

**How a Bill Really Becomes a Law  
(Park Your Cherry Tree at the Door)  
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- I. Introduction
  - A. Cherry Tree reference
  - B. ABC Schoolhouse Rock “I’m Just a Bill”
    - 1. Citizens contact their elected officials about busses stopping at railroad crossing and then there are hearing in both chambers where eventually it passes.
    - 2. Basics
      - a. We vote for elected officials who listen to us and then we have influence in a bicameral process to pass legislation.
  - C. All true in theory but it misses a lot of points.
    - 1. My talk is to fill in these details and offer some points in terms of how you can increase your influence.
  
- II. Reality of today’s political environment
  - A. America’s Noisy Democracy
    - 1. Benjamin Barber’s *Strong Democracy*
    - 2. Democracy is noisy
    - 3. Lots of talk and talkers
      - a. Noise
        - (1) people
        - (2) lobbyists and interest groups Television
        - (3) Radio
        - (4) Newspapers
        - (5) Telephones
        - (6) E-mail
        - (7) social media
        - (8) Democracy is noisy but who is listening?
          - (a) How to get the message out with so many other talkers?
  - B. The World of Politainment
    - 1. Merging politics and entertainment

- 2. Postmodern merger of public and private worlds
  - 3. We are distracted by the sideshows
  - C. Culture of Distrust
    - 1. Declining Distrust in Government and political process
  - D. The World of the Social Media
    - 1. Alternative facts and realities
  - E. Entrenched polarization and partisanship
- III. The Problem
- A. How to communicate in:
    - 1. A Noisy World,
    - 2. With few listeners,
    - 3. That is politainment
    - 4. Distorted with social media
    - 5. Full of distrust?
    - 6. Polarized?
- IV. Structural Issues
- A. Entrenched money and lobbyists who have built up personal relationships
    - 1. Studies point to the upper class bias in the political process if we look at whose interests win.
    - 2. Drafting their own bills or interest groups come with ready-made bills
  - B. A legislative built to kill legislation
  - C. Multiple committees and pressure point to kill legislation
  - D. Full time versus part time people advocating
    - 1. They can outlast you?
  - E. Part-time legislature with limited agenda, personal biases, limited attention spans, and often limited knowledge
  - F. Odds are against you in terms of proposing an idea and winning
- V. What to do? Some Tips
- VI. Communicating with Legislators
- A. Choice of Communication
  - B. Real constituents and the rule of five
  - C. Tell a personal story and what you want
  - D. Keep it short and simple
  - E. Follow up
  - F. Get others to contact them
  - G. Understanding their agenda
  - H. Make it win/win and not zero-sum game

- VII. Working with the Media
  - A. Reporters have a job to do and want to cover a good story
  - B. Define the story for them
  - C. Use to help set the agenda and define the issues
  - D. Importance of local newspapers
  - E. Elements of a good press release
    - 1. Short
    - 2. Third Person
    - 3. Write the story for them
    - 4. Use quotes
    - 5. The Five Ws
    - 6. No jargon
    - 7. Contact person
    - 8. Embargoing
  - F. Press conferences
    - 1. Short and brief
    - 2. One speaker
    - 3. Time of day
    - 4. Visual, audio, or print?
  - G. Social Media
    - 1. Good for organizing, communicating, and finding supporters
    - 2. Same rules as other media
  
- VIII. Minnesota's Political Culture
  - A. Passive Aggressive culture
  - B. Low tolerance for dissent
  - C. High premium on consensus
  - D. Weak on eye contact
  
- IX. Working with public/Others
  - A. Their knowledge base
  - B. Their agenda?
  - C. Their attention span
  - D. Understand the needs of others
  
- X. Conclusions
  - A. Odds are against you getting what you want, at least in one legislative session.
  - B. Understanding the context and some of these techniques on communications will help.