

RESULTS OF 2005 LEGISLATIVE PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Following the 2005 regular session, a questionnaire soliciting answers to seven questions on legislative rules and procedures was sent to each member of the Legislative Assembly.

Of the 141 questionnaires sent, 70 were returned-- 20 by senators and 50 by representatives. The questions asked and the answers and comments received have been reproduced in this memorandum.

1. By statute, the agenda for the organizational session in December includes orientation classes on legislative rules and procedure for new legislators and includes presentation of the budget and revenue proposals recommended by the Governor. Do you have any suggestions to improve the organizational session held in December?

	Senate	House
Yes		5
No	19	40
No response		3
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)	1	2
Total	20	50

Comments by Members of the Senate

I feel the organizational session is effective and helps get the regular session off to a quick start.

I believe it goes quite well and is informative.

I think it is very well done. I'd just like to see bills requiring cost-benefit analyses required to be submitted by December 1, just as those for employee benefits are. The current system doesn't work.

I would suggest that a briefing on school finance be available for attendance. This should include formulas, etc. Also briefings on overviews of human service costs, process, etc.

Comments by Members of the House

It could be a day longer. Have parties name mentors at start of presession. This way more people would get help when they need it. It's too late in January.

Provide more orientation with hands-on activities for freshman legislators.

More classes on rules.

Tighten up the timeframe for interim committee reports.

Great job by LC.

A list of current bills submitted and subject for the next session to date.

Just invite the Democrats.

2. Are there any changes concerning floor procedures you would like to see implemented?

	Senate	House
Yes	3	11
No	15	34
No response	1	3
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)	1	2
Total	20	50

Comments by Members of the Senate

Provide legislators with floor decorum rules, and have President of the Senate and Speaker enforce them.

Instead of floor action on creation of conference committees, why don't we simply announce them? It would greatly expedite the process.

Yes, a chance to show PowerPoint slides - hidden screens and projectors.

Sometimes it would help to allow expert witnesses to testify before the whole Senate on some complicated or very important bill.

Comments by Members of the House

Procedural adjustments that might be implemented:

- On the sixth order of business, should amendments be approved automatically if there is no objection, or should there be a motion for approval of amendments?
- After an amendment has been debated, should the bill go to the 11th or 14th order right away? Automatically or by motion, or only after a certain legislative day?
- The motion to end debate on a matter. Should it require a simple or super majority i.e., two-thirds or sixty percent or some other number?
- Should assistant leaders also be able to move to put remarks of a member or nonmember in the Journal? See House Rule No. 345.
- Should there be any further restrictions on visitors on the floor during a session? At

times it got pretty crowded on the floor during the 2005 session.

- Should all the bills in which the House does not concur with Senate amendments be taken in one motion or a motion for each of those bills?
- Procedure to recall a bill in possession of the Governor. Should we follow the procedure in *Mason's Manual No. 753(3)*?
- Should House Rule 501 with regard to the referring of bills and resolutions to the standing committees be followed more closely or should it be revised in any manner?

I have always felt we should work full days on Fridays whether in floor session or in committee. The big "push" seems to be in the first half only to give us extra time off at crossover. Working until at least 3 p.m. or 4 p.m. is highly recommended.

I would like to see floor sessions start at 8:00 a.m. on Friday. Committees could then use the rest of the day as needed.

I think the House should look at amendments in the same manner as the Senate. Too many mistakes this year.

More organization - Professionalism - Less consent calendar usage. Amendments explained and voted on.

Every bill and resolution should be presented on the floor. The rule change about not hearing a floor presentation on bills that pass committee unanimously needs to be dropped.

Only comment is while House is on the floor more education on procedural motions should happen. Maybe something in December would help. Also more scrutiny with lobbyists going to floor. I feel they could give House members their time before floor session.

Make sure the speaker of respective chamber is not allowed to prematurely cut off floor debate. Especially not allowing the debate cutoff before the bill sponsor has a chance to speak if his light is on.

The Majority Leader should not be allowed to suspend the rules.

I thought the closing ceremony was ragged and disrespectful. We need to maintain a high degree of decorum and dignity throughout the entire process. I was embarrassed.

We have lost some respect and decorum in addressing fellow House members.

More attention to dress code and guests on the floor.

Each section of the OMB bill should be decided individually on the floor.

3. Are the various deadlines satisfactory (such as for introduction and crossover of bills, reporting bills out of committee, etc.)?

	Senate	House
Yes	16	33
No	3	11
No response		1
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)	1	5
Total	20	50

Comments by Members of the Senate

Move up last day to introduce bills by Senate a couple of days. It is too hard on B committees when bills are dumped on at end.

I think it is very well done. I'd just like to see bills requiring cost-benefit analyses required to be submitted by December 1, just as those for employee benefits are. The current system doesn't work. I like having an extra week for submitting bills in the Senate, but it creates a frightful workload in the last weeks before crossover. The first weeks of the session are underutilized and the end of the first segment is too busy.

