

LEADERSHIP AND STANDING COMMITTEES

LEADERSHIP

Major officers of the House and Senate are selected by their fellow members following the November elections. The presiding officer for the House is the Speaker of the House, who is addressed as "Mr. Speaker" or "Madam Speaker." The presiding officer for the Senate is the Senate President, who is addressed as "Mr. President" or "Madam President."

The presiding officers of each house conduct floor sessions in their respective chambers and exercise control over their house's operations, facilities, and property, including the appointment of the various subject-matter committee chairs and conference committee members, and the scheduling of the legislative timetable in cooperation with the other house. In addition, the presiding officers represent their respective houses in dealing with the public and other agencies. In the absence of the Speaker or President, the Vice Speaker or the Vice President assumes all the duties and responsibilities of the Speaker or the President, respectively.

Both houses are also organized along partisan lines into a Majority Caucus and Minority Caucus, composed of all majority-party and minority-party representatives, respectively. Each caucus elects its own official leaders.

STANDING COMMITTEES

The subject-matter standing committees of the Legislature initiate inquiries and ascertain facts in preparation for the enactment of laws. This is done through public hearings, receipt of data, review of reports and studies, staff research and investigation, and other activities. The standing committees vary in size, number, and subject area.

Standing committees are the main working committees of the Legislature as distinguished from interim committees, ad hoc committees, special committees, and other committees deemed necessary by the Speaker or the President.

The scope of a standing committee's jurisdiction is set by the organizational rules of each house. In addition, a committee may review budget requests, financial plans and programs, and other pertinent matters relating to the committee's subject-matter jurisdiction.

Meetings of the committee are called by the committee chair, who prepares the agenda and presides at each meeting. The committee chair is also responsible for preparing files for committee members and the leadership of that house, keeping a record of documents and information presented to the committee, and drafting the reports of the committee's findings and recommendations.