

Rules Committee Procedures



2012

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Senator Margarita Prentice, Vice Chair

Senator Lisa Brown
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Senator Nick Harper
Senator Mary Haugen
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Senator Curtis King
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Senator Val Stevens
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House Rules Committee Members - 2012

Rep. Frank Chopp, Chair

Rep. Jan Angel
Rep. Mike Armstrong
Rep. Cathy Dahlquist
Rep. Richard DeBolt
Rep. Deb Eddy
Rep. Roger Goodman
Rep. Tami Green
Rep. Bob Hasegawa
Rep. Norm Johnson
Rep. Troy Kelley
Rep. Joel Kretz
Rep. Marcie Maxwell

Rep. Jim Moeller
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Rep. Pat Sullivan
Rep. Kevin Van De Wege
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SENATE RULES COMMITTEE PROCESS

The Rules Committee determines which bills advance to the floor calendar for consideration by the full Senate.

There are two calendars in Senate rules. The **White Sheet** is where bills are sent immediately after being passed out of a standing committee. This is more or less a review calendar.

The **Green Sheet** is a consideration calendar made up of bills requested (or "pulled") by Rules members from the White Sheet and is the list of bills eligible to go directly to the floor.

When the Rules Committee considers bills on the White Sheet, they may be moved ("pulled") to the Green Sheet without debate or a vote. They are then eligible to pull to the floor at the next Rules meeting.

Bills on the Green Sheet are debated and voted on prior to moving to the floor. Most bills advance on a voice vote but divisions are often called where a show of hands decides the bill's fate. Any member may request an oral roll call on any bill before it goes to the floor.

The vast majority of bills are placed on the Senate floor calendar in the preceding manner. However, "packages" of bills may be voted out at one time. There might be a package pull before a cutoff or the end of session, or when the Senate is going to address one topic with several bills. Whether the bills move by individual pulls or by package, the list of bills added to the floor calendar is called the **Flash Calendar**.

Occasionally, the Committee will create a "**consent**" calendar of bills with little or no opposition. These bills can come from either the white or green sheets and are placed on a separate pink calendar for the floor.

After certain cut-off dates, the Senate Rules Committee sometimes places bills in the **X-File**, if they are no longer eligible for consideration. This removes them from calendars and the status sheet.

Currently, there are 19 members on the Senate Rules Committee: the Lt. Governor, 12 majority members and 6 minority members. The majority leader determines how many positions will be appointed by each caucus. Leadership of each caucus decide which members will serve on Rules, but traditionally, the Majority/Minority leader, Caucus Chair, Floor Leader, President Pro Tem and Vice President Pro Tem are members of the Rules Committee. The Lt. Governor is the chair and a voting member of the committee (Senate Rule 50) and the Vice Chair is the President pro tem.

Staff to the Rules Committee include the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the Senate. Both Senate Counsel generally attend, and Senate Workroom and Legislative Information Center (LIC).

Two Step Process in Rules Committee to move a bill to the Floor Calendar

Moving a bill from the White Sheet to the Green Sheet:

At the beginning of a meeting, the Majority Leader will announce how many 'pulls' each member will get. Beginning with the Majority Leader, each member, in order of seating, chooses a bill to move from the White Sheet to the Green Sheet. No vote is taken. Factors for the number of 'pulls' include: number of bills currently on the White Sheet, the number of bills already on the Green Sheet; and the number of bills still on the current calendar. Generally, a **bill** only moves one step during a Rules meeting.

Moving a bill from the Green Sheet to the Calendar:

At the beginning of the meeting, it will be announced how many 'pulls' each member will have from Green to the Calendar. Each member makes a motion to place a particular bill on the calendar, gives a short statement regarding the purpose of the bill, gives a short statement in support of the bill and then a vote (usually voice vote aye/nay) is taken. A recorded roll call can be requested by any member of the committee.

If a member moves a bill and it fails, the bill goes back to the White Sheet. The member does not get another choice, it counts as one of their 'pulls'.

The bills are placed on the calendar in the order in which they are pulled out of the Rules Committee.

PRE-RULES MEETINGS

Prior to a Rules Committee meeting, each caucus staff will usually provide Green and White Sheets to their Rules Committee members. In addition, the staff will distribute a form to members that is used to record their proposed selections.

Shortly before a Rules Committee meeting, each caucus will usually hold a pre-rules meeting of their Rules Committee members. At the meeting, members review the status of bills in Rules, discusses problems or issues that may arise in the committee meeting, notes bills that should be pulled, and does vote counts if necessary. Also, members usually indicate the bills they are planning to pull and may describe them briefly. Sometimes two or more members may discover plans to pull the same bill, and this issue can be resolved during the pre-rules meeting.

HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE PROCESS

The Speaker is the Chair of the Rules Committee.

The primary function of the House Rules Committee is to determine which bills will advance to the floor calendar for consideration by the full House.

The Rules Committee typically follows a two-step process working off of two calendars: the "Rules Review" calendar (always printed on white paper) and the "Rules Consideration" calendar (always printed on light green paper.)

Bills reported out of a standing committee are placed on the Rules Review calendar (the first calendar).

The first step is for a committee member to move (or "pull") a bill from the Rules Review calendar to the Rules Consideration calendar.

The second step is for a member, at a later meeting, to move (or "pull") a bill from the Rules Consideration calendar to the floor calendar.

Most bills advance to the House floor calendar in this manner (that is, from standing committee to Rules Review to Rules Consideration to Floor.) Now for the caveats.

- From time to time, the Speaker may allow individual member pulls directly from Rules Review to the floor.
- On motion of the Majority Leader, the committee may pull a bill or a "package" of bills, from Review and/or Consideration, to the floor -- this is known as a "leadership pull".
- Also on motion of the Majority Leader, the committee may pull to the floor a package of noncontroversial bills for placement on the "Suspension Calendar" (printed on light blue paper for the floor). House Rules require that at least two minority caucus members of the Rules Committee vote in favor of placing a bill on the Suspension Calendar, but a different practice has evolved over the years. Generally, bills are not placed on the Suspension Calendar unless both the Chair and Ranking Minority member of the reporting committee recommend it, and both the majority and minority members of Rules agree. This degree of consensus is sought because bills on the Suspension Calendar go through an expedited process on the floor. No floor amendments are allowed and a 2/3 vote of the members is required to adopt the committee recommendations and advance the bill to 3rd reading/final passage.
- The Speaker has the discretion to place bills "on hold" temporarily, making them ineligible for any kind of pull at any particular meeting.

Rules members vote on every motion to pull a bill (whether from Review to Consideration, Consideration to Floor, or Review to Floor). Most bills advance on a voice vote, but if a member requests, an oral roll call vote is taken.

Finally, a note on the Rules "X" file. As an internal housekeeping practice, bills that appear unlikely for floor consideration are sometimes placed on a separate list called the "X" file. The most common (but not only) reason for placing a bill in the "X" file is a determination that it's ineligible for consideration under the deadlines established in a cut-off resolution. The act of placing a bill in the

"X" file does not, in itself, have any legal or parliamentary effect. A determination can still be made later that it is appropriate to run the bill, and, once such a determination is made, the bill can still be pulled to the floor.

The Senate Rules process is almost identical. The Senate equivalent of the Review Calendar is called the "White Sheet"; the equivalent of the Consideration Calendar is called the "Green Sheet"; the equivalent of the Suspension Calendar is called the "Consent Calendar" (printed on pink paper in the Senate), and they have an "X" file too.