



Washington State Legislature
Guide to Lawmaking

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Introduction

The Washington State Legislature is a bicameral body that convenes annually. Washington is divided into 49 legislative districts, with one state Senator and two state Representatives elected in each district (49 Senators and 98 Representatives). In the House, Representatives are elected in even-numbered years to serve two-year terms. Senators are elected every four years with overlapping terms; therefore, half of the Senate is up for reelection every two years.

Legislative sessions are defined by the biennium or the two-year period in which bills are considered. Each new biennium begins every odd-numbered year and coincides with the two-year election cycle. Though it is a biennial body, the Washington State Legislature has assembled annually on the second Monday in January since 1979, when the constitution was amended to provide for annual sessions.

The first year of the biennium is known as a long session and lasts 105 calendar days, including weekends and holidays. One of the primary tasks of legislators during a long session is to pass the state's biennial budget. The short session is held on even-numbered years and lasts 60 calendar days. All bills that do not pass during the long session are retained in the chamber of origin in the current form in the following short session. New legislation may also be introduced in the short session; however, all bills that do not pass by the end of the biennium "die." During the short session, a supplemental budget is also passed to make adjustments and additions to the previously adopted two-year budget.

The Washington State legislative process functions similarly to most democratic legislative bodies. The process is governed by many laws, rules, and procedures, making it systematic, yet complicated because it is designed to facilitate thorough deliberations on issues that can have far-reaching effects on Washingtonians.

Functions of the Legislature:

Taxation and spending – Determines the level and means by which citizens will be taxed and how tax dollars will be appropriated.

Public policy enactment – Writes and modifies the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) in order to protect or restrict citizens, institute civil and criminal code, establish standards, etc.

Oversight – Regulates other branches of state government, (including itself) by establishing rules and by its power of impeachment.

Assistance – Helps constituents understand and work with state government.

Legislative Measures

Several kinds of measures are introduced during a legislative session:

Bills are any proposed changes to the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). A bill can create a new law, modify an existing law, or eliminate an existing law. Bill ideas may originate from many sources, including constituents, state agencies, the Governor, or advocacy groups, but all bills must be sponsored and introduced by a member of the Legislature. They must have at least one legislator as a sponsor and a brief but comprehensive title. Only bills require the Governor's signature; all other legislative measures take effect without review by the Governor.

- *HB* - abbreviation for House Bill; these are numbered starting with 1000 at the beginning of each biennium.
- *SB* - abbreviation for Senate Bill; these are numbered starting with 5000 at the beginning of each biennium.

Companion Bills are two identical versions of the same bill that are introduced in both the House and Senate. Companion bills start out with the same versions but generally differ as they go through the process and as amendments are made.

Substitute Bills replace an original bill with a new bill in every way excluding the title. If a committee adopts amendments, it is common for these amendments to be rolled into the substitute bill.

- *S* - abbreviation for substitute bill, (e.g. *SSB 6043*)

Engrossed Bills contain all amendments that have been added in the house of origin.

- *E* - abbreviation for engrossed bill, (e.g. *EHB 1405*)

Enrolled bills have passed both chambers and contain all amendments adopted by both houses and a certificate of enrollment, including the date passed, votes cast on the bill, and the certifying officers' signatures. Enrolled bills are ready to be sent to the Governor for consideration.

Title-only Bills contain nothing more than a title and a number. It is introduced in order to have a vehicle on which to amend substance at a later time.

Administration/Agency Request Bills are initiated by the executive branch or other agencies for consideration by the Legislature. These bills must still be sponsored by a legislator.

Joint Resolutions are an act of the Legislature which proposes an amendment to the state Constitution for reference to the people for acceptance or rejection. To pass, joint resolutions must receive a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members elected in the Senate and the House.

Concurrent Resolutions relate to the internal operation of the Legislature, such as procedures or rules, in which one chamber concurs with the action of the other. These can originate in either chamber.

Floor Resolutions are a written motion calling for action, which may be offered from the floor of either house. Floor resolutions are usually congratulatory, commendatory, or memorial.

Gubernatorial Appointments confirm people who have been chosen by the governor to fill positions on boards or commissions. Gubernatorial appointments are confirmed only by the Senate and can be considered in committee for a hearing prior to being considered on the Senate floor. Gubernatorial Appointments are numbered starting with 9000.

Joint Memorials are a message or petition addressed to the President and/or Congress of the United States, or the head of any other agency of the federal or state government, asking for consideration of some matter of concern to the state or region. Proposed amendments to the U.S. Constitution are also in the form of joint memorials.

Initiatives are a form of legislative power vested in the people. An initiative is proposed through a petition containing signatures of 8 percent of the number of voters voting in the last preceding regular gubernatorial election. There are two types of initiatives:

1. Initiative to the people. Original legislation by the voters, proposing a new law (or changing existing laws) without consideration by the Legislature.
2. Initiative to the Legislature. Original legislation by the voters, proposing a new law (or changing existing laws) for consideration by the Legislature at its next regular session. If not enacted, it is placed on the next general election ballot. (See Article II, Section I of the state constitution for other options.)

For more information regarding initiatives, refer to the Secretary of State's website, www.sos.wa.gov.

Referenda/Referendums are recently passed legislation referred by the Legislature to the voters for their rejection or approval.

A *referendum measure* is an option given to the people to call back recently enacted laws for voter consideration. The call back begins in a petition where at least 4 percent of the signers were registered and voting in the last preceding regular gubernatorial election.

Bill Numbering

Bills are numbered in the order they are introduced. The following is the numbering system used by the legislature.

- Below 1000 initiatives and referenda
- 1000-3999 House bills
- 4000-4199 House joint memorials
- 4200-4399 House joint resolutions
- 4400-4599 House concurrent resolutions
- 4600-4799 House resolutions
- 5000-7999 Senate Bills
- 8000-8199 Senate joint memorials
- 8200-8399 Senate joint resolutions
- 8400-8599 Senate concurrent resolutions
- 8600-8799 Senate resolutions
- 9000 and above Senate gubernatorial appointments.

Bill Sponsorship

Bills are drafted by House or Senate staff or by the Code Reviser's Office. Once a legislator approves the draft, it is entered into the legislative system, and a *signature sheet* is attached. In the House, this is a blue sheet, and in the Senate it is pink. Members will circulate these signature sheets to garner support and co-sponsorships for a bill before the draft is dropped in the Hopper outside the Code Reviser's Office.

All bills must be introduced by a member of the House or Senate. This member, whose signature appears first on the signature sheet, is the *prime sponsor* of the bill. Other members of that chamber may also sign on as *co-sponsors*.

Members also have an opportunity to sign on to a bill after it has been dropped in the Hopper. An abbreviated description of bills being introduced is sent to members' offices the day before the bill is scheduled for floor consideration. In the Senate, this list is known as *Short Titles & Referrals*, and in the House, it is referred to as *Introductions*. Members write the bill numbers of the bills they are interested in co-sponsoring on a slip of paper known as an *add-on sponsor slip* or a *pink slip* and submit this form to their respective workrooms by 2 PM on the day the measure is scheduled to be introduced on the floor. In the House, members can also add their names electronically.

Title / Subject and Scope and Object

Typically, staff drafting a bill also write the title of a bill under the member's direction. As stated in the "Titles/Single Subject Rule" of the Washington State Constitution (Article II, Section 19,) unlike the US Congress, the state Legislature can only address one issue per bill, which must be clearly defined in the title of the bill. Objections based on the single subject rule and within the title rule are typically heard in the courts rather than in the Legislature. Therefore, if a bill with multiple subjects passes the Legislature without objection, it will become law; however, the constitutionality of the law is still subject to challenge by the courts.

The state constitution also has a requirement stating, "No amendment to any bill shall be allowed which shall change the *scope and object* of the bill" (Article II, Section 38). Members wanting to challenge amendments on scope and object grounds generally do so during a floor session. When challenges are presented, the presiding officer makes the decision.

Effective Date and Emergency Clauses

The *effective date* indicates when a bill will become a law. If no effective date is specified in a bill, the bill will take effect 90 days after the adjournment of the session in which it was passed. A bill may have an *emergency clause*, which allows it to take effect earlier than the standard 90 day period. Bills can also be contingent upon the adoption of a constitutional amendment or some other contingency in order to become law. For example, if a bill or section of a bill is contingent on ratification by the voters and is not ratified, the bill or amendment is void.

Null & Void and Severability Clauses

Null and void clauses contain language specifying that a measure is invalid unless funding is provided in the budget by a specified time. *Severability clauses* indicate that if one section of an act is found unconstitutional by the courts, the rest of the act will remain intact. It is now common practice for the Legislature to include severability clauses in all major bills to indicate legislative intent, although the clause is not binding in the courts.

