

JAN 23 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE LEGISLATURE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The Hawaii state legislature currently meets
2 for a sixty-day regular legislative session each year, generally
3 stretching from the third Wednesday in January until early May,
4 or approximately three and a half months. To ensure that
5 legislation remains on track to pass all required legislative
6 committees and satisfy all constitutional requirements during
7 this short timeframe, the legislature sets multiple self-imposed
8 deadlines that bills must meet to advance through the
9 legislative process. Unfortunately, this often means that bills
10 must be rushed to meet these deadlines.

11 One potential way to alleviate this rushed scenario and
12 allow for a more deliberate and mindful legislative process is
13 by providing more time in the legislative calendar, specifically
14 by thoroughly examining the merits and costs of transitioning
15 the Hawaii state legislature's regular session from a
16 three-and-a-half-month session to one that meets on a year-round
17 basis.



1 In particular, requiring the legislature to be in session
2 throughout the whole year could improve many facets of the
3 legislative process, including bill drafting, community
4 engagement, and emergency response. For example, extending the
5 legislative session could allow legislators and stakeholders the
6 additional time needed to craft more thoughtful and effective
7 legislation that better meets the needs of Hawaii residents and
8 businesses. Legislators would have additional opportunities to
9 engage constituents and work through the multitude of issues
10 facing the State. The legislature notes that state legislatures
11 with longer legislative sessions may be more likely to craft
12 policies that address the specific concerns of their states,
13 rather than simply applying policies from other states and
14 national lobbying organizations.

15 In addition, a year-round legislature would allow the State
16 to more quickly and effectively address natural disasters and
17 other emergencies. Many natural disasters that the State has
18 experienced occurred when the legislature was not in regular
19 session, including hurricane Iniki, the 2018 Kilauea eruption
20 that destroyed much of Kapoho, and the 2023 Maui wildfires. Had



1 the legislature been a year-round body, the State may have been
2 able to better address those events.

3 The legislature notes that a year-round legislative session
4 would require additional staffing and resources. These
5 potential costs have not been studied in-depth, and there is not
6 yet a good understanding of the potential financial burden that
7 a year-round legislature would place on taxpayers.

8 However, there are analogues that the State can look to as
9 it studies this issue. The National Conference of State
10 Legislatures classifies California, Michigan, New York, and
11 Pennsylvania as "full-time" legislatures due to the length of
12 their legislative sessions, the amount of time legislators spend
13 on the job, the pay that legislators receive, and the size of
14 the legislature's staff. The National Conference of State
15 Legislatures also notes that several other state legislatures
16 meet throughout the year, including in Illinois, Massachusetts,
17 New Jersey, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Moreover, locally, the
18 legislative bodies of the State's counties also meet throughout
19 the year.

20 In 2024, the Hawaii state legislature adopted House
21 Concurrent Resolution No. 138, Senate Draft 1, which requested



1 the legislative reference bureau to "conduct a study of a
2 continuous legislative session, extending the legislative
3 session, and adding additional recess days." Commissioning this
4 study was an important first step in examining this issue. The
5 legislature finds that the next step in this process is to bring
6 together relevant stakeholders to examine the feasibility of
7 transitioning to a year-round legislature and to create a plan
8 to initiate this transition.

9 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a
10 temporary working group to study the feasibility of
11 transitioning the Hawaii state legislature's regular session
12 from one that meets for three and a half months, from
13 mid-January to early May, to one that meets on a year-round
14 basis.

15 SECTION 2. (a) There is established a temporary working
16 group to study the feasibility of transitioning the Hawaii state
17 legislature's regular session from one that meets for
18 approximately three and a half months from mid-January to early
19 May, to one that meets on a year-round basis.

20 (b) The members of the working group shall include:



- 1 (1) One member of the senate, to be selected by the
2 president of the senate, and who shall serve as
3 co-chair of the working group;
- 4 (2) One member of the house of representatives, to be
5 selected by the speaker of the house of
6 representatives, and who shall serve as co-chair of
7 the working group;
- 8 (3) One person to be selected by the governor;
- 9 (4) The attorney general or the attorney general's
10 designee;
- 11 (5) The chief clerk of the senate or the chief clerk's
12 designee;
- 13 (6) The chief clerk of the house of representatives or the
14 chief clerk's designee;
- 15 (7) One representative from the League of Women Voters of
16 Hawaii, who shall be invited to serve by the co-chairs
17 of the working group;
- 18 (8) One representative from Common Cause Hawaii, who shall
19 be invited to serve by the co-chairs of the working
20 group; and



(9) One representative from the Hawaii State Association of Counties, who shall be invited to serve by the co-chairs of the working group.

(c) The working group may invite to serve on the working group any other persons whom the working group believes have expertise that would be helpful fulfilling the working group's duties pursuant to subsection (d).

(d) The working group shall:

(1) Study the feasibility of transitioning the Hawaii state legislature's regular session from one that meets for approximately three and a half months from mid-January to early May, to one that meets on a year-round basis;

(2) Analyze the financial impact and necessary costs to operate a year-round legislative session, including staffing requirements, changes to legislative services, operational costs, office space needs, and impacts on legislation;

(3) Analyze and recommend any constitutional and statutory changes necessary to implement a year-round legislative session; and



(4) Examine other states that have transitioned to a year-round legislature and the impact those transitions have had on the states and their communities. For the purposes of this paragraph, the working group shall examine California, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, and any other state deemed appropriate by the working group.

In performing its duties under this subsection, the working group shall consider any findings and recommendations made by the legislative reference bureau in its report to the legislature to be submitted pursuant to House Concurrent Resolution No. 138, Senate Draft 1, adopted during the regular session of 2024.

(e) The working group shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2026.

(f) The legislative reference bureau:

(1) Shall provide administrative assistance to the working group;



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(2) Shall assist the working group in preparing and submitting the report required by subsection (e); and

(3) May retain a contractor or consultant to assist the working group perform its duties under this section.

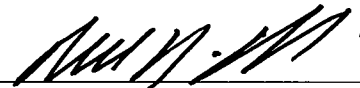
(g) The working group shall cease to exist on June 30, 2026.

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 for the purposes of the working group, including procuring services for the study and facilitating working group meetings; provided that the contracting of services using funds appropriated under this section shall be exempt from chapter 103D, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the legislative reference bureau for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

INTRODUCED BY:



By Request



S.B. NO. 1514

Report Title:

Working Group; Year-Round Legislative Session; LRB; Report;
Appropriation

Description:

Establishes a temporary working group to study the feasibility of transitioning the Hawaii State Legislature's regular session from one that meets for 3.5 months from mid-January to early May, to one that meets on a year-round basis. Requires the Legislative Reference Bureau to provide administrative support to the working group. Requires report to Legislature. Appropriates moneys.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

