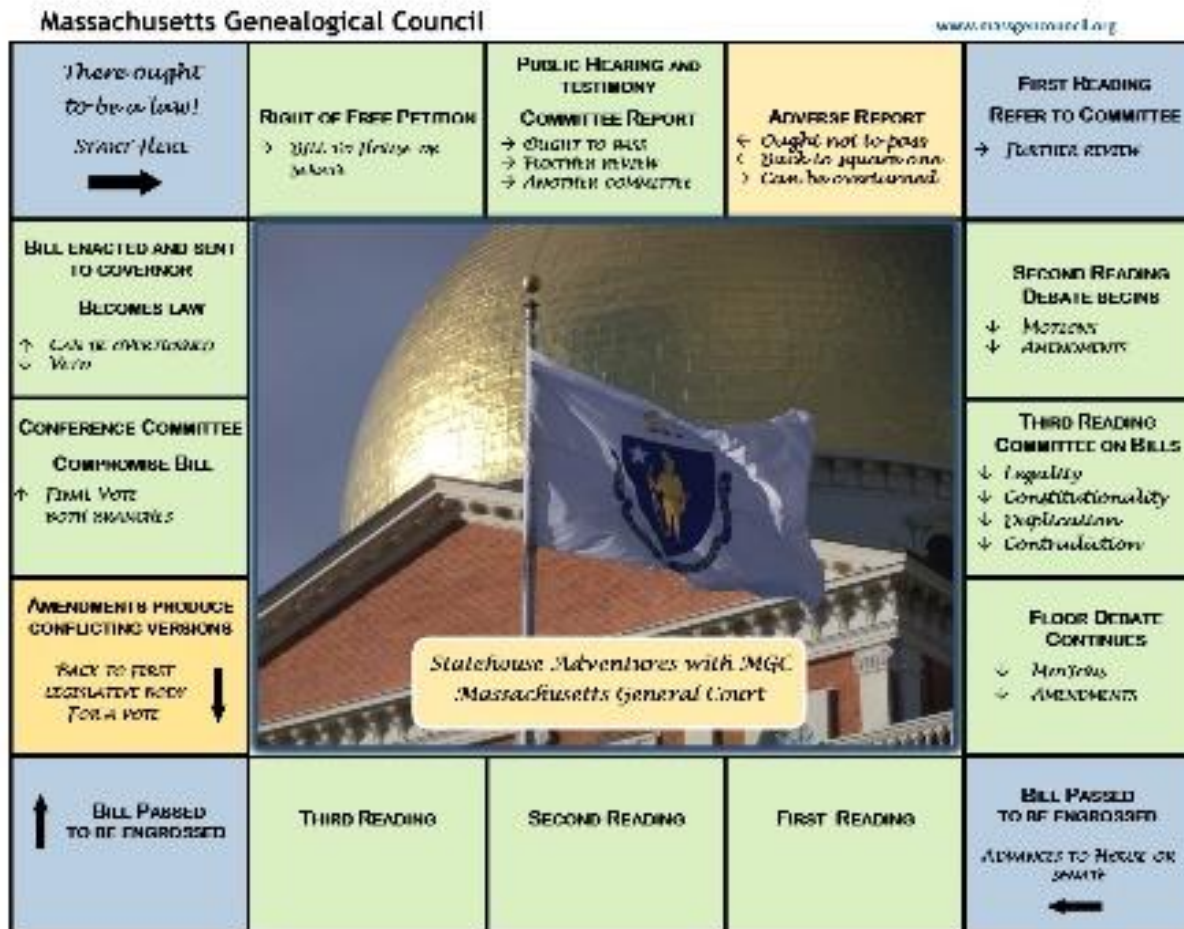
Workshop Material

Your Folder

- ◆ Legislative Process Map with descriptions on back
- ◆ List of Useful Links
- ◆ Glossary



Each Legislation Session Is Two Years



There Ought to Be a Law!

*There ought
to be a law!*

START HERE



- ◆ Before the session starts, the first step is recognizing that there should be a change to the M.G.L., the Massachusetts General Law.
- ◆ Articulate that as a bill or petition.
- ◆ Find a legislator to submit it.

Bill Submission

- ◆ The legislator submits the text of the bill and obtains the bill number.
 - ◆ H bills were submitted on the House side.
 - ◆ S bills were submitted on the Senate side.
- ◆ Introduced bills are assigned to Joint Committees. There are 26 on which both representatives and senators sit.

S. 1630

Section 19D. The custodians of birth, marriage, and death records will provide non-certified copies of records on plain paper rather than safety paper. These copies will be marked "for research purposes only, not to be used as evidence." The cost will be 20% of the cost of a certified copy.

The Joint Committee Hearing

- ◆ Monitor the legislative site for committee assignments and scheduled hearings. Generally there is only three days notice, so monitor twice a week.
- ◆ Arrive early enough to go through Security and sign your name on the witness sheet.

