

# COLORADO'S LEGISLATIVE SESSION

## TIPS FOR ACCESSING THE LAWMAKING PROCESS

**New to the legislative process? This document aims to provide tools for engaged citizens to access the lawmaking process and stay involved throughout Colorado's legislative session.**

### LEGISLATIVE SESSION BASICS

- The annual session is constitutionally mandated to meet for 120 days between January and May. They must convene no later than the second Wednesday of January and adjourn "sine die" (term to denote the final day) 120 days after.
- Each legislator may introduce five bills and must get approval from leadership for additional bills.
- The GAVEL (Give a Vote to Every Legislator) rule means that every introduced bill is required to have a committee hearing where the legislators consider and vote on the bill.
- Nonprofit organizations, industry groups, and individuals with lived expertise often generate bill concepts and can be big players in the process to help pass or kill bills.
- **Lobbying:** Communicating with decision makers about existing or potential legislation and urging a vote in favor or against the legislation.
- **Advocacy:** Sharing a personal story, encouraging civic engagement, volunteering, public education, providing data or information to elected officials.

### QUICK LINKS

- [FIND MY LEGISLATOR](#)
- [GENERAL ASSEMBLY SITE](#)
- [BILLS HOME](#)
- [LEGISLATORS](#)
- [COMMITTEES](#)
- [SESSION SCHEDULE](#)
- [SIGN UP TO TESTIFY](#)
- [GO DISPLAY BOARDS](#)
- [LIVE AUDIO AND VIDEO](#)
- [LEGISLATIVE LINGO](#)

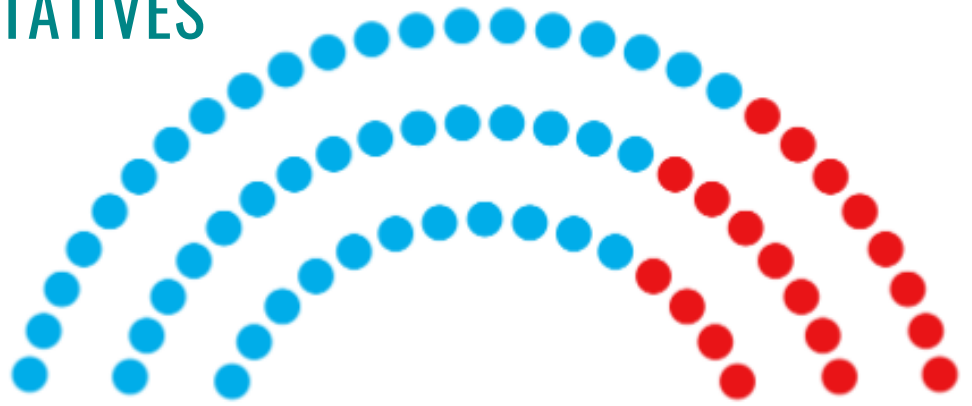
### COLORADO GENERAL ASSEMBLY STRUCTURE

The General Assembly consists of 100 members— 35 Senators and 65 Representatives. In 2023, there are 23 Democrats and 12 Republicans in the Senate, and 46 Democrats and 19 Republicans in the House of Representatives. There are 50 men and 50 women in the legislature, and 32 "freshmen" legislators who just completed their first legislative session.

Senators serve four-year terms, while Representatives serve two-year terms. All members are limited to serving for eight consecutive years in their chamber— four terms for Representatives and two terms for Senators. As of the 2020 census, each Senator serves an average of 164,693 residents and each Representative serves an average of 88,826 residents.

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

46 DEMOCRATS  
19 REPUBLICANS



# SENATE

23 DEMOCRATS  
12 REPUBLICANS



## LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

The Executive Leadership of the House includes the Speaker, Majority Leader, Assistant Majority Leader, Minority Leader, and Assistant Minority Leader. On the Senate side, there is the Senate President, President Pro Tempore, Majority Leader, Assistant Majority Leader, Minority Leader and Assistant Minority Leader. The Speaker and President positions are elected by the majority vote of their chamber, while the Majority and Minority Leader positions are chosen by their respective caucuses.

There is also a Majority and Minority Whip for both chambers whose role it is to ensure discipline within their respective parties, and a Caucus Chair for each chamber. For the House majority party, there are two Co-Whips and Caucus Co-Chairs while the minority party has one of each.

Do you know your legislators? If not, use the tool below to find out who represents you and how to contact them. You can also learn about their occupation, party, committee assignments, and bills.