I would like to see bills with fiscal notes have an earlier deadline.

Comments by Members of the House

Introduction for House bills deadline should be extended 3-4 days.

More time should be allowed for introduction of bills.

I would like to see the deadlines to introduce bills moved back 3-5 days.

I think the deadlines are too soon.

The House should have the same bill introduction deadline as the Senate.

As a freshman legislator I felt too much was handled prior to crossover; however, I recognize the time constraints and perhaps there is no solution to the hectic nature of the beast prior to crossover.

If Constitutional Revision Committee is a House committee (rather than joint) as in 2005, maybe deadlines for introduction and getting the resolutions out of committee should be reviewed.

"Policy" committees should take more time dealing with bills. There seems to be a race to get all bills out first.

We should strengthen our rules for bills reported out of the second house!

Generally speaking it is satisfactory and it works. I have always felt we should work full days on Fridays whether in floor session or in committee. The big "push" seems to be in the first half only to give us extra time off at crossover. Working until at least 3 p.m. or 4 p.m. is highly recommended. Affording more work time (especially on Fridays) will yield a better product as well as improve the prospect of meeting deadlines and providing a longer crossover break.

I do not know, why ask?

4. Do you have any suggestions to change the standing or conference committee structure or procedures?

	Senate	House
Yes	7	7
No	10	36
No response		3
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)	3	4
Total	19	50

**Comments by Members of the Senate
Standing Committee Comments**

2-day committees ought to meet M-T, M-W, T-TH or the like. When they meet TH-F their work time gets shortened by special functions and Friday homesickness.

I would suggest that consideration be given to allowing a legislator to have a period of time (i.e., 4 minutes) to pose questions to a witness rather than the present process of requesting permission for a 2nd question. This would seem to allow for development of a train of thought and could be controlled by the chair. This may have been tried in the past?

Should be a joint meeting between some standing committee and corresponding appropriation section at about the time of the deadline for appropriation bills to be out of policy committee.

It would be nice to rotate a couple of policy committee members through the Appropriations Committee each session. It would broaden the level of experience in both committees.

They can get rid of the House Appropriations micromanagement committee that was added. House Appropriations Human Services Committee should have hearings on all bills they act on.

The number of people testifying during the hearing for and against an issue should be recorded in its minutes.

Conference Committee Comments

Instead of floor action on creation of conference committee, why don't we simply announce them? It would greatly expedite the process.

Strict enforcement of prohibition on introduction of new issues, especially in appropriation conference committees.

Earlier notice of meeting dates.

Perhaps members of a conference committee should be changed after no agreement can be reached for several meetings.

This year, on several occasions, appropriations people were on conference committees who had no knowledge of the policy committee's work. Substitutions should be permitted, because sometimes it is helpful and timesaving to have two policy and one appropriation. But it should only be done with the knowledge and consent of both chairs.

**Comments by Members of the House
Standing Committee Comments**

The change to House Appropriations Committee structure in 2005, I feel, was productive, and should be continued.

Pay chairs of House appropriation divisions the \$5. They do more work than 2-day chairmen do.

Each committee should spend 1-2 days reviewing what is in place and brainstorming on what issues/problems exist. Leave it up to individual legislators to write the bills/resolutions.

Testimony from agencies should be presented in advance. Others should be encouraged to also do this. This is done in most larger cities and counties so that councils and commissions have a chance to do their own research and to save time. We can all read the material ahead of committee meetings and, then, only ask questions at hearing.

A good day for the Constitutional Revision Committee to meet is Wednesday, especially on the Wednesday after crossover break.

Conference Committee Comments

Limit the number of conference committees a member serves on - made it very difficult to schedule when a member was on 4+ conference committees - slowed the wrapup of the session.

There are some legislators (especially senators) who serve on too many conference committees, thus slowing the process.

Conference committee selections should be more reflective of legislators' background, experience, and legislative involvement, rather than vote and/or position stature.

Should the respective caucus leaders have more authority in who is appointed to conference committees - or at least consulted regarding appointments?

New concepts that are controversial should not be passed out of conference committees. Public input lacks in the conference committees.

Better reporting on changes made - especially in appropriation bills.

Probably the best way.

- 5. Were you satisfied with the services provided by staff (legislative employees, interns, Legislative Council staff)?

	Senate	House
Yes	18	47
No		2
No response	1	1
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)	1	
Total	20	50

Comments by Members of the Senate

They all do a quality job! They are truly professionals! We (Legislature) are blessed to have them working for us.

I do not trust all LC staff to keep confidential information confidential.

They were all very accommodating and wonderful to work with!

They were terrific! Thank you to everyone for their hard work!

Exceptional!!

Excellent job!!

They do excellent work.

Absolutely.

