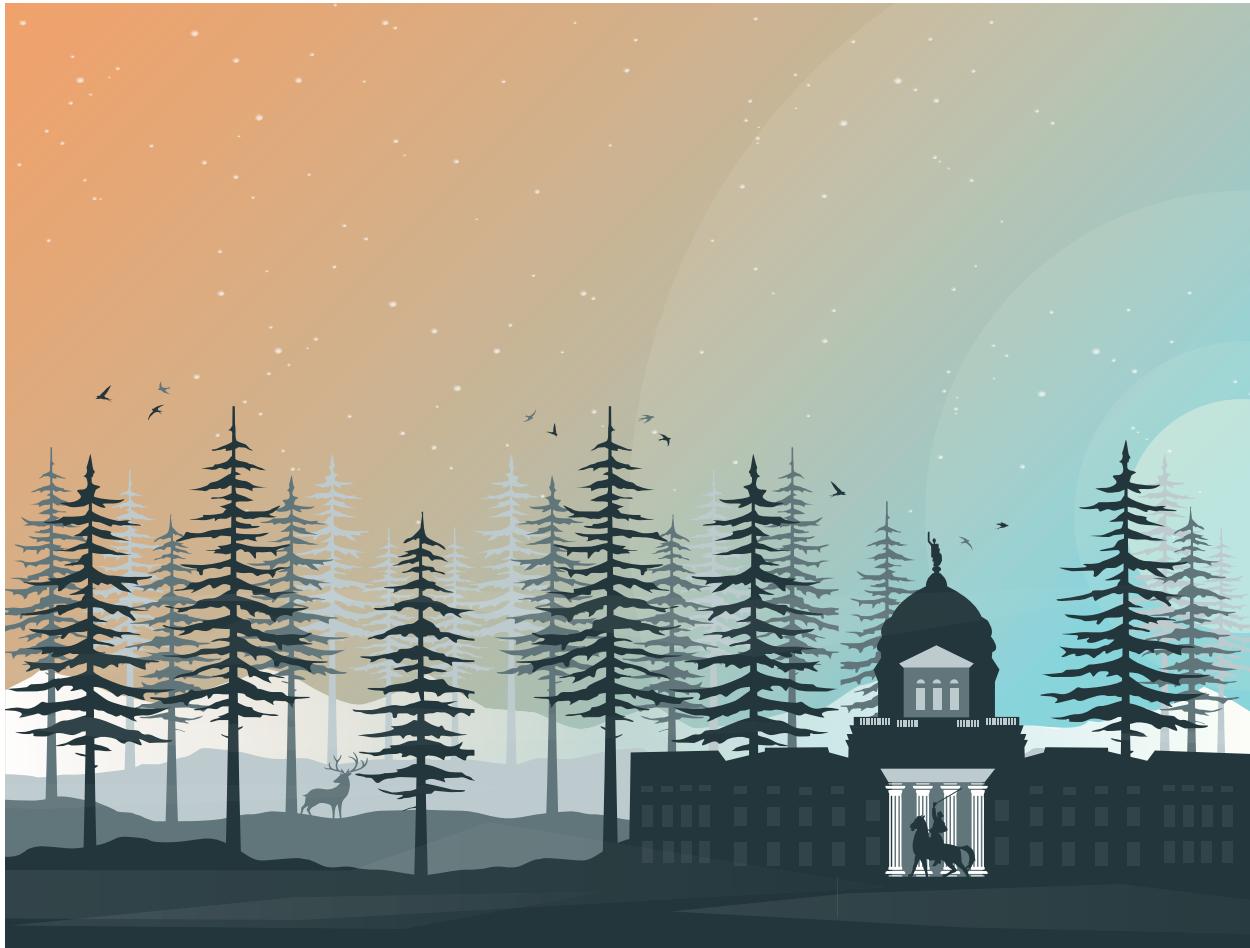


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Montana State Legislature



THE **LEGISLATOR'S HANDBOOK**

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Legislative Branch

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Introduction



A Legislator's Handbook presents information of value to new legislators and veteran legislators as they prepare for and participate in a regular session of the Legislature.

The handbook provides general information to create a foundation for understanding how the Montana Legislature works. It is not a comprehensive digest of statutes, rules, or other applicable provisions. Exceptions to general requirements and provisions that are not often implemented are not generally noted. Legislators are advised to consult the actual laws and rules applicable to the current Legislature to determine specific requirements.

This handbook represents the “tip of the iceberg” with respect to informational resources that are available to legislators.

Some of the terms and acronyms used in this handbook may be unfamiliar to the reader. Appendix A contains a glossary of commonly used terms. Appendix B contains a guide to acronyms. Appendix C provides a key to the color coding used for various versions of bills and related materials.

Chapter One. Being a Montana State Legislator: What the Office Means

General Responsibilities

In a representative democracy power is held by the people and exercised through elected representatives. As elected representatives, Montana's legislators play a key role in our government. The general responsibilities of Montana's legislators are to:

- support, protect, and defend the U.S. and Montana Constitutions;
- serve constituents living in the district;
- serve the citizens of the state as a whole;
- act as a liaison between constituents and state government;
- study, discuss, request, and vote on proposed legislation;
- create, amend, and repeal state laws and programs;
- allocate state resources to agencies and programs;
- ensure that laws are carried out according to the intent of the Legislature;
- oversee the work of state agencies; and
- act as a balance to the Executive and Judicial Branches of government.

Unlike legislators in many other states, Montana's legislators are part-time and compensated only during the legislative session and for interim committee work.

Representation

Each Montanan is represented by one state senator and one state representative.

The Montana Senate consists of 50 members elected to serve 4-year staggered terms. The Montana House is composed of 100 members elected to 2-year terms.

Every 10 years, Montana is divided into geographical districts, based on population, from which senators and representatives are elected. Each member of the House of Representatives represents a district. The Montana Constitution requires that all districts be compact and contiguous and as nearly equal in population as is practicable. Each member of the Senate represents a district composed of two adjoining House districts.

Redistricting and reapportionment of legislative districts takes place following each decennial census. The Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission, composed of five citizens, is responsible for this task in Montana. The members of the Commission may not hold public office.

The Commission submits a proposed plan to the Legislature. The Legislature has 30 days to return the plan to the Commission with recommendations. The Commission files its plan with the Secretary of State within 30 days of receipt of recommendations from the Legislature. The plan becomes law when filed with the Secretary of State.

Qualifications

A Montana legislator:

- must be a United States citizen;
- must be a Montana resident for at least 1 year before the general election;
- must be 18 years of age or older;
- may not be serving a sentence for a felony;
- may not be of unsound mind; and
- must, for 6 months preceding the election, be a resident of the county if it contains one or more districts or of the district if it contains all or parts of more than one county.

A legislator may not serve as a member of Congress or hold a public office of a civil nature during the legislator's term. A legislator may run for another office; however, if elected to the other office, the legislator must resign the legislative seat.

Privileges

Legislative Immunity

The rationale for legislative immunity was reiterated in a 2002 federal District Court order. Quoting prior holdings, the Court stated:

Legislators enjoy immunity from prosecution when acting in their capacity as lawmakers. These [immunities] are thus secured, not with the intention of protecting the members against prosecutions for their own benefit, but to support the rights of the people, by enabling their representatives to execute the functions of their office without fear of prosecutions, civil or criminal.¹

Legislators are exempt from arrest during attendance at a session of the House or Senate and while going to and from those sessions. This exemption does not apply in the case of a felony or a breach of the peace.

Members and staff of the Legislature are immune from suit for damages arising from the lawful discharge of an official duty associated with legislative acts.

A legislator may not be questioned in any other place, including a court, for any speech or debate in the Legislature.

¹ Single Moms, Inc., et al. v. Montana Power Company, et al. Judge Donald W. Molloy, United States District Court, District of Montana, Butte Division, February 6, 2002.

Harassment and Discrimination

Legislators (and legislative employees) have the right to work free of harassment because of their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, or any other characteristic protected by law. This is true regardless of whether the offender is an employer, employee, legislator, lobbyist, or member of the public.

The Branch's Nondiscrimination and Harassment Policy can be found in Chapter 10 of the Administrative Manual. Nothing in the policy precludes a person from seeking other legal remedies. At any point in the process, if criminal activity is suspected, the matter should immediately be referred to law enforcement.

Duties

A guiding statement regarding a legislator's public duty is found in section 2-2-103(1), MCA:

The holding of public office or employment is a public trust, created by the confidence that the electorate reposes in the integrity of judicial officers, public officers, legislators, and public employees. A judicial officer, public officer, legislator, or public employee shall carry out the individual's duties for the benefit of the people of the state.

The Montana Constitution requires the Legislature provide a code of ethics prohibiting conflict between public duty and private interest for members of the Legislature and others. Provisions governing ethical conduct are in statute and rule (Title 2, chapter 2, part 1, MCA).

Participation

Section 2-2-112(2), MCA, provides that a "legislator has a responsibility to the legislator's constituents to participate in all matters as required in the rules of the legislature." Legislators must be present when their house is in session unless they are excused. Senators are required to vote unless excused. Representatives are required to vote when present unless a member discloses a conflict of interest.

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

Understanding the laws and rules governing conflict of interest is important for members of the Montana Legislature. Under Montana law, a legislator has a responsibility to the legislator's constituents to participate in all matters as required by rules contained in the Rules of the Montana Legislature. A legislator may have a personal interest or a private interest that would be affected by a legislative decision.

If a legislator has a conflict created by a personal or private interest that would directly give rise to an appearance of impropriety, the legislator must disclose the interest prior to participating in an official action. The law establishes criteria that the legislator shall consider in determining whether to disclose an interest. The legislator may ask the Ethics Committee or the member's house for advice regarding the disclosure requirement.

A legislator who is a member of a profession, occupation, or class affected by legislation is not required to disclose an interest unless the class is so narrow that the vote has a direct and distinctive personal impact on the legislator.

Business and Employment Disclosure

Legislators must file a business disclosure statement with the Commissioner of Political Practices by December 15 of each even-numbered year. Legislators who are paid by more than one public employer also must file a disclosure statement.

Prohibited Activities

A legislator may not:

- disclose or use confidential information acquired in the course of official duties in order to further substantially the legislator's personal interests;
- accept a gift with a value of \$100 or more or a substantial economic benefit that is equivalent to a gift. The law clarifies what is considered a gift (section 2-2-102(3), MCA). Campaign contributions reported as required by law are not considered gifts.
- accept a fee, contingent fee, or any other compensation (except the official compensation for legislators) for promoting or opposing the passage of legislation;
- seek other employment for the legislator or solicit a contract for the legislator's service by use of the office;
- accept a fee or other compensation (except for compensation and expenses allowed when the Legislature is not in session) from a Montana state agency or political subdivision of the state for speaking to the agency or political subdivision;
- have an interest in a contract made by the legislator in the legislator's official capacity or by any body, agency, or board of which the legislator is a member, if the legislator is directly involved with the contract, or solicit, accept, or agree to accept a pecuniary benefit² from a person who is known to be interested in or likely to become interested in a matter before the Legislature or a committee of the Legislature.

Accountability

Legislature

Each house may expel or punish a member for good cause shown with the concurrence of two-thirds of all of its members.

² A pecuniary benefit is defined in section 45-2-101, MCA: "Pecuniary benefit" is benefit in the form of money, property, commercial interests, or anything else the primary significance of which is economic gain."

Montana law requires each house of the Legislature to have an Ethics Committee. The Ethics Committee consists of two members of each political party. The committees may meet jointly, and the joint committee may consider matters affecting the entire Legislature.

The Ethics Committee is responsible for:

- educating members about the code of ethics in Montana law;
- advising and determining when there is a conflict of interest that requires disclosure; and
- responding to complaints referred by the Rules Committee that allege a violation of statute or rule by a legislator.

The Senate Rules specifically address matters that may be referred to the Senate Ethics Committee.

In each house, the general process is as follows:

- The Rules Committee refers a matter to the Ethics Committee.
- The Ethics Committee considers the matter. The Ethics Committee may dismiss the charge, refer the matter to the Lewis and Clark County Attorney, if appropriate, or make a recommendation.
- If the Ethics Committee makes a recommendation, it is referred to the Senate or the Committee of the Whole of the House of Representatives.

[Commissioner of Political Practices](#)

A person alleging a violation of the code of ethics codified in Title 2, chapter 2, part 1, MCA, that does not involve a legislative act by a legislator may file a complaint with the Commissioner of Political Practices.

[Recall](#)

A legislator may be recalled by the voters in the legislator's district. The basis for the recall must be one of the following:

- lack of physical or mental fitness;
- incompetence;
- violation of the oath of office;
- official misconduct; or
- conviction of a felony offense.

The recall process, outlined in Title 2, chapter 16, part 6, MCA, is initiated by a petition of electors, and the question is decided through an election.

Chapter Two. Organization and Services of the Legislative Branch

The following entities are consolidated into a single administrative organization known as the Legislative Branch to provide efficient and effective service:

- the Senate;
- the House of Representatives;
- the Legislative Services Division and Legislative Council;
- the Legislative Fiscal Division and Legislative Finance Committee; and
- the Legislative Audit Division and Legislative Audit Committee.

Organizational information and services provided by each of these entities are described in this chapter.

Senate



Senators are elected by their individual caucuses to fill the offices described below.

President of the Senate

The President of the Senate is the chief administrative officer for the Senate. The President of the Senate:

- presides over the Senate, maintains order, and decides questions of order and privilege;
- sets the agendas for second and third reading;
- is ultimately responsible for administration, budget approval, and management of the Senate and its staff;
- certifies legislative acts and records as required;
- carries out responsibilities related to bills and resolutions, including referral to committees and the request for fiscal notes and other statements; and
- is a statutory member of the Legislative Council.

President Pro Tempore of the Senate

The President Pro Tempore of the Senate performs the duties of the President of the Senate when the President is absent or disqualified.

Senate Majority Leader

The Senate Majority Leader is the lead speaker in chamber debate. The Senate Majority Leader makes procedural motions during floor sessions and assists the President of the Senate with monitoring the progress of and scheduling of bills and with policy and position development. The Senate Majority Leader is an ex officio member of all committees and, if present, may be counted toward establishing a quorum.

Senate Minority Leader

The Senate Minority Leader is the minority party's leader in the Senate and develops the minority position and negotiates with the majority party. The Senate Minority Leader is an ex officio member of all committees and, if present, may be counted toward establishing a quorum. The minority leader is a statutory member of the Legislative Council.

Party Whips

Each party also has one or more whips. The whips ensure that members are present at moments of importance to the party and for other duties related to helping the party accomplish its goals and further its positions. Absentee vote forms may be submitted to a party whip.

The following are staff officers of the Senate who are appointed by the President of the Senate, subject to confirmation by the Senate.

Secretary of the Senate

The major responsibilities carried out by the Secretary of the Senate or the Secretary's staff include:

- receiving, tracking, and transmitting bills and resolutions and related documents;
- preparing the daily calendar and organizing floor business at the direction of the President of the Senate;
- keeping records, including records of votes;
- hiring and supervising most Senate employees;
- directing the work of committee secretaries; and
- providing clerical services.

Sergeant at Arms

The primary responsibilities of the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate are:

- maintaining order as directed by the President of the Senate or the presiding officer;
- providing safety and facility services for the Senate;
- supervising pages;
- regulating access to the Senate Chamber;
- administering and enforcing parking space requirements for areas under the control of the Senate; and
- purchasing and distributing supplies and equipment for the Senate.

The Sergeant at Arms of the Senate supervises employees assigned to the office of the Sergeant at Arms to carry out these duties.

House of Representatives



Representatives are elected to fill the offices described below.

Speaker of the House

The Speaker of the House is the chief administrative officer for the House of Representatives. The Speaker of the House:

- presides over the House of Representatives, maintains order, and decides questions of order;
- is ultimately responsible for administration, budget approval, and management of the House of Representatives and its staff;
- certifies legislative acts and records as required;
- carries out responsibilities related to bills and resolutions, including referral to committees and the request for fiscal notes and other statements;
- sets the agendas for second and third reading;
- makes committee appointments, except for the Rules Committee;

- is an ex officio member of all committees and, if present, may be counted toward establishing a quorum; and
- is a statutory member of the Legislative Council

Speaker Pro Tempore of the House

The Speaker Pro Tempore of the House presides over the House of Representatives in the absence or inability of the Speaker of the House and carries out other duties assigned by the Speaker.

House Majority Leader

The House Majority Leader is the lead speaker in floor debate. The House Majority Leader makes procedural motions during floor sessions and assists the Speaker of the House with monitoring the progress of and scheduling of bills and with policy development. The House Majority Leader is an ex officio member of all committees and, if present, may be counted toward establishing a quorum.

House Minority Leader

The House Minority Leader is the minority party's leader in the House of Representatives and develops the minority position, negotiates with the majority party, and makes recommendations for the assignment of minority committee members and minority vice chairs. The House Minority Leader is an ex officio member of all committees and, if present, may be counted toward establishing a quorum. The minority leader is a statutory member of the Legislative Council.

Party Whips

Each party also has one or more whips. The whips are responsible for ensuring that members are present at moments of importance to the party and for other duties related to helping the party accomplish its goals and further its positions. Absentee vote forms are submitted to a party whip.

The following are staff officers of the House of Representatives who are appointed by the Speaker of the House, subject to confirmation by the House.

Chief Clerk of the House

The major responsibilities carried out by the Chief Clerk of the House or the Chief Clerk's staff include:

- receiving, tracking, and transmitting bills and resolutions and related documents;
- assisting the speaker in preparing the daily calendar and organizing floor business at the direction of the Speaker of the House;
- keeping records, including records of votes;
- supervising all employees of the House of Representatives;
- directing the work of committee secretaries; and
- providing clerical services.

Sergeant at Arms

The primary responsibilities of the Sergeant at Arms of the House of Representatives are:

- maintaining order as directed by the Speaker of the House or the Chief Clerk of the House;
- providing safety and facility services for the House of Representatives;
- supervising pages;
- regulating access to the House Chamber;
- administering and enforcing parking regulations in areas under the control of the House of Representatives; and
- purchasing and distributing supplies and equipment for the House of Representatives.

The Sergeant at Arms of the House of Representatives supervises employees assigned to the office of the Sergeant at Arms to carry out these duties.

Legislative Council

The Legislative Council is a 12-member, bipartisan, bicameral, statutory committee of the Montana Legislature. The legislators in the following leadership positions must serve unless they are approaching the end of their term: President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, and minority leaders from each house. Legislators in these positions who will not serve in the following legislative session because of term limits may designate another member to serve on the Council in their place.

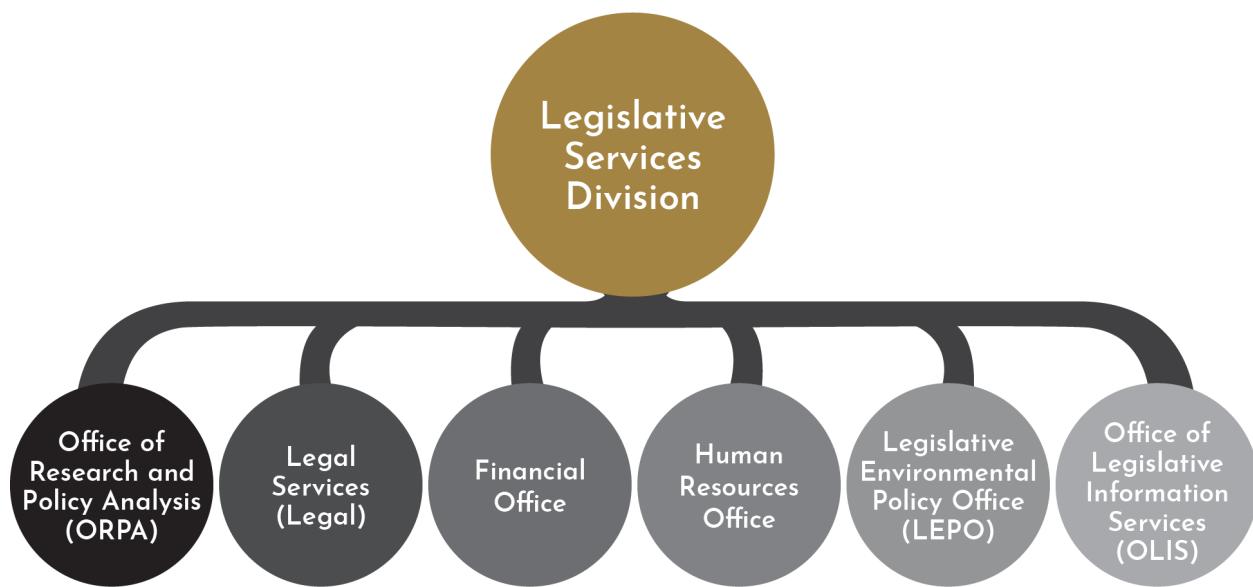
The Legislative Council oversees the activities of the Legislative Services Division and hires the Executive Director. Selected duties of the Legislative Council include the following:

- adopting personnel management, classification, and pay policies for Legislative Branch employees, with the concurrence of the Legislative Finance and Legislative Audit Committees;
- establishing time schedules and deadlines for work conducted by interim committees;
- assigning interim studies and issues of statewide importance that arise during the interim to interim committees;
- approving the computer system plan for the Legislative Branch;
- overseeing publication of the MCA and supervising the Code Commissioner's work;
- appointing legislators to serve as members of appropriate interstate, international, and intergovernmental entities; and
- submitting a budget proposal for the administratively consolidated Legislative Branch entities.

