



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL



CARL LEVIN CENTER  
FOR OVERSIGHT AND DEMOCRACY

LEVIN CENTER



FOR OVERSIGHT  
AND DEMOCRACY



WAYNE STATE  
Law School

# Introduction to Legislative Oversight

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December 10, 2024



# Agenda

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- About the Levin Center
- State Oversight Academy
- What is Oversight?
- Recommendations



# What is the Carl Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy?



U.S. Sen. Carl Levin



PA Oversight Committee



CSG West Annual Meeting



NCOIL Summer Meeting

- Workshops for Congress, state, international legislatures
- Videos, testimony, webinars, social media
- Research & Reports (50 -state analysis, contract oversight, more)
- Conferences, panels & events
- Oversight experts

# State Oversight Academy: Resources

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- Videos:
  - Oversight Overview
  - Headlines
  - Masterclasses
- Blog: *State Oversight Matters*
- SOA Oversight Leaders
- Researchers and practitioners in partnership
- Oversight consulting
- Monthly newsletter →

[stateoversight.org](https://stateoversight.org)





# State Oversight Academy: State Legislature Oversight Wiki

go.levin -center.org/wiki

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Michigan

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Legislature

Type of Legislature Michigan has a full-time, bicameral legislature. House of Representatives: 110 members | 2-year terms 12 years in...

Committee Oversight Authority

"Legislative committees; powers, punishment for contempt."Sec. 1. "Committees and commissions of or appointed by the legislature may by resolution...

Standing Committees Focused on Oversight

House Ethics and Oversight Committee Website Membership, testimony, and meeting minutes available on website. Purpose/Jurisdiction "Upon receipt of Auditor General...

Non-Standing Committees Focused on Oversight

Joint Committee on Administrative Rules House Website / Senate Website Membership / membership; rulemaking process; documents; reports; regulatory plans; proposed...

# SOA Oversight Training Program

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- Bring an in -depth SOA workshop to you on -demand!
- Over nine courses, you will learn how to conduct an in -depth oversight investigation
- Each lesson includes:
  - Instructional video (typically 20 - 40 minutes long)
  - Interviews with practitioners and academics
  - Examples of best practices in the states
  - Short assignment to explore how you can apply lesson in your state
- Complete at your own pace - you will receive a certificate and micro-credentials (for LinkedIn and other profiles) when you're finished
- Launches **February 5, 2025!**

[go.levin -center.org/training](https://go.levin-center.org/training)

# SOA Symposium: Legislators and Academics in Collaboration

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- June 26 - 27, 2025, in Detroit
- Academics will present working papers on state legislative topics
- Breakout rooms on popular oversight topics
- Oversight application exercise
- Oversight Leader presentation
- Roundtable discussion
- Social activity

Registration opens January 20, 2025!





