



STATE FORMATION AND PRE-1932 INSTITUTIONAL ORDER: MONARCHY, BUREAUCRACY, AND MODERNIZATION

Politics and Government of Thailand

Summary by Angie

BUDGET DEBATE

การอภิปรายงบประมาณ

A process where elected representatives (Members of Parliament) review and question how public money will be spent, to ensure that the money is used transparently and effectively, prevent corruption, and maintain a sustainable financial status.



GOVERNMENT BUDGET PROCESS IN THAILAND (2017 CONSTITUTION)

รัฐธรรมนูญแห่งราชอาณาจักรไทย พ.ศ. 2560 (ฉบับที่ 20)

2017 Thai Constitution is the current supreme law, which came to power after the 2014 military coup.



The process for preparing, considering, and approving Thailand's annual budget is outlined primarily in Sections 140-144 of the 2017 Constitution, supplemented by the **State Fiscal and Financial Discipline Act B.E.2561** (พระราชบัญญัติวินัยการเงินการคลังของรัฐ พ.ศ.2561) and **parliamentary rules** (ระเบียบวิธีประชุมสภา).

SECTION 140-144:

*Section 138
establishes the checks and balances between the House and the Senate. The Senate has the power to review, disapprove, or amend within a time limit. However, if the House insists with a majority vote, the bill proceeds directly for Royal Assent.

Thai Constitution 2017: Sections 140-144

Section 140 Public expenditure

- Spending allowed only under budget laws.
- Emergency spending permitted → must be reimbursed later.



Section 141 Annual budget law

- Budget must be enacted as an Act.
- If delayed → previous year budget applies temporarily.
- Ensure adequate funds for Parliament, Courts, Independent Orgs, Attorney-General.
- These bodies may petition Budget Committee directly.



Section 142 Budget bill requirements

- Show revenue sources and estimates.
- State expected outcomes/benefits.
- Align with National Strategy and development plans.



Section 143 Timeframe for deliberation

- House: finish in 105 days, else auto-approved.
- Senate: approve/disapprove in 20 days, cannot amend.
- If Senate delays → auto-approved.
- If Senate disapproves → Section 138 applies, House reconsiders.



Section 144 Budget amendments

- No increasing appropriations or adding items.
- Only reduce/cut non-obligatory spending.
- No dishonest acts for personal/others' gain.
- Violation → Constitutional Court → membership terminated.

BUDGET PREPARATION (EXECUTIVE STAGE)

1. Drafting (Executive)

Initiation - executive branch: The Cabinet—through the Bureau of the Budget (สำนักงานประมาณ), under the PM's office—prepares the Annual Appropriations Bill (พระราชบัญญัติงบประมาณรายจ่ายประจำปี)

Guidelines - The Cabinet sets budgetary priorities according to national strategy, development plan, and fiscal discipline law (กฎหมายวินัยทางการคลัง).

Drafting - Ministries submit their budget requests. The Bureau of the Budget reviews, adjusts, and compiles them into a draft appropriations bill

Timeframe - The bill must be prepared in advance so it can be submitted to the House of Representatives (สภาผู้แทนราษฎร) before the start of the fiscal year (ปีงบประมาณ) (October 1)



PARLIAMENTARY CONSIDERATION

2. First Reading (House)

การพิจารณาร่างกฎหมายครั้งแรก

- The House of Representatives debates the bill in principle.
- If approved, a **Budget Scrutiny Committee (คณะกรรมการตรวจสอบงบประมาณ)** is appointed to examine details.
- Under Section 144, MPs may not propose any amendment that increases expenditure beyond what is proposed by the Cabinet, except for internal reallocation with Cabinet consent.

3. Committee Review

คณะกรรมการตรวจสอบ

- The Budget Scrutiny Committee reviews each ministry's allocation and can recommend adjustments– within the constitutional limits.
- Ministers and agencies defend their proposals before the committee.

PARLIAMENTARY CONSIDERATION

4. Second Reading (House)

การปรึกษาแก้ไขเป็นมาตรา

- The House debates and votes on each section of the bill.

