Legislative 101

By Amy West 😊
**The Government:**

Why does it matter to **ME**?
How does it affect you?

- Government tells us what we can and can’t do
  - Laws, laws, laws
    - Protection laws (assault, theft, murder)
    - Age limits: driving, smoking, drinking, working, “adulthood”
    - Truancy laws
    - Driving while texting
    - Bullying laws
    - # of cases a worker can have
    - Who kids in foster care can be placed with
How Does It All Work?

Government Basics
U.S. Government
Nebraska Government

THREE BRANCHES

LEGISLATIVE
- Unicameral legislature of 49 senators

EXECUTIVE
- Governor Dave Heineman
- Executive Branch Agencies (e.g. DHHS)

JUDICIAL
- Nebraska Supreme Court
- Court of Appeals
- Juvenile Courts

Have you ever...
- Followed a law?
  - Legislative Branch
- Had a caseworker?
  - Executive Branch
- Gone to court?
  - Judicial Branch
The Nebraska Legislature

- Creates Nebraska’s laws!
- In session every year
- Lasts 60 or 90 days (not including weekends/days off/holidays!)
- 49 senators are broken up into smaller committees:
  - 14 standing
  - 4 select
  - 8 special
Who’s Representing YOU?

- Each senator represents one district
- Who are they?
  - Must be 21, have lived in the district they represent for 1+ year, be a registered voter, and never have been convicted of a felony
  - Senators are citizens, too!
    - Most senators have other jobs
- How do they get there?
  - Elected by citizens
  - Serve up to two 4-year terms
HOW OUR LAWS ARE MADE

Where to start??

U.S. Constitution Article 1 Section 8
‘Congress shall have Power...to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper”
Lawmaking

Here’s the basic idea:

- A problem...
- An idea!
- A bill is introduced
- Senators vote on the bill
- With enough votes, the bill becomes a law
- Yippee!!!
Lawmaking in Nebraska

Public Hearing
Standing Committee

General File
Senators debate the bill

Select File
Senators debate the bill AGAIN

Final Reading
Final vote on the bill

Governor Approval

LAW!
Where do you come in?
Where to start??
Advocacy at the Legislature

- Testify at a public hearing
  - Support/Oppose/Neutral
- Contact your senator or the Governor
  - Phone calls, letters, emails, face-to-face
- Use media to support your position
  - Op-eds, blogs, action alerts
- Other methods:
  - Press conference, rally, draft a bill, interim study
THE END

Questions???

YAY!!!!
We made it!