



Legislative 101

Lawmaking in Oregon



A dimly lit library with wooden bookshelves filled with books. The scene is dark, with light highlighting the spines of the books and the wooden structure of the shelves. The text "What is it all about?" is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

**What is it
all about?**

Laws...It's all about laws.

Article IV of the Oregon Constitution creates a "Legislative Assembly," comprised of two chambers: a Senate and a House of Representatives.

That article also vests the legislative power of the government in that assembly.

This power is expressed by the passage of measures, the first step in the process of creating laws.

Anything the Legislature does, they do through law.



**Where
does it all
take place?**



Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

www.oregonlegislature.gov

800-332-2313

In accordance with Article IV of the Oregon Constitution, all law making must take place in the “capitol of the state.”



Learn more at: www.oregonlegislature.gov
in the citizen's engagement tab, where you will find more information on the legislative process and the logistics of the building itself.

Oregon State Legislature

Search the Legislative Website

Senate House Bills and Laws Committees **Citizen Engagement** Capitol Offices

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Audio and Video

Legislative Housing Survey
Have a property to rent? Rental information will be made available to legislators and staff for temporary housing during legislative session. Add your property today!

Citizen Engagement
The connection between citizens and their government is strengthened when the public has ample opportunity to have their concerns heard by the legislature.

The primary functions of the Legislature are to enact new laws and revise existing ones relating to the health, education and general welfare of all Oregonians, and to make decisions that keep the state in good economic and environmental condition. An informal, but highly significant, function is to provide a forum for resolution of group conflicts and expressions of public grievances.

The Legislative Assembly, often referred to as state government's board of directors, is responsible for a total state biennial budget in excess of \$65 billion. The power to allocate state monies gives the legislature influence over the executive branch. In deciding where and how much money the state will spend on its agencies and programs, the legislature establishes priorities and sets public policy.

In addition to enacting laws, setting public policy, and administering the state's budget, legislators review administrative rules drafted by state agencies, and in the Senate, confirm certain executive appointments made by the Governor.

Students - Looking for an up-close experience at your Oregon State Capitol?
Learn about Oregon's legislative process and rich history as an Honorary Page. Programs are offered by both the Oregon Senate and the House of Representatives. [Learn more.](#)

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**How does the
Legislature
work?**



Each chamber organizes legislators into topical committees.

Bills are introduced to the chamber and then referred to committees.

Committees hear bills in a public setting.

Bills must pass out of committee by a majority vote, after which they move to the chamber floor.

Bills must pass each chamber floor by a majority vote.



First Reading



Bills must be “read,” meaning literally read from the dais.

“First reading” signifies the introduction of the bill to the Legislature.

The reading clerk will read aloud on the chamber floor the measure number and title.

The President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House then refers the bill to a committee.



Committees





Committees hear bills in a public setting.

This is where the public is given the chance to comment on bills through testimony.

Some bills are chosen by the committee to be “worked,” meaning edited or changed.

Prior to passage out of committee, all bills require statements containing possible fiscal, revenue, and equity impact.

Bills must pass out of committee by a majority vote, after which they move to the chamber floor.

Second Reading



After work in a committee, a bill is “second read.”

The second reading notifies the public that the bill has completed its process in committee and is back on the floor for a vote.

The reading clerk will again read aloud the measure number and title.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS • WILLIAM B. BRADDOCK • WILLIAM D. TRAVEL
ALEXANDER HAMILTON • JOHN C. FREMONT • ROBERT MCNEE • BRUNO HEUTA
WASHINGTON IRVING • RUSSELL BARNHAM • GEORGE SIMPSON • ADOLPH
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TACALAWEA • DAVID
HILL • JOHN MINTO
SAMUEL K. BARLOW
OSWELL C. PRATT



Third Reading



A bill's "third reading" is when legislators debate and vote on the text of the bill.

The reading clerk will again read aloud the measure number and title and is also required to read the entire text of the bill.

Legislators then discuss the merits and contents of the bill in a debate on the chamber floor.

At the close of the debate legislators then vote. They must vote yes or no. They may not abstain.

Bills must pass each chamber floor by a majority vote. Certain types of bills, like tax increases, require a three-fifths super-majority vote.



Introduced

Upon first reading, the bill is considered "introduced."



Engrossed

If a committee adopts an amendment(s) with its recommendation of do pass, before the bill can proceed to its next destination, it will detour to the legislative counsel office, where the text of the bill will be updated to include the adopted amendment(s). The bill is then considered "engrossed."