PUBLIC HEARING AND TESTIMONY	
COMMITTEE REPORT	ADVERSE REPORT
→ <i>OUGHT TO PASS</i>	← <i>Ought not to pass</i>
→ <i>FURTHER REVIEW</i>	← <i>Back to square one</i>
→ <i>ANOTHER COMMITTEE</i>	→ <i>Can be overturned</i>

Joint Committee Hearing

- ◆ The joint committee schedules a public hearing on the bill.
- ◆ The public attends the hearing and testifies before the committee.
- ◆ The public may also submit written testimony.

Joint Committee Hearing

- ◆ Mary Ellen Grogan testifying on behalf of S. 1629 and Barbara Mathews on S. 1630 before the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight.



Determination

- ◆ The committee will later meet in an executive session (which is open to the public) to make their determination:
 - ◆ Ought to pass. (Bill moves forward.)
 - ◆ Ought not to pass. (Bill is dead unless a substitute is made)
 - ◆ Reported favorably as changed.

First Reading

- ◆ The First Reading of a bill reported favorably out of committee occurs automatically when the bill is printed in the Journal of the House or Senate Clerk.
- ◆ A bill with financial impact always goes to the House or Senate Ways and Means Committee.

FIRST READING
REFER TO COMMITTEE

→ *FURTHER REVIEW*

House Ways and Means

- ◆ In 2009, both MGC and the Town Clerks Association submitted “gut-and-stuff” bills on vital records access. Both supported computerization, and improved security. The TCA bill added some records closure text.
- ◆ The TCA bill was reported favorably out of the Joint Committee on Public Health.
- ◆ MGC supported parts of the bill, but intervened in critical areas when it was being considered in the House Ways and Means Committee.
<http://massgencouncil.org/index.php/legislation/79-letterchairmurphy>

Second Reading

- ◆ The bill having been considered by committees, it is placed on the agenda for its Second Reading.
- ◆ The bill is subject to debate, motions and amendments.

**SECOND READING
DEBATE BEGINS**

↓ *MOTIONS*
↓ *AMENDMENTS*

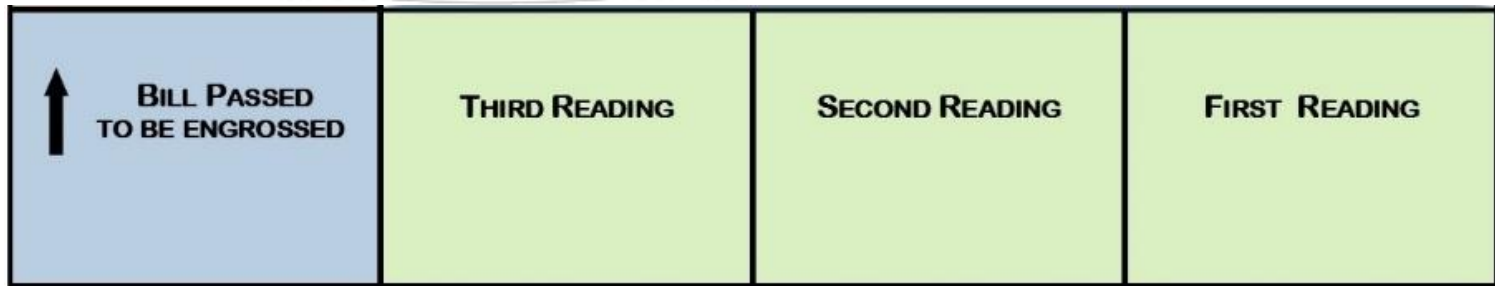
Committees on Bills in the Third Reading

- ◆ The Committee on Bills in the Third Reading examines technical points, legality, and constitutionality.
- ◆ Bill is read a third time, subject to debate, motions, and amendments.
- ◆ The bill is Engrossed when the branch votes favorably on it.

THIRD READING COMMITTEE ON BILLS

- ↓ *Legality.*
- ↓ *Constitutionality*
- ↓ *Duplication*
- ↓ *Contradiction*

Bill Advances to Other Branch



- ◆ In the other branch, the bill passes through a similar process, subject to debate, motions, and amendments.
- ◆ If this other branch approves, it is engrossed in that branch.

Conference Committee



- ◆ If the bill passed by the second branch had changes compared to its version in the first branch, these have to be resolved in the Conference Committee and returned for a Concurrence vote.
- ◆ Once a bill is enacted in both branches, it goes to the governor for signature.
 - ◆ It can be signed into law.
 - ◆ It can be allowed into law without signature.
 - ◆ It can be vetoed.
 - ◆ The governor can request changes.

Making Our Concerns Known

Hands-on exercises to:

- Find legislation that has been introduced.
- Figure out what the bill impacts.
- Write a fact sheet.
- Write testimony.
- Find a legislator.



