

Questions & Answers

How can I get more information on a bill?

Your Assemblymember, Senator, or the office of the bill’s author should be able to provide you with an analysis or fact sheet that summarizes the proposed new law. The website leginfo.legislature.ca.gov provides bill language, votes, analyses, and more for all legislation introduced since 1999. Legislation from previous years is also available online or in hard copy. Contact your legislator for more information.

Can I visit my Assemblymember?

YES. Each legislator has an office in the Capitol and in the District. It is best to call in advance for an appointment. If the Assemblymember is not available, they have staff who can help.

How do legislative assistants help?

Staff members perform a variety of important tasks. Some work directly for individual legislators, drafting bills, assisting constituents, meeting with community leaders and other interested individuals and groups as well as other functions. Others work specifically for committees providing expert analyses of pending legislation.

Can I testify before a committee?

YES. Any person has the right to testify before a committee of the legislature. Contact the bill’s author or your own legislator to find out how to make your voice most effectively heard.

Where are legislators when they are not in the Capitol?

When not at the Capitol, legislators are most often in the district meeting with constituents, local groups, and interested organizations. They may also be attending policy hearings held throughout the state used to gather input and testimony from those unable to travel to Sacramento during regular session.

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEES

Accountability and
Administrative Review
(916) 319-3600

Aging and Long-
Term Care
(916) 319-3990

Agriculture
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Appropriations
(916) 319-2081

Arts, Entertainment,
Sports, Tourism and
Internet Media
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Banking and Finance
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Budget
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Business and Professions
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Communications and
Conveyance
(916) 319-2637

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(916) 319-2087

Elections and
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Development and
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(916) 319-3550

Water, Parks and Wildlife
(916) 319-2096

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES

Agriculture
(916) 651-1508

Appropriations
(916) 651-4101

Banking and Financial
Institutions
(916) 651-4102

Budget and Fiscal
Review
(916) 651-4103

Business, Professions and
Economic Development
(916) 651-4104

Education
(916) 651-4105

Elections and
Constitutional
Amendments
(916) 651-4106

Energy, Utilities and
Communications
(916) 651-4107

Environmental Quality
(916) 651-4108

Governance and Finance
(916) 651-4119

Governmental
Organization
(916) 651-1530

Health
(916) 651-4111

Housing
(916) 651-4124

Human Services
(916) 651-1524

Insurance
(916) 651-4110

Judiciary
(916) 651-4113

Labor, Public Employment
and Retirement
(916) 651-1556

Natural Resources
and Water
(916) 651-4116

Public Safety
(916) 651-4118

Rules
(916) 651-4120

Transportation
(916) 651-4121

Veterans Affairs
(916) 651-1503



Compliments of
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Your Guide to Participation

An easy reference to the
California State Legislature

For a full list of active subcommittees, joint committees, select committees, and special committees of the State Legislature, please visit assembly.ca.gov or senate.ca.gov.

Your Legislature at Work

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Floor sessions of the Assembly, Senate, and meetings of legislative committees are all open to the public. Visitor galleries for the Assembly and Senate are located on the third floor of the Capitol.

Assembly

The California Assembly has 80 members, each serving two-year terms. The Assembly is presided over by the Speaker or a designated member. Voting is conducted by electronic push buttons on each legislator's desk, with tally boards at the front of the chamber.

Senate

The Senate is comprised of 40 members serving staggered four-year terms. The President pro Tempore is the chief officer of the Senate. Voting is conducted by voice roll call.

Standing Committees

To give adequate consideration to the more than 4,500 bills introduced each two-year session, the Legislature does

most of its work in committees. Each committee has responsibility for a specific area of policy (education, health, etc.).

A typical committee hearing will involve the author's presentation of his or her bill and testimony by interested groups and citizens.