5. Third Reading (House)

คณะกรรมการตรวจสอบ

- The House votes on the bill as a whole. If approve, it is sent to the Senate.

SENATE CONSIDERATION

6. Senate Review

การตรวจสอบโดยวุฒิสภา

- The Senate examines the bill, but cannot amend it (Section 140)
- The Senate must complete its consideration within 20 days. If it does not act within this period, the bill will be deemed approved.

ROYAL ASSENT

7. Royal Assent

พระบรมราชานุญาต

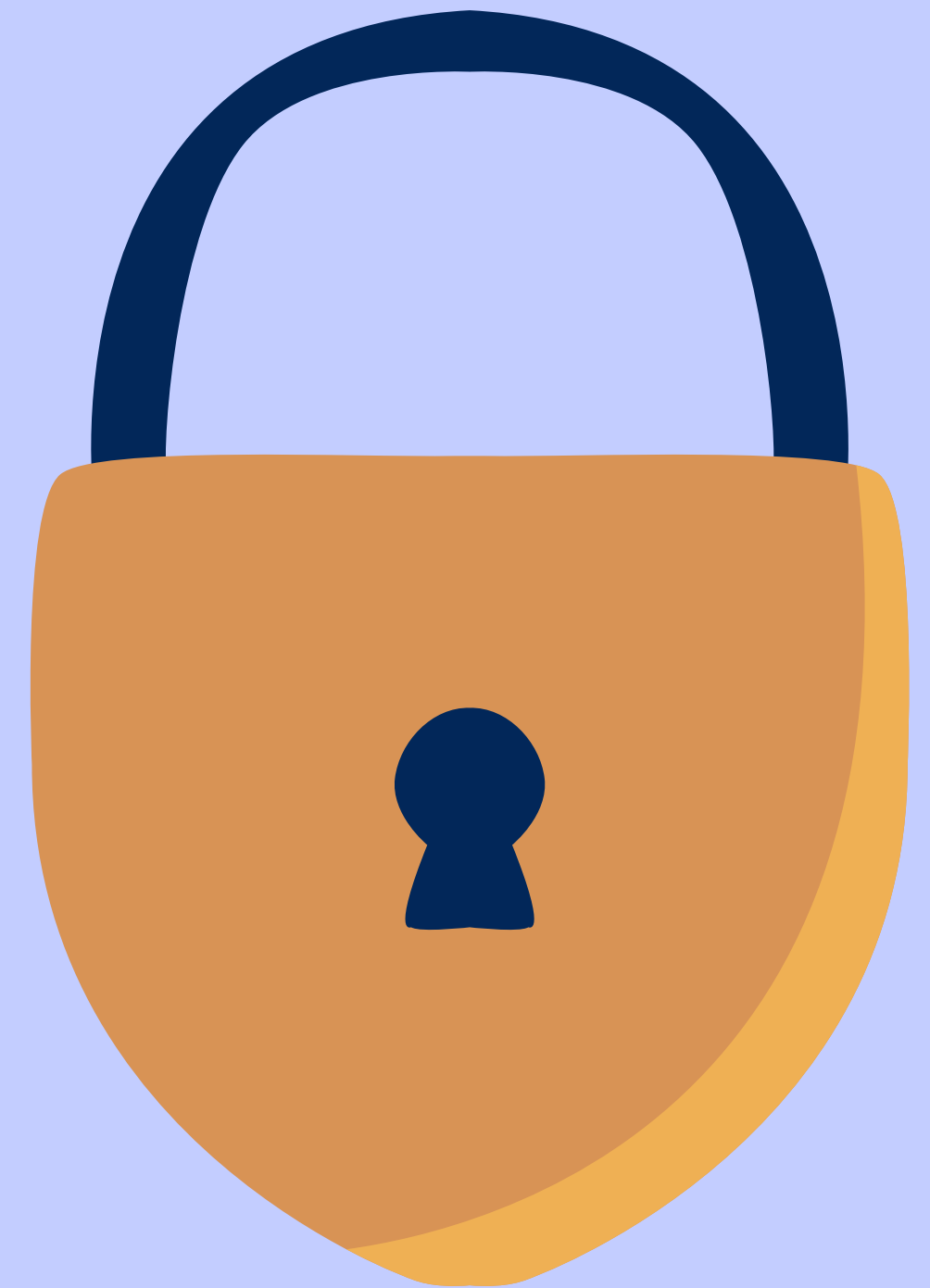
- Once both Houses approve, the bill is submitted to the King for Royal Assent and publication in the Royal Gazette (ราชกิจจานุเบกษา)
- Upon publication, it becomes the Annual Appropriations Act.