Fiscal Notes

Bills generally have *fiscal notes* attached when the subject matter of the bill requires or is related to finances and/or funding. A fiscal note is an estimation of the expected fiscal impact a bill will have on state and/or local government within a specified timeframe.* Since legislation often changes as it continues through the process, fiscal notes can change as well. They also serve as an important tool in writing the state budget.

Fiscal note requests are sent to a division of the executive branch called the Office of Financial Management (OFM), where they are directed to state agencies that would be impacted by the bill to determine the fiscal impact. Bills affecting local governments are sent to the Department of Commerce for fiscal notes.

* Generally, only bills with a fiscal impact of \$50,000 or more require a fiscal note.

Amendments

An *amendment* is any modification to a bill. Most bills are amended as they progress through the legislative process. Occasionally, members will even withdraw support for their own bill if it has changed significantly from its original intent.

A *committee amendment* is an amendment proposed in a committee meeting. Committee amendments are proposed by members of the committee. A *floor amendment* is an amendment proposed during second reading on the floor of a legislative chamber. Any member can propose amendments on the floor. A *striking amendment* removes everything after the title and inserts a whole new bill. Amendments, including striking amendments, can be amended.

Often when several amendments are adopted in committee, they are rolled into a single substitute bill. Since amendments can only officially be adopted by the entire body of the House or Senate, an amendment adopted in committee is technically only a recommendation to modify a bill. Adoption by the entire body is done when the sponsor or committee chair moves the bill on the floor during second reading.

Members or committees of one chamber are permitted to add amendments to a bill that originated in the opposite chamber but, substitute bills can only be introduced in the chamber of origin. Instead, opposite chamber members can roll several amendments into a *striking amendment*, which is essentially the same as a substitute bill. Striking amendments always begin with the phrase, “Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the following...”¹

¹ Edward D. Seeberger, *Sine Die* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1989, 1997) 67.

Bill Reports, Analyses, & Digests

Bill reports and *analyses* provide an objective, easy to read description of a bill and its potential impacts. These reports include a brief description of the bill, its sponsors, background information on the issue, a summary of the bill, the public hearing date, testimony for and against the bill, and appropriations or fiscal notes if applicable. Bill reports and analyses are prepared by nonpartisan committee staff, and the name of the staff person assigned to the bill is printed on the report.

In the Senate, bill reports are generally available around the time of the bill's first committee hearing. The House typically prepares a bill analyses before the first public hearing, with bill reports available after a bill has passed out of committee.

Bill provide a brief summary of the bill, which is produced in the Code Reviser's Office. These are available on-line the morning that the bill is to be introduced.

Member and Staff Roles

Leadership

The Lieutenant Governor serves as the *President of the Senate* and presides of all floor action in the Senate, in addition to the other duties of their office. The Lieutenant Governor is a statewide elected official, and could potentially belong to either party, not necessarily that of the majority caucus. The duties of the President of the Senate include: preserving order on the Senate floor; signing all acts and resolutions adopted by the Senate; presiding over the Senate Rules committee; and making final decisions on all questions of order. In the Washington State Legislature, unlike the U.S. Congress, the President of the Senate casts the deciding vote on equally-divided issues except on final passage of a bill.

The President Pro Tempore is a senator elected by the Senate to discharge the duties of presiding officer in the Lieutenant Governor's absence. The Senate also elects a *Vice President Pro Tempore* to serve in the absence of the Lieutenant Governor and the President Pro Tempore. They are members of the Senate majority caucus.

The Speaker of the House is the presiding officer in the House of Representatives. They are a member of the majority caucus but elected by a vote of the entire House. The duties required of the Speaker include: preserving order and decorum on the House floor; referring bills to committees; appointing committee chairs; presiding over the House Rules committee; deciding questions of order; naming any member to perform the duties of the chair during a temporary absence; appointing all standing and special committees; signing all bills, resolutions, and memorials in open session; and, when necessary, signing all acts and orders of the House.

The Speaker Pro Tempore is a member of the majority caucus and is elected at the commencement of each regular session. They preside over floor sessions in the House in the Speaker's absence.

The Majority Leader in the Senate is elected by the majority caucus to lead the caucus, especially in partisan matters, and is also responsible for assigning committee chairmanships and memberships. The Majority Leader in the House is second in command to the Speaker. Unlike the Speaker, the Majority Leader is elected by the majority caucus rather than the entire body. This person is responsible for assisting the Speaker with party leadership and policy positions. In the House, the Majority Leader is also responsible for deciding where to send bills that have been passed out of committee (e.g., to Rules or a fiscal committee).

The Majority Caucus Chair in both chambers is elected by the majority caucus to hold and preside over the majority caucus meetings. In the Senate, the Majority Caucus Chair also presides over the Facilities and Operations Committee (commonly referred to as the "F&O Committee,") which manages staff and administrative matters, as well as material and operational matters.

The Majority Floor Leader, also elected by the majority caucus, along with counsel, decides to which committees bills will be referred. The Senate Majority Floor Leader and the House Majority Leader direct floor action and consult with leadership on which bills to call for debate.

The Majority Whip acts as an assistant to the Majority Leader. Their duties include counting votes, checking attendance, and maintaining caucus discipline on partisan issues and procedural questions.

The Minority Leader is elected by members of the minority caucus to speak for the minority caucus and lead the caucus in partisan policy matters. In both chambers, the Minority Leader is responsible for developing the minority position, negotiating with the majority caucus, and leading debate for the minority.

The Minority Caucus Chair holds and presides over the House and Senate minority caucus meetings and assists the Minority Leader with policy development.

The Minority Floor Leader leads the minority party in floor debate. They also assist other minority caucus leadership in policy development.

The Minority Whip assists the Minority Leader on the floor, count votes, and ensures attendance of minority caucus members.

Other Leadership Positions:

Majority/Minority Caucus Vice Chair

Majority/Minority Assistant/Deputy Floor Leader

Majority/Minority Assistant/Deputy Whip

Senate and House Administration

Chief Clerk

In addition to elected officials, professional legislative staff assists the conduct of the official proceedings. The Chief Clerk of the House is selected by the majority party and then officially elected by the entire House membership. The Chief Clerk selects and removes employees with approval from the Speaker of the House, supervises preparation of the journal, and oversees all administrative and procedural duties of the House. The Deputy Chief Clerk assists the Chief Clerk in all duties. In the event of the death, illness, or inability of the Chief Clerk to act, the Deputy Chief Clerk will assume duties and powers of the Chief Clerk.

Secretary of the Senate

The Secretary of the Senate is the chief administrative officer of the Senate. The person to fill this position is first chosen in the majority caucus, and then by a formal vote of the entire chamber. The Secretary of the Senate selects and removes employees (subject to approval of the Senate), supervises all procedural details, and performs other duties of the office during the session and until the election of a successor at the next session. The Deputy Secretary of the Senate assists the Secretary in all administrative functions, and in the absence of the Secretary, the Deputy assumes all duties.

Sergeant at Arms

The Sergeant at Arms is elected by the body to administer services and security needs of members. It is their specific duty to keep order, to summon members to their seats upon the call of the House or Senate, and to see that legislative premises are kept clean and comfortable. The Sergeant at Arms also supervises all other support services persons: garage, parking, shuttle bus, doorkeepers, and building security personnel.

Senate/House Counsel

In the House, each caucus has an attorney who advises their respective caucuses and provides assistance on parliamentary procedure and scope and object rulings. A separate position, the House Counsel provides assistance to members and staff on ethics questions, employment law issues, and legal matters related to the House.

The Senate has two counsel positions, one representing each caucus. Senate Counsel provides assistance to the President of the Senate on parliamentary floor procedures and scope and object rulings. They also advise their respective caucuses, assist members and staff with ethics questions, advise on legal matters relating to the Senate, and serve as counsel to the Secretary of the Senate.

Reader

The Reader in the House and Senate sits at the rostrum. It is their responsibility to read aloud measures and amendments as they come up for consideration on the floor.

Journal Clerk

Both chambers have a Journal/Status Clerk, who is responsible for recording all legislative actions that occur on the floor. This record is later used to publish an official Journal of the legislative session. The Journal does not include verbatim debate; rather, it is a record of all motions, amendments, and votes in a session.

Committee Staff

All committees have nonpartisan policy and fiscal analyst staff and attorneys who have specialized knowledge of the committee subject area. In the House, the Office of Program Research (OPR) oversees committee staff. Senate Committee Services (SCS) holds this responsibility in the Senate. After a bill has been sent to the appropriate committee, a committee staffer is assigned to each bill to provide further research and drafting assistance to members. In some cases, the staff person has been working on the bill for months before session. The name(s) of the committee staffer assigned to the bill is listed in all bill reports and analyses.