CHAIR

Enrolled

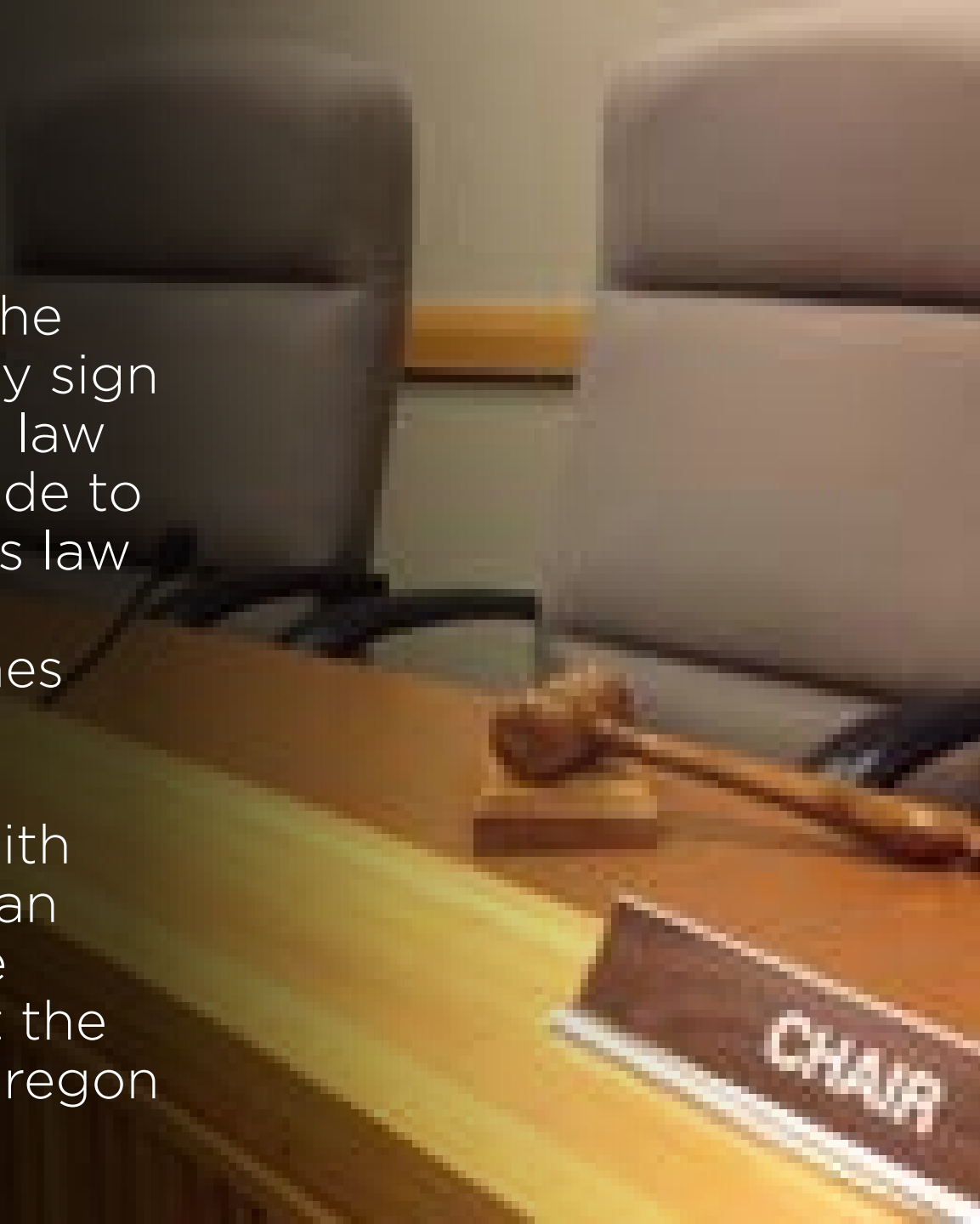
After the bill has passed both houses, it is signed by the Speaker of the House, the Senate President, and the Chief Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate, and is now considered “enrolled.”

CHAIR

Law

The enrolled bill is then presented to the Governor for action. The Governor may sign the bill into law, allow a bill to become law without his/her signature, or may decide to veto the bill. If signed, the bill becomes law on the date indicated in the bill or on January 1. If not signed, the bill becomes law on Jan. 1.

The signed enrolled bill, is then filed with the Secretary of State, who assigns it an Oregon Laws chapter number and the Legislative Counsel's office then insert the text of the new law into the existing Oregon Revised Statutes.



A stack of papers and a pen on a desk. The papers are stacked in several piles, and a pen is lying across them. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

Types of Bills

Laws start as an idea that has been submitted through a local legislator to become a bill.

There are several types of bills, but today we will focus on the three most common.

Policy Bills

Policy bills would change laws relating to state policy or standard and are generally handled by the policy committee for the subject area (i.e., education, judiciary, etc.).



Budget Bills

Budget bills would directly spend money or otherwise cost money and are generally handled by the Joint Committee on Ways and Means.



Revenue Bills

Revenue bills would raise money by tax increases and are generally handled by specific committees on Revenue.

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of an open calendar. The calendar is white with a grid of dates. A blue pen and a yellow pencil are resting on the top edge of the calendar. The background is dark, making the white calendar stand out.

**When does
this happen?**

Long Session

Odd-numbered years

May not exceed 160 Days

Typically, mid-January through late-June

Designed to address the majority of all bills

Short Session

Even-numbered years

May not exceed 35 Days

Typically, early-February through early-March

Meant to address housekeeping issues and technical fixes incurred during the implementation of laws from the last long session

Session Deadlines

Session deadlines establish the timeline for bills to be posted for work sessions, then voted out of policy committees in the first and second chambers.

Although there are exceptions, bills not posted for a work session or not moved out of a policy committee by these dates, generally, cannot be moved out of the committee and are considered “dead.” Session deadlines do not apply to rules, revenue, or joint committees.

Legislative Session Start and End

Regular Legislative Assembly sessions convene in the early part of each year and may last 160 days in odd-numbered years and 35 days in even-numbered years.

Floor sessions are scheduled on weekdays during the legislative session and are announced by the Senate President or House Speaker.

A legislative session formally ends with the passage of a specific resolution, sine die, or when the legislature reaches the constitutionally limited number of session days.

Interim Legislative Days

The time between sessions is called the interim.

The Legislature convenes periodically during the interim for special meeting days, called "Legislative Days." These happen approximately every eight weeks and last four days.

During Legislative Days, committees may hold informational hearings on topics that could lead to legislation in upcoming sessions, hear updates on implementations of past legislation, hear reports from state agencies and task forces, and keep current on the subject areas that affect Oregonians.



Why Advocate for Education?

The Oregon constitution creates a system of citizen-legislators. They control education policy in Oregon, among many other things.

By design, citizen-legislators are not required to be education experts. School board members are education experts.

Advocating at the legislature is the best way to use this expertise for benefit public education across Oregon.