Legislative Services Division

The Legislative Services Division acts as an independent, nonpolitical, impartial agency for the Legislature. The Executive Director manages the Legislative Services Division. The staff of the Legislative Services Division is organized into functional offices as illustrated below.

The mission of the Legislative Services Division is to provide objective, nonpartisan research, reference, legal, technical, information technology, communications, and administrative support services to the Senate, House, and other divisions of the Legislative Branch in support of effective and efficient operation of the Legislative Branch and to support the mission of the Legislative Council. Because most legislators do not have personal staff, the Legislative Services Division provides these services to all legislators. Services of the Division are summarized below.



Legislation

- drafting bills and resolutions and amendments to proposed legislation;
- providing legal review of bills and resolutions before introduction;
- editing, proofreading, and assembling bills and resolutions for introduction;
- engrossing and enrolling bills and resolutions; and
- reviewing the text of proposed ballot measures for clarity, consistency, and conformity with the Bill Drafting Manual.

Publication and Distribution

- preparing, publishing, and distributing the Montana Legislative Review, session laws, text and annotations of the Montana Code Annotated (MCA), History and Final Status for each legislative session, Legislative Services Division reports and documents, and other legislative information; and
- printing and distributing Rules of the Montana Legislature, bills, fiscal notes, resolutions, electronic journals, and other legislative information.

Research and Reference

- providing legislative research and reference services and maintaining a collection of reference materials; and
- providing interlibrary loan services to legislators and staff.

Legal

- providing legal opinions to legislators regarding issues of state law; and
- providing legal services to the Legislative Branch consolidated entities.

Management and Business Services for Legislative Branch Consolidated Entities

- preparing and monitoring budgets;
- processing reimbursement claims and payrolls;
- purchasing supplies and equipment and maintaining property inventories; and
- providing personnel and administrative services.

Committee Services

- providing research and legal services for legislative standing and select committees;
- providing research, legal, and administrative staff support for the Legislative Council, the Environmental Quality Council, the Districting and Apportionment Commission, interim committees; and other designated legislative committees and work groups;
- providing research and project management for interim studies; and
- providing technical staff support for the Legislative Branch Information Technology System Planning Council.

Public Education and Information

- providing information about the Legislature and legislative process to the public;
- helping to train and educate legislators about staff services and the legislative process;
- serving as a liaison for media seeking information about the legislative process and institution;

- producing and distributing educational information via printed publications and the legislative website for legislators and the public;
- relaying messages from the public to legislators during sessions;
- broadcasting legislative meetings; and
- coordinating communications services.

Information Services

- planning, developing, and maintaining the computer network and applications for the Legislative Branch; and
- developing and maintaining systems to provide public access to legislative information online.

Legislative Audit Committee

The Legislative Audit Committee is a 12-member, bipartisan, bicameral, statutory committee of the Montana Legislature. The establishment of a committee to oversee auditing duties is mandated by the Montana Constitution. The primary functions of the Legislative Audit Committee include the following:

- appointing, consulting with, and advising the Legislative Auditor;
- reviewing audit reports and releasing audit reports to the public; and
- serving as a conduit between the Legislative Auditor and the Legislature.

Legislative Audit Division

The Legislative Auditor manages the Legislative Audit Division. The Legislative Audit Division conducts independent audits and provides factual and objective information to the legislative, judicial, and executive managers of the public trust.

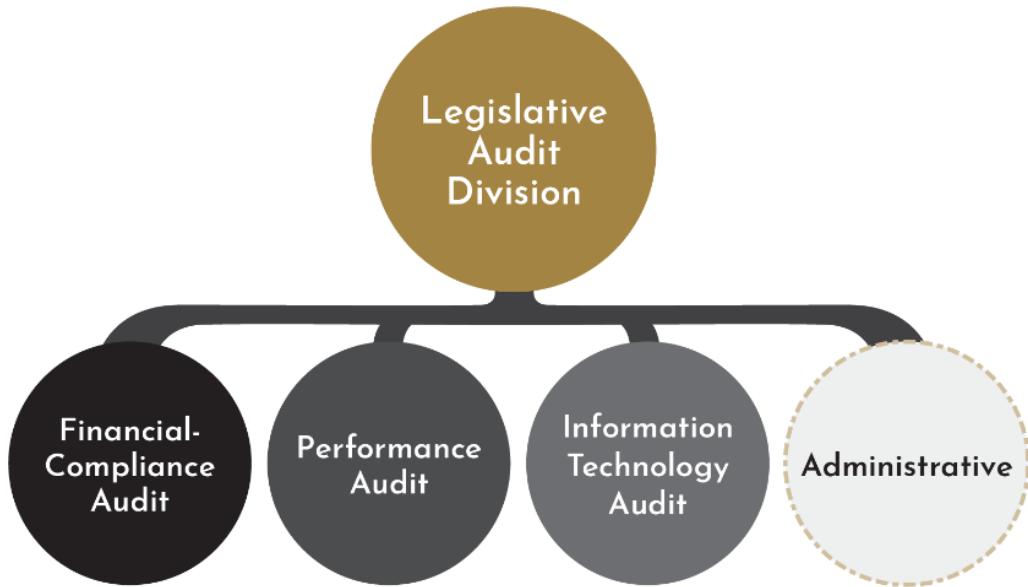
The Legislative Audit Division operates a toll-free telephone “Fraud Hotline” that enables state employees and the public to report improper acts committed by state departments, agencies, or employees.

The goals of the Legislative Audit Division are listed below.

- provide the Montana Legislature and state agency directors and program managers with independent information regarding whether state agencies:
 - conduct only those activities and programs authorized by the Legislature;
 - conduct programs effectively and efficiently;
 - make expenditures only in accordance with applicable laws and regulations;
 - collect and account properly for all revenue and receipts; and
 - adequately safeguard and control assets; make comments, recommendations, and suggestions for the improvement of state agency operations and activities; and

- provide assistance when requested by the Legislature, its committees, or its members.

The organizational structure of the Division is illustrated below.



Financial-Compliance

The financial-compliance audit staff perform audits of state agencies in accordance with applicable audit standards to determine whether an entity's financial operations are properly conducted, the financial reports are presented fairly, and the entity has complied with applicable laws and regulations. These activities include annual audits of the state's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report and the federal Single Audit. During each fiscal year, financial-compliance audit staff also complete work on legislative requests, special projects, and identified or suspected fraudulent activities affecting federal or state agencies.

Performance Audits

Performance audits assess the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations and programs. Performance audits provide objective analysis to assist the Legislature in its oversight mission. The information provided through the performance audit process is used to improve program operations, reduce costs, facilitate decision-making, and contribute to public accountability.

Performance audits are prioritized at the direction of the Legislative Audit Committee. The committee reviews a list of potential performance audits every fiscal year and assigns a priority ranking to the projects it judges to be most important. Legislators, legislative committees, or other interested parties

can request a performance audit be conducted for any program, activity, or policy issue affecting state government. Because of the diversity of subject matter associated with different projects, performance audit staff hold degrees in a variety of fields, including business administration, political science, public administration, statistics, information systems, English, and math.

The performance audit process starts with a review of statutory directives and goals and objectives associated with a government program, activity, or public policy issue. Audit teams identify applicable criteria and gather evidence to determine whether statutory directives are being met and associated goals are being achieved. Performance audits also involve determinations about whether directives and goals can be achieved with greater efficiency and economy, or whether programs or activities are no longer necessary or could be delivered at lower cost via other means.

Information Technology Audit

The Information Technology Audit and Analytics (ITAA) team assesses the state's use and control of IT systems and processes. The team conducts IT management audits, which address general IT controls, and system security and reliability audits, which provide more in-depth review of specific systems on a cyclical basis. The ITAA team also manages an enterprise-wide risk assessment process to identify and assess significant IT risks across state government.

The work of the ITAA team is critical in helping the Legislature understand management, operational, and security risks for the state's IT systems. The team's work is also very important internally to the Audit Division in providing assurances for other types of audits. Both Financial and Performance audits often require expertise and support from the ITAA team to assess IT controls and assess the reliability of data being used as part of our work.

Administrative and Other Audit Support

The work of the Audit Division would not be possible without the support of the administrative team, which includes an executive assistant, legal counsel, editorial functions, and training and development. Audit teams are also supported by the research and evaluation methodologist, who provides expertise in applied statistical theory, advanced quantitative techniques, and sampling and survey methodology.

Legislative Finance Committee

The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) is a 12-member, bipartisan, bicameral, statutory committee of the Montana Legislature that meets during the interim to review fiscal issues. Four members must serve on the Senate Finance and Claims Committee, and four members must serve on the House Appropriations Committee. Chairs of the Interim Budget Committees are ex officio nonvoting members of the LFC.

The LFC appoints, consults with, and advises the Legislative Fiscal Analyst. Other primary committee functions include:

- making recommendations to the Senate Finance and Claims Committee and the House Appropriations Committee regarding certain budget issues;
- reviewing dedicated revenue provisions and reporting recommendations to the Legislature;
- reviewing and commenting on budget amendments, reductions in spending, proposed supplemental appropriations to transfer appropriations between fiscal years of a biennium, operating budget changes, and program transfers;
- receiving reports on specific state financial matters;
- monitoring information technology policies of the Department of Administration and providing written comment on proposed policy changes; and
- identifying information technology issues likely to require future attention.

[Legislative Fiscal Division](#)

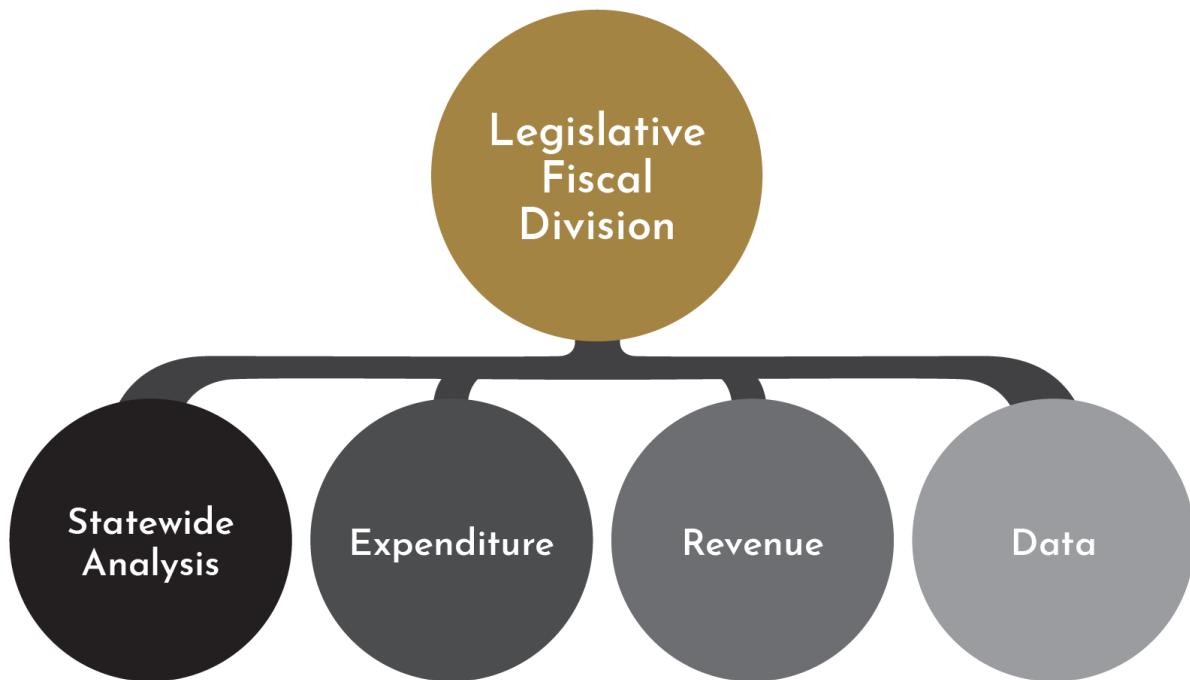
The Legislative Fiscal Analyst manages the Legislative Fiscal Division. The Legislative Fiscal Division provides nonpartisan budget and data analysis to the Legislature, so that all lawmakers have objective, accurate, and relevant information to make decisions.

The organizational structure of the Legislative Fiscal Division is illustrated on the following page.

The responsibilities of the Legislative Fiscal Division are to:

- provide staffing support to the:
 - Joint Appropriations Subcommittees;
 - Legislative Finance Committee;
 - Financial Modernization and Risk Analysis Committee (often referred to as the MARA Committee); and
 - Interim Budget Committees
- provide fiscal analysis of state government, including accumulating, compiling, analyzing, providing information, and studying economic factors and efficiency in state government;
- estimate existing tax and proposed tax revenues;
- analyze the executive budget and budget requests of selected state agencies, including proposed capital improvements;
- make reports, data tools, and recommendations considered desirable and requested by the Legislative Finance Committee to the Legislature;
- assist legislative committees and individual legislators in compiling and analyzing financial data tools; and
- assist the Revenue Interim Committee in revenue estimation.

The Division staff provide these functions as described below.



Statewide Analysis and Communication

Division staff provide statutory and historical statewide comparisons. Staff also evaluate the overall balance sheet and financial policy and communicate information to a broad audience.

Communication with legislators and the public happens in a variety of ways, from written materials, online brochures, public presentations, and online data tools, to one-on-one, in-person meetings with legislators to assist them in their job.

Revenue Estimation and Analysis

Staff in this section specialize in various areas of revenue estimation. They provide objective estimation and analysis of state revenue during the legislative session and throughout the interim.

In addition, staff analyze all bills impacting tax policy and collections during the legislative session, assist the tax committees of each legislative chamber, assist the Revenue Interim Committee, and conduct tax policy analysis.

Expenditure Analysis

Division staff provide objective, impartial analysis of state agency operations and expenditures during the legislative session and throughout the interim. Fiscal analysts staff appropriations subcommittees, write the general appropriations bill, and conduct other fiscal research as required or requested.

Each analyst in this section specializes in the operations and budgets of a group of state agencies. Analysts in this section can answer questions about individual agencies and their budgets, as well as general budgeting and appropriation questions.

Data Analysis

Division staff work to combine state and local data from varied sources to create a comprehensive, connected data set for use in financial analysis and to support the Legislature in general. These various data often need significant work in cleaning, formatting, connecting, and flagging them in such a way as to make them usable and consistent.

The data analysis staff support the work of the Modernization and Risk Analysis Committee through analysis of state and local government revenues, expenditures, and assets 20 years into the future, as well as data analysis of selected topics of interest of the Legislature.

Chapter Three. Organizing the Montana Legislature

In January of every odd-numbered year, a new Legislature convenes and exists for 2 years. This chapter describes how each Legislature organizes itself, from the election of members to the first day of the legislative session.

Election of Members

One-half of the Senate is elected every 2 years. The entire House of Representatives is elected every 2 years. The general election is held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of every even-numbered year, approximately 2 months before the Legislature convenes for the regular session.

Following the election, the Secretary of State prepares certified rosters of the members of each house of the Legislature. Newly elected members begin their terms on the first day of the legislative session.

Legislative Sessions

Regular Session

When the Legislature meets for a regular session in each odd-numbered year, the session may not exceed 90 legislative days.

The law provides that each regular session of the Legislature begins at noon on the first Monday of January. When January 1 falls on a Monday, the regular session begins on the first Wednesday in January (section 5-2-103, MCA).

Special Sessions

A special session may be convened in the following ways:

- The Governor may call a special session.
- A majority of the members of the Legislature may request a special session in writing. In order to request a special session, 10 members of the Legislature may request the Secretary of State to poll legislators to determine if a majority are in favor of a special session. The request must specify the conditions warranting the call of a special session, the purposes of the special session, and the proposed date and time for convening the special session. If a majority of members are in favor of the special session, the Secretary of State will notify legislators of the date and time of the special session.
- When the Legislature is in session, a special session may be called by a recorded vote of a majority of the members of the Legislature (section 5-3-102, MCA).

A special session may be limited to subjects specified in the call.

The law also provides for emergency sessions to be convened if the Governor and the Governor's primary successors are killed or are unable to serve as the result of an enemy attack.

Caucuses

After the election and before December 1 of each even-numbered year, the parties of each house are required to hold a presession caucus for newly elected legislators and holdover senators who will continue to serve in the Legislature. The date of the presession caucus is set by the Legislative Council. Officers for each house are nominated during the presession caucus.

Traditionally, the nominated officers begin to serve as if they will be elected, and the elections held on the first day are a formality. The officers to be nominated for each house are listed below.

Senate

Officers elected by the Senate:

- President
- President Pro Tempore

Officers elected by the appropriate caucus of the Senate:

- Majority Leader
- Minority Leader
- Majority Whips
- Minority Whips

The members of the Senate Committee on Committees are elected by the Senate.

House of Representatives

Officers elected by the House of Representatives:

- Speaker
- Speaker Pro Tempore

Officers elected by the appropriate caucus of the House of Representatives:

- Majority Leader
- Minority Leader
- Majority Whips
- Minority Whips

Presession Organization

After the November election, each person who will serve in the next Legislature will receive a request to indicate the person's preferences for standing committee appointments.

Committee members are appointed following the presession caucuses. In general, the Senate Committee on Committees appoints, with the approval of the Senate, members to committees of the Senate. The Speaker of the House appoints members to committees of the House of Representatives.

The President of the Senate appoints a Secretary of the Senate and a Sergeant at Arms. The Speaker of the House appoints a Chief Clerk of the House and a Sergeant at Arms. The duties of these staff officers are described in Chapter 2. The law also provides for appointment of a chaplain for each house.

Before the session begins, the Senate Finance and Claims Committee and the House Appropriations Committee may review appropriation requests and may visit state agencies and institutions to discuss the requests, although this is rarely done.

Convening the Senate

The following activities usually take place on the first day of the legislative session in the Senate.

- Senators and senators-elect report to the Senate Chamber and sit in assigned seats that are assigned during caucus.
- The first day's session is called to order.
- Roll is called by the Secretary of the Senate.
- The constitutional oath of office is administered to the senators-elect.
- The rules of the previous Legislature are adopted as the temporary operating rules for the current Legislature.
- Officers nominated at the presession caucuses are officially elected.
- Staff officers appointed by the President of the Senate are confirmed.
- Welcoming speeches are delivered.
- The President of the Senate appoints small, select committees to notify each of the other branches of state government and the other house that the Senate is organized and ready for business.
- The report of the Committee on Committees recommending appointments to committees of the Senate are read.
- The first reading and commitment of all preintroduced and other introduced bills and resolutions occur.

Other business may also be conducted. See Chapter 6 for more information about floor sessions in each house.

Convening the House of Representatives

The following activities usually take place on the first day of the legislative session in the House of Representatives.