# What is legislative oversight?

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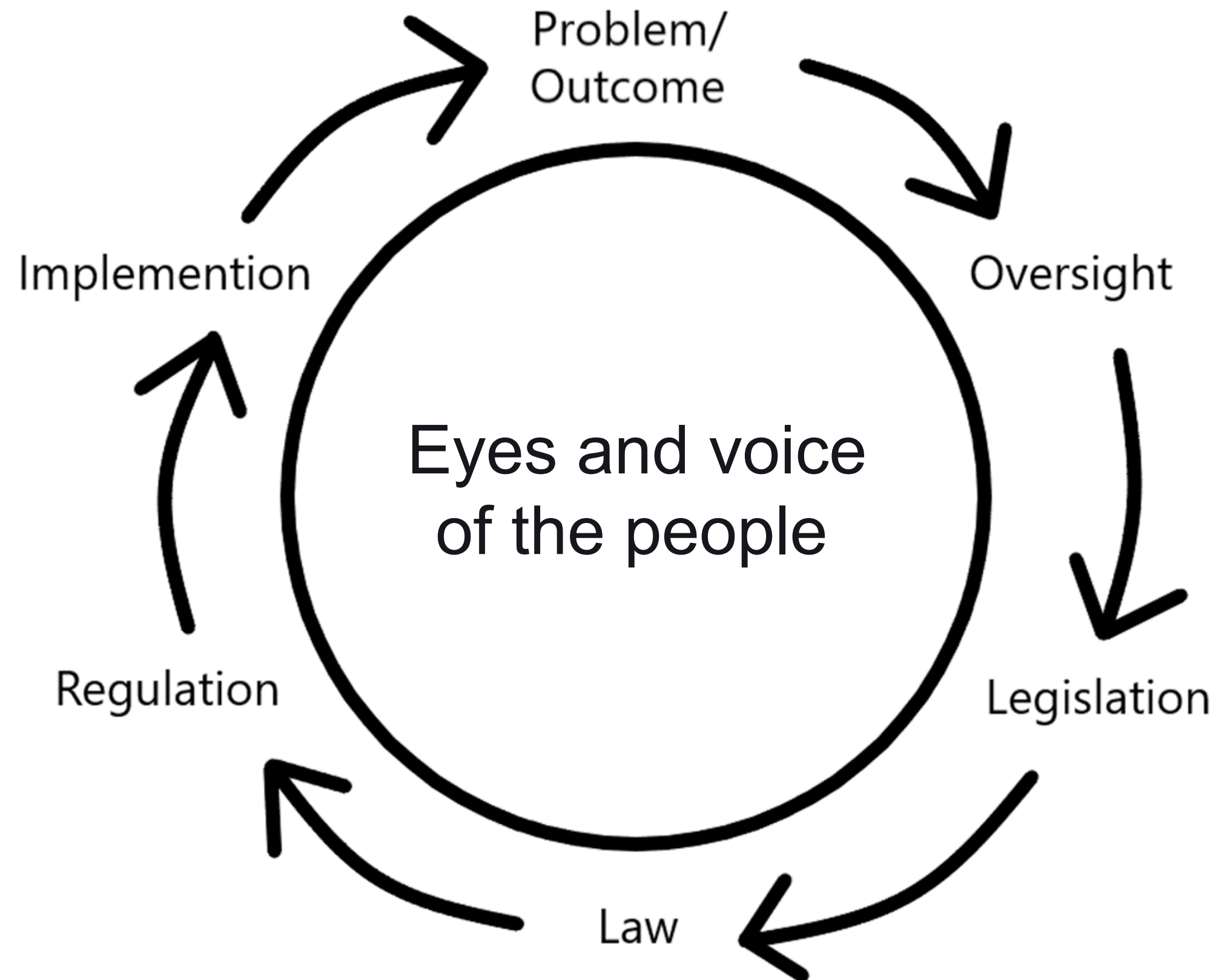
## The “eyes and voice” of the people

“It is the proper duty of a representative body to look diligently into every affair of government and to talk much about what it sees. It is meant to be the eyes and the voice, and to embody the wisdom and will of its constituents.”