Caucus Staff

The term *caucus* can have varying meanings depending on the context in which it is used. *Caucus* refers to a group within a legislative body seeking to represent a specific interest. With a few exceptions, in the Washington State Legislature, the term implies partisanship.

There are four caucuses in the legislature—a Republican and Democratic caucus in both the House and Senate. Each of the four caucuses has full-time staff consisting of approximately 20 people who provide members with partisan policy, communications, and administrative support.

Caucus policy staff members have many of the same responsibilities as committee staff, except they approach issues and legislation from a partisan perspective. Policy caucus staff members are assigned policy issues based on their areas of expertise and follow all legislation pertaining to that issue, including attending committee meetings and sometimes drafting bills.

Caucus communication staff members support caucus members with media and public relations. They advance members' policy objectives by maintaining relationships with the media, writing speeches and other documents, and managing members' legislative websites.

Lobbyists and Legislative Liaisons

Lobbyists play an important role in the legislative process and can be helpful to members by providing input and specialized information on the issues they represent.

Any person who attempts to persuade legislators to introduce or vote for or against measures can be considered a lobbyist. Lobbyists represent business, unions, professional groups, concerned citizen groups, and others. State agencies and, in some cases, federal and local government agencies also employ legislative liaisons who act as their lobbyists. Lobbyists analyze how proposed legislation would affect the clients they represent and how they believe constituents will react to any given piece of legislation. Sometimes they work with agencies and other lobbyists to form coalitions to support or defeat legislation.

Lobbyists cannot introduce legislation, but they can be authorized by a member to work with caucus staff, committee staff, or the Code Reviser's office to draft a bill on the member's behalf. Lobbyists and liaisons testify or arrange for people they represent to testify at public hearings.

Legislative Agencies

Code Reviser / Statute Law Committee (SLC)

The Statute Law Committee employs the Code Reviser and oversees the functions and performance of the Code Reviser's Office. The primary responsibility of the Code Reviser's office is to assign bill numbers, periodically codify, index, and publish the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), and to revise, correct, and harmonize the statutes by means of administrative or suggested legislative action as may be appropriate. This office also compiles, indexes, and publishes the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), the Washington State Register (WSR), and official session laws. They sometimes provide bill drafting services.

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC)

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) is a joint bipartisan committee which conducts performance audits, program evaluations, sunset reviews, and other oversight duties assigned by the Legislature. The JLARC Executive Committee consists of one member from each of the four legislative caucuses. The committee also makes recommendations to the Legislature and state agencies that should result in cost savings and/or improved performance in state government.

Joint Transportation Committee (JTC)

The Joint Transportation Committee is a joint bipartisan committee between the Senate and the House which serves as a fact finding committee on highways, streets, and bridges.

Legislative Ethics Board (LEB)

Enforces state ethics laws and rules with respect to members and employees of the Legislature.

Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program (LEAP)

The Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program (LEAP) is a joint committee that serves as the Legislature's independent source of information and technology with respect to budgets and revenue. LEAP's primary objectives are to provide automated databases and applications in support of legislative budget writing requirements, as well as consulting and analysis assistance on special projects, reports, and requests. It is made up of two members from each legislative caucus.

Legislative Service Center (LEG-TECH)

LEG-TECH provides the information technology infrastructure used by legislative agencies and the legislature for law-making, research, communication, administrative, and accounting responsibilities.

Legislative Support Services (LSS)

Provides legislative information services to the public, the legislative Gift center, and media and facilities support to the Legislature, including photo, video, and other resources.

Office of the State Legislative Labor Relations (OSLLR)

Assists the Legislature in implementing and managing collective bargaining for legislative employees.

Office of the State Actuary (OSA)

Monitors the balance between the cost of future retirement benefits and the projected value of retirement fund assets. Performs actuarial services for the Department of Retirement Systems. Provides actuarial assistance and advice to the Legislature.

Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP)

Reviews and recommends changes to Washington public retirement benefits.

How a Bill Becomes a Law

Hundreds of bills are introduced every session. In the 2023 long session, 861 bills were introduced in the House and 773 in the Senate. *Out of all bills introduced in the Legislature, less than 20 percent become law.*

While it may seem like the legislative system is unnecessarily complicated, it is designed for most bills to fail. One of the most important functions of the legislative process is to thoroughly vet all proposed legislation by requiring bills to be carefully studied, debated, and amended. This screening process serves a vital purpose by closely examining all bills before they become law.

Ideas for a Bill

Although legislators do their best to stay informed on important issues, it is often the public who bring issues to their attention. Ideas for bills are also proposed by citizens, local governments, lobbyists, and state agencies (*agency request bills*), as well as the Governor's office (*Governor's request bills*). Regardless of where an idea for a bill originates, all bills need a legislative sponsor to be introduced.

Drafting a Bill

Bills can be drafted by various people. Occasionally a member will draft his/her own bill or amendment, but generally, the technical writing is left to OPR/SCS staff or caucus staff. Members of both caucuses can send bill ideas to nonpartisan committee staff for drafting, but sometimes they will send politically controversial bill ideas to partisan caucus staff. Bills are also drafted by lobbyists and state agencies, and it is not unusual to see lobbyists go from member to member before a session in search of a sponsor for their bills.

No matter who drafts a bill, it must go to the Code Reviser's Office to check for errors to be entered into the legislative system and to attach the signature sheet before it is dropped in the hopper.

Code Reviser's Office / The Hopper

To be introduced in the legislative system, all bills must be placed in a box outside the Code Reviser's Office commonly referred to as the *hopper*. The deadline for dropping bills in the hopper is 10 AM in the House and 12 PM in the Senate for bills to be introduced on the floor the following day.

The House and Senate allow bills to be *prefiled* on the first Monday in December. Prefiled bills are then introduced on the first day of Session. If a bill has not been dropped in the hopper it is considered confidential and is only available to the person(s) initiating the bill draft. After the bill is dropped, the Code Reviser assigns a number to the bill and sends it to either the Secretary of Senate or the Chief Clerk of the House. After a bill is introduced in its respective chamber, its contents are publicly available.

First Reading / Introductions / Short Titles

A report of bills being introduced and referred to the appropriate standing committees is distributed to members the afternoon or evening prior to floor consideration. These reports, known as *Short Titles & Referrals* in the Senate and *Introductions* in the House, give members an opportunity to consider adding their names as co-sponsors to individual measures. The reports also give staff a head start in preparing for the next day's measures. The report includes: bill numbers; brief description; sponsor(s), and proposed committee recommendations. Members then have until 2 PM on the day of introduction to sign-on to individual measures as co-sponsors by turning in sign-on sheets to their respective work rooms.

Bills considered by the Legislature must go through three formal floor readings in each chamber before final passage. Introductions are essentially the First Reading of a bill. This reading is the first time a bill is introduced to a body of the Legislature.

Often the First Reading occurs during *Pro Forma* sessions. *Pro Forma* is a Latin phrase that means "for sake of form." In legislative terms, it is a required process intended to move legislative business forward. Often the only legislators present on the floor during *Pro Forma* sessions are the President of the Senate/Speaker of the House and the Majority Leaders or Floor Leaders.

After a bill is introduced, it is assigned to a legislative committee. The Majority Floor Leader in the Senate and Majority Leader in the House determine to which standing committee bills will be referred. Generally, bills are referred to a committee that deals with the general subject matter of the bill. For example, a bill dealing with roads would likely be sent to the Transportation Committee.

Committees

There are generally about 20 standing committees in the House, which convene in the John L. O'Brien Building, and 15 in the Senate, which meet in the John A. Cherberg Building. Committee hearing rooms in the Cherberg Building are numbered 1 - 4, while hearing rooms in the O'Brien Building are lettered A - E.

Standing committees are the main working committees of the Legislature as distinguished from joint select committees, task forces, and other committees deemed necessary by the House Speaker or the Senate Majority Leader. The purpose of legislative standing committees is to examine a measure and its potential effects more thoroughly than would be possible by the entire body of either chamber.

Committee membership is determined by party leadership in both chambers. The number of members on a given committee is usually determined by the majority party, and committees are typically weighted with members of the majority party.

The *committee chair* is the legislator appointed to preside over a committee meeting. These positions are almost always held by members of the majority party and are generally determined based on seniority or strong interest in the committee subject area. The committee chair is responsible for determining committee agendas, deciding whether to bring bills up for a vote, order of testimony, and other matters. Often the chair involves the ranking minority member and vice chair in these decisions.

There are two types of standing committees: policy committees and fiscal committees. If a bill requires a funding appropriation or raises revenue, it typically goes to a fiscal committee. Some bills with fiscal impact will go to a policy committee first, and then (if the bill is passed from that committee) it will go to a fiscal committee for review before moving on to the Rules committee. In the Senate, there are two fiscal committees: Ways & Means and Transportation. The Senate Ways & Means Committee covers all budget areas and has two vice chair positions that oversee the Capital Budget and the Operating Budget. In the House, there are four fiscal committees: Appropriations, Capital Budget, Finance, and Transportation.