- Representatives-elect report to the House Chamber and sit in assigned seats that are assigned during caucus.
- The first day's session is called to order by the Secretary of State.
- Roll is called by the Chief Clerk of the House.
- The constitutional oath of office is administered to the representatives-elect.
- The rules of the previous Legislature are adopted as the temporary operating rules for the current Legislature.
- Officers nominated at the presession caucuses are officially elected.
- Staff officers appointed by the Speaker of the House are confirmed.
- Welcoming speeches are delivered.
- The Speaker of the House appoints small, select committees to notify each of the other branches of state government and the other house that the House of Representatives is organized and ready for business.
- The first reading and commitment of all preintroduced and other introduced bills and resolutions occur.

Other business may also be conducted. See Chapter 6 for more information about floor sessions in each house.

Chapter Four. Enacting Laws: The Legislative Process

This chapter explains how the Legislature enacts laws through the legislative process.

Overview of Bills and Resolutions

Bills

A bill is a proposal sponsored by a legislator to amend or repeal existing law or establish new law. A few types of bills are described below. Others are described in the Bill Drafting Manual published by the Legislative Services Division.

- General bill. A bill that amends or repeals statutes or establishes new statutes.
- Appropriation bill. A bill that authorizes the expenditure of state money for a specific purpose. Appropriation bills must originate in the House of Representatives.
- Revenue bill. A bill that increases or decreases revenue.
- Constitutional amendment. A bill that proposes a constitutional amendment by legislative referendum. If the bill is approved by two-thirds of the members of the Legislature, it is referred to Montana voters. All constitutional amendments must be approved by the voters.
- Referendum. A bill that orders a vote and approval by the electorate before the bill becomes law.

Resolutions

Resolutions are actions of the Legislature for a variety of purposes. Resolutions do not have the force of law. Some common types of resolutions are described below. Others are described in the Bill Drafting Manual.

Simple resolution. A simple resolution may be used to adopt or amend the rules of the Legislature or otherwise provide for the internal affairs of the house adopting the resolution. In the Senate, simple resolutions are used to confirm the Governor's nominations for appointments.

Joint resolution. Some of the uses of a joint resolution are to:

- amend, adopt, or repeal Joint Rules of the Legislature;
- express support for or disapproval of federal legislation;
- request an interim study;
- send a request to a state agency, Congress, or the President of the United States;
- express sympathy to relatives of a deceased legislator;
- ratify or propose amendments to the U.S. Constitution;
- request amendment, adoption, or repeal of Executive Branch administrative rules; or
- approve construction of a state building.

Authorized uses of a joint resolution are specified in the Joint Rules.

Requirements for Bills: Tips for Legislators

Legislators should be aware of the constitutional requirements summarized below.

- A bill may not be amended after introduction so as to change its original purpose.
- A bill may contain only one subject, which must be clearly expressed in its title. (Exceptions are made for general appropriation bills and bills for the codification and general revision of laws. The constitution clarifies what qualifies as a general appropriation bill.)
- An appropriation may not be made for religious, charitable, industrial, educational, or benevolent purposes to any private individual, private association, or private corporation not under the control of the state.
- A law may be challenged on the ground of noncompliance with Article V, section 11, of the Montana Constitution (including the provisions listed above) only within 2 years after its effective date.

Additional requirements in statute are summarized below.

Statutes are effective October 1 following passage and approval except for:

- laws appropriating public funds for a public purpose (usually July 1);
- statutes providing for the taxation or imposition of a fee on motor vehicles (usually January 1);
- statutes enacted during a special session of the Legislature; or
- laws that provide a different effective date (1-2-201, MCA).

Additional requirements in rule are summarized below.

- A bill may not be introduced or received in a house after that house has finally rejected a bill designed to accomplish the same purpose. The Rules Committee of the appropriate house may approve exceptions to this rule. (Joint Rule 40-70)
- It is a crime, punishable by a fine or imprisonment, to knowingly make a false entry or false alteration in a bill or law. (section 45-7-208, MCA)

The Drafting Process: From Idea to Introduction

Making a Bill Draft Request

The drafting process begins when a legislator requests that a bill or resolution be drafted.

The following individuals or committees may request that bills or resolutions be drafted:

- a person entitled to serve in the next session of the Legislature (holdover senators or unopposed candidates prior to election, all legislators upon election);

- a standing committee of the Legislature; or
- an interim or other statutory legislative committee.

The eligible requesters listed above may request that legislation be drafted on behalf of Executive Branch officials or agencies.

Limitations on Drafting Requests

Under the current Joint Rules, an individual may request:

- an unlimited number of bills or resolutions before 5 p.m. on December 5 preceding a session; and
- up to seven bills or resolutions after December 5. Only two of these seven bills or resolutions may be requested after the Legislature convenes. All general bills and resolutions must be requested by 5 p.m. on the 12th legislative day; deadlines for other bills and resolutions, including committee bills, are established in the Joint Rules.

After December 5, an eligible requester may give any unused requests to another person entitled to serve in the next legislative session.

Bill Drafting Services

Each bill draft request is assigned to a research analyst or attorney from the Legislative Services Division based on expertise and workload. The drafter is an impartial technician whose function is to translate the objectives and proposed policies of the requester into clear, concise, and unambiguous language.

The Joint Rules require that bills and resolutions be reviewed by the staff of the Legislative Services Division prior to introduction for proper format, style, and legal form. The Bill Drafting Manual establishes the format and style guidelines.

The drafter will:

- draft the bill or resolution in accordance with the Bill Drafting Manual and applicable law;
- identify potential conflicts with state and federal constitutional provisions and notify the requester of these conflicts;
- contact persons identified by the requester for information if necessary;
- identify decisions that need to be made by the requester and review existing statutes to avoid conflicts, duplication, or confusion.

Upon request and time permitting, the drafter may conduct research and identify options for the requester or provide background information related to the bill.

The drafter may not:

- express personal thoughts or promote self-interest;
- prepare speeches or testimony for individual legislators; or
- make decisions that determine the policy to be implemented or articulated through a bill or resolution.

Prior to introduction, draft bills and resolutions are reviewed by an attorney, an editor, proofreaders, and the Executive Director of the Legislative Services Division, in addition to the drafter.

Providing Direction to the Drafter

Legislative Council rules require that all bill drafting requests provide sufficient information to allow a subject area to be assigned.

The following questions are designed to help a legislator prepare a bill draft request.

- What exactly is the problem to be solved? If applicable, what are the undesired effects of the current law?
- Who has experienced the problem?
- What results are desired?
- What is the proposed solution to the problem?
- What action should the government take to solve the problem? Do you know of existing statutes that should be changed to achieve your proposed solution?
- Is there a document or “draft bill” prepared by a citizen, agency, lobbyist, or any other entity that may serve as a model or provide guidance for your bill? Provide a copy if you have one. (You may request that Legislative Services Division staff make a copy and return the original to you.)
- Is there legislation from another state that may serve as a model for your bill? Provide a copy of the legislation if you have one. If you are aware of any information that will help to find the legislation (state, date, bill or law number), provide this information.
- Is the proposed solution based on an idea that you heard or read about? Provide any reference information that you are aware of. Where did you hear or read about it? Do you have a copy of an article that you can provide?
- Does the solution require additional money for implementation? How should the money be raised or from what existing source should it come? (Mandates to local governments must authorize a source of funding.)

Requesters who are not prepared to answer these questions may ask for information from research analysts or attorneys of the Legislative Services Division, or from fiscal analysts of the Legislative Fiscal Division. Requestors may also ask that a resolution requesting an interim study be drafted.

After a request is received, the requester will be asked to provide additional guidance through responses to questions posed by the drafter and will be asked to review the draft bill or resolution.

Prioritization of Drafting Requests

The general rule that applies to drafting the first five requests from persons who will serve as legislators in the next session is “first in, first worked on.” After the first five bills or resolutions have been drafted for all requesters, remaining requests are drafted in order of request. As is often the case with general rules, there are many exceptions; most are listed below.

- After a draft bill or resolution has been submitted for legal review, the requester may make changes to the draft only one time without losing priority. If the changes are requested in accordance with deadlines specified in Legislative Council rules for notifying the drafter of potential revisions and for providing requested revisions, the request retains its original priority. If these deadlines are not met or if the requester submits subsequent revisions, the request is treated as if it were a new bill draft request for purposes of prioritization.
- The President of the Senate, Senate Minority Leader, Speaker of the House, and House Minority Leader are each generally given authority under the rules to direct the Legislative Services Division to assign a higher priority to a certain number of requests.
- A request must be assigned a higher priority when jointly directed by:
 - the leadership of both houses as provided in the Joint Rules; or
 - the Senate or House.

Monitoring the Status of Bills

The requester should periodically review all drafts requested. The status of bills can be easily monitored by using “Bill Explorer” on the Legislative Branch website: <https://bills.legmt.gov/> and through the dashboard within an individual legislator’s legislator portal: <https://legislator.legmt.gov/>.

At various points in the process, the “ball is in the legislator’s court.” For example, when the status is “Draft to Requester for Review” or “Draft Ready for Delivery,” the requester is being asked to act. The requester should contact the bill drafter whenever the requester has a question about the status of a request.

A requester may cancel a request or place it on “hold” any time before introduction. Legislators can help to ensure that state government resources are used efficiently and that all legislators are best served by:

- notifying the drafter that a request should be placed on “hold” if the legislator is uncertain as to the best approach or is not sure that the bill or resolution merits further effort. Placing the draft on “hold” allows the drafter to work on requests for other members.
- canceling requests for bills or resolutions that are no longer desired.

Preintroduction

Bills or resolutions drafted prior to the legislative session may be preintroduced before the legislative session and assigned a bill number.

Preintroduction allows the Legislature to “hit the ground running” by facilitating the assignment of bills to committees so that committee chairs may schedule hearings.

With a few exceptions, bills drafted at the request of an interim or other statutory legislative committee (including Executive Branch proposals) must be preintroduced. Deadlines are specified in the Joint Rules (typically mid-December). All preintroduced bills must be sponsored by a legislator. The legislator must comply with the instructions provided by the Legislative Services Division for signing and returning the bill by the deadline or the request will be canceled.

[Request to Introduction: Step-by-Step](#)

Request.

An eligible requester may request that a bill or resolution be drafted through the Legislator Portal or by contacting the division.

Request assigned -- displayed on website.

The request is assigned to a Legislative Services Division research analyst or attorney by the Director of the Legal Services Office or the Executive Director. The request is summarized in an unofficial short title and displayed through Bill Explorer on the Legislative Branch website: <https://bills.legmt.gov/>

Drafting.

The drafter writes a draft bill or resolution and provides the bill drafting services identified above. The drafter will notify the requester if information or guidance is needed. If the information is not available for a day or more, the drafter may put the draft on “hold” until the information is available.

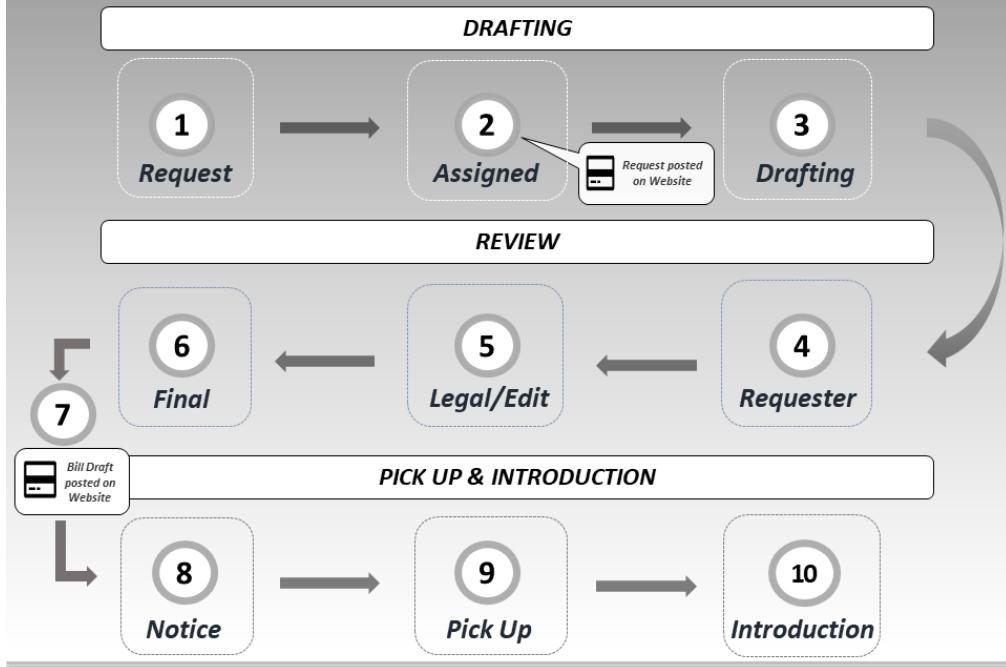
Draft to requester for review.

A draft is provided to the requester for review, along with a form. The requester fills out the form to indicate the appropriate instructions and returns the signed form to the drafter. The drafter may put the draft on “hold” or forward the draft to legal review if the drafter has not heard from the requester within a specified timeframe.

Draft to legal review and edit.

The draft is reviewed and corrected, if necessary, by a Legislative Services Division attorney and an editor. The drafter will communicate to the requester any substantive changes made to the draft during legal review and edit. Once the draft has been submitted for legal review, the request may lose its priority if changes are requested (see “Prioritization of Drafting Requests” or Legislative Council rules).

Steps from Draft Request to Bill Introduction



Draft available on website.

After corrections have been made as a result of legal review and edit, the draft text is posted to Bill Explorer on the Legislative Branch website: <https://bills.legmt.gov/>. An updated version is posted whenever the document is revised or amended.

Final review.

The draft is reviewed by proofreaders, the drafter, and the Executive Director, and any necessary corrections to proper format, style, and legal form are made.

Notice to requester.

A notice is delivered to the requester providing instructions for introduction or preintroduction.

Requester picks up bill.

Only the requester may pick up the bill. Once the bill has been picked up, it is considered “delivered” and must be introduced by the requester or by another legislator within 2 legislative days (or as designated in the rules). The day the bill is picked up counts as Day # 1. The bill is due in the Chief Clerk or Secretary’s office the next day, Day # 2.

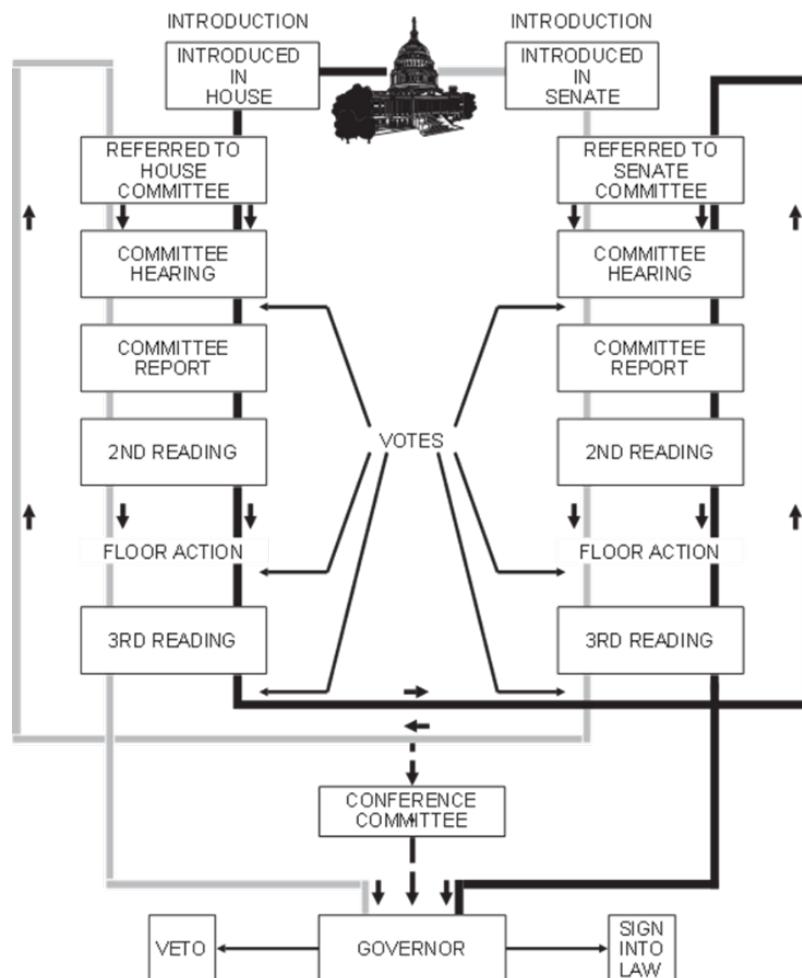
Introduction.

Except for appropriation bills, any legislator may introduce the bill. (An appropriation bill may be introduced only by a representative.) A senator may introduce a bill or resolution by signing it and delivering it to the Secretary of the Senate. A representative may introduce a bill or resolution by signing it and delivering it to the Chief Clerk of the House. Signatures of cosponsors or a joint chief sponsor from the other house may be gathered before introduction. Once the bill or resolution is introduced, it may only be withdrawn under limited and specific circumstances.

If a local government fiscal impact statement is required, it must accompany the bill at the time that it is presented for introduction (see “Information About Bills: Fiscal Notes and Other Statements” later in this chapter).

How a Bill Becomes a Law

This section outlines the general process for making a law, from the time a bill is introduced until the bill becomes a law. It includes a step-by-step overview of the process, oriented to the bill’s sponsor, and information about preparation of amendments. The basic process is illustrated below.



Step-by-Step Overview

The process outlined applies to bills that are proposed laws. Approved resolutions are not laws. Proposed constitutional amendments and referendum measures are subject to approval of the voters. These measures follow most, but not all, of the same steps; however, they are not sent to the Governor for action. The appropriations process is reviewed in a subsequent section.

A bill may not always proceed through the exact steps in this sequence; for example, the house that has the bill may approve a motion to refer the bill to another committee or take the bill from committee and place it on second reading. A legislative body may reconsider its action at various points.

- A. **First reading, first house, and referral to committee.** The bill is assigned to a committee by the Speaker or President. The bill's number, sponsor, and the committee to which the bill has been referred are announced in the first house.
- B. **Committee hearing.** The committee holds a public hearing. This is the opportunity for the public to participate directly in the process and to testify as a proponent or opponent. The hearing begins with an opening statement by the sponsor. The committee chair should be notified as early as possible if the sponsor cannot appear at a scheduled hearing. A sponsor may distribute copies of a written statement to all committee members before beginning the sponsor's testimony. If the sponsor wishes to use visual aids, the committee secretary should be notified at least 1 day in advance of the hearing. If a sponsor has arranged for a number of individuals to speak as proponents, the sponsor should encourage them to avoid repeating the testimony of the others. A sponsor may make a closing statement.
The committee hearing is a critical step in the process of lawmaking. Many bills never proceed beyond this step. The hearing is an opportunity for the sponsor to explain why the bill is needed, educate members about the bill so that they can speak to the bill on the floor, respond to any concerns raised by witnesses, and suggest amendments if warranted. The sponsor may also follow up with committee members between the hearing and executive action. If the sponsor desires an amendment to the bill, the sponsor should ask a committee member to request that the amendment be drafted before executive action and move the amendment during executive action. Amendments are usually drafted by the committee research analyst or attorney who will be present and able to explain the amendment when action is taken.
- C. **Committee consideration and action.** Action by the committee is usually not taken on the same day as the hearing. (See Chapter 5 for a thorough discussion of actions that may be taken by the committee.) If the committee recommends further consideration by the appropriate house ("do pass", "do pass as amended"), a committee report is prepared. If the committee does not recommend consideration by the appropriate house, the bill does not move beyond this point until action is taken.
- D. **Committee report.** The committee report, along with the text of any amendments approved by the committee, is read across the rostrum on Order of Business # 2 by the Secretary or Chief Clerk. It is adopted on a motion by the committee chair. In the House of Representatives, without objection, a favorable committee report is considered adopted upon reading. If a fiscal note is required, the bill may not be reported out of committee without the fiscal note.

