



For Immediate Release

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**LWVKY URGES GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO RESTORE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
IN LAWMAKING PROCESS**

LOUISVILLE, KY-Today, the League of Women Voters of Kentucky released *How Can They Do That? Transparency and Citizen Participation in Kentucky's Legislative Process*. The report provides results of a review of the processes used to pass bills in a sample of legislative sessions between 1998 to 2022.

The analysis shows that the Kentucky General Assembly has increasingly fast-tracked legislation in ways that make it difficult or impossible for citizens, journalists, and fellow legislators to review and comment on important and sometimes controversial bills.

These processes violate a basic principle of our democracy: ***The people have a right to participate in decisions that affect them.***

Major Findings: Our analysis identified four procedural maneuvers that undermine citizen participation:

- Replacing bills with substitute versions on short notice with little time for review.
- Holding required “readings” of bills before any committee has considered the bill, which allows fast-tracking the bill for passage with no time for public input.
- Holding “floor” (full House or Senate) votes on bills the same day those bills were approved in committee.
- Holding floor votes on free conference committee reports (which may contain new bill language) on the same day the reports are filed.

Even though some legislators may claim that procedures like these have always happened, our analysis showed that **25 years ago, less than 5% of bills** that became law used one or more of those maneuvers. In 2002, the percentage began to increase rather dramatically. **By 2022, 32% of bills that passed the House and 24% that passed the Senate** were fast-tracked in ways that cut out the public. There is indeed a pattern of increasing use of fast-track maneuvers that make participation more difficult.

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Major Recommendations: The General Assembly can strengthen citizens' participation in our democracy in four ways:

- Hold the three required bill “readings” on three separate days after a standing committee sends the bill to the whole House or Senate for a vote.
- Make committee substitute bills available online at least one full day before the committee meeting where the substitute will be considered.
- Allow at least one full day between the last standing committee action on a bill and the House or Senate floor vote on the bill.
- Allow at least one full day between free conference committee revisions to a bill and the House or Senate floor vote on that changed bill.

“Our democracy depends on informed and active public participation in decision-making,” said Jennifer Jackson, President of the LWVKY. “While elections are crucial, public engagement should extend beyond voting alone. Citizens must have the opportunity to contribute throughout the legislative process, and lawmakers should prioritize careful study and listening to ensure a comprehensive and participatory approach to finalizing legislation.”

The report, *How Can They Do That? Transparency and Citizen Participation in Kentucky’s Legislative Process*, is available at www.lwvky.org/how-can-they-do-that

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