



THE MINNESOTA SENATE

Frequently Asked Questions

This booklet was prepared by the staff of the Secretary of the Senate as a response to the many questions from Senate staff and from the public regarding internal operations of the Minnesota Senate. We hope that it will be a valuable source of information for those who wish to have a better understanding of how the laws of Minnesota are made.

Your suggestions for making this booklet more useful and complete are welcome.

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Secretary of the Senate
Updated January 2017

This document can be made available in alternative formats. To make a request, please call (voice) 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112.

1. What is the state Legislature and what is its purpose?

There are three branches of state government: the executive, the judicial and the legislative. In Minnesota, the legislative branch consists of two bodies with members elected by the citizens of the state. These two bodies are called the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Upon election, each Senator and Representative take an oath to support the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of this state, and to discharge faithfully the duties of the office to the best of the member's judgment and ability. These duties include the consideration and passage of laws that affect all of us.

2. What are some of the constitutional provisions regarding the state Legislature?

Two key points to remember are: 1) in order for a bill to become a law it must be reported or read in each house on three different days, except in case of urgency when this provision may be suspended with the support of two-thirds of the body; and 2) an absolute majority of those elected in each house (34 Senators and 68 Representatives) must vote for a bill on final passage in order for it to become law. To fully appreciate what the Constitution says about the Legislature, read Article IV of the Minnesota Constitution.

3. Who may serve in the state Legislature?

Senators and Representatives must be qualified voters of the state, be 21 years of age, and must have resided at least one year in the state. In addition, legislators must have lived the six months immediately preceding the election in the district from which they are elected.

4. How long is the term of office for each Senator and Representative?

Senators serve a four-year term and Representatives serve a two-year term. However, in election years ending in 0, such as 2020, Senators are elected for a two-year term in order to provide for the redistricting process done in conjunction with the United States Census.

5. If a Senator or Representative resigns or dies in office, how is the vacancy filled?

By a special election called by the governor.

6. What is the size of the Senate and House of Representatives?

There are 67 Senators and 134 Representatives. Each Senate district is divided into two House districts.

7. Who determines the size of the Legislature and the boundaries of the legislative districts?

Article IV, Section 2 of the Constitution states that the size of the Legislature "shall be prescribed by law." The Legislature is also responsible for determining the boundaries of each district and redistricting must occur after each census performed by the United States (Article IV, Section 3). In 2012, a five-judge panel devised the redistricting plan that took effect.

8. What is meant by a session of the Legislature?

A yearly session of the Legislature begins on the day the Legislature assembles and ends on the day it adjourns for the year. We also speak of daily sessions, which adjourn each day, and of the Senate or House being "in session." Two yearly sessions separated by temporary adjournment, or interim, make up the biennial session. Thus, the 89th Legislature was composed of the 2015 and 2016 Sessions, and the 90th Legislature includes the 2017 and 2018 Sessions.

9. When does the Legislature meet? What is a legislative day?

The Legislature convenes in regular session each odd numbered year on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January. In the even numbered years, it convenes on a date set by joint agreement of both bodies. Article IV, Section 12 of the Constitution limits the Legislature to meeting 120 legislative days during each biennium. In addition, the Legislature may not meet in regular session after the first Monday following the third Saturday in May of any year.

By statute, “legislative day” is defined as “any day when either house of the Legislature is called to order.” Thus, when the Senate and House decide to spend a day holding committee hearings rather than meeting on the floor, a “legislative day” is not used. If the first year of the biennium uses 57 legislative days, for example, the Legislature could meet for a total of 63 legislative days the second year, or until the first Monday following the third Saturday in May, whichever comes first.

10. Is it possible for the Legislature to meet at any other time?

Yes, if it is necessary for the Legislature to consider legislation at a time other than during its regular session, the Governor may call a Special Session. The legislation to be considered is usually of an urgent nature.

Only the Governor can call a Special Session, but only the Legislature can decide what legislation will be considered and when the Special Session will adjourn.

11. Is it possible during session to adjourn for any length of time?

During a session of the Legislature neither body may adjourn for more than three days (Sundays excepted) without the consent of the other body.

12. What is adjournment sine die?

Literally, the words mean “without a day.” Adjournment without setting a definite date to reconvene is called adjournment sine die. The Legislature may also adjourn to a day certain; that is, a day for the next meeting may be specified.

13. What is a caucus? What is the majority caucus in the Senate?

A caucus is a group with a common belief or interest such as party affiliation. Currently Minnesota legislators run with party designation. Whichever political party has 34 or more members holds the Senate majority.

14. What is the caucus division in the Senate?

There are 34 Republican Senators and 33 DFL Senators as of Jan. 3, 2017.