- E. **Second reading, first house.** The bill is placed on second reading and is debated by the Committee of the Whole. Amendments may be moved and voted on. After any amendments are considered, the bill (as amended, including all action taken on the bill during second reading) is voted on.
- F. **Re-referral of bills with significant financial impact.** Although the amount triggering this action can vary depending upon direction from leadership, bills with significant financial impact will be re-referred to a committee focused on this financial impact (House Appropriations and Senate Finance & Claims). In this hearing, the focus of discussion is on the fiscal impact of the bill, and these committees consider how this interacts with the financial picture of the state budget in total. If the bill is amended in this step, it would return to (step E) for discussion by the entire first house. If it is passed out unamended, it proceeds to the next step.
- G. **Committee of the Whole report.** When a Committee of the Whole report is adopted that includes a majority vote for a favorable recommendation, any amendments are engrossed into the bill, and it moves to third reading. A member may move to segregate legislation prior to the adoption of the Committee of the Whole report. If the motion prevails, the bill remains on second reading.
- H. **Third reading, first house.** A bill may not be amended or debated on third reading. Each member's vote must be recorded and printed in the journal. An extraordinary (greater than majority) vote is required for certain bills. (A section in the bill will note the requirement.) The third reading vote determines whether this requirement has been met. Except on the last legislative day, second and third reading may not take place on the same day.
- I. **Transmittal.** The bill is transmitted to the other house. Deadlines for transmittal of various types of bills are established in the Joint Rules. After the deadline, a bill may be considered by the receiving house only upon approval of two-thirds of its members present and voting.
- J. **First reading, second house, and referral to committee.** See step A.
- K. **Committee hearing.** See step B. Because the bill's sponsor will not be present during Committee of the Whole debate in the second house, the bill's sponsor may want to arrange for a member in the second house to be a floor sponsor. The sponsor should notify the committee chair if a floor sponsor has been arranged. Otherwise, the committee chair will designate a committee member to act as floor sponsor if the bill is recommended for further consideration by the appropriate house.
- L. **Committee consideration and action.** See step C. If the committee recommends consideration by the appropriate house ("be concurred in", "be concurred in as amended", ""), a committee report is prepared. If there is another live bill with a conflicting provision, the staff will inform the committee and sponsor and the committee will need to adopt an amendment providing a coordination instruction. The coordination instruction typically voids a provision if a conflicting provision is passed.
- M. **Committee report.** See step D.
- N. **Second reading, second house.** See step E.
- O. **Rereferral if necessary.** See step F.
- P. **Committee of the Whole report.** See step G.
- Q. **Third reading, second house.** See step H. A bill passed on third reading in the second house, if not amended by the second house, will have passed both houses in an identical form. The bill then proceeds to step V "Enrolling." If the bill is amended in the second house, it is returned to

the original house with a message requesting concurrence in the amendments. Deadlines are established in the Joint Rules for transmittal of various types of bills with amendments.

- R. **Consideration of amendments of second house by first house.** Concurrence with the amendments of the second house is considered by the Committee of the Whole during second reading. If the Committee of the Whole recommends concurrence and there is a favorable vote it proceeds to third reading.
- S. If the bill receives **concurrence on third reading** the bill proceeds to step V. If a Committee of the Whole report is adopted that recommends the amendments not be concurred in, the first house appoints a conference or free committee and requests a conference with the second house. The President and Speaker appoint the members, often three from each chamber, two from the majority and one from the minority.
- T. **Conference committee/Free Conference Committee.** A conference committee is limited to consideration of the disputed amendments. The committee may recommend acceptance or rejection of disputed amendments in their entirety or further amendment of disputed amendments. A free conference committee may discuss a bill in its entirety. Conference committee meetings are joint meetings of separate committees. The chair of the Senate committee is the chair of the conference committee. Each committee votes separately. The time and place of conference committee meetings is determined by the chair and made public by the Secretary or Clerk. Meetings are announced from the rostrum.
- U. **Conference committee report.** If a conference committee report is agreed to by a majority of the committee members from each house, the committee report is debated by the Committee of the Whole in each house. If the Committee of the Whole recommends concurrence, it is placed on the third reading agenda, upon a favorable vote on third reading, the bill proceeds to step V "Enrolling." If the conferees do not approve a committee report or the conference committee report is not adopted by either house, various approaches may be pursued. The bill will not become law unless both houses approve the bill in the same form on third reading. This may be done by adopting the same conference committee report or dissolving and appointing a new committee.
- V. **Enrolling.** The bill is printed in the form that it was approved by both houses.
- W. **Signature of presiding officers.** The enrolled bill is delivered to the presiding officer of the first house. The bill is signed and recorded in the journal and then transmitted to the other house. The presiding officer of the second house signs the bill and it is recorded in the journal. If the bill is a resolution, referendum, or constitutional amendment, the bill is transmitted to the Secretary of State. All other bills go to the Governor.
- X. **Governor's action.** If the Governor signs the bill, it becomes law. If the Governor does not sign or veto a bill, it becomes law after 10 days. All laws are filed with the Secretary of State. (The work does not end here; see "Codification and Publication of Laws" later in this chapter.)

The Governor has the option of using three types of vetoes:

- **Veto.** Disapproval of the entire bill.
- **Line item veto.** Disapproval of a specific appropriation.
- **Amendatory veto.** The Governor returns the bill to the Legislature with recommendations for amendment.

Y. Consideration of Governor's amendments. Governor's amendments may be:

- » recommended for approval on second reading and approved on third reading by both houses; or
- » rejected by one or both houses of the Legislature.

Z. Veto override. The Legislature may override a veto or an item veto by a two-thirds vote of the members of each house present. If the Legislature is not in session and the bill was originally approved by two-thirds of the members of each house, the Secretary of State must convey the veto message and poll the members. If two-thirds or more of the members of each house vote to override the veto, the bill becomes law.

[Amendment Drafting Services](#)

Amendments are drafted by Legislative Services Division research analysts and attorneys at the request of legislators. (See the following section for amendments to appropriation bills.) Because an amendment may be considered only if a motion is made by a legislator, staff are not authorized to draft amendments at the request of a citizen, lobbyist, agency staff member, or any other person who is not a legislator.

A legislator who wishes to move an amendment must authorize Legislative Services Division staff to prepare the amendment. This must be done prior to the committee or chamber taking action on the bill.

Amendments are almost always drafted by the research analyst or attorney assigned to the committee that is considering the bill. That person continues to draft amendments to the bill for the Committee of the Whole or a conference committee until another standing committee amends the bill. Sometimes amendments are assigned to other staff based on workload and expertise. (Note that amendments to HB 2 are drafted by the Legislative Fiscal Division, with the staff responsible for each individual agency drafting corresponding amendments.)

Any legislator who is not sure whom to contact for amendment drafting may contact the amendments coordinator for the member's chamber or the Legislative Services Division.

If approved, an amendment to a bill becomes part of the proposed law. A substantial amount of time and effort is devoted to drafting bills and resolutions so that Montana's laws can be clear and consistent; amendments deserve the same attention. Although many suggested amendments appear to be simple, some behind-the-scenes work and careful review by trained staff are necessary to write amendments that result in clear and consistent laws.

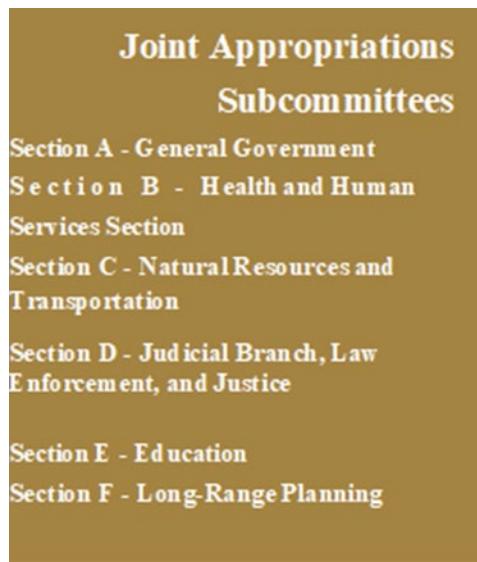
Amendments are reviewed by legislative technical editors. Staff perform the following services:

1. ensure that changes made by an amendment are reflected in the bill's title in order to comply with the Montana Constitution;
2. evaluate whether the amendment would change the original purpose of the bill in violation of the Montana Constitution;

3. review the entire bill and references to sections that occur in other laws to ensure that any changes are made consistently in order to avoid conflicts in the laws;
4. identify the need for coordination instructions when provisions of two bills conflict;
5. ensure compliance with format and style guidelines;
6. review the entire bill in light of the proposed amendment to identify any portions that require clarification; and
7. if desired, suggest additional amendments that are necessary or desirable in order to accomplish the requester's goal.

The Appropriation Process

All appropriation bills must be sponsored by a member of the House of Representatives and introduced in that chamber no later than Day 62 of the Legislative Session. Deadlines for transmittal of appropriation bills are later than the deadlines for general bills. Day 45 is the last day to request appropriation bills. For more information, the Legislative Fiscal Division provides in-depth training materials for legislators.



General Appropriations Bill

The general appropriations bill (by tradition House Bill No. 2) is the vehicle through which the majority of appropriations that fund state government agencies are made. Due to its size and complexity, House Bill No. 2 must be reviewed by following a process different from that of other bills. The bill is divided into sections composed of the budgets of agencies with similar functions. Each section is reviewed by a subcommittee consisting of members of the Senate Finance and Claims and House Appropriations Committees. (See inset for a list of the joint subcommittees.) The chair of each subcommittee is a member of the House of Representatives.

Traditionally, the consideration of House Bill No. 2 during the legislative session begins with reviews by and recommendations from the joint subcommittees comprised of members from both House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Claims committees. These subcommittees hear testimony from agency staff and the public throughout the first two months of the session, after which House Bill No. 2 follows the same steps as other bills, beginning in House Appropriations.

Throughout each legislative session, the Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD) provides useful information about the appropriation process. The Legislative Budget Analysis is available at the beginning of session, and the House Bill No. 2 Narrative will be generated and updated at certain times during session. Additionally, an interactive online budget tool is made available by the LFD that allows for various visualizations of the appropriations in HB 2, as well as comparisons between different versions of the bill. All of LFD products are available on the LFD website: <https://legmt.gov/lfd/>.

Other Appropriations

Other bills that contain specific appropriations, commonly referred to as “cat-and-dog bills,” follow the same path as any other bill. If these bills have significant fiscal impact, they are usually referred to the Senate Finance and Claims Committee or the House Appropriations Committee. Cat-and-dog bills may also be referred between standing committees and the budget committees.

Certain appropriation bills are traditionally considered by the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Long-Range Planning before they are referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

Amendments

All amendments to House Bill No. 2 are drafted by fiscal analysts from the Legislative Fiscal Division.

For amendments to other appropriation bills, a legislator may contact the amendments coordinator, the Legislative Fiscal Division, or the Legislative Services Division.

How to Read a Bill

Title

The title must clearly summarize the contents of the bill. Reading the title is a good way to get an overview of what is proposed.

Preamble

Resolutions and some bills include a preamble. The preamble follows the title and includes one or more clauses that begin with “WHEREAS.” The preamble is a preliminary statement of the reasons for enactment of the law but is not considered law.

Underlined Words

New words that are to be included in an existing section of law are underlined, while the language in current law is not underlined, as illustrated:

An interim committee shall review administrative rules and draft legislation.

Underlined and Capitalized Words

Words that are added to a bill by amendment after introduction are underlined and printed in capital letters, as illustrated:

An interim committee shall review administrative rules AND DRAFT LEGISLATION.

Stricken Words

Words that will be deleted from the bill or from an existing section of law are stricken as illustrated:

An interim committee shall review administrative rules ~~and monitor agency functions.~~

Sections

Each bill is divided into sections. A section may include proposed amendments to a single section of existing law (a numbered section of the MCA), or a section may propose a new section of law. A new section is identified as illustrated:

NEW SECTION. Section 2. Reports to legislative council. Each interim committee shall provide periodic written reports to the legislative council.

The text of a new section is not underlined unless it is amended during the legislative process.

Definitions

Some sections of law contain definitions that apply to specified titles, chapters, parts, or sections. An understanding of applicable definitions can be essential to interpreting the policy to be established by the bill.

Nonsubstantive Changes

Whenever a section of existing law is amended in a bill, Legislative Services Division staff are required to amend the language, without changing its meaning, as necessary to comply with the format and style guidelines in the Bill Drafting Manual. This is also a means of “cleaning up” archaic language in the existing MCA. Therefore, some of the underlined and stricken text may indicate nonsubstantive changes.

Repealer

If the bill proposes to repeal sections of existing law, it will include a separate section labeled “repeater,” which contains a list of the repealed sections and their catchlines. Repealed sections must also be listed

in the title. The text of the repealed section is not included in the bill. Legislators may ask committee staff to provide them with a copy of the text of the repealed section.

MCA Numbering : Title, chapter, part

The MCA is divided into titles. Titles are further divided into chapters. Chapters are further divided into parts.

For example, the laws in Title 75 deal with environmental protection. Within Title 75, there are numerous chapters; one of these (chapter 2) is devoted to air quality laws. Within Title 75, chapter 2, there are several parts. One of these parts (part 5) is devoted to asbestos control. Within Title 75, chapter 2, part 5 is a specific section providing definitions. This section is known as 75-2-502, MCA.

Information About Bills: Fiscal Notes and Other Statements

Fiscal Notes

A fiscal note is an analysis of a bill's dollar impact on state or local revenue, expenditures, or fiscal liability. Except for bills that appropriate a specific dollar amount, a fiscal note must be prepared for every bill that affects the revenue, expenditures, or fiscal liability of the state, a county, or a municipality.

Fiscal notes must be requested at the time of introduction by the Speaker or President who determine the need for a fiscal note based on the recommendation of Legislative Services Division staff.

A fiscal note may also be requested through the Speaker or President by:

- a committee considering the bill;
- a majority of the members of the house considering the bill on second reading; or
- the chief sponsor of the bill.

The notes are prepared at the direction of the Governor's Budget Director by the staff of the Governor's Office of Budget and Program Planning in cooperation with agencies affected by the bill. The Budget Director has 6 calendar days after the fiscal note request is received to return the analysis unless an extension is granted by the Speaker or President.

A fiscal note shows, in dollar amounts when possible:

- the estimated increase or decrease in revenue or expenditures;
- costs that may be absorbed without additional funds;
- long-range financial implications; and
- pension implications.

The fiscal note may not contain comments or opinions on the merits of the bill; however, technical defects and the assumptions used to prepare the fiscal note may be noted.

The Budget Director submits the fiscal note to the Speaker or President, who notifies the sponsor. Within 1 day of notification, the sponsor must:

- notify the Speaker or President that the sponsor concurs; or
- choose to let the fiscal note move forward without a concurring signature; or
- elect to prepare the sponsor's own fiscal note rebuttal.

A sponsor who either does not understand the fiscal note on the bill or does not agree with the conclusions represented in the fiscal note is encouraged to contact the LFD or the Office of Budget and Program Planning to discuss their concerns or questions. This may help resolve any misunderstandings by the sponsor concerning the fiscal note or the bill itself.

After the applicable time limits, the Speaker or President directs that the fiscal note be printed, distributed, and referred to the committee considering the bill. This is done whether or not the sponsor concurs.

A sponsor who elects to prepare a fiscal note rebuttal must submit the note within 4 days unless an extension is granted. Upon receipt of the sponsor's fiscal note rebuttal, the Speaker or President directs that the fiscal note rebuttal form be printed, distributed, and referred to the committee considering the bill.

Background information used in developing a fiscal note may be obtained from the Office of Budget and Program Planning or through discussion with the LFD.

If a sponsor would like assistance in any of these steps, please contact the Legislative Fiscal Division.

If adopted amendments to the bill may change its fiscal impact, a revised fiscal note may be requested. The process for requesting a revised fiscal note is the same as for requesting a fiscal note.

Fiscal notes are distributed along with the bill when the bill is under consideration by a standing committee or committee of the whole. The text of fiscal notes and the status of fiscal note requests are available for each bill through the Bill Explorer application of the Legislative Branch website.

A bill requiring a fiscal note may not be reported out of committee without a fiscal note.

Expanded Fiscal Analysis

Each session leadership may ask the Legislative Fiscal Division to develop an expanded fiscal analysis to provide a more comprehensive review of the circumstances, assumptions, and potential fiscal implications of a bill. Recently, each of the four caucuses were limited to a maximum of two requests per caucus for expanded fiscal analysis during the session.

Local Government Fiscal Impact Statement

A local government fiscal impact statement must accompany any bill which requires a local government unit to take on a direct expenditure of funds without a specific means to finance the activity, service, or facility. This statement must be available upon the bill's introduction.

The cost estimate must be prepared by the Budget Director in cooperation with the local government or school district affected by the bill. The Budget Director has 10 calendar days after the local government fiscal impact statement request is received to prepare the statement unless an extension is granted by the Speaker or President.

Codification and Publication of Laws

Session Laws

Immediately following approval of legislation or adoption of a legislative or constitutional referendum, the legislation is filed with the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State assigns a chapter number to each act in the order that it is received by the Secretary of State's office. Resolutions are cited by the number assigned by the Senate or the House at the time of introduction and are not given chapter numbers.

Publication of all chapters and resolutions from a session of the Legislature is accomplished as soon as possible by the Legislative Services Division in a set of volumes known as the "Session Laws."

The Session Laws contain tables of MCA sections affected and previously uncodified session laws affected, cross-references between bills and chapter numbers, tables of effective dates, and tables showing where each new section of every bill has been codified in the MCA.

Montana Code Annotated (MCA)

The Code Commissioner, a statutory officer within the Legislative Services Division, directs the Legislative Services Division staff in the compilation of newly enacted laws and amended laws within the framework of the MCA.

The MCA is the systematic arrangement of all permanent state laws currently in effect in Montana. The MCA is published in two parts: the code itself and the annotations to the code. A new edition of the code is printed every odd-numbered year, with new laws added, repealed laws deleted, and amended statutes updated. An entry in the MCA includes the statute, its legislative history, and any compiler's comments and cross-references to related code sections.

The annotations incorporate background materials related to the statutes, including pertinent official comments, amendment summaries, case notes, references to administrative rules, digests of Attorney General's opinions, and citations to law review articles and legislative publications.

The index to the MCA and the Montana Constitution provides the user with a convenient reference, by subject, to all material codified. The index is composed of a general index, an index of words and phrases defined in code, and a popular names and short titles index.

Other Publications

Other publications that are useful to those who want to recall or learn what happened during the legislative session are the journals for each house, the Montana Legislative Review, and the History and Final Status of Bills and Resolutions.

Chapter Five. Session Standing Committees

This chapter provides background information about standing committees of the Montana Legislature. It focuses on standing committees that meet regularly to hear bills on the assigned subject matter. Certain committees³ have differing responsibilities that are not addressed here.

This information is based on the current rules. The rules for subsequent Legislatures may be different from these rules. Legislators are advised to consult the adopted rules.

Role of Committees

A standing committee plays a key role in the legislative process in the following ways:

- serving as the primary forum for face-to-face participation by citizens in the legislative process;
- using the collective expertise of its members to review, analyze, and amend proposed legislation regarding subjects within the committee's purview; and
- recommending the passage or disapproval of bills.

Standing Committees of the Montana Legislature

The standing committees are established in the rules for each house of the Legislature. Current standing committees are listed on the following page.

In the Senate, committee members and a chair and vice chair are appointed by the Committee on Committees, with the approval of the Senate. The minority leader designates a ranking minority member for each standing committee.

In the House, committee members and a chair and majority vice chair are appointed by the Speaker after consultation with the minority and with approval of the House. The minority leader designates a minority vice chair for each standing committee.

³ Committees with differing responsibilities include those that deal with appropriations, ethics, legislative administration, and rules.

Senate	House
Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation	Agriculture
Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs	Appropriations
Committee on Committees	Business and Labor
Education and Cultural Resources	Education
Energy and Telecommunications	Energy, Telecommunications, and Federal Relations
Ethics	Ethics
Finance and Claims	Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
Fish and Game	Human Services
Highways and Transportation	Judiciary
Judiciary	Legislative Administration
Legislative Administration	Local Government
Local Government	Natural Resources
Natural Resources	Rules
Public Health, Welfare, and Safety	State Administration
Rules	Taxation
State Administration	Transportation
Taxation	

Schedule and Workload

Committees hear and act on bills referred by the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House. The workload varies widely among committees. Some committees only meet “on call”, while others meet 2, 3, or 5 days a week. Most committees are scheduled to meet at a regular time and place for the duration of the legislative session. The schedule minimizes the possibility of conflicts between committee meetings, making it possible for legislators and staff to attend the meetings of committees to which they are assigned.

