

Under the Dome
HOW AN IDEA BECOMES A LAW
by State Representative Sue Schafer
Representing Edgewater, Wheat Ridge and Lakewood
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Hello, Citizens of Wheat Ridge and Edgewater!

Have you ever wondered how a good idea becomes a law? If you have a good idea for a law, please get in touch with me! (See my contact information below.)

A lot of good ideas from citizens become law by a legal process called “drafting.”

As your State Representative, if I agree with your idea, I will take it to a lawyer called a drafter at the Capitol and have it written into legal language. Then, I will find a State Senator to co-sponsor it with me.

Here is a specific example of how one of my bills started. A constituent informed me he was concerned about safety in public schools after a dangerous incident at Montrose High School . A high school girl was stabbed outside her locker by another student who had a troubled past. My constituent’s idea was that a student who has been in juvenile corrections, a state mental hospital, or a day treatment facility should only return to the public school when school administrators have been notified that the student has in the past been a risk to the safety of other students, adults, himself, or herself. I contacted the school principals’ and

superintendents' association who strongly endorsed this idea. I then requested the drafter to write a bill addressing the safety issue and to also include a success plan for the at-risk student. What happens next is a long journey for a citizen's "good idea" which has now become House Bill 10-1274. Could anyone possibly be opposed to such a strong measure for school safety? Yes. Many concerns were immediately raised by children's rights attorneys, mental health professionals, and counties who were worried that notifying principals might stigmatize at-risk students, jeopardize their right to a quality public education, and cost a county money. I have worked over 14 months with supporters and opponents to find a compromise of fairness and safety for both the principals and the at-risk students. I've learned that passing a bill requires an enormous amount of collaboration, mutual respect, and listening to others' points of view.

Any bill is first heard in a committee, then debated in the House by 65 legislators, and then debated a third time for the formal recorded vote. House Bill 10-1274 passed the House and now goes to the Senate. Please stand by to learn if this good idea actually becomes a law. Do you have a good idea for a law?

Please email me at sue.schafer.house@state.co.us or call my office at 303-866-5522. Also, be sure to visit my website at www.sueschafer.com for upcoming

public Town Halls and for “Coffee with Sue” dates! I look forward to hearing from you!

Rep. Schafer