15. Who are the leaders of the Senate and the House?

In the Senate, the majority leader directs the business of the Senate and is considered the leader of the Senate. The leader’s chief assistant is called the assistant majority leader. In the House, the Speaker of the House is also the leader of the majority caucus and, therefore, leader of the House. The chief assistant in the House is called the majority leader. The members of the minority caucus in each body also selects a leader.

16. Who presides over the Senate and House?

The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House are members of, and preside over, their respective bodies. They are elected by the members on the opening day of each biennial session.

17. What is the Senate Office?

The office of the Secretary of the Senate, or Senate Office, serves as a service center for members and staff and as a resource or information center for the general public. The phone number for the Secretary of the Senate is 651-296-2344. Senate materials and information are available on the Senate website (www.senate.mn). Daily Journals, agendas, calendars and copies of bills may be obtained from this office. Questions concerning bill status and committee and floor session activity can be answered through the Information Office. The telephone number is 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112. The Senate Office is located in RM 231 of the State Capitol.

18. What are the office hours?

Office hours for all Senate offices are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. during the interim between sessions. During the legislative session, the hours are extended to 5 p.m. or whenever the Senate meets in floor session.

19. How can I find my legislative district? How can I find out the names of my Senator and Representative?

A link called “Who Represents Me?” is located at the bottom of the legislative website (www.leg.mn). By inputting your address, you can learn the names and contact information your elected officials at the state and federal level. Staff in the Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112 can also tell you your legislative district and the names of your Senator and Representative if you give them your street address and city.

20. How do I contact my Senator?

Many Senators use e-mail. A directory of e-mail addresses for Senators who have e-mail can be found on the Senate website (www.senate.mn). Please remember that e-mail is most effective when you send a message, including the address of your residence, to the Senator who represents you.

If you wish to talk to your Senator and Representative, you can find their contact information on the Senate website or by calling the Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112.

If sending a written letter, address it to: The Honorable Jane Smith, State Senator or Sen. Jane Smith. The street address for Senators is Minnesota Senate Building, 95 University Ave. W., St. Paul, MN 55155.

21. What is the Senate Journal?

The Senate Journal is the official record of Senate floor proceedings prepared by the Secretary of the Senate. Following the Order of Business, it shows:

FIRST	Petitions, Letters and Remonstrances;
SECOND	Executive and Official Communications;
THIRD	Messages from the House of Representatives;
FOURTH	First reading of House Bills;
FIFTH	Reports of Committees;
SITXTH	Second Reading of Senate Bills;
SEVENTH	Second Reading of House Bills;
EIGHTH	Introduction and First Reading of Senate Bills;
NINTH	Motions and Resolutions;

TENTH	Calendar;
ELEVENTH	Consent Calendar;
TWELFTH	General Orders;
THIRTEETH	Announcements of Senate Interest.

The Senate Journal is not a verbatim report, but shows all action taken by the Senate in formal sessions.

22. What are the Constitutional requirements of the Senate Journal?

Article IV, Section 15, of the Constitution states that “Both houses shall keep journals of their proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, and yeas and nays, when taken on any question, shall be entered in the journals.”

23. How often is the Senate Journal printed? Is the Daily Journal indexed?

Minnesota Statutes, Section 3.17, requires that a Journal of the daily proceedings in each house be printed and laid before each member at the beginning of the next day’s session. This is called the Daily Journal.

An index at the end of each Daily Journal lists all bills receiving action that day, and the page number on which the action is recorded.

24. How is the Senate Journal distributed? Is there a charge?

Copies are available in the office of the Secretary of the Senate. There is no charge for the Journal. In addition, you can view the Senate Journal on the Senate website (www.senate.mn). This information is also available from the Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112 and on the Senate website (www.senate.mn).

25. What is the Permanent Journal?

At the end of each year’s legislative session, the Daily Journals are proofread and checked for accuracy and then reprinted in hardbound volumes called the Permanent Journal. It is available to Senate and House members, to committee offices, to depository libraries, Constitutional offices and some state offices. It is published on the Senate website (www.senate.mn).

26. What is Senate Index?

Senate Index is a part of the Senate Office. Index staff generates and maintains official information on the status, history and content of bills. Indexes are maintained by author, subject, location and bill number, companion, chapter, revisor and statutory citation numbers. Bill status information includes the committees to which a bill has been referred, committee hearings and actions, amendments, engrossments, and floor votes. The Index staff also maintains miscellaneous records relating to Senate organization, conference committees, gubernatorial appointments, resolutions and rules.

This information is available through the Senate Information Office or by calling 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112. Status information is also available through the Senate website (www.senate.mn).

For detailed information about committee action it is necessary to contact the committee directly.