Fiscal committees typically deal with 3 types of bills: bills that appropriate money to state agencies, bills affecting revenue sources, and bills that have a cost to state or local government.

Committees hold three kinds of meetings:

- *Work sessions* are held as a way for members to review background information, ask questions, and learn about a given

bill or subject. Some committee work sessions are held during interim. Specific bills are not considered during work sessions.

- *Public hearings* are held to give the public an opportunity to testify before the committee in support of or in opposition to a bill. House and Senate Rules require that public hearings be advertised at least five days in advance; however, this rule can be waived by the Speaker of the House (only close to cutoff dates), or by a majority of committee members present in the Senate.
- *Executive session* is when members decide if they will pass/report a bill or bills out of committee. It is during executive sessions of committee meetings that amendments and substitute bills can be introduced. While executive sessions are open to the public, only committee staff and members are permitted to speak.

Many bills will “die” in committee for various reasons. Often there is simply not enough time in a session for a committee to hear all of the bills assigned. In order for a bill to be passed out of committee, it must receive a *majority report*, a recommendation to the entire body of a chamber that is signed by the majority of committee members. This report contains a recommendation to the entire chamber that the bill “do pass” or “be referred without recommendation.” A *minority report* may be filed on a bill, where dissenting committee members can officially voice their opposition to a measure.

In the Senate, members vote orally, but their vote is subject to signature. This means committee members are free to sign or remove their signature from a committee vote until the bill has passed out of committee and has been acted on by the floor, or until the cut-off date, whichever happens first. It is the signature (not the oral vote) that serves as the official voting record reported on bill reports. One-sixth of the committee may demand an oral roll call.²

Voting in committee hearings is handled slightly different in the House. In the House, every committee vote on bills is taken by yeas and nays, and this oral vote is recorded. A majority recommendation must also be signed in the committee meeting room, where members are not required

² Senate Rules, 22-7.

to sign the way they voted orally. Again, the official voting record is the committee report with signatures.³ After bills pass out of committee (standing and fiscal), they go to the Rules Committee.

Rules Committee

Unlike the Rules Committees in the U.S. Congress, where rules for legislation are determined, the Rules Committees in the Washington State Legislature serves as a two-step process to determine which bills will be placed on the floor calendar for second and third reading. The members of the Rules Committee are determined by leadership and is always weighted with members of the majority party. The Lieutenant Governor (the President of the Senate) presides over the Senate Rules Committee, and the Speaker of the House presides over the House Rules Committee. Senate Counsel and House Leadership Counsel also attend their respective Rules Committees. The Senate Rules Room is adjacent to the Lieutenant Governor's office, and the House Rules Room is located on the first floor of the Legislative Building.

Rules is a powerful committee and is often referred to as "The Gatekeeper." Bills are sent to Rules from fiscal or policy committees and are first placed on the *white sheet* in the Senate and on the *review calendar* in the House. At each Rules Committee meeting, members are allowed to move a predetermined number of bills from the Senate *white sheet* to the *green sheet* or from the House *review calendar* to the *consideration calendar*. These moves are called *pulls*. Bills are generally pulled from one sheet to another without debate or vote and the bills are then eligible to go to the floor.

Members are also given a predetermined number of pulls from the green sheet to the Senate floor calendar or from the consideration calendar to the House floor calendar. The number of pulls allocated to Rules Committee members is determined by leadership before each meeting. Once a member has selected the bill he/she wants to pull, the entire committee votes whether it will move on to the floor calendar. If a bill fails this vote, it then goes back to the white sheet in the Senate or the rules review calendar in the House and the member loses their pull.

³ House Rules, 24-D.

Members on the Rules Committee work closely with caucus staff and party leadership when deciding which bills to move.

Occasionally majority leadership will pull bills from both calendars and send them to the floor as a group, which is referred to as a *package pull*. They may also pull a package of bills that are considered noncontroversial and put them on special floor calendars: the Senate *Consent Calendar* (pink) or the House *Suspension Calendar* (blue). Often package pulls will consist of bills dealing with similar issues, such as an “education pull.”

There are many more bills in Rules than can be dealt with on the floor; therefore, some bills “die” in Rules. It takes a constitutional majority vote of the members on the floor to pull a bill directly from Rules to the floor without going through the traditional process. After certain cut-off dates, the Rules Committee sometimes places bills in the *x-file* if they are no longer available for consideration. Bills placed in the x-file are removed from all calendars and daily status sheets. While most bills remain in the x-file until the end of the biennium, some may be pulled for further consideration.

Calendars and Cutoffs

Cut-off dates play a crucial role in the legislative process because they serve as a tool in limiting the number of bills introduced and insure that the Legislature adjourns on time. In a 105-day session, for example, bills must be out of committee in their house of origin by the 8th or 9th week of the session. If a bill makes it through its original committee by this time, it will need to make it out of committee in the opposite house by the 12th or 13th week. If these deadlines are not met in the long session, the bill will be available again in the following short session; however, if a bill does not meet a deadline in the short session, it is likely “dead”. Of course, bills are never truly “dead” because their content can always be introduced in a subsequent session in the form of a new bill. Additionally, some bills can be exempt from the cut-off dates if the budget relies on the bill in order to be complete. These bills are known as *necessary to implement the budget* or *NTIB*.

As bills are introduced and pass through the legislative process, they are assigned to various *calendars*. Aside from the Cutoff Calendar and the various committee hearing calendars, these documents aren’t calendars

in the familiar sense. They are generally lists of bills that have passed through one of the legislative steps, such as bills to be introduced or bills passed out of committees. These calendars are issued as these events occur (usually daily) and may have different names in the House and the Senate.

Hard copies of these calendars are available in the Legislative Information Center (LIC) as they are published, and most are available electronically on the www.leg.wa.gov.

The Cutoff Calendar: At the beginning of each session, the House and the Senate jointly agree on a timetable for considering bills. Bills that haven't moved forward through the various steps by the dates listed on the cutoff calendar will most likely receive no further consideration. Typical cutoff dates are; the last day bills can be voted out of a policy committee; the last day bills can be voted out of a fiscal committee; the last day to consider bills in the chamber of origin; the last day for bills from the opposite chamber to be voted out of a policy committee; the last day for bills from the opposite chamber to be voted out of a fiscal committee; and the last day for bills from the opposite chamber to be considered on the floor. The cutoff calendar is available online once adopted by the legislature.

The Introduction Calendars: The House and the Senate both have an Introduction Calendar (the Senate's is called the Short Titles and Referrals). The respective Introduction Calendars list all the bills introduced for the day on the floor of the House or Senate and provide a short description of each.

The Standing Committee Reports: The House and Senate both produce a Standing Committee Report that lists all bills that have been passed out of committees for the day. The report lists the bill number, a brief description, the committee, and its recommendation and the place to which the bill was referred.

The Rules Review Calendar (House) or Rules White Sheet (Senate): Bills generally go through a two-step review process in the Rules Committee where members can select a limited number of bills on the calendar to receive further consideration. These calendars list bills that are in the initial review stage in the Rules Committee.

The Rules Consideration Calendar (House) or Rules Green Sheet (Senate): These calendars list bills that have been selected from the Review Calendar or White Sheet and are available to the floor of the House or Senate.

The Rules Flash Calendar (Senate Only): This calendar lists bills that have been pulled from the Green or White Sheets in Senate Rules and have been sent to the floor. The House produces no comparable calendar.

The X-Files Calendars: The House and Senate both produce an X-Files calendar. This is a list of bills which the Rules Committee members agree will not be sent to the floor of the House or the Senate for further consideration.

The Suspension Calendar (House) and Consent Calendar (Senate): These calendars are published after a Rules Committee meeting and contain a list of non-controversial bills all the Rules members agree can be sent to the floor without the usual two-step process.

The 2nd and 3rd Reading Calendar (Senate) and the Green Book (House): This is a list and description of all bills currently under consideration on the floor of the House or Senate.

The Concurrence Calendar: This is a list of bills from the opposite house which have been amended, and for which the opposite chamber is seeking concurrence (agreement on the amendments by the house of origin).

The Dispute Calendar: This is a list of bills with amendments that have come back from the opposite house without concurrence (the opposite house did not agree with the amendments and asks the house making the amendments to pass the original version of the bill).

The Conference Calendar: This is a list of bills in dispute which have been referred to a Conference Committee.

The Confirmation Calendar (Senate Only): This is a list of Gubernatorial appointments that are currently on the floor of the Senate awaiting confirmation.