Roles of Officers and Staff

Committee Chair

The committee chair is responsible for:

- generally managing committee work;
- directing committee staff;
- maintaining order in the committee room and vicinity;
- presiding over the meeting;
- deciding questions of order;

- monitoring the committee's workload and the pace of action on bills and resolutions and ensuring that proposed legislation is acted on as soon as possible so that a backlog does not occur;
- scheduling hearings for bills and resolutions and, as often as possible, scheduling the hearing in coordination with the availability of the measure's fiscal note when one is required;
- directing the committee secretary to provide notice of committee hearings in compliance with applicable rules;
- authenticating committee reports by signing them and ensuring in the committee report that a new or revised fiscal note is needed and should be requested by the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House of Representatives for bills for which the committee passed an amendment that possibly adds or changes fiscal impact; and
- appointing subcommittees if needed.

Majority Vice Chair

The majority vice chair presides over committee meetings when the chair is absent or is presenting a bill to the committee.

Minority Vice Chair/ Ranking Member

The minority vice chair or ranking member serves as a contact for the minority members of standing committees. For example, minority members may give their proxy votes to the minority vice chair or ranking member.

Committee Secretary

The committee secretary is responsible for:

- providing notice of hearings as directed by the chair;
- notifying bill sponsors of hearing dates and times;
- maintaining a record of witnesses;
- recording committee votes;
- preparing committee reports and ensuring that the correct amendment numbers are contained in the committee reports;
- preparing minutes for committee meetings; and
- ensuring that the meeting room is ready.

If a committee member or bill sponsor has special needs for a meeting room (e.g., equipment, larger room for a controversial bill), the committee secretary should be contacted.

The committee secretary is hired by the appropriate house of the Legislature.

Committee Research Analyst, Fiscal Analyst, or Attorney

A research analyst or attorney from the Legislative Services Division is assigned to most standing committees. A fiscal analyst from the Legislative Fiscal Division is assigned to committees or joint subcommittees that deal with appropriations or revenues.

The research analyst or attorney performs the following duties for the assigned committee:

- drafting proposed amendments before committee action on a bill or resolution;
- drafting amendments to bills or resolutions that have been acted on by the committee for consideration on second reading;
- drafting any committee bills;
- reviewing bills and resolutions assigned to the committee and providing advice to the committee regarding constitutionality, internal consistency, the possibility of conflict with or duplication of existing provisions, and compliance with the guidelines of the Bill Drafting Manual;
- providing answers to questions about rules of procedure; and
- assisting the committee or an individual committee member in obtaining information pertaining to bills or resolutions under consideration by the committee.

The fiscal analyst performs similar duties, specifically focusing on the appropriation process and fiscal matters.

The committee research or fiscal analyst or attorney and the committee secretary work together; however, each has distinct duties. For example, the committee secretary cannot draft amendments, and the research analyst, fiscal analyst, or attorney cannot provide notice of hearings.

Rules of Procedure

The authorities governing legislative procedures are described in Chapter 7. A chapter of the rules for each house is dedicated to committees. Committees often adopt procedural rules or guidelines that can be distributed to citizens, lobbyists, and others. These rules must be consistent with any applicable requirements.

Dialogue

Committee members may speak only after recognition by the chair.

Quorum and Attendance

A quorum must be present in order to take action, including bringing a meeting to order. A quorum is not required to hear testimony. However, committee chairs often wait for a quorum before beginning testimony so that a majority of members have the opportunity to become informed.

A quorum is a majority of the members of the committee. In the Senate, the majority and minority leaders may count toward establishing a quorum if they are present. In the House of Representatives, the Speaker of the House, the House Majority Leader, and the House Minority Leader may count toward establishing a quorum if they are present.

Legislators are expected to attend their committee meetings; however, sometimes members must miss committee meetings in order to present a bill to another committee or to conduct other legislative business. Committee members should notify the chair of anticipated absences and leave a written proxy with the appropriate committee member.

Voting

All votes must be recorded. Votes may be taken by voice, show of hands, or roll call. Any member may request a roll call vote.

Rules authorize committee members to vote by proxy, either by using a standard form or through one of the two vice chairs and reflected in the minutes.

Question of Order

A question of order is decided by the chair, subject to appeal to the committee.

Committee Meetings

Meetings of legislative committees are subject to Montana's open meetings law. All meetings must be open to the public, and notice must be provided. Committee members can remain apprised of committee meetings by listening to announcements by committee chairs during the daily floor sessions.

Hearings

Hearings are scheduled by the chair. Public notice of the hearing must be given. The current Senate Rules and House Rules encourage a notice of 3 days.

Hearings provide an opportunity for members to learn about the pros, cons, and potential effects of proposed legislation from the sponsor, lobbyists, experts, and other citizens.

Hearings may vary considerably in length depending on the complexity or level of controversy associated with the proposed legislation. In order to make the best use of time, the chair may allocate a specified amount of time for testimony, to be divided equally between proponents and opponents. Witnesses may be encouraged to avoid duplicating testimony that has already been given by preceding witnesses.

Steps in the hearing process are detailed below.

- Opening statement of sponsor. The sponsor of the bill or resolution presents an opening statement. A sponsor may introduce a person who brought the bill or issue to the sponsor's attention. The person identified by the sponsor should be the first person to testify.
- Testimony by proponents. Proponents of the bill or resolution testify, beginning with the proponent introduced by the sponsor if applicable.
- Testimony by opponents.
- Statements of informational witnesses. An interested person may testify solely for the purpose of providing information that is relevant to the proposed bill or resolution. For example, an employee may provide facts and data about an Executive Branch program that is addressed by the proposed legislation. After hearing the testimony of an informational witness, if the chair determines that the witness has spoken in favor of or in opposition to the proposed legislation, the chair may designate such a witness as a proponent or an opponent.
- Questioning by committee members. Subject to approval by the chair, committee members may ask questions of the sponsor, witnesses, or others present in the room. The questions must be related to the bill or resolution. Committee members must seek the approval of the chair for each question asked.

Committee members usually direct their questions to those who are not committee members or staff. This practice ensures that time is allocated to questioning those who may be present only for the hearing (e.g., constituents who have traveled from out of town to testify). However, the chair may authorize a member to ask a question of any appropriate person.

A committee member may use this opportunity to ask a witness who has raised a concern about the proposed legislation if the witness's concern could be addressed by an amendment.

Witnesses must confine their answers to the questions and may not ask questions of others. If a witness does not know the answer to the question, a committee member may ask that information be provided to the committee before executive action is taken.

- Closing statement of sponsor. The sponsor of the bill or resolution may make a closing statement or may waive this right.
- Closing the hearing. The chair may announce when the committee will take executive action on a bill or resolution. Immediately following the hearing on a bill or resolution is a good time for a committee member to notify the committee research analyst or attorney of the member's desire for additional information related to the bill or resolution or for proposed amendments to be drafted.

Executive Action on Bills

During the executive action session, the committee:

- discusses bills and resolutions under consideration if desired;
- asks questions, if there are any, of the committee research analyst, fiscal analyst, or attorney; and

- acts (votes) on bills and resolutions before them, including proposed amendments to the bills and resolutions.

The executive action session is open to the public but is not a public hearing.

Fiscal Notes

Except for bills that appropriate a specific dollar amount, a fiscal note must be prepared for every bill that affects the revenue, expenditures, or fiscal liability of the state, a county, or a municipality. The fiscal note must be prepared before the bill is reported out of the committee.

A local government fiscal impact statement must be prepared for any bill that imposes a requirement on a local government unit for a direct expenditure of additional funds without a specific means to finance the activity, service, or facility. The impact statement must accompany the bill at the time that it is presented for introduction.

See Chapter 4 for more information about fiscal notes and local government fiscal impact statements.

Amendments

Committee members may move amendments to a bill or resolution during executive action.

Amendments should be prepared by the committee research analyst or attorney before the meeting when executive action is taken. Before a committee report can be generated, the research analyst, fiscal analyst, or attorney must prepare all amendments and have the amendments edited. While some suggested amendments appear to be simple, they need to be drafted by committee staff to ensure they are clear, complete, internally consistent, do not conflict with other laws, and comply with the Bill Drafting Manual. By requesting amendments before executive action, committee members can avoid delays or possible reconsideration of executive action.

Committee Action and Recommendation

After proposed amendments are moved and acted upon, action is taken on the bill or resolution. If amendments are approved, the committee acts on the proposed legislation as amended. Committee actions are recommendations, subject to action or approval by the appropriate Committee of the Whole.

Motions for committee action are listed on the following pages. Motions to dispose of a bill or resolution for the purposes of committee action are listed first. Certain motions are discouraged because they can waste valuable time during floor sessions, create confusion, or represent unnecessary steps. These motions are indicated with the symbol “X” in the table and are displayed in regular type. All motions are debatable unless otherwise noted.

Denotes Discouraged Motions

Motion	Result
Motions to Dispose of Bills	
Do pass	Bill or resolution moves to first house for floor action with recommendation that it be approved.
Do pass as amended	Bill or resolution moves to first house for floor action with recommendation that it be approved as amended.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do not pass	Bill or resolution moves to first house for floor action with recommendation that it not be approved.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do not pass as amended	Bill or resolution moves to first house for floor action with recommendation that it not be approved as amended.
Be concurred in	Bill or resolution received from first house moves to second house for floor action with recommendation that it be approved.
Be concurred in as amended	Bill or resolution received from first house moves to second house for floor action with recommendation that it be approved as amended.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not be concurred in	Bill or resolution received from first house moves to second house for floor action with recommendation that it not be approved.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not be concurred in as amended	Bill or resolution received from first house moves to second house for floor action with recommendation that it not be approved as amended.
To table or lay on the table (nondebatable motion)	Consideration of bill or resolution is set aside. Consideration may be resumed at the will of the committee. In addition to setting aside bills that may be taken up later, this motion is traditionally used to dispose of a bill without requiring consideration by the Committee of the Whole. However, based on certain requirements in the rules, the full house can vote to remove the bill or resolution from the committee.
To postpone indefinitely (Senate)	Prevents further discussion of the question. (This is a debatable motion that may be used to finally dispose of a bill or resolution without requiring consideration by the Committee of the Whole.)

Motion	Result
Motions to Dispose of Bills	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Refer [bill or resolution] to [appropriate committee]	<p>Recommendation that legislation be referred to another committee. Traditionally, the chair of the committee that has the bill or resolution consults with the Majority Leader before making a motion in that house.</p> <p>Because a committee report is only a recommendation, a committee report recommending referral may be an unnecessary step.</p>
Other Motions	
To amend [refer to distributed written amendments* or specify the proposed change]	Proposes to change bill or resolution in a specified manner.
To take from the table (nondebatable motion)	Resumes consideration of previously tabled bill or resolution.
Postpone action until [date] (debatable in the Senate; nondebatable in the House of Representatives)	Consideration of bill or resolution is delayed to a specified date. (This motion may be used when a committee decides that it wants more information before taking further action.)
Reconsider action	Brings up bill or resolution that was previously voted on but that has not yet been reported from the committee.
Place on the consent calendar (House of Representatives only)	Noncontroversial bills and resolutions (except for appropriation and revenue bills) that have received a unanimous “do pass” or “do pass as amended” vote may be recommended for the consent calendar by a unanimous vote. If any one representative submits a written objection, the legislation must be removed from the consent calendar and placed on second reading.

Other Committee Activities

Work Sessions

A committee may meet to discuss bills, resolutions, or other matters, yet take no official actions. For example, a committee that expects to hear several bills on a complex topic may want to schedule an information presentation early in the legislative session. Legislators and committee chairs are encouraged to work with committee staff if interested in organizing a work session or educational meeting.

Subcommittees

A subcommittee may be appointed to work on a complex bill. The subcommittee may develop proposed amendments. These amendments are treated in the same way as amendments moved by an individual committee member.

Committee Bills

A committee may request that legislation be drafted and introduced by a vote of three-fourths of all committee members. A deadline for requesting committee bills is established in the Joint Rules.⁴

Committee Reports and Minutes

A report is prepared for each bill or resolution that is recommended for action by the appropriate house. A committee report must make a recommendation. When the report is made, it is printed in the daily journal for the house that is receiving the committee report. Reports from standing committees are recommendations, subject to action or approval by the appropriate house or Committee of the Whole.

A committee report must also indicate, when appropriate, that the committee amended the bill being reported and that a new or revised fiscal note needs to be requested by the presiding officer of the chamber receiving the committee report.

The committee secretary prepares minutes of committee meetings. Committee minutes are an electronic recording of the meeting with a written log, which serves as an index to the recording. The audio minutes are the official minutes of the committee, and the minutes log is a statutory requirement.

The minutes log must include:

- date, time, and place of each committee meeting;
- committee members present, excused, or absent;
- names of persons appearing before the committee, whom each person represents, and whether the person is a proponent, opponent, or other witness;
- motions and their dispositions;
- results of all votes; and
- written testimony/exhibits.

⁴ All amendments prepared by Legislative Services Division staff have a label in the lower right-hand corner that indicates the bill number and amendment version number.

Chapter Six. Floor Sessions of the Senate and House of Representatives

This chapter provides a general overview of what takes place during the daily floor sessions of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Much of the information presented in this chapter is based on the rules at the time of publication of this handbook. The rules for subsequent Legislatures may be different. Furthermore, the information presented is general and not comprehensive. Exceptions are not generally noted. Legislators are advised to consult the adopted rules.

Thorough knowledge of the rules of legislative procedures is essential to gaining a complete understanding of the workings of each house during daily floor sessions. The authorities governing legislative procedures are described in Chapter 7.

Senate Floor Sessions

Senate Chamber and Gallery

The Senate has been meeting in the current Senate Chamber since 1912. Original features, including the chandelier and paintings documenting Montana's history, evoke traditions developed over decades. The chamber provides an appropriate setting for the daily floor sessions, which are generally more formal than other legislative activities. The floor sessions are televised as described in Chapter 8.

Access to the Senate Chamber is limited. During the period of time that begins 1 hour before the Senate is in session and ending 1/2 hour after the Senate adjourns, no one is permitted in the chamber except:

- current legislators;
- legislative officers and employees whose presence is necessary for the conduct of business of the session;
- registered members of the news media; and
- former legislators who are not currently registered as lobbyists.

The President of the Senate may make exceptions for visiting dignitaries.

Anyone who wishes to observe the proceedings of the Senate may sit in the Senate Gallery.

Convening the Senate

Senators must be present for each session of the Senate unless they are excused. A quorum of the Senate is 26 members.

Each daily session of the Senate begins with a prayer, pledge of allegiance to the flag, roll call, and report on the journal. The Senate then follows the order of business established in the Senate Rules.

Each order of business is described below under “Order of Business”.

Although this is not often done, senators may compel the attendance of all absent members by ordering a call of the Senate.

A call of the Senate may be ordered whether or not a quorum is present. A senator who refuses to attend on a call of the Senate may be arrested and held liable for expenses incurred in securing the senator’s attendance.

Floor Action

The President of the Senate presides over the Senate and has the authority to maintain order. The President often designates a “Chair of the Day” to act as presiding officer for second reading.

A senator who wishes to speak may indicate this by standing or raising the microphone. The senator must rise and address the presiding officer. Members do not address each other directly, but always direct their communications through the presiding officer. In general, senators are limited to speaking no more than twice on a motion. A senator who has spoken may not speak again on the same motion to the exclusion of a member who has not spoken.

Order of Business

To revert to or pass to a new order of business requires a majority vote on a motion to do so. The motion must be allowed at the time that it is made. The following orders of business are provided for in the Senate Rules:

1. Communications and petitions. Various types of communications may be read.
2. Reports of standing committees. Standing Committee reports are read across the rostrum. The chair of the committee that is reporting traditionally moves adoption of the committee report. There is no debate unless an adverse committee report has been submitted.
3. Reports of select committees. Conference committee reports are read but are not voted on during this order of business.
4. Messages from the Governor. Matters addressed in messages from the Governor include nominations by the Governor and the Governor’s action on specific bills. This order of business is devoted to receiving the message. The Senate does not take action on the matter that is addressed in the message until the appropriate order of business.
5. Messages from the House of Representatives. Common examples of matters addressed in these messages include transmittal of bills or resolutions from the House of Representatives, actions on Senate bills, actions on Governor’s amendments, appointment of conference committees, actions on conference committee reports, and concurrence in or rejection of Senate amendments to House bills or resolutions. This order of business is devoted to receiving the message. The Senate does not take action on the matter that is addressed in the message until the appropriate order of business.

6. Motions. Numerous motions are in order under this agenda item. Examples include motions to:
 - redirect legislation (e.g., rerefer to another committee, move from second reading to a committee, etc.);
 - change the vote of an individual legislator;
 - reconsider action by the Senate on a specific matter;
 - add the names of cosponsors to a bill;
 - appoint conference committees; and
 - override a veto.
7. First reading and commitment of bills. Each introduced bill or resolution and the committee to which it has been referred are announced.
8. Second reading of bills (Committee of the Whole). The Senate resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole. The President of the Senate appoints a senator to preside over the Committee of the Whole. It is under this order of business that debate occurs on bills and resolutions and that amendments may be offered to proposed legislation. Conference committee reports, amendments made by the House of Representatives to Senate bills or resolutions, and the Governor's recommended amendments may also be considered.

After the sponsor makes an opening statement on the bill, amendments are offered. After all amendments are considered, the Committee of the Whole considers the bill in its entirety.

A senator may ask a question of another senator by directing a question through the presiding officer. For example:

[Mr. or Madam] Chair, would Senator Jones yield to a question?

The following guidance regarding the conduct of members during debate is derived from *Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure*:

- Confine remarks to the question before the house and avoid personalities.
- Do not use indecent language.
- The nature or consequences of a measure may be condemned in strong terms, but the motives of a member may not be arraigned.

The Senate Rules limit the type of motions that are permitted in the Committee of the Whole. However, in practice, additional motions have been allowed.

Following a motion to "rise and report" or "rise and report progress and ask leave to sit again", the presiding officer moves adoption of the committee report for the Committee of the Whole. Prior to adoption of the Committee of the Whole report, a member may move that a bill or resolution be segregated from the report and left on second reading for further consideration.

9. Third reading of bills. The Senate votes on bills, resolutions, House amendments to Senate bills and resolutions, conference committee reports, and Governor's amendments. Debate is not permitted, and amendments may not be offered. Each member's vote is recorded in the journal.
10. Unfinished business.

11. Special orders of the day. Speeches from visitors, memorial services, and other special events take place during this order of business.
12. Announcement of committee meetings. Committee chairs announce meetings. Other announcements may be made.

Adjournment

When business concludes, a motion to recess (further action may be taken) or to adjourn is made. The Senate may adjourn until the date and time of the next meeting or until the next session of the Legislature (sine die).

House of Representatives Floor Sessions

House Chamber and Gallery

The House of Representatives has been meeting in the current House Chamber since 1912. Original features, including Vermont marble columns, glass skylights, and oak furnishings, contribute to an atmosphere based on decades of tradition. The daily House floor sessions are generally more formal than other legislative activities. The floor sessions are televised as described in Chapter 8.

Access to the House Chamber is limited. The following persons may be admitted to the floor of the House of Representatives during a daily session:

- current and former legislators;
- legislative employees necessary for the conduct of the session;
- registered media representatives; and
- the spouses and children of members.

The Speaker of the House may allow exceptions to this rule.

Anyone who wishes to observe the proceedings of the House of Representatives may sit in the House Gallery.

Only a member may sit in a member's chair when the House of Representatives is in session.

Lobbying on the floor of the House of Representatives and in the anteroom is prohibited during the period of time that begins 2 hours before a daily session and ends 2 hours after a daily session.

A paper concerning proposed legislation may be placed on the desks of representatives only if it is authorized by a representative and permitted by the Speaker of the House. Furthermore, signs, placards, and similar objects are not permitted on the floor of the House of Representatives, in the lobby, or in the House Gallery.