[FIND MY LEGISLATOR](#)

## HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

A bill begins by being introduced to either the Senate or House, where it is assigned a bill number, official title, and is referred to a committee. Each committee is composed of several members that focus on a particular subject area, such as agriculture and natural resources, health and human services, housing and local government, education, and more. In the committee hearing, the legislators leading the bill (the sponsors) present the bill and the floor is opened for public testimony. Testimony gives community members the opportunity to speak to the committee, usually for 2-3 minutes, to educate and persuade them on a piece of legislation. Testimony usually highlights stories from personal experience or expertise and/or compelling data points.

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP TO TESTIFY ON A BILL IN PERSON, REMOTELY, OR WITH WRITTEN TESTIMONY.](#)



After hearing testimony, the committee votes on whether to send a bill to the floor of that chamber (unless the bill will cost money, in which case it will first be sent to a committee on appropriations), where it is voted on by all members of the chamber in a second and then third reading. The second reading includes discussion and amendments to the bill, whereas the third reading is usually more brief and includes an official vote. If the chamber votes to pass that piece of legislation, it heads over to the other chamber where it goes through the same process of committee hearing, second reading, and third reading. If any amendments are made by the second chamber, the chamber of origin must vote to concur (or a conference committee must convene to find a compromise) before the bill is officially passed and sent to the Governor for a signature.

## SECOND READING

Includes discussion with all members of the chamber followed by a simple and informal yes or no vote. This occurs in the chamber.

## THIRD READING

Consideration of a bill by the entire legislative chamber for final passage. Passage is determined by an official recorded vote of the members.

## TOOLS TO STAY ENGAGED DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Each day, both the House and Senate update their calendars to reflect their upcoming agenda items on the General Assembly homepage. For a real-time view and audio of proceedings at the Capitol, you can view the [CO Display Boards](#). The display allows you to see which bill is currently up for action and what is next in the lineup on the floor of the House or Senate or in a committee hearing. You can also see amendments that are being brought forward on a bill and votes as they are counted. The display boards are shown in various places throughout the Capitol but can also be accessed remotely.

HOU Floor	SEN Floor	HOU Cmtes	SEN Cmtes
<b>House Live Proceedings</b> <a href="#">audio</a> Fri, Mar 10, 2023 (day 61) @ 7:09a			
<b>SPECIAL ORDERS - SECOND READING OF BILLS</b>			
<a href="#">HB23-1219</a> Waiting Period To Deliver A Firearm	Rep. Froelich, Rep. Amabile		SA Report Adopted
			Amendment L.046 Passed Bill Passed
<a href="#">HB23-1202</a> Overdose Prevention Center Authorization	Rep. Epps, Rep. Willford		Amendment L.014 Lost Amendment L.006 Lost Amendment L.010 Passed Amendment L.025 Passed Bill Passed

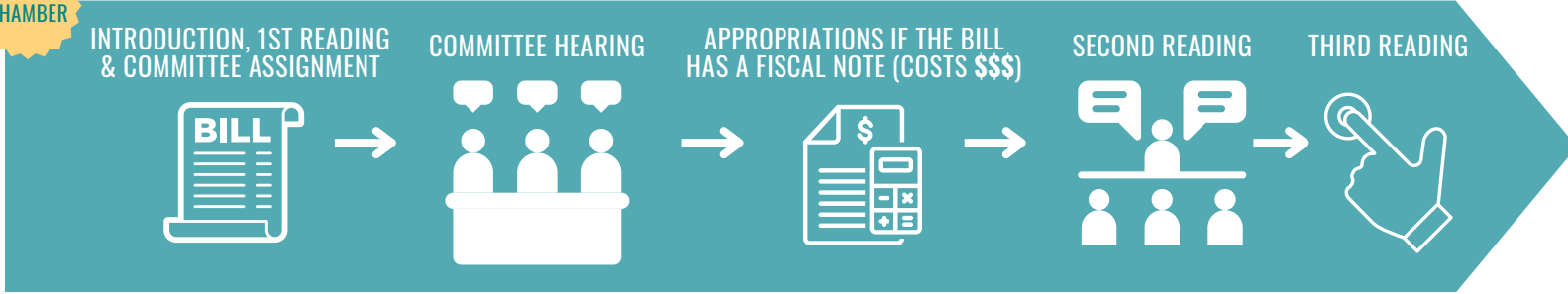
The State of Colorado provides live audio and video for the majority of the legislature's meetings during session for those looking to tune in. Committee hearings can be followed with live audio and floor proceedings of the House and Senate have both audio and live video.



# HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW



1ST CHAMBER



2ND CHAMBER