Second Reading

The *second reading* is technically the first time a bill is read to the entire membership of a chamber. Generally, a bill is not read in its entirety unless requested by a member. The Reader will begin to read the bill followed by the President of the Senate or Speaker of the House saying “last line,” at which point the Reader skips to the last line of the bill. With the large number of bills that are considered by the Legislature, this is a time-saving practice. Additionally, all bills are available online for the public to access and read in their entirety at any time.

The second reading is also the only time amendments can be offered on the floor. Technically, after second reading the bill must be returned to Rules; however, it is common practice in both chambers to “bump” the bill. This simply means that the bill will skip the 3rd reading and be available for a vote on final passage. The motion is made that “... rules be suspended, the second reading be considered the third, and the bill be placed on final passage.” If there are no amendments offered, the presiding officer declares that the bill has passed its second reading and should be placed on final passage (3rd reading).⁴

Speaking and Voting on the Floor

There are a few basic rules for speaking on the floor that are adopted in both chambers. First, a member must rise and be recognized by the presiding officer before they may speak. The member who presents a motion may also close the debate on the motion. During the course of debate, no member may impeach the motives of another member.

According to Senate Rules, members may speak at least once on each question and may not be limited to less than three minutes per question.⁵ In the House, members are limited to ten minutes per question, except on and after the fifth day prior to adjournment sine die, or on and after the third day prior to the day a bill must be reported from the House as established by concurrent resolution, when members are limited to three minutes.⁶

⁴ Edward D. Seeberger, *Sine Die*, 62.

⁵ Senate Rules, 29.

⁶ House Rules, 16-C.

Votes are taken verbally for amendments and orally on final passage in the Senate. Senators must be physically on the floor and vote by saying “aye” or “no.” *Division votes* are also taken in the Senate by standing. If the vote is close, a roll call might be requested. One-sixth of the members present must demand the roll call. During a roll call, the Reader will go through the list of members one by one and ask them to state their vote aloud.

In the House, votes are taken by a roll call machine. Members indicate their votes by pushing the appropriate button (green for aye, red for no). The Speaker will warn the members when the machine is about to be locked. This usually happens right before the reader announces the results. As with the Senate, the House can also call for a roll call which must also be demanded by one-sixth of the members present.

Third Reading and Final Passage

Third reading is a discussion of a bill before final passage, where a final vote is taken. The voting procedure is the same as the second reading; however, once a roll call has begun there can be no interruptions, except by a call of the House or Senate. It is during the third reading of a bill that most discussion and debate occurs. Generally, the prime sponsor of the bill and the chair of the committee to which the bill was recommended will first speak to the merits of the bill and encourage its passage.

An *engrossed bill* is one that has passed its chamber of origin and reflects all of the amendments made in its house of origin. An *executive bill* has passed both chambers, incorporates all amendments adopted by both chambers, and has a certificate of enrollment of a certifying officer (President of the Senate or Speaker of the House).

Opposite Chamber

After a bill has passed its chamber of origin, it must repeat the same process in the opposite chamber. Things move quickly at this point in session and schedules can change with little notice.

Bills are again assigned to committees and have the same type of work sessions, public hearings, and debate as in the original chamber. However, while the opposite chamber may amend a bill, it may not pass a substitute bill. Instead, the opposite chamber may pass a striking amendment that would be similar to a substitute bill. A *striking amendment* removes all the wording after the enacting clause and inserts the new language. Of course, it must still fit within the title or it could be ruled outside of the scope and object of the bill.

It is not unusual to see people testifying at the second round of public hearings who were not present during hearings in the chamber of origin. Bills that have passed the original chamber will often receive more public or press attention than they did during the first public hearings because once a bill makes it to the opposite chamber, the chances of the bill becoming law are much greater.

The prime sponsor will also testify in favor of their bill at committee hearings in the opposite chamber.

Concurrence/Conference

If a bill has been amended by the second chamber, the first chamber has to decide whether it will *concur* with the amendments. Leadership decides which bills returned from the second chamber will be discussed and places those bills on the *concurrence calendar*. If the first chamber concurs with the amendments of the second chamber, the bill has passed the Legislature. If the first chamber disagrees with the second chamber, it can ask the second to recede from the amendments. If the second recedes, the bill has passed the Legislature.

If the two chambers cannot resolve their differences, one may request a *conference committee*. Here both bodies send members to a meeting in an attempt to seek a resolution. This committee consists of three members from each chamber, two members of the majority party and one from the minority party.

If an agreement has been reached, a conference committee report is released, but must be adopted by both bodies for the bill to pass. The procedure is to first adopt conference committee report, then vote on final passage of the bill. If one chamber does not adopt the conference committee report (whether by vote or inaction), the bill does not pass.

Sine Die

The final act of the legislature at the end of a session is adjournment *sine die*. Sine Die is a longstanding tradition in the legislature that either occurs when both chambers are completely finished with legislative business or at midnight on the last day of session, whichever happens first.

When both chambers are finished with business, the chamber doors of both bodies are opened so that the presiding officers in both chambers can see each other across the rotunda. Members, staff, and visitors gather in the wings of both chambers and then come onto the floor with the permission of the presiding officers for the final bang of the gavel. This concludes the regular legislative session.

The Governor

Bills that make it entirely through the Legislature are known as *enrolled bills*. These bills have been signed by the Speaker, Chief Clerk, President of the Senate, and Secretary of the Senate and are subsequently sent to the Governor for consideration.

If the Legislature is in session, the Governor has five days (excluding Sundays) to take action on a bill unless the Legislature is within five days of adjournment, in which case the Governor has 20 days after adjournment to act on a bill. After these deadlines, all bills the Governor has not acted upon automatically become law. This is unlike the federal government, where bills not signed by the President do not become law (pocket veto).

After reviewing a bill, the Governor may decide to sign it, veto a section of the bill, or veto all of it. Actual line-item vetoes are only permitted in the budget. In order for the Legislature to override a veto, a two-thirds majority vote is necessary in both chambers.

From the Governor's desk, bills go to the Secretary of State who assigns a session law chapter number. The Chapter to Bill Table lists the bills that have passed the Legislature, the chapter numbers assigned by the Secretary of State, vetoes, short descriptions, and the effective dates.

Special Session

The 68th Amendment of Washington's Constitution established the required annual sessions of 105 and 60 days. Before then, the Governor had to call a *special session* for the Legislature to meet in even-numbered years. Special sessions can be called by the Governor or the Legislature and often are held to deal with fiscal matters. There is no limit to how many special sessions can be called but each special session is 30 days. The legislature may adjourn before the 30th day if their business is complete. Almost all special sessions are called by the Governor and occur when they issue a proclamation. For the Legislature to call a special session, a two-thirds vote is required in both chambers.

Budgets

Passing the state's budget is one of the most important tasks of the Legislature. In this process, the Legislature and the Governor's Office work separately to create an overall budget each biennium. In December preceding an odd-numbered year, the Office of Financial Management (part of the Governor's Office) releases a budget based on a forecast of state revenues. By law, the Governor has to *propose* a balanced budget; however, it is not constitutionally mandated that the final budget passed by the Legislature be balanced. Still, the budget passed by the Legislature traditionally is balanced. The Legislature then reviews the Governor's proposed budget before drafting their own proposed budget.

In odd-numbered years, the Legislature passes three budgets, *Operating*, *Capital*, and *Transportation*, which together make up the state's budget for the next two years. The *Supplemental Budget* is passed in even-numbered years, which includes three separate bills in each chamber: the supplemental operating, capital, and transportation budgets.

Budgets are introduced in the form of a governor request bill (with a companion bill in the opposite chamber), and thus require a sponsor and a bill number and can be found online, where bills can be searched for specific budget items. The sponsors of the budgets are traditionally the chairs of the committees hearing the bill. For example, in the Senate, the chair of the Ways & Means Committee is the prime sponsor of the Operating Budget.

Fiscal committees in both the House and Senate each create separate versions of the budgets. Traditionally, the two chambers have alternated years to be the first to introduce their version of the budgets. The budgets are typically not adopted until near the end of the session, in order to give legislators an opportunity to see what other legislation has passed so they know what needs to be funded, as well as what revenue sources will be available.

The majority party of each body writes the budget to accommodate their legislative priorities. The minority party members weigh in on the budget and offer amendments to the budget requesting funding or cuts for any purpose.

After a budget bill is passed out of its chamber of origin, it goes to the opposite chamber like any other bill. The opposite body makes changes and returns it to the original chamber, where the original body will vote whether or not to concur. The budget bill will then either go to conference committee or be sent to the Governor's Office for the Governor's signature.

Unlike other bills, the Governor is permitted to veto specific budgetary items without vetoing the entire budget. These are known as *line-item vetoes*. A two-thirds majority is required for the Legislature to override these vetoes.

The Operating Budget is a two-year plan for funding all ongoing state activities except for construction and transportation. The Operating Budget is in effect from July 1 through June 30, two years later. The Ways & Means committee works on the operating budget in the Senate, while the Appropriations Committee works on it in the House.