Convening the House of Representatives

Representatives must be present for each session of the House of Representatives unless they are excused. A quorum of the House of Representatives is 51 members.

Each daily session of the House of Representatives begins with an invocation, pledge of allegiance to the flag, and roll call. The House of Representatives then follows the order of business established in the House Rules. Each order of business is described below under “Order of Business”.

Although this is not often done, representatives may compel the attendance of all absent members by ordering a call of the House. A call of the House may be ordered whether or not a quorum is present.

Floor Action

The Speaker of the House presides over the House of Representatives and has the authority to maintain order. The Speaker often designates a “Chair of the Day” to act as presiding officer for second reading.

A representative who wishes to speak may indicate this by standing or raising the microphone. The representative must rise and address the presiding officer. Members do not address each other directly, but always direct their communications through the presiding officer. The presiding officer has the authority to decide if the member will be recognized.

Representatives are limited with respect to the number of times that they may speak on a motion as well as to the length of time that they are permitted to speak. In general, a representative may speak only once on a motion for up to 5 minutes. The representative who made the motion is allowed 5 additional minutes to close the debate.

Absentee voting is allowed, except when a vote of “representatives present and voting” is called for or during a call of the House. An absentee voting authorization form must be signed as provided in House Rules.

Order of Business

1. Communications and petitions. Various types of communications may be read.
2. Reports of standing committees. A House standing committee report that recommends “do pass” or “be concurred in”, with or without amendments, is announced across the rostrum and, if there is no objection to form, is considered adopted. The House Rules address the procedures for an adverse committee report; however, adverse committee reports are uncommon. (See Chapter 5 for more information about committee reports.)
3. Reports of select committees. Conference committee reports are announced but are not voted on under this order of business.
4. Messages from the Senate. Common examples of matters addressed in these messages include transmittal of bills or resolutions from the Senate, actions on House bills, actions on Governor’s amendments, appointment of conference committees, actions on conference committee

reports, and concurrence in or rejection of House amendments to Senate bills or resolutions. This order of business is devoted to receiving the message. The House of Representatives does not take action on the matter that is addressed in the message until the appropriate order of business.

5. Messages from the Governor. Matters addressed in messages from the Governor include the Governor's action or recommendation on specific bills. This order of business is devoted to receiving the message. The House of Representatives does not take action on the matter that is addressed in the message until the appropriate order of business.
6. First reading and commitment of bills. Each introduced bill or resolution and the committee to which it has been referred are announced.
7. Second reading of bills (Committee of the Whole). The House of Representatives resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole. The Speaker of the House appoints a representative to preside over the Committee of the Whole. It is under this order of business that debate occurs on bills and resolutions and that amendments may be offered to proposed legislation. Conference committee reports, amendments made by the Senate to House bills or resolutions, and the Governor's recommended amendments may also be considered.

After the sponsor makes an opening statement on the bill, amendments are offered. After all amendments are considered, the Committee of the Whole considers the bill in its entirety. A representative may speak once for up to 5 minutes. The sponsor may speak a second time for 5 minutes in order to close.

If the House Majority Leader and the House Minority Leader agree in advance, a lead proponent and a lead opponent may be granted additional time to speak on a bill, and a bill or resolution may be allocated a predetermined amount of time for debate and number of speakers.

There are special provisions in the House Rules that govern debate on the general appropriations bill.

The House Rules limit the motions that are permitted in the Committee of the Whole. However, in practice, additional motions have been allowed.

A representative may ask a question of another representative by directing a question through the presiding officer. The form of this motion is provided in the House Rules.

There is no limit on the number of questions that a representative may ask unless the presiding officer determines that the purpose of the questioning is to delay or obstruct business.

The following guidance regarding the conduct of members during debate is derived from *Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure*:

- Confine remarks to the question before the house and avoid personalities.
- Do not use indecent language.

- The nature or consequences of a measure may be condemned in strong terms, but the motives of a member may not be arraigned.⁵

Following a motion to “rise and report” or “rise and report progress and beg leave to sit again,” the presiding officer moves adoption of the committee report for the Committee of the Whole. Prior to adoption of the Committee of the Whole report, a member may move that a bill or resolution be segregated from the report and left on second reading for further consideration.

8. Third reading of bills. The House of Representatives votes on bills, resolutions, Senate amendments to House bills and resolutions, conference committee reports, and Governor’s amendments. Debate is not permitted, and amendments may not be offered. Each member’s vote is recorded in the journal.
9. Motions. Numerous motions are in order under this agenda item. Examples include motions to:
 - redirect legislation (e.g., rerefer to another committee, move from second reading to a committee, etc.);
 - change the vote of an individual legislator;
 - reconsider action by the House of Representatives on a specific matter; appoint a conference committee; and
 - override a veto.
10. Unfinished business. The filing of additional cosponsors of a bill or resolution is noted by the Chief Clerk for the record at this time.
11. Special orders of the day. Speeches from visitors, ceremonies, and other special events take place during this order of business. The consent calendar is also announced under this order of business.
12. Announcement of committee meetings. Committee chairs announce meetings.

Adjournment

A representative may make a nondebatable motion that the House of Representatives adjourn under any order of business except second reading of bills (No. 7). A motion to adjourn for a legislative day must specify a time for the House to convene on the subsequent legislative day.

The House of Representatives may adjourn until the date and time of the next meeting or until the next session of the Legislature (*sine die*).

⁵ National Conference of State Legislatures. *Mason’s Manual of Legislative Procedure*, 2010, sections 123-124.

Journals

The Montana Constitution requires each house to keep a journal. The journal is the only official record of action taken by the Senate or the House of Representatives.

The journal does not include a transcript of debate. There is no written record of the discussion that occurs when legislation is debated on second reading in the Committee of the Whole.

A legislator may suggest corrections to the journal for the legislator's house. Without objection, the President or Speaker may direct that the correction be made.

Chapter Seven. Legislative Procedures

Montana Constitution

Constitutional provisions are the overriding authority that may not be violated.⁶ Key provisions of the Montana Constitution that impact legislative procedures are presented and discussed below. This information is general and provides an understanding of the framework within which the Legislature operates.⁷

Right of Participation

Article II, section 8, of the Montana Constitution provides:

The public has the right to expect governmental agencies to afford such reasonable opportunity for citizen participation in the operation of the agencies prior to the final decision as may be provided by law.

Right to Know

Article II, section 9, of the Montana Constitution provides:

No person shall be deprived of the right to examine documents or to observe the deliberations of all public bodies or agencies of state government and its subdivisions, except in cases in which the demand of individual privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure.

Moreover, Article V, section 10(3), of the Montana Constitution provides:

The sessions of the legislature and of the committee of the whole, all committee meetings, and all hearings shall be open to the public.

Based on these provisions, meetings must be open to citizens. Public notice must be given.

Extraordinary Votes

The Montana Constitution requires extraordinary votes to approve certain types of legislation (see table on following page).

⁶ National Conference of State Legislatures. *Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure*, 2010, page 15.

⁷ The term "rules" is used generically unless the text refers to specific Rules of the Montana Legislature (e.g., Joint Rules).

Type of Legislation	Vote Required	Montana Constitution Section
Grant immunity from suit to a public entity	2/3 of each house	Art. II, sec. 18
Override vetoed bill	2/3 of present members of each house	Art. VI, sec. 10
Appropriate highway revenue for nonhighway purposes	3/5 of each house	Art. VIII, sec. 6
Create state debt	2/3 of each house	Art. VIII, sec. 8
Appropriate principal of coal severance tax trust fund	3/4 of each house	Art. IX, sec. 5
Appropriate noxious weed management trust funds	3/4 of each house	Art. IX, sec. 6
Appropriate principal and one-tenth of the interest and income deposited in the Montana tobacco settlement trust fund	2/3 of each house	Art. XII, sec. 4
Propose calling a constitutional convention	2/3 of all members of the Legislature	Art. XIV, sec. 1
Propose amendment to Montana Constitution	2/3 of all members of the Legislature	Art. XIV, sec. 8

Governor's Veto

Veto powers of the Governor and procedures are addressed in Article VI, section 10, of the Montana Constitution.

Other Procedural Matters Addressed by the Constitution

Article V, sections 6, 10, and 11, of the Montana Constitution contain some specific provisions governing how the Legislature operates. These requirements include:

- every vote of each member on each substantive question must be recorded and made public;
- each house is required to keep a journal, make rules for its proceedings, and choose officers from among its members;
- each house may expel or punish a member for good cause shown with the concurrence of two-thirds of all its members;

- a majority of each house constitutes a quorum. A smaller number may adjourn from day to day and compel attendance of absent members.
- neither house may adjourn or recess for more than 3 days or to any place other than that in which the two houses are sitting without the consent of the other; and
- the Legislature may be convened in special sessions by the Governor or at the written request of a majority of the members.

The oath of office is specified in Article III, section 3, of the Montana Constitution.

[Montana Statutes](#)

The statutes, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), contain numerous provisions related to legislation, organization of the Legislature, and other topics addressed in other chapters of this handbook. There are few provisions that deal strictly with procedural matters during the legislative session. However, statutes address procedures in response to action by the Governor (e.g., veto of legislation) and compelling the attendance of witnesses. Title 5, MCA, contains the Legislative Branch statutes. The index to the MCA includes several pages referencing sections related to the Legislature (see “LEGISLATURE” in the general index to the MCA).

[Rules of the Montana Legislature](#)

The Montana Constitution gives each house the authority to make rules for its proceedings.

The primary source of information on how the Legislature conducts its business is the Rules of the Montana Legislature. Topics covered by these rules include administration, decorum, committees, legislation, floor actions, motions, and rules about rules.

Joint Rules, Senate Rules, and House Rules are adopted by resolution at the beginning of each legislative session. Traditionally, the rules of the previous Legislature are adopted temporarily (with or without exceptions) until the resolutions for the current session are approved. Once the rules are adopted, the rules are published by the Legislative Services Division in a booklet that includes a table of contents and an index. The index makes this booklet a useful reference source for legislators.

The rules booklet also contains the U.S. and Montana Constitutions for reference.

[Procedures Not Addressed by the Rules of the Montana Legislature](#)

The traditional practices that fall into this category are a recognized source of procedural rules. According to *Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure* (2010), custom, usage, and precedents take priority over the adopted parliamentary authority.

Practices That Conflict With the Rules of the Montana Legislature

The rules adopted take priority over custom, usage, and precedents. The use of a traditional practice that conflicts with any of these rules violates the rules. See below for more information about “Violations of Rules” and “Suspension of Rules”.

Mason’s Manual of Legislative Procedure

Under the rules adopted by the Montana Legislature, *Mason’s Manual of Legislative Procedure* (2010) governs the proceedings of the Senate and the House of Representatives in all cases not covered by the Joint, Senate, or House rules. *Mason’s Manual of Legislative Procedure* is a parliamentary manual designed specifically for state legislatures. The manual is a compilation of the practices and precedents of legislative bodies, usually stated in the form of rules.

Parliamentary procedures for legislatures are sometimes different from the procedures used by private organizations, such as those found in *Robert’s Rules of Order*. For example, under the Senate and House Rules (2013) and *Mason’s Manual of Legislative Procedure*, a motion made in the Montana Legislature does not require a second.

Committee Procedural Rules

The rules for each house include a chapter regarding committees. Committees often develop rules of procedure that outline how a committee will conduct its business. The rules are posted and made available to participants or attendees at committee meetings. This practice helps everyone involved make the best use of their time and facilitates participation in the process. The rules are consistent with constitutional requirements, Montana statutes, Joint Rules, and the rules of the respective house.

Interpretation by the Judicial Branch

The Montana Constitution gives each house the authority to make rules for its proceedings. Unlike legislation, rules are not subject to veto by the Executive Branch, and the role of the Judicial Branch is limited. Section 71 of *Mason’s Manual of Legislative Procedure* (2010) addresses the powers of courts with reference to legislative procedure.

The courts will not disturb a ruling on a parliamentary question made by a legislative or governmental body having authority to make rules for its government and acting within the scope of its powers.

A rule of procedure adopted by a legislative house pursuant to the constitutional provision authorizing each house to determine its rules of procedure cannot be impeached on the grounds that some other rules would be better or more accurate or more just, if the rule, as adopted, does not ignore constitutional restraints or does not violate fundamental rights and there is a reasonable relation between the mode or method of procedure and the result that is sought.

The Montana Legislature complies with the state Constitution and state statutes. Court decisions may require the Legislature to change the way it operates in order to comply with the Montana Constitution.

[Attorney General's Opinions](#)

The Attorney General is the legal officer of the state and is required by law to give written legal opinions to the Legislature, either house of the Legislature, and other specified state and local officials regarding questions of law. These questions must relate to the office of the requester.⁸

Other examples of questions relevant to the operations of the Legislature that have been addressed in opinions of the Attorney General include the implementation of term limits, qualification of a member to serve when convicted of a felony, and the power of a legislative standing committee to meet during a special session.

[Learning the Rules: Tips and Concepts](#)

[Understanding the Question and Points of Order](#)

A legislator has a right to understand the question before the legislative body. To ask a question about a floor procedure or to seek information about a motion before the Senate or the House, a legislator may make a parliamentary inquiry by addressing the presiding officer and saying, "I rise to a point of inquiry" or "I rise for a point of information." The presiding officer will ask the requester to state the inquiry and will then respond to the question. A point of inquiry is merely a request for information and may not be debated or appealed.

For both chambers, a question of order (also known as a point of order) is a parliamentary procedure used by a member to bring attention to a possible violation of the rules. A question of order must be raised promptly at the particular time that the question is pending. To raise a question of order, a member rises and addresses the presiding officer by stating "I rise to a question [point] of order."

[Appealing a Decision of the Presiding Officer](#)

A member may appeal the decision of the presiding officer if the motion is seconded by two additional members. After debate, the question is put to a vote. If at least one-half of those voting support the ruling, the ruling stands.

Interpretations of the House Rules by the Speaker of the House may be appealed to the House Rules Committee by 15 representatives. The decision of the House Rules Committee may be appealed to the House of Representatives by any representative.

⁸ The Secretary of State and the legislative leadership each have responsibilities related to convening a special session, so it is appropriate for each to raise the question. (41 A.G. Op. 27 (1985), 35 A.G. Op. 7 (1973), 35 A.G. Op. 6 (1973). 41 A.G. Op. 27 overruled part of 35 A.G. Op. 6.)

Violation and Suspension of Rules

When the legislative body acts in violation of its own rules, implied suspension of the rules occurs. The action taken by the body is valid as long as the body has the authority to suspend the rules.⁹ The Legislature does not have the authority to violate the Montana Constitution or Montana statutes. Both Senate and House Rules contain a rule that *Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure* (2010) governs the proceedings in all cases not covered by the rules of the respective chamber.

Either house may suspend its own rules as long as the action taken does not violate constitutional or statutory requirements. Approval by two-thirds of those voting is required to suspend the rules. The Joint Rules allow either house to suspend a rule governing handling of bills upon a two-thirds vote.

⁹ National Conference of State Legislatures. *Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure*, 2010, section 284.

Chapter Eight. Participants in the Process

The rights of citizens to participate in and observe government deliberations are contained in Article II, sections 8 and 9, of the Montana Constitution (see Chapter 7). The Bill of Rights Committee of the 1972 Montana Constitutional Convention provided the following comments on the right to participate:

In part, it is also a commitment at the level of fundamental law to seek structures, rules and procedures that maximize the access of citizens to the decision-making institutions of state government.

Further comments of the Committee continue to be relevant more than 40 years later.

It is hoped that this provision will play a role in reversing the dissatisfactions increasingly expressed regarding bureaucratic authority insulated from public scrutiny and participation.

This chapter explains how various citizens participate in and know about the deliberations of the Legislature.

Citizens, lobbyists, and other legislators seek to persuade legislators to sponsor, support, oppose, or modify proposed legislation. This is how legislators learn about ideas for legislation, understand the effects of proposed legislation, identify ways that legislation might be improved, and gauge opinions about proposed legislation.

Citizens, lobbyists, and Executive Branch employees are a significant source of information for legislators. In the following pages, each of these groups is discussed in more detail.

Citizens

Citizens may lobby, provide information, or observe legislative proceedings in many ways:

- Citizens may attend committee hearings to observe or may participate in committee hearings by providing testimony. Committee hearings are the primary forum for face-to-face citizen participation in the process of making laws.
- Citizens may communicate with legislators about potential or proposed legislation in person, by using the Internet, by telephone, or by mail.
- Citizens may observe daily floor sessions in the gallery.
- Through MPAN (discussed later), citizens have an opportunity to observe floor sessions and committee hearings on television or the Internet.
- Citizens can read bills and resolutions and monitor their status and obtain comprehensive information about the Legislature by using the Internet or by telephone.
- Citizens often join organizations whose members have common interests and that are represented by lobbyists.

Legislators may wish to help their constituents understand how they can participate in and observe the Legislature.

Lobbyists

Lobbyists may be paid by governmental, nonprofit, and for-profit entities. Lobbyists who receive payments from one or more persons that in total equal or exceed a certain annual threshold¹⁰ are regulated under statutes and administrative rules. Likewise, entities that make payments to one or more lobbyists (i.e., principals) that exceed the annual threshold are subject to regulation. A general overview is presented below. The reader should refer to the statutes and rules for specific requirements.

- Lobbyists must be licensed by the Commissioner of Political Practices.
- Principals must report lobbying expenditures at specified times.
- The Commissioner of Political Practices is required to make a report available to each legislator monthly during the legislative session. The report must include the names of registered lobbyists, the names of principals represented by the lobbyists, and the subjects of legislation in which each principal is interested. This information is also available to the public.
- When a lobbyist invites a legislator to attend a function or offers a legislator a gift, upon request, the lobbyist must supply the legislator with the benefit's true or estimated cost and allow the legislator to reimburse the lobbyist. (These benefits are subject to ethics laws. See Chapter 1 for more information.)
- Lobbyists and principals may not engage in or authorize unprofessional conduct, such as:
 - violating the lobbying laws;
 - instigating action by a public official for the purpose of obtaining employment;
 - attempting to influence the action of a public official on a measure that is pending or to be proposed by promising financial support or making public unsubstantiated charges of improper conduct on the part of a lobbyist, a principal, or a legislator; or
 - attempting to knowingly misrepresent pertinent facts of an official matter to a public official or knowingly deceive the official in regard to those facts.

Executive Branch Employees

Executive Branch employees may lobby or may simply provide information. State agencies that engage in lobbying are subject to the requirements of Montana's lobbying statutes. Provision of information by a state employee at the request of an individual legislator or legislative committee is not an activity subject to these requirements.

State agencies, belonging to the branch of government that implements laws, offer a broad spectrum of valuable information. The Executive Branch is a major repository of statistics.

¹⁰ The annual threshold for calendar years 2023 and 2024 is \$2,900. The threshold is adjusted for inflation following each general election. (ARM 44.12.204)

Furthermore, agency staff can explain how programs are operated and can often identify potential effects of proposed legislation. A legislator who wants information from a state agency may ask a research analyst or attorney to request the information. Legislators also may contact the agency's director, who will ensure that the appropriate staff person responds to the request.

A substantial amount of information is available on state agency websites.

Bringing the Legislature to the Citizen: MPAN

The 2001 Legislature established a state public affairs television and Internet broadcasting service "to provide Montana citizens with increased access to unbiased information about state government deliberations and public policy events through unedited television coverage and other communications technologies" (5-11-1101, MCA).

The Legislative Council assists the Division in monitoring the broadcasting service to ensure that broadcasts are in compliance with the principles of good conduct enumerated in law. There are also programming policy and operating guidelines in place, as adopted by Montana PBS and Legislative Services.

During the session, MPAN provides gavel-to-gavel daily coverage of the Senate and House floor sessions and several committee meetings. This C-Span-style programming is distributed on closed-circuit television within the Capitol and to cable television subscribers in many communities in Montana.

All legislative committee meetings that take place at the Capitol are broadcast live over the Internet, through either streaming audio or video. On-demand archives that contain audio or video recordings are available shortly after the meeting on the legislative website: <https://legmt.gov/>.