Other Committees

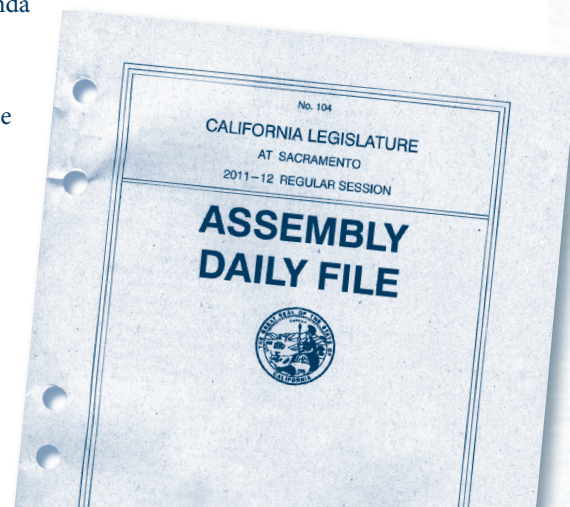
The Legislature has other committees, including Select, Special, and Joint Committees that primarily provide informational expertise on certain issues. Some Standing Committees, such as the Budget Committee, also have subcommittees that review and vote on bills, and provide additional policy expertise.



Finding out what is happening when you are at the Capitol

Assembly and Senate Daily Files

The *Daily File* provides a listing of agendas for floor sessions and all committee hearings. Files are available in the Legislative Bill Room in the basement of the Capitol. Floor session times are listed on the front cover, and the bills on the agenda are listed under "Third Reading File." Committee agendas list the bill number, author and subject matter.



The Path of a Bill

The Author

A legislator sends the idea and the language for the bill to the office of Legislative Counsel where it is drafted into the actual bill. The drafted bill is returned to the legislator for introduction. If the author is a Senator, the bill is introduced at the Senate desk and is called a Senate Bill; if the bill is introduced by an Assemblymember, it is introduced at the Assembly Desk and is called an Assembly Bill. The house in which the bill is introduced is known as the "house of origin."

First Reading Introduction

A bill's first reading is when the clerk reads the bill number, the name of the author, and the descriptive title of the bill before the members of the house. The bill is then sent to the Office of State Printing. No bill may be acted upon until it has been in print for 30 days.

Committee Hearings

The bill then goes to the Senate or Assembly Rules Committee where it is assigned to the appropriate committee for its first hearing. Bills are assigned according to the nature of the issue they address. After passing all policy committees, bills that have an effect on the State Budget ("fiscal bills") must also be heard by a fiscal committee. Senate bills are heard in the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee and Assembly bills are heard in the Appropriations Committee. You can speak "for" or "against" a bill at all committee hearings. Your letters of support or opposition are important and should be mailed to committee members as well as the committee office before the scheduled hearing. It takes a majority vote of the full committee membership for a bill to be approved and "passed out" of the committee.

Second and Third Reading

Bills passed by committees are read a second time in the house of origin and then placed on file for third reading. When a bill is read the third time, it is explained to the full house by its author, discussed by the members during floor debate, and voted on by a roll call vote. Bills that require an expenditure of state funds or are urgency bills (take effect immediately) require 27 votes in the Senate and 54 votes in the Assembly for passage. All other bills need 21 votes in the Senate and 41 votes in the Assembly to be passed. If a bill is defeated, the member may seek reconsideration and another vote.

All legislation begins as an idea, which can come from anyone.

The process starts when either an individual or a group persuades a Senator or Assemblymember to author a proposed new law, commonly called a "bill."

Repeat Process In Other House

Once the bill has been approved by the house of origin, it proceeds through the second house where the same hearing and review procedure occurs. Citizen participation is repeated as the bill moves through the second house. If the bill is passed without amendments, it proceeds directly to the Governor for approval.

Resolution of Differences

If a bill is amended in the second house, it is returned to the house of origin in order for that house to approve the amendments (concurrence). If the house of origin concurs with (approves of) the second house's amendments, the bill goes

to the Governor. If the house of origin does not concur with the second house's amendments, the bill might not proceed any further, or it may go back to the second house for further amendments and review. On rare occasions, a bill may move to a two-house conference committee (three members of the Assembly and three members of the Senate) to resolve the houses' differences. If approved by the conference committee and both houses, the bill (now called a conference committee report) goes to the Governor. The conference committee process is most often used for budget bills.

The Governor

The Governor has three choices when a bill reaches his desk. He can sign it into law, allow it to become law without his signature, or veto it. Urgency measures take effect immediately after they are signed. Other bills usually become effective the following January 1st. A final and important time for citizen participation in the bill process is when the bill reaches the Governor's desk. Letters and phone calls received by the Governor's office are taken into consideration when the Governor decides whether to sign or veto a bill. If the bill is vetoed, it is returned to the house of origin where the author may ask for a vote to override the veto. A two-thirds vote of both houses is required to override the Governor's veto.