The Capital Budget includes appropriations made to state and local agencies for building and construction projects, such as public schools and universities, parks, prisons, etc. It operates on the same two year

period as the Operating Budget. In the House, the Capital Budget committee works on this budget, and in the Senate, it is the Capital Budget subcommittee of Ways & Means.

The Transportation Budget is written by the Transportation Committees of both chambers. Transportation budget items are in a separate budget because the money does not come out of the state's general fund. Instead, this budget is mostly user-funded based on revenue from gas taxes, permits, licenses, and other fees.

For further information regarding the budget, refer to: *A Citizen's Guide to the Washington State Budget*, prepared by the Senate Ways & Means Committee, and *A Citizen's Guide to the Washington State Transportation Budget*, prepared by the Senate Transportation Committee.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do you determine if a bill is a draft?

An example of a Code Reviser draft number for the Senate is S-0001.1. The .1 indicates that it is the first draft of that particular proposed bill. An example for the House is H-1716.2. Here the .2 indicates it is a second draft. Another example is Z-0623.4, which is an agency request bill that has gone through 4 drafts.

How soon are bills updated on the website?

Updates to bills usually occur by the end of each business day or sooner. However, during cutoffs and other busy times, updates are made as fast as the workroom is able.

Do bills ever really "die"?

People often mistakenly assume a bill is dead when it does not pass out of a committee. Although it may seem like a bill has no chance of passing the legislature, a bill can never truly be dead until the end of the biennium. Furthermore, the same proposal can always be introduced to

the legislature in subsequent biennia so long as there is a sponsor. This can also be confusing in regards to companion bills. While one version of a bill may appear to be “dead,” the companion bill and/or a similar bill might still be moving along in the process. Additionally, ideas and wording from a bill that is not moving can be inserted into a new or substitute bill.

When can members receive messages?

Members can receive messages both on the floor and in committee meetings. While on the floor, pages and security deliver notes to members. Staff members with visible badges are permitted in the wings to deliver messages, but the general public, including lobbyists, must hand their notes to a security guard outside of the chambers to be delivered. With the exception of executive session, during committee meetings, notes can be handed to committee staff to deliver to members.

What is the difference between caucus staff and committee staff?

Committee staff are nonpartisan, while caucus staff are partisan. Both are employed by either the House or Senate, both are involved in bill and amendment drafting, and both provide support to members. While several people work on a committee staff, there is generally only one caucus staffer responsible for a committee or an issue. Another difference is that only nonpartisan staff prepare bill analyses and reports and make presentations at public hearings, while caucus staff does not.

What is the difference between “must” and “shall”?

The words “must” and “shall” appear frequently throughout bills. While at first glance these words may appear to mean the same thing, in bills they are quite different. “Shall” is used to signify that someone (or a group) has the duty to perform a certain act. For instance; “The Senate shall nominate the director of the agency.” The use of “must” creates a conditional duty. For example; “The nominee must be a resident of Washington.” In other words, “shall” indicates who or what has the obligation and “must” provides the conditions that need to be met.

Who is allowed on the floor (wings) during session?

During floor sessions, only members, pages, and security are allowed on the floor. Staff typically wait in the wings and can send a message into

the member via security. The public and lobbyists are allowed to watch the floor sessions from the gallery above the floor, and can only be let into the wings if they are called in by a member. Then they must pass their messages to the member via security as well. During evening session, Senate and House interns serve as pages on the floor.

Does *sine die* occur when the legislature is scheduled to go into special session?

Yes. *Sine die* always takes place at the conclusion of regular session regardless of whether a special session is scheduled.

Appendices

Key differences between the House and Senate

	SENATE	HOUSE
Presiding Officer	Lt. Governor/President of Senate	Speaker of the House
Counsel	Bipartisan Office of Senate Counsel	Speaker's Attorney
2nd & 3rd Reading	Bills are customarily advanced or "bumped" from second reading to third reading by an unopposed floor motion to suspend the rules.	Bills are customarily advanced or "bumped" from second reading to third reading by the Speaker if there is no objection.
Scope and Object Ruling	Focus is on the content of the bill itself. Title concerns are secondary, and the title amendments are freely allowed as long as the content test is met.	Focus is on both the title and content of the bill. No title amendments are allowed.
Voting	Oral roll call, with the final result announced from the rostrum.	Electronically from the member's desk, with votes displayed on the screen as they occur.
Rules Committee	Chaired by Lt. Governor White Sheet to Green sheet	Chaired by Speaker of the House Review Sheet to Consideration Sheet
Committee Hearings	Members can sign a committee report until the bill is acted on by the Senate or cutoff for bills out of committee, whichever comes first. If asked, staff can bring sign out sheets to a member.	Must be present at the committee meeting to sign out bills from committee.

Example cutoff calendar

2018 Session Cutoff Calendar

	Date	Day of Week	Day of Session			
January	8	M	1	← First day of session		
	9	T	2			
	10	W	3			
	11	Th	4			
	12	F	5			
	13	S	6			
	14	Su	7			
	15	M	8			
	16	T	9			
	17	W	10			
	18	Th	11			
	19	F	12			
	20	S	13			
	21	Su	14			
	22	M	15			
	23	T	16			
	24	W	17			
	25	Th	18			
	26	F	19			
	27	S	20			
	28	Su	21			
	29	M	22			
	30	T	23			
	31	W	24			
	February	1	Th		25	← Policy Committee Cutoff - House of Origin
		2	F		26	
		3	S		27	
		4	Su		28	
		5	M		29	
		6	T		30	
		7	W		31	
8		Th	32			
9		F	33			
10		S	34			
11		Su	35			
12		M	36			
13		T	37			
14		W	38			
15		Th	39			
16		F	40			
17		S	41			
18		Su	42			
19		M	43			
20		T	44			
21		W	45			
22		Th	46			
23		F	47			
24		S	48			
25		Su	49			
26		M	50			
27		T	51			
28		W	52			
March	1	Th	53	← Opposite House Cutoff		
	2	F	54			
	3	S	55			
	4	Su	56			
	5	M	57			
	6	T	58			
	7	W	59			
	8	Th	60			
				← Last day allowed for regular session under state constitution.		

After 5:00 p.m. on the 54th day, only initiatives and alternatives to initiatives, budgets and matters necessary to implement budgets, matters that affect state revenue, messages pertaining to amendments, matters of differences between the two houses, and matters incident to the interim and to the closing of the session may be considered.

The Governor has 5 days, if the Legislature is still in session, or 20 days, if the Legislature has adjourned, to take action on any bill passed by the Legislature.

Glossary of Legislative Terms

ACT. A bill adopted by the Legislature.

AGENCY REQUEST BILL. A request for legislation proposed by an agency of the executive branch of government.

AMENDMENT. Any change in a bill, resolution or memorial. A committee amendment is an amendment proposed in a committee meeting. A floor amendment is an amendment proposed on the floor of a legislative chamber.

APPROPRIATION. A legislative allocation of money for a specific purpose.

BIENNIUM. Two-year period. The Washington State fiscal biennium is from July 1 of odd-numbered years to June 30, two years later.

BILL. A proposed law presented to the Legislature for consideration.

BILL DIGEST. Brief summary of a bill, prepared by the Code Reviser's office.

BILL HISTORY. A record of the action taken on bills, resolutions and memorials.

BILL INDEX. A list of legislative measures by subject matter.

BILL REPORT. Summary of background and effect of bills, prepared by committee staff.

BILLS ON CALENDAR. In the Senate, printed volumes with yellow covers distributed to each member's floor desk. Includes the full text of bills and proposed committee amendments on the pending calendar.

BUMPING. Slang term for suspending the rules to allow a bill to be advanced from second to third reading without having the bill revert to the Rules Committee.

CALENDAR. List or schedule of pending business.

CALL OF THE HOUSE OR SENATE. A procedure used to compel attendance of members. Members are not allowed to leave the chamber under a call.

CAPITAL BUDGET. Appropriations made to state and local agencies for building and construction projects.

CAUCUS. A meeting of members of a body who belong to the same political party.

CAUCUS CHAIR. Leader of a political caucus who is elected by the majority caucus to hold and preside over the caucus meetings.

CHAPTER NUMBER. A number, in numerical order, given by the Secretary of State to each bill enacted. When codified the chapter is inserted in the appropriate section of the statutes known as the Revised Code of Washington (RCW).

CHIEF CLERK. A person elected by the members of the House of Representatives to record the official actions of the House and to be the chief administrative officer of the House.

CODE REVISER. Operating under the supervision of the Statute Law Committee, this person codifies into the appropriate sections of the RCW those measures enacted into law and also codifies administrative rules adopted by executive branch agencies.

