



Key Principles: Bill Draft Requests

1. The description of your bill draft request (“please describe your request” text box on the bill drafting system) is the most important component for the drafter.

- a. The best bill draft requests include a clear, narrative account of the intent, purpose, and goal of the request, including a description of the issue or problem that you are trying to address and a description of how you would like to address that issue or problem.
- b. Please avoid vague or non-descriptive language such as “child safety act” or “please see attached.”

2. Confidentiality is taken seriously but is flexible and can be adjusted to best suit your needs.

- a. We default to “strict confidentiality” for any bill draft request that we receive, meaning that we will not discuss the contents of the request with any other individual or entity until you instruct otherwise.
- b. There is a box that you may check on the bill drafting system to authorize “normal confidentiality,” which allows the drafter to share the nature of your request with anyone who may be able to assist with the drafting of the legislation, such as state agencies. This is entirely optional.
- c. We can’t work with a lobbyist or stakeholder or even acknowledge the existence of a bill draft request to any such individual unless you specifically authorize us to do so.
- d. We’ve worked with all different levels of confidentiality, so please don’t hesitate to include specific instructions in the description box on the bill drafting system. Some examples:
 - i. This is a recommendation of JLARC, so please work with JLARC staff to craft the language before you send a draft for my review.
 - ii. Once you’ve completed a draft, please share with Ms. Lobbyist but please request that Ms. Lobbyist not disclose the contents of the draft to any other individual or entity.
 - iii. This bill will likely have a state fiscal impact, so please share the draft language with House Appropriations Committee staff to receive their input on the likely impact.

3. Draft bill language and other supporting documents are not necessary but are often helpful and we welcome them from any source.

- a. Draft language and other supporting documents such as email correspondence, studies, reports, Virginia regulations, federal laws and regulations, and other states’ laws and regulations are not a substitute for a clear statement of intent in the description box on the bill drafting system (see above). Especially during the weeks leading up to the deadline to request legislation to be prefiled (Monday November 30, 2026), when DLS receives hundreds of bill draft requests every day, opening up attachments in order to discern the requestor’s intent can consume a significant amount of time.
- b. If applicable, please ensure that draft language includes accurate, up-to-date versions of current law and differentiates between current law and new provisions of law. Methods for differentiating include striking, bolding, italicizing, underlining, or color coding language.
- c. If possible, please send attachments as a PDF.
- d. Alternatively, documents can be hyperlinked in an email or in the description box of the request on the bill drafting system.



4. We welcome any other special drafting instructions that you may wish to provide. A few examples:

- a. You may need to review a first draft sooner than the standard deadline for the return of first drafts (30 days) for any number of reasons, including to present the bill draft at a stakeholder meeting or a local town hall, and we do our absolute best to accommodate your needs. Please simply provide a clear and detailed description of your preferred timeline at the time of the bill draft request.
- b. You may be ready to submit a bill draft request but don't yet have a key supporting document from a stakeholder (e.g. draft language). If that is the case, you're welcome to submit the request, but please include a note that you are waiting on draft language and will send a copy when it is available.
- c. When returning drafts for your review by email, we'll default to your standard senate.virginia.gov or house.virginia.gov email address unless you specify otherwise at the time of the bill draft request.

5. The bill draft request form on the bill drafting system contains two other nonessential but useful data elements: type of legislation (bill, single-house resolution, or joint resolution) and subject (Courts of Justice, Finance and Taxation, Transportation, etc.).

- a. If you forget to or don't feel confident enough to fill in these details on the bill drafting system request form, don't worry about it.
- b. However, even if you're not sure, feel free to make an educated guess, especially on the subject area. This becomes particularly helpful to us at DLS as we near the deadline for requests for legislation to be prefiled (Monday November 30, 2026); as the volume of requests increases, an indication of the subject area helps us quickly assign each request to the appropriate drafter.
- c. Most requests will be bills. The most common resolutions are commending and memorial resolutions, study resolutions, and constitutional amendments.

6. Nothing is set in stone. We welcome continued communication.

If your needs or desires change after you've submitted your request, just call or email the drafter and he or she will be delighted to hear from you and adjust as necessary.