News Media

Press access to the Legislature

Members of the public, including the press, have the constitutional right to observe all public meetings, including committee meetings, floor sessions, and caucus meetings (if the caucus meeting contains a majority of the members of a public committee). All legislative hearings are televised to the public.

Credentialed members of the media also have access to the House and Senate chamber floors. A member of the press may not be prohibited from photographing, televising, or recording a legislative meeting or hearing. Reporters and TV cameras are usually present during floor sessions and also often during committee hearings. They have designated physical space in the chambers and also sometimes in committee rooms. Credentialed reporters and news organizations go through training on legislative decorum, rules, and expectations; noncredentialed reporters do not.

Public records

Many legislators' communications about official legislative business may be public records that can be obtained by any member of the press or public upon request. This may include legislators' emails sent using legislative email addresses and correspondence about bill drafting. It also can include emails sent using personal email addresses or other forms of communication—content (legislative business) is what matters for public records, not the medium or ownership of devices or accounts. Anything posted online, on social media, or elsewhere, is also fair game for media coverage. However, current litigation makes this a dynamic and evolving area of the law. All legislators are strongly encouraged to attend relevant trainings and watch for updates from the Legal Services Office. When in doubt, consult with staff for further guidance.

Interacting with the press

A good rule of thumb is to never say anything in any public setting or put anything in writing that you wouldn't want to see published on the front page of the newspaper or broadcast on the nightly news.

You should get guidance from and work with your caucus's leader when it comes to learning about reporters and their news organizations, seeking press coverage, and doing interviews. Each caucus typically employs at least one staff member who is experienced and knowledgeable in public communications, including the media.

You never have to give press interviews or answer reporters' questions, but routinely denying the press access to you as an elected official is usually not advisable. If you are inexperienced or uncertain about interacting with members of the media, seek guidance from your caucus leadership.

Seeking News Coverage

Legislators may wish to convey information through a news release or a news conference. A few tips for legislators who desire coverage of an issue are presented below.

- Talk with the editor or political reporter of your local newspaper before the session convenes to see if either would like you to provide regular updates on the session.
- Show the media how the news directly affects people's lives.
- Include information about "who, what, where, when, how, and why."
- Learn about media deadlines; timing is important.
- Present information that is easy to understand.
- Keep material focused on legislation, how constituents can be involved in the process, or a particular issue that will be heard during the session. News releases and guest columns focusing on issues are more likely to be published than are overtly political pieces focusing on only one side of an issue or taking one political party to task.

Chapter Nine. Compensation – IT Support – Odds & Ends

Financial Office

The Financial Office of the Legislative Services Division is responsible for processing payroll, mileage, expense allowances, and per diem allowances.

Compensation

Compensation rates are available on the legislator compensation page: <https://legmt.gov/information-legislators/compensation/>.

The compensation page includes information on:

- session daily allowance – current and historical amounts;
- salary – current and historical amounts
- expense reimbursement; and
- interim activities.

Deductions

The following deductions will be taken from a legislator's salary:

- Social Security (including Medicare);
- Federal and state income tax withholdings in accordance with the legislator's W-4 forms;
- Public Employees' Retirement System contributions (if applicable), and
- Deferred compensation contributions (if applicable).

Special conditions may apply to legislators who were members of, or drawing retirement benefits from, any of the state retirement systems prior to beginning legislative service.

Distribution of Payments for Salary and Expenses

- Direct deposit of your compensation, although not required, is highly encouraged.
- All compensation is processed through the biweekly payroll process. The State of Montana payroll calendar can be found online:
https://statehr.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/457.
- Paper checks will be delivered to the legislator's Capitol Station post office box.

Tax Considerations

If a legislator lives within 50 miles of the state Capitol, per diem allowance payments are taxable income, subject to withholding. If a legislator lives more than 50 miles from the Capitol, a portion of the per diem allowance payments may be taxable, but payments are not subject to withholding.

You will be **required** each session to fill out a form declaring where you reside. If the Financial Office doesn't receive this form prior to the first per diem payment (first Wednesday of the session), the payment will be taxed.

For other tax considerations, legislators are advised to consult with the federal Internal Revenue Service or their income tax preparers.

Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS)

Questions about PERS must be directed to the Montana Public Employee Retirement Administration:

<https://mpera.mt.gov/>

Membership in the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) is optional for legislators who are not members. Within 90 days of assuming office, the legislator must elect to accept or decline membership. The election is irrevocable as long as the legislator is in office. If a legislator elects membership, retirement contributions begin immediately.

If a legislator declines membership, the legislator may not become a PERS member while still a legislator. In addition, no membership service credit may accrue for the time that the legislator serves in office. If a legislator later becomes employed in a position for which PERS membership is mandatory, the legislator is required to become a member at that time, but no service credit for legislative time in office will be credited, nor can it be purchased.

If a legislator is an active, inactive, or retired member of the PERS (anyone with funds on deposit with the PERS), the legislator is not allowed an election option. And a legislator who is a member of PERS and employed by another PERS employer, the legislator may not retire during the term of office.

In addition to regular retirement benefits, there are provisions for benefits in case of disability or death.

Group Insurance Benefits

Members of the Legislature are eligible for state employee group insurance benefits. Options include medical, dental, and vision hardware coverage for the legislator and family members and life insurance coverage. Eligibility for newly elected officials begins on the date that the oath of office is taken or on the date that the term begins, whichever is earlier.

The state contributes an amount, specified in section 2-18-703, MCA, toward the cost of group benefits for employees and legislators. Legislators may enroll to receive state insurance benefits and have the monthly state contribution applied to those benefits or elect to have the monthly state contribution

applied toward out-of-pocket costs of other health insurance coverage. If the out-of-pocket cost is less than the state's monthly contribution, only the portion of the state contribution necessary to cover actual out-of-pocket costs may be applied, and this amount will be taxed as income.

All group insurance benefits questions **must** be directed to the State of Montana Health Care and Benefits Division.

Deferred Compensation Plan

Legislators are eligible to participate in the State of Montana 457 Deferred Compensation Plan, which is a tax-deferred supplemental retirement program. The plan allows participants to defer as little as \$20 a month.

A legislator may enroll, change, or stop deferrals at any time. There is no specific time or period during which a legislator becomes eligible or must enroll. The plan is available only through payroll deduction and would be most beneficial to a legislator during legislative sessions when the legislator is receiving regular paychecks through the central payroll system.

Leave

Sick leave and annual leave benefits do not apply to legislators.

Travel Expenses

Travel during the legislative session. Each legislator is authorized to receive mileage reimbursement at a rate established by statute for four round trips from home to the Capitol during a regular session. An initial payment, covering the legislator's trip to Helena at the beginning of the session and the return trip home at the end of the session, is paid automatically during the first week of the session. To receive reimbursement for the three additional round trips, the legislator must complete a form. Reimbursement is made after the trip is completed.

Additional travel during a legislative session may be authorized and funded by money from the "feed bill"¹¹ with the concurrence of the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House.

Travel during the interim. A budget for leadership-approved travel is usually included in the feed bill to pay for travel expenses associated with meetings of Legislative Administration Committees, Rules Committees, or similar groups during the interim. Leadership-approved travel funds also help members attend meetings of value to the Legislature during the interim. Expenditure of this money is subject to approval of the President of the Senate, Senate Minority Leader, Speaker of the House, or House Minority Leader.

¹¹ House Bill No. 1, the appropriation bill that supports the functions of the Legislature.

Money is also appropriated in the general appropriations bill (House Bill No. 2) for legislators to attend meetings of permanent legislative committees, legislative interim committees, and other special committees. Occasional appropriations are provided for legislators to attend meetings of the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Council of State Governments, or other interstate organizations. Except for appropriations for the Legislative Finance and Legislative Audit Committees, allocation of the interim committee budgets is the responsibility of the Legislative Council. Expense and mileage allowances are determined as provided in Title 2, chapter 18, part 5, MCA.

Office of Legislative Information Services (Information Technology)

The Office of Legislative Information Services (OLIS) is the primary provider of technology and information services to all legislative staff and members of the Montana Senate and House of Representatives. OLIS supports all computer systems (laptop, tablet, phone), software applications, websites, network services, printers, audio video services, and printed publications necessary for the successful business operations of the Montana Legislature. OLIS also provides video broadcast and streaming services in partnership with Montana PBS for the Montana Public Affairs Network (MPAN).

Legislators needing technical assistance – whether it's accessing official services like their legmt.gov email or the Legislator portal, installing a printer on their laptop, getting email on their mobile phone, or setting themselves up for a web-conferencing call – can contact the OLIS Service Desk:

- OLIS Service Desk:
 - o Phone: (406) 444-0912
 - o Email: OLIS-ServiceDesk@legmt.gov

Technology Services for Legislators

OLIS provides several information technology services specifically for legislators.

Websites

- Montana Legislative Branch Public Portal – <https://legmt.gov>
 - o Bill Information
 - o Legislator Public Pages
 - o Committee Information
 - o Laws and Related Information
 - o Services, Fiscal, and Audit Division Websites
- Montana Legislator Portal (secured website for legislators only) – <https://legislator.legmt.gov>
 - o Daily Schedule
 - o To Do List
 - o Bill Draft Requests

- Public Participation Information
- Remote Voting (as approved)
- Legislator Locator
- Reports

Email

- Each Legislator is provided an official legmt.gov email address for legislative business.
- The address name will follow the pattern Firstname.Lastname@legmt.gov.
- In addition to being posted to a legislator's information page on the website, this address will be used by legislative staff and the suite of legislative applications for all official communications, notifications, and updates.

Microsoft 365

- Each legislator is provided with a license to use the Microsoft 365 suite of productivity applications:
 - Outlook for email and calendar scheduling
 - Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.
 - Microsoft Teams for instant messaging and video conferencing.
 - OneDrive for cloud storage.
- Access these applications via the web at <https://office.com> using the username and password provided or the applications can be downloaded and installed on your computer if desired.
- All online content resides in secure Microsoft cloud services owned by the Montana Legislature and administered by OLIS.

Computer Requirements

Legislators are expected to provide their own computer laptop and mobile devices. Constituent Services funds are available to all members and may be used to purchase these items if needed. OLIS can assist in selecting an appropriate device should you need help. The following recommendations are provided for your convenience.

- Laptop made within the last four years* with a currently supported operating system.
- Current endpoint protection and anti-virus program.
- Fully updated operating system and applications with automatic patching enabled.

*Four years is a general guideline. Please check with your computer manufacturer and operating system provider for specific details on what is currently supported. OLIS technicians are available for assistance if needed.

Please know that while OLIS technicians will do their best to provide hardware support, a computer requiring advanced-level troubleshooting or repair may be redirected to a local computer services company. Please also note that support for applications or services not supplied by OLIS can only be provided on a limited basis.

Copiers/Printers

Legislators are provided access to printers and copiers throughout the Capitol building. OLIS technicians are on hand to install and configure these printers and copiers for legislators.

Administrative Odds & Ends

Administrative topics are listed in alphabetical order. Except when otherwise noted, services and equipment are to be used for legislative business and not for political or private purposes.

Absence.

Senators should notify the party whip and representatives should notify the party leader if they need to be excused from meetings on a legislative day.

Agenda, bills, and resolutions.

Members receive a packet of information that includes a daily agenda and copies of bills and resolutions on second and third reading for that day. Additional copies are available from the Bills Distribution Office in the basement of the Capitol. Legislators will receive information on how to get these documents electronically and will be able to go “paperless.”

Aides for individual legislators.

Each legislator may sponsor one legislative aide, who is at least 18 years of age, for a session. Exceptions may be approved by the appropriate Rules Committee. The Legislature does not provide any funds for compensating or reimbursing aides. Any compensation or reimbursement of expenses is the sole responsibility of the sponsoring legislator. A senator who sponsors an aide must register with the Secretary of the Senate and arrange for the purchase of a name tag with the Senate Sergeant at Arms. A representative who sponsors an aide must provide written notification of the designation of an aide to the House Sergeant at Arms and arrange to purchase an identification tag from the Sergeant at Arms.

Computers for legislator use.

Computers with Internet access, a web browser, word processing software, and printing capability are available in common-use areas. The Legislative Services Division will arrange for Internet access for

legislators who wish to bring their own laptop computers to the Capitol. Legislators may contact the Sergeant at Arms to make arrangements.

Copying.

Photocopiers are available for use by legislators in the areas assigned to each house for copying of materials. Legislators should use the machines assigned to their house. Contact the Secretary of the Senate's office or the Chief Clerk's office in the House of Representatives for large copying jobs.

Fax.

Facsimile machines are available for use by legislators in the areas assigned to each house. Legislators should use the machines assigned to their house.

Food service.

There is a snack bar on the third floor of the Capitol in the public hallway between the Senate and House Chambers.

Housing.

Legislators are responsible for making their own housing arrangements. As a courtesy to legislators, the Legislative Services Division maintains a file of information that is provided by landlords about housing opportunities.

Mail.

Each legislator is assigned a post-office box located next to the post office on the first floor of the Capitol. After the legislative session, first-class mail is forwarded to the legislator by the Legislative Services Division. Items to be mailed may be deposited at the Sergeant at Arms' office in the Senate or the Chief Clerk's office in the House of Representatives. Mass mailings are not permitted in general. Other mailing may be allowed with permission of Caucus leadership.

Offices.

Office space assignments are coordinated by the Sergeant at Arms. Offices are not available for all representatives; however, rooms with desks and other office equipment are available for common use by representatives.

Pages.

There is a "page call" button on each desk on the chamber floor. Pages may be asked to deliver or pick up mail, to deliver notes and messages to other legislators, or to get a snack when the legislator is busy

during a floor session. Legislators may sponsor pages to serve for 1 week. Applications for appointment as pages are available at the office of the Secretary of the Senate or the Chief Clerk of the House.

Parking.

Each legislator is assigned an individual numbered parking space before the beginning of the session. Legislators may contact the Sergeant at Arms regarding parking assignments or parking violations.

Schedule.

The Legislature typically meets 5 days a week, Monday through Friday and on some Saturdays. In the past, the Legislature has recessed for several days after the transmittal deadline and at the time of the Easter holiday.

Smoking.

Buildings owned and occupied by the state are required by law to be smoke-free.

Supplies.

Legislators may contact the Sergeant at Arms for supplies, including stationery, name tags, and business cards.

Chapter Ten. The Interim

The regular biennial legislative session occupies only about one-sixth of the life span of a Legislature. Members do not escape from legislative responsibilities during the 20 months between legislative sessions.

Members may be involved in the following activities during the interim between legislative sessions:

- serving on administrative committees: the Legislative Council, Legislative Audit Committee, or Legislative Finance Committee;
- serving on Interim Committees and Interim Budget Committees;
- serving on other statutory or ad hoc committees;
- participating in interstate organizations;
- communicating with constituents and others about the activities of the Legislature and policy issues;
- responding to constituents' concerns; and
- developing new policy proposals for consideration by the next Legislature.

This chapter provides information about interim and other committees, interim studies, and research requests. See Chapter 2 for more information about the duties of the Legislative Council, the Legislative Audit Committee, and the Legislative Finance Committee.

Interim Committees

The following are statutorily established interim committees:

- Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee;
- Economic Affairs Interim Committee;
- Education Interim Committee;
- Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee;
- Law and Justice Interim Committee;
- Local Government Interim Committee;
- Revenue Interim Committee;
- State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee;
- Transportation Interim Committee; and
- Water Policy Interim Committee.

The Environmental Quality Council and the State-Tribal Relations Committee also meet during the interim and conduct interim studies.

The Districting and Apportionment Commission is appointed in the session prior to the decennial census and completes its work in a 4-year period.

The Information Technology Planning Council includes two legislators and Legislative Branch staff to oversee the maintenance and future project planning in the IT environment.

The Legislative Consumer Committee appoints the Consumer Counsel, a position required by the Montana Constitution. The Consumer Counsel represents Montana public utility and transportation consumers before the Public Service Commission, state and federal courts, and administrative agencies in matters concerning public utility regulation. Two Senators and two Representatives, appointed by the Committee on Committees and the Speaker of the House, respectively, serve on the panel.

Other interim committees may be added through legislation. Committees are generally formed for topics that the Legislature wants to focus attention on, e.g., fire suppression. The statutory interim committees are assigned study resolutions by the Legislative Council.

Duties

Duties of interim committees are listed below:

- review administrative rules and offer agency oversight within the jurisdiction of the committee;
- conduct interim studies;
- monitor the operation of assigned Executive Branch agencies;
- review legislation proposed by assigned agencies or entities and request that legislation be drafted; and
- prepare bills and resolutions that are considered necessary for the next regular session of the Legislature.

Some committees have additional responsibilities. The Environmental Quality Council performs the same duties as an interim committee and is also subject to additional statutory requirements.

The State-Tribal Relations Committee is required to act as a liaison with tribal governments. The Legislature's Local Government Interim Committee acts as a liaison with local governments.

Members and Officers

Senate interim committee members are appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees. House interim committee members are appointed by the Speaker of the House.

Most interim committees have four members from each house, three members from the majority party and one from the minority party. The Legislative Council may ask the appointing authority to add one or two additional members to an interim committee if warranted because of the committee's workload.

A chair and vice chair for each interim committee are elected by the members. These officers may not be members of the same political party and typically rotate between party each interim.

Interim Studies

The Legislature identifies prospective interim studies through resolutions requesting interim studies. A process is in statute for prioritization and assignment of studies.

The steps include:

1. The Legislative Services Division compiles a list of study requests contained in bills or resolutions approved by both houses of the Legislature.
2. Legislative staff mails legislators the list and requests legislators rank the study requests in order of importance.
3. Legislative Services Division staff compile the rankings. The poll results, estimated staff time requirements, and other relevant background information is then presented to the Legislative Council.
4. The Legislative Council determines study assignments. Sponsors of studies are also invited to attend the Legislative Council meeting and speak about the request.
5. An interim committee or statutory committee may recommend to the Legislative Council that an interim study be assigned to another committee. According to Legislative Council guidelines, interim studies are completed by September 15 of the year before a regular legislative session.

Interim Budget Committees

Members of session Joint Subcommittees on budgeting are statutorily appointed to serve on Interim Budget Committees (IBCs). These committees meet quarterly to stay apprised of the budget status and hear from agencies regarding any budget or hiring issues, etc. This keeps the budgeting legislators informed of potential needs, concerns, and budget shortfalls, and allows them to come into the next session with a broad foundation of knowledge and understanding.

Modernization and Risk Analysis Committee

The Financial Modernization and Risk Analysis Committee (MARA) was made a permanent legislative committee during the 2023 Legislative Session. MARA has two primary statutory roles:

1. Conduct forward-looking quantitative analyses of state and local government revenues and expenditures in areas including health, education, public safety, infrastructure, and others; and
2. Create data sets and models for future analysis by the Legislature.

MARA consists of 10 members, including 4 nonlegislative members, and generally invites the chair and vice chair of another interim committee to its meetings, and those invitees serve as full members of MARA for the duration of that meeting.

Research Requests

Legislators may request information from Legislative Branch staff during the interim. Examples of common requests include:

- information about requirements in current law;
- research about potential options to address a problem through legislation; and
- legal opinions regarding the application of current law. A request expected to take less than 16 hours is made directly to a legislative staffer.

To ensure that staff resources are allocated appropriately among interim and statutory committee responsibilities and the requests of individual legislators, consultation with the chair and vice chair of the appropriate oversight committee is required for requests that are expected to be completed in 16 to 40 hours. Requests that require more than 40 hours of staff time require approval.

Chapter Eleven. State Government: The Big Picture

This chapter describes and discusses the authority of the three branches of state government, the federal government, Indian tribes, and local governments.

Three Branches of State Government

The Montana Constitution provides for three distinct branches of state government. The three branches of government and their general functions are:

- the Legislative Branch, which sets public policy through laws and appropriations;
- the Executive Branch, which implements and administers laws; and
- the Judicial Branch, which settles disputes arising from the interpretation or application of laws.

The constitution prohibits one branch from exercising the power of the other branches, except when the constitution expressly directs or permits this exercise of power. This concept is referred to as “separation of powers.”