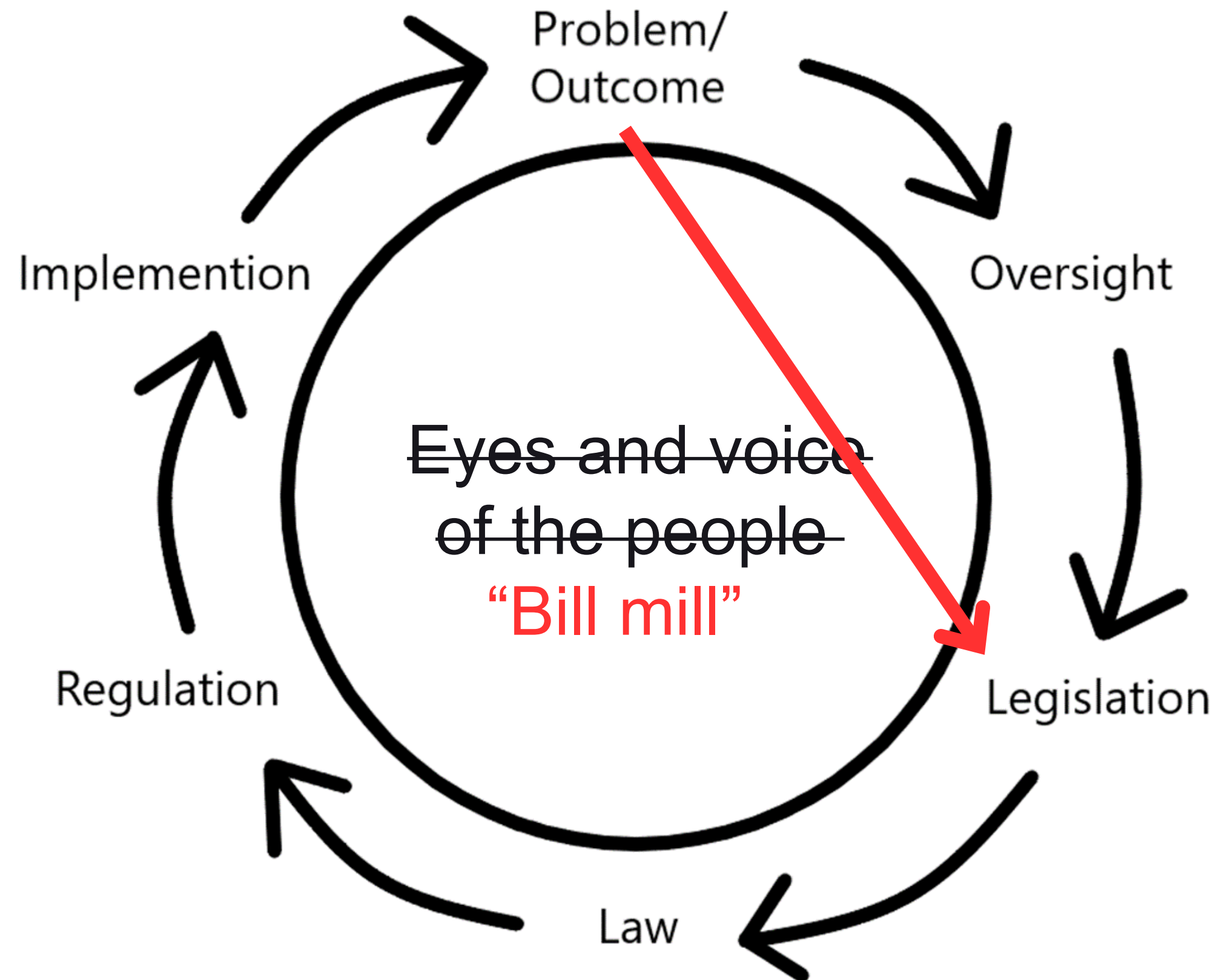
-- United States Supreme Court <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Trump v. Mazars USA, LLP, 140 S.Ct 2019, 2031 (2020), citing United States v. Rumely , 345 U. S. 41, 43 (1953).