COMMITTEE. A portion of a legislative body charged with examining matters specifically referred to it.

COMMITTEE ASSEMBLY. A legislative practice during the interim of having some days devoted to committee hearings and caucuses in Olympia or another location within the state.

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES. Committees in each chamber that select the chairs and members of standing committees.

COMPANION BILL. A bill introduced in the identical form in both the House and the Senate.

CONCURRENCE CALENDAR. A list of own-house bills amended by the opposite body and returned for possible concurrence.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION. A resolution relating to the internal operation of the Legislature, in which one house concurs in the action of the other; it may originate in either house.

CONFERENCE CALENDAR. A list of bills to which both bodies have appointed conferees to discuss differences and seek resolution.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE. A committee which may be appointed to discuss specific differences of opinion between the House and Senate on bills which have passed each house but with differing positions on one or more amendments.

CONSENT CALENDAR. Bills with little or no known opposition which are placed on a special calendar by the Rules Committee.

CONSIDERATION CALENDAR. The list of bills eligible for action by the House Rules Committee. Bills on the consideration calendar can be placed directly on the floor calendar, if approved by a majority of the members of the Rules Committee.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Proposed change in the Washington State Constitution which has been approved by two thirds of both houses of the Legislature. To be enacted, the proposed amendment must be placed on the next general election ballot and secure a simple majority of votes in favor of adopting the measure.

CONSTITUTIONAL MAJORITY. Usually this means a majority of those members elected to either the Senate or the House. In the Senate a constitutional majority is 25; in the House it is 50. On some issues, the State Constitution sets a higher constitutional majority. For example, for votes of “lotteries” the constitutional majority is 60 percent of the members of each chamber.

COSPONSOR. The members listed on a bill after the first name (prime sponsor).

CUTOFF DATES. Time certain set by a legislative body for specified action such as bill introduction, committee action, or passage of bills by either house.

DEBATE. Discussion of a matter following parliamentary rules.

DEPARTMENT REQUEST BILL. A request for legislation proposed by a department of the state (also known as agency request bill).

DISPUTE CALENDAR. Bills amended by one body where the second body refuses to concur and asks the first body to recede.

DISTRICT. Area encompassing citizens represented by a legislator. There are currently 49 legislative districts, each having two House

members and one Senator. The boundaries do not correspond to Congressional districts.

DIVISION. A method of voting by standing.

DIVISION OF QUESTION. Consideration of each item separately.

EFFECTIVE DATE. The date a bill, once passed, becomes law. Unless a different date is specified, bills become law ninety days after adjournment of the session in which the bill passed.

EMERGENCY CLAUSE. A provision in a bill that allows a measure to become effective immediately upon the signature of the Governor or other specified date.

ENACTMENT. The passage of a bill by both chambers and the signing by the Governor.

ENGROSSED BILL. A bill which reflects all amendments made in the house of its origin. Noted with an E: ESB 5654.

ENROLLED BILL. A bill passed by both chambers, which incorporates all adopted amendments, and to which has been attached a certificate of enrollment indicating the date passed, votes cast on the bill, and the certifying officers' signatures. It is presented to the Governor for signature.

EXECUTIVE ACTION.

1. Executive action of a standing committee refers to final consideration of a bill by the committee.
2. Executive action on a bill already passed by both houses refers to action taken by the Governor.

EXECUTIVE ORDER. A directive or command from the Governor to agencies in the executive branch.

EXECUTIVE REQUEST BILL. Request for legislation proposed by the Governor

EXECUTIVE RULES COMMITTEE. The House leadership committee that oversees matters relating to staff, the physical plant and equipment, and operational matters. The corresponding Senate committee is called *Facilities and Operations* (F&O).

EXECUTIVE SESSION. A meeting for committee members to discuss and vote on bills they wish to report out of committee. These meetings are open to the public but no testimony is taken.

FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE (F&O). The Senate leadership committee that oversees matters relating to staff, the physical plant and equipment, and operational matters. The corresponding House committee is called *Executive Rules*.

FIRST READING. First of three readings required to pass measures. Bills on first reading are introduced and referred to standing committees.

FISCAL. Relating to financial matters. The state fiscal year (FY) is July 1 through June 30.

FISCAL NOTE. An estimate of the expected cost/revenue of a measure to state and/or local government prepared by the affected agency or by the Department of Commerce on behalf of local governments.

FLASH CALENDAR. A listing of bills on the second or third reading calendar for the next day's agenda in the Senate.

FLOOR (OF THE HOUSE OR SENATE). The actual floor space, committed primarily to legislators' desks, on which the business of the Legislature is conducted.

FLOOR CALENDAR. List or schedule of pending business, prepared in both chambers daily, giving the order in which the bills are to be considered on second and third reading.

FLOOR RESOLUTION. A written motion calling for action, which may be offered from the floor of either house.

GRANDFATHER CLAUSE. Inserted in a bill making provisions non-applicable to activities or personnel involved prior to the enactment of the new legislation.

GREEN SHEET. The list of bills eligible for action by the Senate Rules Committee. Green sheet bills can be placed directly on the floor calendar, if approved by a majority of the members of the Rules Committee.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT. Designation by the Governor to fill an office or position

HEARING. A legislative committee meeting at which witnesses present testimony on matters under consideration by the committee.

HB. Abbreviation for House Bill.

HOPPER. Box located in the Code Reviser's Office in which legislative measures are deposited for introduction

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. Lower chamber of our two-body Legislature. The House has 98 members.

INB. Irv Newhouse Building (Senate offices).

INITIATIVE. A legislative power vested in the people. An initiative is proposed through a petition containing signatures of 8 percent of the number of voters voting in the preceding regular gubernatorial election. There are two types of initiatives:

1. Initiative to the people. Original legislation by the voters, proposing a new law (or changing existing laws) without consideration by the Legislature.
2. Initiative to the Legislature. Original legislation by the voters, proposing a new law (or changing existing laws) for consideration by the Legislature at its next regular session. If not enacted, it is placed on the next general election ballot.

INTERIM. Time between legislative sessions.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS. An order of business during which new bills are read into the record.

JAC. John A. Cherberg Building (Senate offices).

JLOB. John L. O'Brien Building (House offices).

JMP. Joel M. Pritchard Building.

JOINT COMMITTEE. Committee which consists of members from both houses.

JOINT MEMORIAL. A message or petition addressed to the President and/or Congress of the United States, or the head of any other agency of the federal or state government, asking for consideration of some matter of concern to the state or region. Proposed amendments to the U.S. Constitution are also in the form of joint memorials.

JOINT RESOLUTION. An act of the Legislature which proposes an amendment to the state Constitution for reference to the people for acceptance or rejection. To pass, joint resolutions must receive a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members elected in each house.

JOURNAL. Official record of action of legislative session.

LAW. Common law is law set by precedent in court and by interpretation of the Constitution and statute law. Statute law is governing action or procedure approved through the legislative process.

LEADERSHIP. The officers elected by their respective caucuses.

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET NOTES. Document providing detail about the biennial operating budget.

LEGISLATIVE BUILDING. The domed capitol building of the state of Washington containing both the House and Senate chambers and the offices of the Governor, Lt. Governor, Treasurer, Auditor and Secretary of State.

LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION CENTER (LIC). Located on the first floor of the Legislative Building in which staff is available to answer questions about the Legislature and the legislative process and provide copies of all bills and legislative documents.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT. If the words of a law cannot be clearly interpreted as written, the court may refer to the journal and bill reports to establish the intent of the Legislature in passing certain bills.

LEGISLATIVE MANUAL. Biennial publication that contains the rules of each body, joint rules, biographical and other information about the Legislature and state government.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT. Summary of legislation passed during one or more legislative sessions.

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR (President of the Senate). Presiding officer of the Senate.

MAJORITY LEADER. Leader of the majority party in the state Senate. In the House, second in command to the Speaker. Elected by the majority caucus in each body.

MAJORITY PARTY. The party numbering the most members in a legislative body.

MAJORITY REPORT. Document bearing the signatures of a majority of the members of a committee recommending a particular action on a measure.

MEASURE. Any matter before a body such as a bill, memorial or resolution.

MEMBERS. Legislators having taken the oath of office.

MINORITY PARTY. A party numbering less than a majority of members in a legislative body.

MINORITY REPORT. Document carrying signature(s) of a minority of the members of a committee recommending an action different from the majority.

MOTION. A proposal that the Senate or House take a certain action.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER. A motion which, if it succeeds, would place a question in the same status as it was prior to a previous vote on that question.

MOVE. A formal request for action.

NULL AND VOID CLAUSE. Language specifying that a measure is invalid unless funding is provided in the budget by a specified date.

OFM. Office of Financial Management. The chief executive agency for evaluating the budget, preparing fiscal notes, and providing fiscal and policy analysis to the Governor.