The application of this important constitutional provision may not be as clear as this simplistic summary indicates. For example, the Legislature may delegate rulemaking authority to state agencies. Once adopted, these rules have the force of law. This delegation of power is valid, if the Legislature provides sufficient statutory standards and criteria to guide an agency. Delegation of rulemaking authority without sufficient guidelines is an unlawful delegation of power.

Legislative Branch

The Legislature is a body of elected persons with the power to enact laws, levy taxes, and appropriate money. The Montana Legislature is bicameral and composed of 50 senators and 100 representatives. The Senate confirms appointments made by the Governor, such as the appointment of agency directors.

Montana is one of four states whose legislatures meet biennially; all other states meet every year. Montana is also one of the states whose legislators are term limited. Implemented in 1993, legislators may serve only eight years in each chamber. Nevada is the only other state that is both biennial and has term limits.

The Montana Legislature is a “citizen legislature” because it meets part-time, and most legislators have full-time jobs or are self-employed or retired.

There are limits on the power of the Legislature. The Legislature may not exercise the powers of the other branches of state government. For example, the Legislature generally may not interfere with the Executive Branch in the purely administrative aspects of carrying out the law. Legislative power and responsibility also may not be abdicated to private organizations or to the federal government.

The Legislature has impeachment powers, although rarely used. The House of Representatives may accuse certain officials of felonies, misdemeanors, or malfeasance in office. The Senate may try and convict these officials and require officials be suspended or removed from office.

Executive Branch

The Executive Branch includes elected officials and agencies under the jurisdiction of these officials. Article VI, section 7, of the Montana Constitution provides for no more than 20 principal departments, and Article X, section 9, provides for the three boards of education. Elected officials and the agencies under their jurisdiction are described below.

- Governor. There are 14 principal departments established in state law whose heads are appointed by the Governor. There are three boards established in the Montana Constitution under the authority of the Governor, which include the board of education composed of the board of regents of higher education and the board of public education. There are numerous additional boards, councils, commissions, and other entities established by law. These are attached to a department or board for administrative purposes.
- Lieutenant Governor. The Lieutenant Governor performs the duties provided by law and those delegated by the governor; however, no power specifically vested in the governor by the constitution may be delegated to the lieutenant governor.
- Secretary of State. The Secretary of State maintains official records of the executive branch and of the acts of the Legislature, as provided by law, keeps the great seal of the state of Montana, and performs any other duties provided by law.
- Attorney General. The Attorney General is the head of the Department of Justice.
- State Auditor. The State Auditor serves as the Commissioner of Insurance and Securities.
- Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Superintendent of Public Instruction supervises the Office of Public Instruction and performs duties as provided by law.
- Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission functions as the department head for the Department of Public Service Regulation.

Judicial Branch

The judicial power of the state of Montana is vested in the following:

- the Supreme Court, consisting of a Chief Justice and six Associate Justices;
- the District Courts;
- the Workers' Compensation Court;
- the Water Court; and
- the courts of limited jurisdiction, which include Justices' Courts, Municipal Courts, and City Courts.

Unlike most state court systems and the federal judiciary, Montana does not have an intermediate appellate court. Consequently, the Supreme Court hears direct appeals from District Courts across Montana, as well as from the Workers' Compensation Court and the Water Court. Because people have a right to an appeal and there is no intermediate appellate court, the Montana Supreme Court does not have discretion to turn down appeals; it must take them all and resolve them.

The Montana Constitution also vests the Supreme Court with original jurisdiction which means the court can hear the case the first time in certain instances. Original jurisdiction may be asserted via habeas corpus applications from inmates and petitions for supervisory control over District Courts in cases still pending there. The Supreme Court also may exercise original jurisdiction in a case that has not been through a District Court if there are no facts in dispute and the case presents only legal or constitutional questions. An example of a case in recent years where the Montana Supreme Court accepted original jurisdiction of this type was a challenge to term limits.

The Montana Supreme Court has other duties, including lawyer discipline and revisions of various rules, such as the Montana Rules of Civil Procedure, the Montana Rules of Appellate Procedure, the Rules of Professional Conduct that apply to Montana lawyers, and the Rules of Lawyer Disciplinary Enforcement that govern lawyer discipline cases. On occasion, the Montana Supreme Court also determines whether to impose judicial discipline as recommended by the Judicial Standards Commission. In addition, the Supreme Court, as part of the state assumption of District Court funding, adopts a personnel plan for the Judicial Branch. The Chief Justice also chairs the District Court Council, created by the Legislature to implement and administer the state-funded District Court program.

The Clerk of the Supreme Court keeps all Supreme Court records, maintains the court's docket, and performs other administrative tasks. The Court Administrator is the chief administrative staff person for the judiciary. Answerable to all seven justices of the Supreme Court, the administrator executes the day-to-day administrative operations of the Supreme Court, including some administrative matters concerning District Courts and courts of limited jurisdiction.

Federal Government

Under the supremacy clause of the U.S. Constitution, any act of Congress that is not itself in violation of the U.S. Constitution may not be contravened by a state legislature. The U.S. Constitution also places certain direct limitations on states. For example, compacts between states require congressional consent. The federal government sometimes encourages states to adopt or comply with certain laws by withholding federal funds if a state does not comply with a federal requirement.

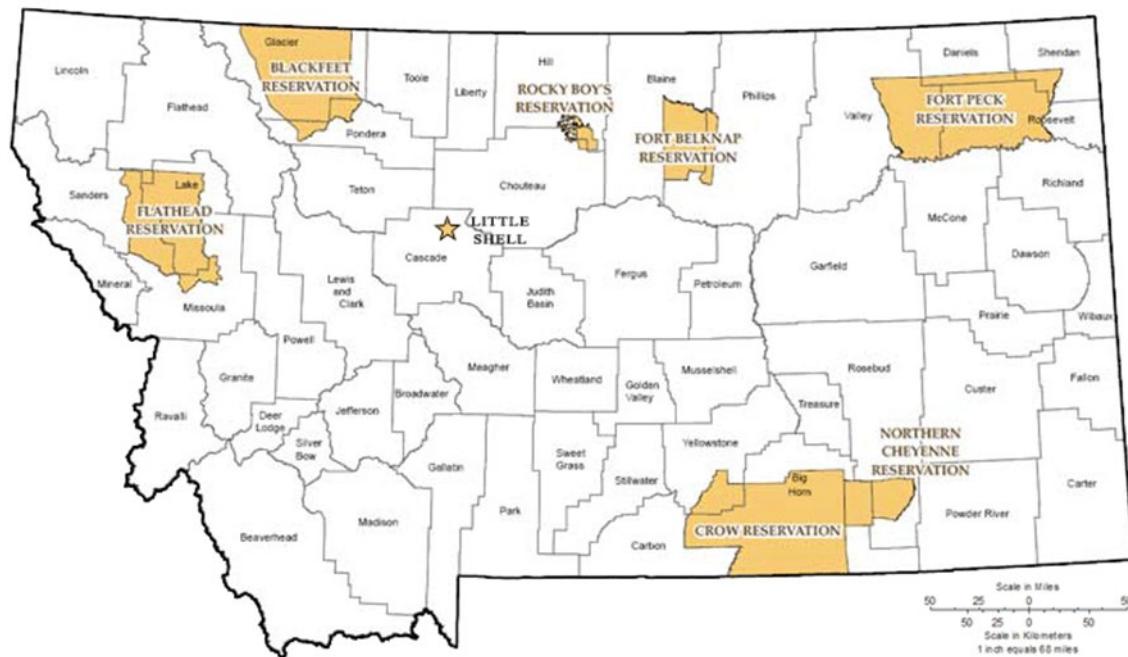
Tribal Governments

Although Montana is home to seven reservations, the state has eight tribal governments (see map on following page). Indian tribes have the right to develop their own form of government and to establish their own civil and criminal laws; jurisdiction is often shared among federal, tribal, and state governments. Tribal courts adjudicate the laws of tribal governments.

The U.S. Constitution gives plenary authority over Indian tribes to the federal government, not the states. As a result, the federal government has a trust responsibility to fulfill treaty commitments unique to Indians and Indian tribes. The Montana Constitution explicitly acknowledges that all lands owned or held by any Indian or Indian tribe are under the absolute jurisdiction and control of the U.S. Congress. With rare exceptions, a state has jurisdiction within a reservation only to the extent that Congress delegates specific authority to the state or in situations in which neither federal nor tribal law preempt state law.

The Legislature established the Office of Indian Affairs, which is administratively attached to the Governor's Office. The director carries out the legislative policy regarding Indian affairs, established in section 90-11-101, MCA. One element of the legislative policy is a declaration that "the best interests of Montana Indian tribes will be served by engaging in government-to-government relationships designed to recognize the rights, duties, and privileges of full citizenship that Indians are entitled to as citizens of this state". Dealing with tribal governments on a government-to-government basis means a dialogue is initiated between governing bodies rather than interacting with tribal governments as if they were special interest groups.

During the interim, the Legislature's State-Tribal Relations Committee, which includes eight legislators, also meets. The State-Tribal Relations Committee acts as a liaison with tribal governments in Montana, encourages state-tribal and local government-tribal cooperation, conducts interim studies as assigned, and may propose legislation and report its activities, findings, or recommendations to the Legislature.



Indian Reservations and Tribal Governments in Montana

- Blackfeet Reservation
- Crow Reservation
- Flathead Reservation
- Fort Belknap Reservation
- Fort Peck Reservation
- Northern Cheyenne Reservation
- Rocky Boy's Reservation
- Little Shell Band of Chippewa¹²

Under the State-Tribal Cooperative Agreements Act (Title 18, chapter 11, MCA), state agencies may enter into agreements with tribal governments to administer regulations and programs and to promote cooperation between state agencies and tribal governments in mutually beneficial activities and services. For example, since 1990, the state has had a cooperative agreement with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes regarding fish and wildlife management on the Flathead Reservation.

Local Governments

Local governments, like counties and incorporated cities and towns, are legal creations or subdivisions of the state. The powers of local governments are derived from the state's constitution and statutes. Under the Montana Constitution, there are two basic types of local governments: governments with general powers and governments with self-governing powers. Local governments with self-governing powers have adopted a self-governing charter under Montana law. In general, local governments with general powers have powers expressly or implicitly granted by the Montana Legislature. Local governments with self-governing powers have powers that are not specifically denied by Montana law or the individual government's charter.

The Legislature's Local Government Interim Committee (LGIC) acts as a liaison with local governments, promotes and strengthens local government through recognition of the principle that strong communities with effective, democratic governmental institutions are one of the best assurances of a strong Montana, and brings together representatives of state and local government for consideration of common problems. LGIC's liaison activities with cities and counties provide an important forum for discussion of strong, effective governance at the community and county level.

¹² The Little Shell Band of Chippewa has a tribal government but does not have a reservation. It received federal recognition in December 2019.

Appendix A: Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

ACT: Legislation that has been passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives, enrolled, and approved by the Governor or passed over the Governor's veto or without the Governor's approval.

ADJOURNMENT: Ending of a meeting or daily floor session. Adjournment of the Senate or the House of Representatives takes place at the close of each legislative day, with the hour and day of the next meeting set before adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT SINE DIE: Ending of the current session of the Legislature. No future meeting date is set except as provided in law.

ADOPTION: Approval or acceptance; usually applied to motions, amendments, and resolutions.

AMENDMENT: A change proposed or made to a bill or resolution. Amendments to bills and resolutions may be offered in a standing committee, in a conference committee, or on second reading during consideration by the Committee of the Whole.

APPROPRIATION: Legislative authority for expenditure of state money to a state agency for a specific purpose.

BILL: A proposed law that is sponsored by a legislator and presented to the Legislature for consideration. Also called legislation.

CALL OF THE SENATE (HOUSE): A procedure used to compel attendance of absent members
-- see Legislative Rules.

CALL TO ORDER: The action of the presiding officer that brings either house officially into session.

CAT AND DOG BILL: A bill that makes a specific appropriation for a specific purpose that is not included in the general appropriations bill.

CAUCUS: A meeting of all members of a political party. The term also refers collectively to all members of a political party in a house.

CHAMBER: The official meeting place of the Senate or the House of Representatives.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: The convening of an entire legislative house into a committee for the transaction of business on second reading.

CONCURRENCE: Agreement by one house to a proposal or action of the other house.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE: A group of legislators appointed by the presiding officer in each house to resolve differences between the houses on a bill.

CONFIRMATION: Approval by the Senate of a nomination for an appointment made by the Governor.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: A conflict created by a personal interest of a legislator that affects the ability of that legislator to vote impartially or that gives rise to an appearance of impropriety. Under current ethics laws, a conflict of interest does not arise from legislation or legislative duties affecting the membership of a profession, occupation, or class.

CONSTITUENT: A person who lives in the district represented by a legislator.

CONVENE: To officially begin a meeting of a legislative body.

DISTRICT: The geographic area of Montana represented by a legislator. Each district is designated by a number. A Senate district consists of two adjoining House of Representatives districts.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The date on which a law takes effect and becomes binding. Most laws take effect on October 1 following a session unless otherwise specified.

ENGROSSING: The incorporation of amendments and all appropriate technical corrections into the text of a bill.

ENROLLING: The preparation of a bill in the form that it finally passes the Legislature for presentation to the Governor, filing with the Secretary of State, or referral to the people for a vote.

EX OFFICIO: By virtue of one's office or position.

FISCAL NOTE: A brief document that contains an analysis of a bill's dollar impact on state or local revenue, expenditures, or fiscal liability.

FISCAL YEAR: The 12-month period that is the basis for the state's budgeting and financial activities. The state fiscal year begins on July 1 and ends on June 30.

HEARING: Public discussion scheduled by a standing committee for the purpose of gathering information on a bill.

INITIATIVE: A process through which citizens may initiate the enactment or amendment of laws or the amendment of the constitution. If a specified percentage of the qualified electors sign a petition, the measure is placed on an election ballot for approval or rejection by the voters. If approved by the voters, the proposal becomes law. The process may also be used to call for a constitutional convention.

INTERIM: The period of time between regular legislative sessions.

JOURNAL: The official chronological record of the proceedings in a house.

LEGISLATOR: An elected member of either the Senate or the House of Representatives.

LEGISLATURE: The branch of government responsible for passing statutory laws. The Montana Legislature has two chambers: the Senate and House of Representatives.

LOBBYIST: A person who is hired to engage in the practice of promoting or opposing the enactment of legislation before the Legislature or the members of the Legislature.

MAJORITY PARTY: The political party having the most members in a house.

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR: An official communication from the Governor that is recorded in the journal.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE (HOUSE): An official communication from the opposite house that is recorded in the journal.

MINORITY PARTY: The political party having the second most members of a house.

MINUTES: A record of the actions taken at a committee meeting that serves as the official and legally required record of the meeting.

MONTANA CODE ANNOTATED: The official codified, published version of the statutes of Montana that are of a permanent or general nature.

MOTION: A formal proposal offered by a member.

PER DIEM: Literally “for a day”. The term is used to refer to a payment that a legislator receives to defray expenses associated with attending official legislative meetings or for conducting official legislative business.

POINT (QUESTION) OF ORDER: A motion of a member that calls attention to a potential violation of order or of the rules and requests a determination by the presiding officer as to whether a violation has occurred.

PRESIDING OFFICER: The person who presides over a committee or a house. The term is often used interchangeably with “chair.”

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

QUORUM: The minimum number of members of a legislative body required to be present for valid transaction of business.

RECESS: A break in a committee meeting or daily floor session of a house.

RECONSIDERATION: A parliamentary process by which a motion or question that has been acted on may be brought back before the body.

REFERENDUM: The submission of a proposed or enacted piece of legislation to the people for approval or rejection. The referendum may be initiated by the Legislature or by voters through a petition process.

REGULAR SESSION: The regularly scheduled session of the Legislature that begins in January of each odd-numbered year and lasts for up to 90 days.

REQUESTER: The legislator or committee that asks that a bill or resolution be drafted.

RESOLUTION: A document that expresses the opinion or will of the Legislature or a house of the Legislature, that requires an interim study, or that governs the business of the Legislature or a house of the Legislature. A resolution does not have the force of law.

SPECIAL SESSION: A meeting of the Legislature convened at the request of either the Governor or a majority of the members of the Legislature. A special session is limited to matters specified in the call of the special session.

SPONSOR: The legislator who introduces a bill or resolution and guides it through the legislative process.

STANDING COMMITTEE: A committee established by a house's rules to consider legislation in a specified subject area and to perform other duties.

STATUTE: A law passed by the Legislature. In Montana, statutes are compiled into the Montana Code Annotated (MCA).

SUBSTITUTE BILL: An amendment that replaces the text of an entire bill. (To be valid, the substitute bill may not change the original purpose of the bill.)

TABLE OR LAY ON THE TABLE: A motion to set aside consideration of the pending question in such a way that its consideration may be resumed at the will of the body.

TERM LIMITS: Constitutional limits on how long a legislator or other state official may serve in one office. Senators and representatives may serve no longer than 8 years in one chamber in a 16-year period.

THIRD READING: The point in the legislative process when legislators in each chamber take a final vote on a bill.

TRANSMITTAL: The act of sending a bill to the second chamber for consideration after it has been passed by the first chamber. Different types of bills have different transmittal deadlines in the legislative rules.

VETO: An action taken by the Governor to reject a bill passed by the Legislature.

Appendix B: Acronyms

ARM Administrative Rules of Montana

BASE Base Amount for School Equity (school funding)

CFHHS Children, Families, Health, and Human Services (interim committee)

CFR Code of Federal Regulation

CHIP Children's Health Insurance Program

CSG Council of State Governments

D of A Department of Administration

DEQ Department of Environmental Quality

DNRC Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

DOR Department of Revenue

DOT Department of Transportation (also MDT)

DPHHS Department of Public Health and Human Services

EDIC Education Interim Committee (LSD)

EQC Environmental Quality Council (LSD)

ETIC Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee

FTE Full-Time Equivalent (employee)

FWP Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

FY Fiscal Year

GABA Guaranteed Annual Benefit Adjustment (state employee retirement)

GF General Fund

LAC Legislative Audit Committee

LAD Legislative Audit Division

LAWS Legislative Automated Workflow System

LC Legislative Council (Each bill draft request is given an “LC” number in order of request.) The Legislative Services Division was called the Legislative Council (LC) when this numbering system was implemented.

LEPO Legislative Environmental Policy Office (staffs the EQC, ETIC, and WPIC)(LSD)

LFA Legislative Fiscal Analyst

LFC Legislative Finance Committee

LFD Legislative Fiscal Division

LGIC Local Government Interim Committee (LSD)

LSD Legislative Services Division

LJIC Law and Justice Interim Committee (LSD)

MACo Montana Association of Counties

MARA Modernization and Risk Analysis Committee

MCA Montana Code Annotated (the codified laws, or statutes of Montana)

MPAN Montana Public Affairs Network (legislative public affairs television and internet broadcasting service administrated by LSD through PBS. Formerly TVMT.)

MPEA Montana Public Employees Association

NCSL National Conference of State Legislatures

OBPP Governor’s Office of Budget and Program Planning

OLIS Office of Legislative Information Services (LSD)

OPI Office of Public Instruction

ORPA Office of Research and Policy Analysis (LSD)

PERS Public Employees' Retirement System

PNWER Pacific Northwest Economic Region

RIC Revenue Interim Committee

SABHRS Statewide Accounting, Budgeting, and Human Resource System

SAVA State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee

SID Special Improvement District

TIC Transportation Interim Committee

TIF Tax Increment Financing

TVMT Television Montana (legislative public affairs television and Internet broadcasting service administered by LSD. Now MPAN.)

USC United States Code

WIC Women, Infants, and Children (program)

WPIC Water Policy Interim Committee (LSD)

Appendix C: Colors for Printing of Bills, Resolutions, and Notes

White

Introduced bill or resolution and enrolled bill or resolution.

Yellow

Second reading bill or resolution in first house.

Blue

Third reading bill or resolution in first house. (Also first reading in second house.)

Tan

Second reading bill or resolution in second house.

Salmon

Third reading bill or resolution in second house -- "reference bill".

Ivory

Reference bill with later amendments (conference committee or Governor's amendments).

Buff

Original fiscal note.

Cherry

Amended fiscal note.

Gray

Sponsor's fiscal note.

Gray

Legal Review Note.