# Cycle of Accountability

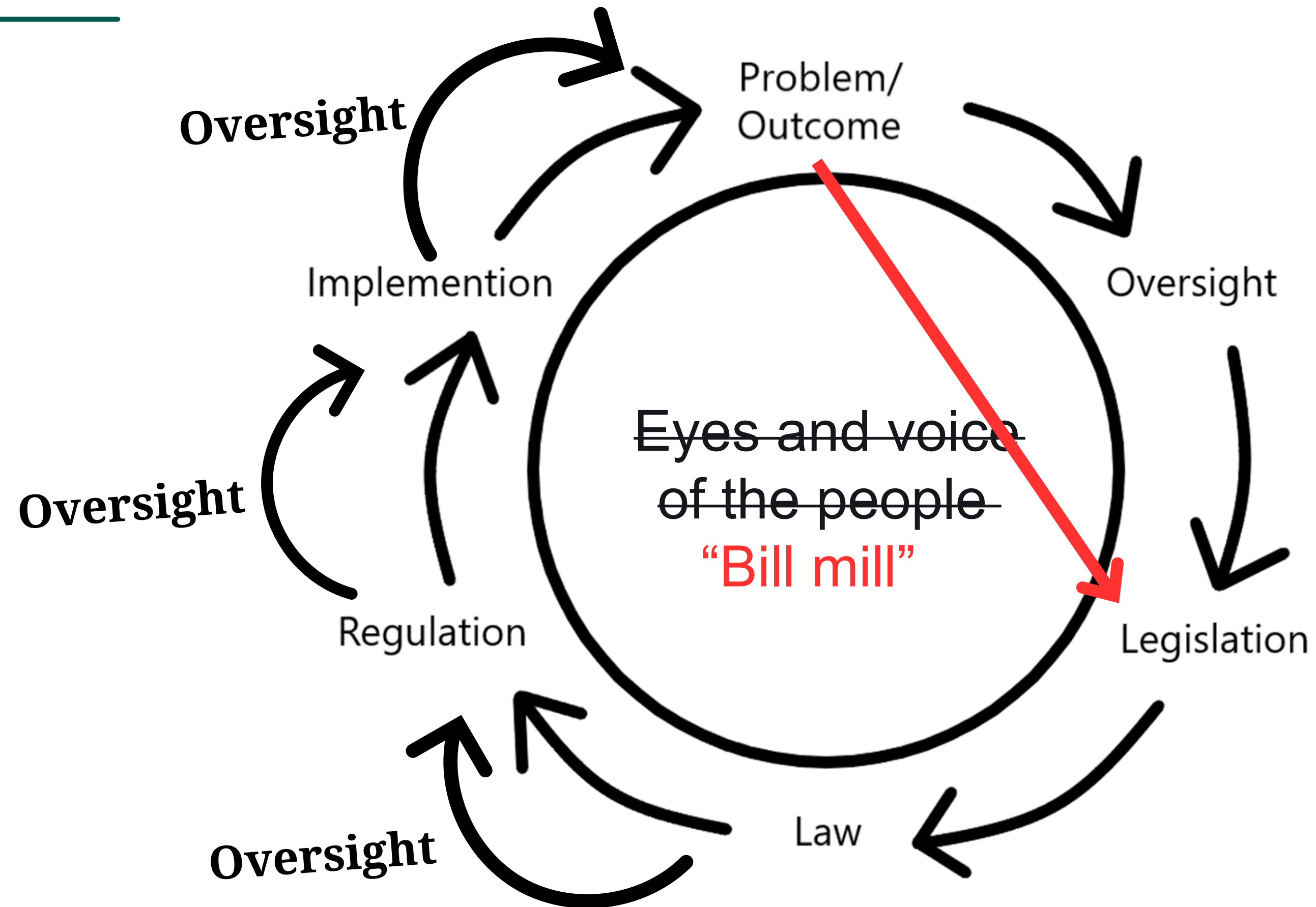


# Cycle of Accountability





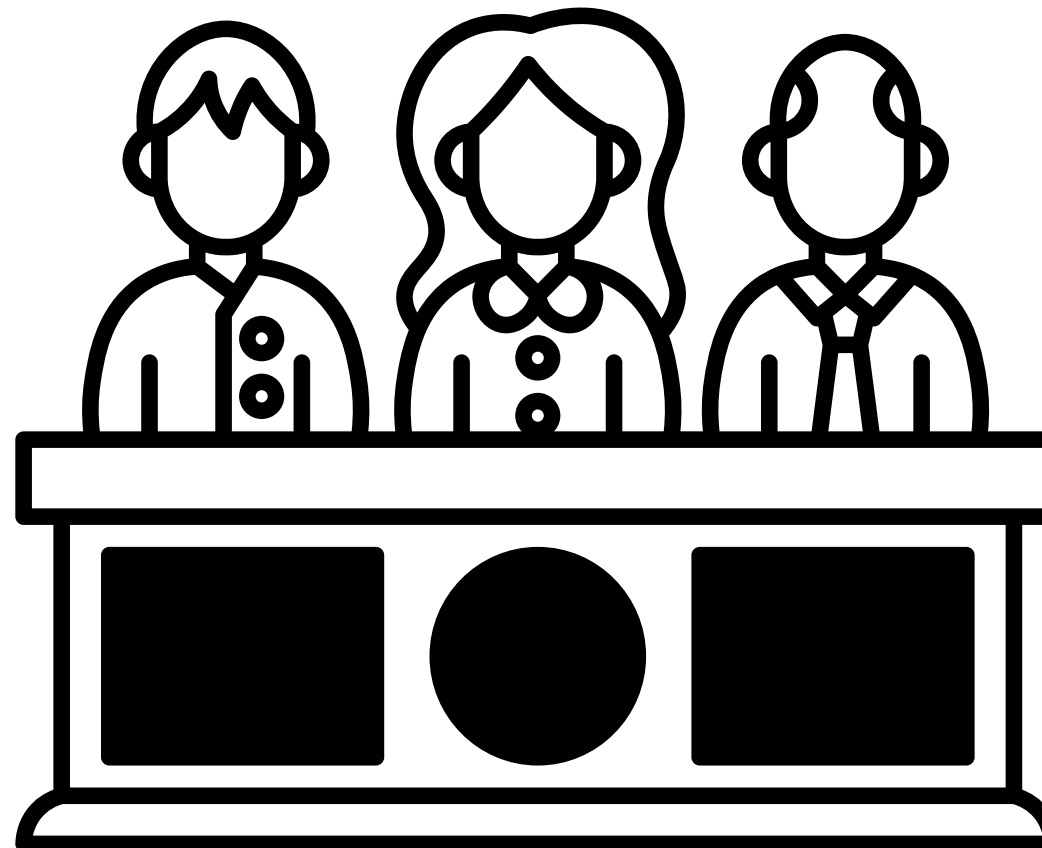
# Cycle of Accountability



# Avenues for State Legislative Oversight

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- Analytic bureaucracies
- Appropriations process
- Committees
- Administrative rule review
- Advice and consent
- Monitoring contracts



# Origin of Investigation Topics

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- Committee jurisdiction
- Leadership concerns
- Scandals, events, news, problems
- Reports
- Constituents
- Whistleblowers, advocacy groups
- Legislator concerns
- Lawsuits
- Agencies
- Personal experience
- Oversight plan, long -term vision