Comments by Members of the House

Again, as a freshman legislator, I was very impressed by the staff at all levels. They were most professional and especially helpful to a first termers such as myself. The state is most fortunate to have such high caliber employees.

Legislative Council staff was very professional.

The staff has way too much power and flexes its authority to pursue its own goals. I would prefer to disband the Legislative Council and to let each party pay for its own attorneys. Legislators don't need the "filter" of the LC staff. No other branch of government has such a filter.

I am always very, very impressed with Council staff.

Very knowledgeable and experienced staff!

Absolutely! The staff should be commended for an excellent job - AGAIN!

What a super group. I would suggest that the legislators receive better info on what they should do for us. Some legislators take advantage of the pages.

There were some concerns raised about legislative employees' attitudes and their indifference to certain staff assistants and employees.

Could use improvement.

Very friendly and prompt.

Very satisfied.

Very good job this session!

Fiscal staff excellent.

Great job.

Excellent.

Excellent.

Excellent.

6. Were you satisfied with the services provided by the private secretarial service, telephone message service, and bill and journal room service during the session?

	Senate	House
Yes	15	45
No	2	2
No response	1	2
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)	2	1
Total	20	50

**Comments by Members of the Senate
Secretarial Service Comments**

We are lucky to get solid hard working people in these positions session after session.

Exceptional!

Very cooperative.

Very.

I could make better use of their services.

Don't really think we need the service anymore. I don't use them.

I used these services very little, so really can't comment.

Really didn't use.

OK.

Telephone Message Service Comments

We are lucky to get solid hard working people in these positions session after session.

Many lost messages in the first half of session. Better in second half.

I receive a lot of phone messages from people outside my district that could be screened.

They do sloppy work. If they are going to relay a call to me I wish they would check spelling.

Messages often too short to be interpreted correctly prior to returning the call.

Didn't get info on computer till a few weeks had passed.

Bill and Journal Room Service Comments

We are lucky to get solid hard working people in these positions session after session.

Excellent.

No problems.

Fine.

Good.

OK.

I do not use this service.

**Comments by Members of the House
Secretarial Service Comments**

They were very efficient, helpful, and friendly.

Excellent service.

All were excellent.

Excellent.

All very good.

OK.

All very detail focused!

My letters usually had typos and needed to be redone.

Do they get used? For what?

Never used them.

Never used.

Did not use.

Telephone Message Service Comments

All were excellent.

All very good.

All very detail focused!

Spelling of names and addresses of caller often inaccurate.

It was OK, not great. The message doesn't all print out in our system.

Additional categories for retrieving phone messages would be helpful.

There was a catch in the system somewhere that delayed getting messages to us.

Fine.

OK.

Not sure.

Bill and Journal Room Service Comments

They didn't have the latest version of bills and legislators had to print them out for themselves and others.

Get a printer!

All were excellent.

All very good.

- Fine.
- All very detail focused!
- Very friendly.
- Bad attitude by some employees.
- Did not use very much.
- Rarely used.

7. Do you have any other comments or suggestions that you believe would result in improving the legislative process (rules, procedures, facilities, staff, etc.)?

	Senate	House
Yes	3	8
No	12	30
No response	5	9
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)		3
Total	20	50

Comments by Members of the Senate

Don't hold so many bills until the last few days of the session.

We need new computer systems and automated procedures.

I think it is challenging for each legislator to have all the information and the ins and outs of each bill before we vote on it. This can be dangerous business when we are voting on such serious issues. I think we need an assistant/secretary for every 1 or 2 legislators.

I really don't have any concerns.

Comments by Members of the House

Should House Rule 501 with regard to the referring of bills and resolutions to the standing committees be followed more closely or should it be revised in any manner?

We should further limit the number of bills allowed by legislators and limit number of bills from everyone involved. Session lasts way too long. Too many worthless bills to deal

with, takes away valuable time to deal with important issues.

It seems that attendance at floor sessions has become too "optional"; too loosey-goosey. There was the day when absences were rare, and the reasons for absences had to be damn good. Now it seems that any reason will suffice. Also, properly notifying the floor leader and committee chairman of an impending absence has declined in importance.

All systems can stand improvement! However, this system has been developed over the years. Appears to work well for requirements established. Continuous purview would be to our advantage.

Only send us a list of what is available. If we need it we can ask. Mailing everything costs a fortune.

Changes should be made to shorten up the legislative session. We are limiting the number and the quality of people that can serve.

I would like to see the chairman for Legislative Council alternated each interim between House and Senate.

All interim studies should be picked by LC and not mandated. If something has been studied the past two interims, perhaps it could be skipped this time.

Senate and House leadership need to listen more closely to the needs of our state's citizens and not their own personal and selfish agendas.

The House sound system needs to be fixed (period). It was embarrassing and frustrating last session. I see that there should be no excuses for improvement. Technology continues to be a frustration, too many breakdowns for the money that has been spent.