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Massachusetts General Court*

Finding Legislation

- ◆ <https://malegislature.gov/>
- ◆ Search on keywords such as births, marriages, deaths, etc.
- ◆ Search for “illegitimate” and then for “out-of-wedlock”.
- ◆ Search for S 1629 and for H 2820.

Figuring Out What the Bill Does

- ◆ Rarely is a bill's action on the law clear. Often it is written in regards to deleting or inserting words into the [Massachusetts General Laws](#).
- ◆ How to assess what the bill does.
 - ◆ Find the applicable M.G.L.
 - ◆ What does it say now? What will it say if the bill is passed?
 - ◆ What changes will that create?

Write a Fact Sheet

- ◆ Describe what problem the bill addresses.
- ◆ Write what effect the bill would have if it were enacted.
- ◆ If it has a financial outcome, assess and describe it.
- ◆ The MGC 2009 gut-and-stuff bill fact sheet:
<http://massgencouncil.org/index.php/legislation/65-bills822>

Write Testimony

- ◆ Written testimony should have a title showing whether it supports or opposes a particular bill number.
 - ◆ Written testimony should accurately describe who you are and what your interest is.
 - ◆ It may be submitted electronically.
 - ◆ It is good to attach a Fact Sheet to the testimony.
- ◆ MGC has a sample letter on the website.
<http://massgencouncil.org/index.php/legislation/model-letter>

Find a Legislator

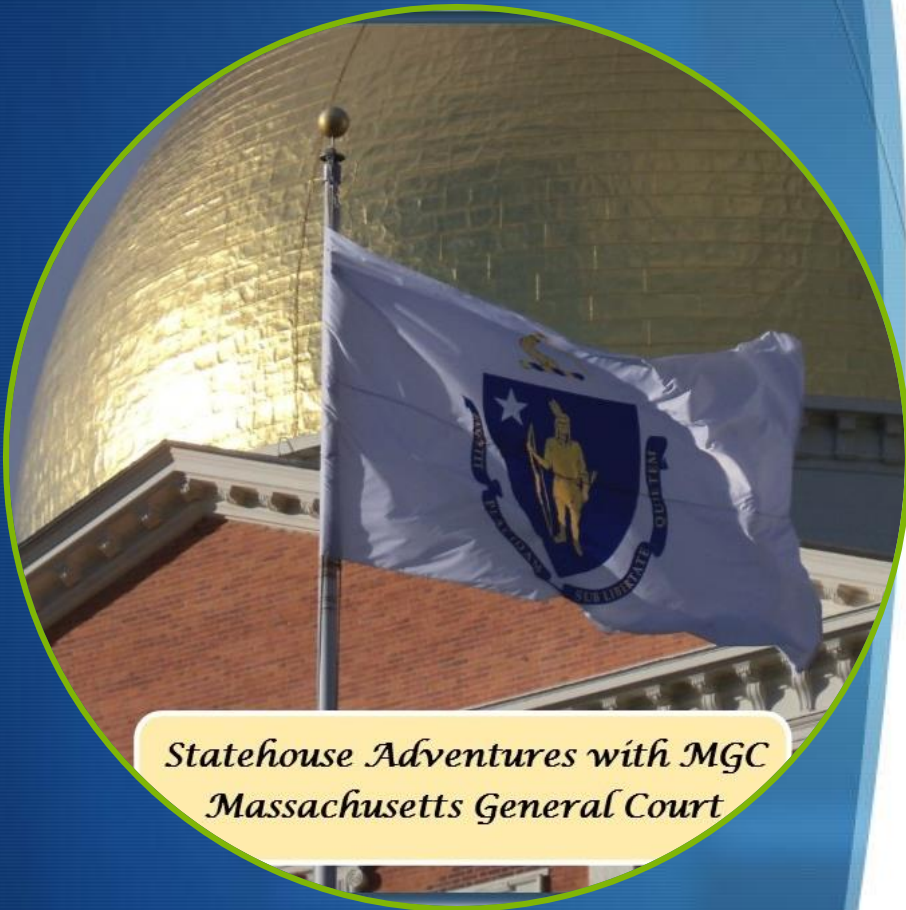
House or Senate

- ◆ <https://malegislature.gov/>
- ◆ Enter your zip code to find your legislator.
 - ◆ If more than one representative is listed for your town, check on the District tab of each legislator to see which precincts in that town are in his or her District.
- ◆ Note on which committees your representative and senator serve.

Citizens' Legislative Seminar

- ◆ Two-day program sponsored by the Massachusetts Senate.
- ◆ Takes place twice a year on Beacon Hill and includes a mock Senate session.
- ◆ Must ask your Senator to sponsor you.
- ◆ It's fabulous!





*Statehouse Adventures with MGC
Massachusetts General Court*

What's Next?

- Keep a watchful eye over newly introduced legislation.
- Prepare a fact sheet about the impact of bills that you support or oppose.
- Be prepared to testify at committee hearings.

Thank you.