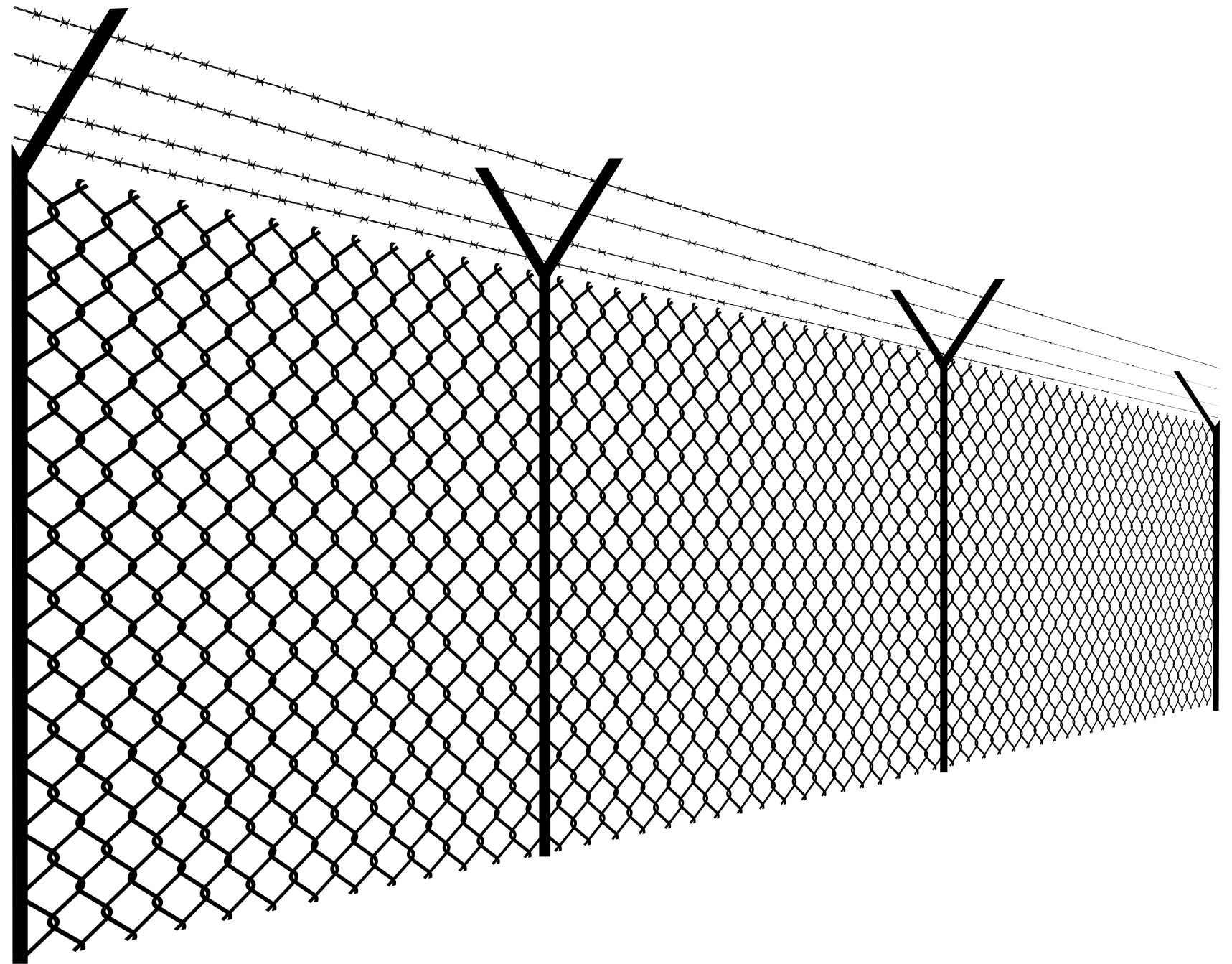






# Examples of Topics

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- Pension funds
- Prisons
- Foster care
- Disaster response
- Lobbying disclosure
- Contract mismanagement
- Infrastructure



# Routine vs. Event -Driven Oversight

 Routine	Event -Driven 
Program outcomes	Scandal
Budgetary	Disaster
Contracts	Chronic problems
Compliance	Escalating problems
Deter malfeasance	Long -term investigation

# Your Superpowers

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- Legislator phone calls and emails get returned
- Legislators can request investigations and reports
- Legislator questions trigger research, reconsideration, and change
- Oversight can have as much, or more, impact as legislation





# Phases of an Investigation

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1. Fact-finding
2. Written product
3. Hearing
4. Follow -up



# Factual Questions

- Not a hypothesis
- Process-orientated
- “How” and “what” questions, not “yes” or “no”

Great!	Less great...
What kinds of oil spills happen in the Great Lakes and how are they handled?	How come we don't have bigger fines for shipping companies responsible for oil spills?
How does service availability differ for Medicaid recipients in different parts of the state?	Why are behavioral health services so bad in rural areas?

# Oversight Scenario

One year after a flood devastated a community in Michigan, the legislature wishes to check in on the disaster response performance. How would you go about using oversight to obtain facts on how the State of Michigan responded to a flood?



**Topic**

**Subtopic**

**Factual  
question(s)**

**Avenue(s)**

**Routine or  
Investigation?**



# Recommendations for Strengthening Oversight

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- **Joint oversight committee** with balanced party membership
- **Bipartisan approach** to topics, inquiry, witnesses, questions, etc.
- More **follow -up** (e.g., hearings) on reports published by analytic bureaucracies
- Include **contract oversight**
- Create **oversight plan** for your office
- **Be transparent** about oversight outcomes: post status and results of investigations



# Advancing Oversight. Strengthening Democracy.

Thank you!

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