OPERATING BUDGET. Two-year plan for funding ongoing activities of state agencies, except transportation.

OPR. Office of Program Research. The House research and committee staff located in the John L. O'Brien Building. Equivalent to Senate Committee Services.

ORDER OF BUSINESS. The usual order of daily activities of a body, set out in its rules.

ORDER OF CONSIDERATION. A list of measures anticipated to be acted upon by the Senate on a particular day.

OVERRIDE. The legislature can override the governor's veto with a two-thirds vote of both houses.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY. Question posed to chair for clarification of a point in the proceedings.

PENALTY CLAUSES. Sections of bills which lay out criminal or civil penalties for violation of the law.

POINT OF ORDER. A demand or request by a member for a legislative body to adhere to its rules of procedure.

PREFILING. The act of introducing a bill prior to the beginning of session. Prefiling in the Senate starts on the first Monday in December prior to the commencement of the session, or twenty days prior to a special session. In the House, prefiling starts 20 days prior to the start of session.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE. Presiding officer of the Senate and Lieutenant Governor of the state.

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE. A Senator elected by the Senate to discharge the duties of presiding officer in the Lieutenant Governor's absence.

PREVIOUS QUESTION. A motion to close debate and bring the pending question or questions to an immediate vote.

PRIME SPONSOR. The originator or first name on a bill or amendment that has been introduced.

PROCLAMATION. An order issued by the Governor, such as a proclamation calling a special session of the Legislature.

PROVISO. A clause in a bill that sets out specific exceptions to the general law.

PULL. Slang term for moving a bill. For example, Rules Committee members may move (pull) bills from the Green sheet to the floor for action by the full Senate or from the white sheet to the green sheet, or members may vote to pull a bill from a committee to the floor.

QUORUM. The number of members that must be present to transact business. Under House and Senate Rules, this means a majority of those elected to either house; in a committee, this means a majority of members assigned to the specific committee.

RCW. See Revised Code of Washington.

RECEDE. To withdraw from an amendment in which the other house refused to concur.

RECONSIDER. To vote again on a question previously decided by the body.

RED BOOK. The Legislative Manual.

REFER. To send a measure to a committee for study and consideration.

RE-REFER. To reassign a measure from one committee to another.

REFERENDUM. Recently passed legislation referred by the Legislature to the voters for their rejection or enactment.

REFERENDUM MEASURE. The legislative power whereby the electorate may disapprove recently enacted laws. It originates in a petition containing signatures of 4 percent of those registered and voting at the last preceding regular gubernatorial election.

RELIEVED. A committee may be relieved of further consideration of any bill in either house by a majority vote of the members of the particular house.

REPEAL. To revoke or abrogate by legislative action.

REPEALER CLAUSE. The section of a bill that lists which RCW sections and chapters of law are revoked and abrogated by the proposed legislation.

REVIEW CALENDAR. The list of bills eligible for consideration to be moved to the consideration calendar by the House Rules Committee.

REVISED CODE OF WASHINGTON (RCW). A codification of current statutes as enacted and amended.

ROLL CALL. Record of how members voted on a particular issue or question.

RULE SUSPENDED. To temporarily set aside a rule.

RULES. Regulating principles used in the conduct of legislative business.

RULES COMMITTEE. Committee responsible for setting the daily calendar of the Senate and House. The President of the Senate and Speaker of the House, respectively, serve as chair of these committees.

SB. Abbreviation for Senate Bill.

SCOPE AND OBJECT. A parliamentary ruling by the presiding officer as to whether a proposed amendment fits within the scope and object of the bill under consideration. Senate and House Rules, and the State Constitution, prohibit amendments which change or expand the scope and object of a bill.

SECRETARY OF THE SENATE. A person elected by the Senate members to record the official actions of the Senate and to be the chief administrative officer of the Senate.

SECOND READING. The reading of a bill for the second time, in full, in open session, opening it to amendatory action.

SELECT COMMITTEE. A committee appointed to consider a particular topic for a limited time. Used interchangeably with special committee.

SENATE. Upper chamber of Washington's two-body Legislature. The Senate has 49 members who serve four-year terms.

SENATE COMMITTEE SERVICES (SCS). The Senate research and committee staff located in the John A. Cherberg Building. Equivalent to House Office of Program Research.

SERGEANT AT ARMS. Enforces protocol of the House or Senate and provides security for the legislative offices.

SESSION. Official meeting of the Legislature. The Constitution provides for one 105-day regular session during odd-numbered years and one 60-day regular session during even-numbered years each biennium.

SEVERABILITY CLAUSE. A section of a bill which informs the court that if one section of the act is found unconstitutional, the legislature intends that the remainder of the act will remain intact.

SHORT TITLE. An abridged description of the bill.

SIGNATURE SHEET. A sheet of paper attached to bill drafts for members to sign-on to before the bill is dropped in the hopper. The paper is blue in the House and pink in the Senate

SINE DIE. To conclude a regular or special session without setting a day to reconvene.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE. Presiding officer of the House of Representatives.

SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE. A Member elected by the House to discharge the duties of presiding officer in the Speaker's absence.

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS. A motion to take up a specified measure at a specific time.

SPECIAL SESSION. A session of no more than 30 days, convened by the Governor or the Legislature, following adjournment of the regular session. The Legislature, upon two-thirds vote of all members, may call itself into special session.

SPONSOR. Member offering a bill, amendment, resolution or memorial.

STANDING COMMITTEES. Committees set up by the Legislature to last for the entire length (two years) of a Legislature.

STATE OFFICIALS. The nine elected statewide administrative officers: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Auditor, Commissioner of Public Lands, Insurance Commissioner and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

STATUS SHEET. A daily publication during session giving status of bills pending or acted upon by the Legislature.

STATUTE. A law enacted by the Legislature.

STRIKE OUT. To delete language from a bill or resolution.

STRIKING AMENDMENT. Amendment removing everything after the enacting clause and inserting a whole new bill.

SUBCOMMITTEE. Selected members of a committee designed to study a special area of concern and then report to the whole committee their findings and recommendations.

SUBSTITUTE. A bill which replaces an entire bill or resolution. Noted with an S: SHB 2142.

SUNSET PROVISION. A date certain for a law to automatically be repealed unless renewed by the Legislature.

SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET. Changes in the second year of the biennium to funds allocated in the original capital, operating, or transportation budgets.

SUSPENSION CALENDAR. Special calendar of noncontroversial bills created by the House Rules Committee. The only question on the floor is acceptance of committee recommendations and advancement to third reading. Closely related to the consent calendar occasionally used in the Senate

TABLE. To set aside a matter for possible consideration at a future time.

THIRD HOUSE. An association whose membership includes most of the professional lobbyists in the state.

THIRD READING. The final consideration of a bill before either house. The bill can be debated, tabled, referred, but not amended. Final passage takes a constitutional majority.

TITLE OF BILL. Description of bill or act which encompasses the intent of the bill.

TITLE-ONLY BILL. A bill which contains nothing more a title and a number. It is introduced in order to have a vehicle on which to amend substance at a later time.

TRANSPORTATION BUDGET. Appropriations for highways, bridges, ferries, transit, vehicle licensing, and traffic enforcement.

TVW. Washington State version of C-SPAN, broadcasting state government meetings and activities.

VETO. Rejection of a bill by the Governor. Governor has power to veto an entire bill or sections of bills but cannot make any additions. The Governor can also veto appropriation items. To pass a bill over a Governor's veto takes a two-thirds vote of each chamber and is known as overriding a veto.

WAC. Washington Administrative Code. Compilation of the rules adopted by the state agencies pursuant to statutory authority. WACs are adopted under the Administrative Procedure Act.

WALIS. Washington Legislative Information System. A number of different types of services, which provides accurate up-to-date information on legislative actions online.

WAYS AND MEANS. The chief revenue and appropriations committee in the Senate. The committee is responsible for deciding the ways in which state monies will be spent and the means that will be used to raise the tax revenues.

WHIP. An assistant to the majority or minority leader, the duties of the whip include counting votes, checking attendance and maintaining caucus discipline on partisan issues and procedural questions.

WHITE SHEET. The list of bills eligible for consideration to be moved to the green sheet by the Senate Rules Committee. Pulls from white to green do not require a vote.

WITHDRAW A MOTION. To recall or remove a motion according to parliamentary procedure.

WORK ROOM. An office in each house where the bills are processed, roll call information retained and bills engrossed, enrolled, etc.

WORK SESSION. Informal discussion of a measure or topic by a committee. No executive action or amendments are permitted.

X-FILE. The House and Senate Rules Committees may place bills that will go no further in the process on the “X-file.”

YIELD. To relinquish the floor of the House or Senate to allow another member to speak.

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This document was prepared by the House and Senate
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