SURVIVING YOUR FIRST SESSION

2022 TIPS

COMMENTS FROM PREVIOUS FIRST-YEAR LEGISLATORS WHO SURVIVED ONE!

- Don't let the first day get you down! You are not alone in knowing NOTHING!

- If you have questions, ask! Talk to other Legislators or staff members.

- Consider good snow tires (studs are best) for the Helena hills! Maybe outfit your feet with Yaktrax to avoid slipping on icy parking lots and sidewalks.

- Attend orientation and the "Room to Roam" options. Ask questions!

- Try to find common issues and values across both sides of the aisle.

- Get lots of rest. Work hard to stay healthy and avoid the "Capitol crud"! Go to functions but leave early!

- Get as familiar as possible with the Montana Constitution and the Rules, House/ Senate, and Joint Rules. Learn and follow the rules of decorum.

- Attend the Capitol tour and keep a map with you until you know where all the out-of-the-way rooms are!

- Save time for study! Focus on the bills that come to your committee(s) and the bills that will be on second and third reading.

- Respond to important constituent email quickly during free moments.

- Lobbyists play an important role in the legislative process. Just remember that they represent their clients' interests and have information from that perspective.

- Carry several bills (but no more than 10). Don't pick up all your bills or introduce them all at the same time. Write introductions for your first bills, keeping them short and precise. Long intros kill bills!

- Be aware of bill deadlines to make sure your bill makes it through the process.

- When you make a mistake, admit it, rectify it (if possible), and move on.

- Before session starts, watch videos on the website of past hearings and committee floor action. You will come with a greater understanding of exactly what's going to happen during your first committee or your first committee of the whole!

- Visit the Legislator Training website (https://legislator.mt.gov) and review the resources available.