BUDGET EXECUTION AND OVERSIGHT

8. Implementation & Oversight

การดำเนินการและควบคุม

- The Cabinet implements the budget according to the Act.
- The **State Audit Office** (สำนักงานการตรวจเงินแผ่นดิน) and **parliamentary committees** (คณะกรรมการสภา) monitor spending for legality, efficiency, and transparency.



KEY CONSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS (SECTION 144)



- **MPs and senators cannot increase budget amounts**
- **Any proposal that may increase expenditure must have the Cabinet's approval.**
- **The aim is to ensure fiscal discipline and avoid populist or unsustainable spending.**



Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Bill

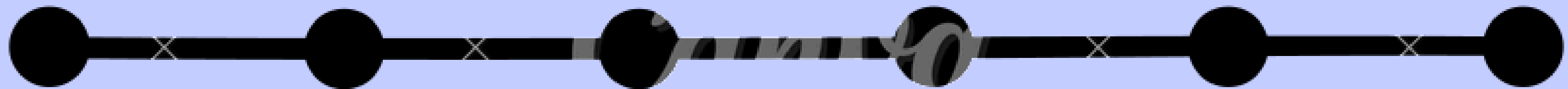
As of now, the First Reading has concluded, and the Second Reading is ongoing. The Third Reading is expected to take place soon.

Key Highlights of the FY2026 Budget

- **Total Budget:** Approximately 3.78 trillion baht.
- **Deficit:** Around 860 billion baht, representing about 4.3% of the GDP.
- **Major Allocations:**
 - **Security and Defense:** 415.3 billion baht.
 - **Economic Competitiveness:** 394.6 billion baht.
 - **Human Capital Development:** 605.9 billion baht.
 - **Social Equity and Welfare:** 942.7 billion baht.
 - **Environmental Sustainability:** 147.2 billion baht.
 - **Public Administration Reform:** 605.4 billion baht.

A notable point of contention is the allocation of 8 billion baht for “soft power” initiatives, which some lawmakers argue lacks clear strategic objectives and measurable outcomes.

THAI POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT BEFORE 1932



- Chakri Dynasty founded
- Bangkok becomes capital
- Absolute Monarchy

- Western influence
- Bowring Treaty 1855

- Rama V reforms
- Abolition of slavery
- Modern Bureaucracy

- Western-educated elites
- Modernization

- Financial crisis
- Political discontent

- People's party
- End of absolute monarchy
- Start of constitutional rule

THAI POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT BEFORE 1932

- Thai politics was based on absolute monarchy, the king held supreme power over the state.
- **Righteous king (ธรรมราชา)**: ruled according to Buddhist principles.
- No elections or parliaments—political legitimacy came from tradition, religion, loyalty to the monarchy
- The administration was organized through a **mandala system (มณฑล)**
 - Reforms under King Rama V:
 - Replaced the old Sakdina system with modern bureaucracy
 - Established ministries; Interior, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Finance
 - Abolished slavery
 - Centralized power in Bangkok
 - Western colonial threats pushed Siam to modernize quickly and had to engage in diplomacy to preserve independence
- Political participation by ordinary citizens was minimal
- Education reformed and gradually created a new middle class exposed to Western political ideas
- Students educated abroad returned with ideas about democracy
- The absolute monarchy faced financial crises, elite conflicts, and rising discontent → led to the 1932 Siamese Revolution led by People's party (คณะราษฎร), which ended absolute monarchy and introduced a constitutional system