27. What other information does Senate Index have?

In addition to bill information, Senate Index keeps records of all other actions taken during Senate floor sessions as they are reported in the Senate Journal. These items, available upon request during session and printed in the miscellaneous index to the permanent bound Journal, include legislative organization, Senate and Joint Rules, Senate and Concurrent Resolutions, Senate appointments to permanent and interim commissions and committees, bills in conference committee, executive and official communications, petitions, letters, and remonstrances, memorial resolutions for deceased Senators, joint sessions of the Senate and House, minority reports, protests and dissents, vetoes, unsigned laws, and other special records. Information can be obtained through the Senate Information Office or by calling 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112. (Also, see #17)

28. How current is the information from Senate Index?

The Senate Index staff monitors each daily session. Actions taken during that session, including all new bill introductions, are entered immediately into the bill status system. Journal page numbers are entered on the system the day after session, as soon as the Journal is available. Committee information is noted when actually reported to the floor. There may be some delay between an official committee action and the report to the floor. The above information can be obtained through the Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112.

29. What publications are available from the Senate?

A list of Senate publications is available on the Senate website (www.senate.mn/publications).

30. Under what rules does the Legislature operate?

The Minnesota Constitution, Minnesota Statutes, Rules of the Senate or House of Representatives, Joint Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, Custom and Usage, and Mason’s Manual of Legislative Procedure are all guidelines that determine legislative procedure. Each house adopts the rules under which it operates and the joint rules, which govern joint conventions and relations between the two houses.

31. Where can the Senate Rules be found?

The Rules are printed in the Legislative Directory (Red Book), in the Legislative Manual and in the Journal when reported out by the Committee on Rules and Administration. The Senate Rules are also printed as a separate document upon adoption by the Senate and are available on the Senate website (www.senate.mn). Paper copies are available in the Senate Information Office upon request.

32. What is a bill for an act?

A bill for an act is a written document that proposes a new law, an amendment to an existing law, or a repeal of existing law.

33. What is an act?

It is a bill that becomes law. It has been passed by both bodies, enrolled, given a chapter number in Session Laws for the year in which it was passed. Most acts are signed by the governor. However, some acts become law without the governor’s signature pursuant to Article 4, Section 23, of the State Constitution. Bills proposing a constitutional amendment that pass both the Senate and House do not require the governor’s signature to become law.

34. Where does a bill originate?

A bill may start as an idea of a member of the Legislature, a constituent or any other interested party. However, it must be introduced by a member of the Legislature or a committee of the Legislature.

35. How is a bill written?

The Revisor of Statutes Office, located on the 7th floor of the State Office Building, has a staff of attorneys who draft the bill. It is drafted and copies are forwarded to the member who requested it.

36. How many authors can a bill have?

There can be up to 5 authors in the Senate, and there may be up to 35 authors in the House of Representatives.

37. How many readings does a bill receive?

The Constitution requires that a bill be reported, or read, on three different days. A reading consists of reading the bill title aloud or of reciting the Senate or House File number. However, in the case of an urgency motion, on a two-thirds vote, the body in which the bill is pending may dispense with this requirement.

38. Does the title of a bill become law?

No. The title of the bill states briefly what the bill contains, but it does not become part of the law. A bill must cover one broad subject only, and the title must reflect this.

39. May the title be amended?

Yes, it may be amended at any time during the bill's consideration by the Legislature. It must be amended if there are amendments to the bill that are not already reflected in the title.

40. How are bills identified? How can I find the number of a bill?

Upon introduction bills are assigned a Senate File number. All bills are identified by the Senate File, or a House File number in the case of House bills.

The Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112 can help you find the bill number if you know the author, subject, popular name, companion bill number, chapter number, section of law amended, revisor number or similar information about it. In addition, you may be able to identify the bill using the legislative website (www.leg.mn).

41. How can I find the status of a bill?

If you know the number of the bill you can track it on www.senate.mn, but if you find it convenient to come to the Senate Information Office they can help you track the progress of a bill. This will include the latest action on the bill. You may also call Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112.

42. Can I find out why a bill was introduced?

Senate Information will help you find the file number and the authors of legislation, and will refer you to the chief author, who will be happy to discuss the reasoning behind the bill. Your own Senator or House member can also help answer questions relating to the arguments for and against particular legislation.

43. How do I find out the legislative intent of a law?

Usually the courts have held that a Legislature meant to act as it did and that the intent should be found in the language passed. The history of a bill can be found by using the printed index to the Journals of both bodies, which shows all the activity taking place on the bill and its companion, if any. Committee books show the same kind of activity within the committees. Finally, to identify some of the issues and comments that accompanied the passage of a law, it may be useful to go to contemporary newspaper reports.

44. Can I find out how a particular law affects me?

Senate staff cannot interpret the law. If a specific department is charged with enforcing the law or with providing regulations, that department should be contacted. For other kinds of questions, consult the attorney general's office at 651-296-6196 or, possibly, a private attorney.

45. Can I find out about legislation prior to introduction?

Often the press will report ideas being considered for legislation by individual Senators or committees. However, the Senate Office will not have copies of the proposed legislation until the bill is officially introduced in the Senate. Senate records only reflect official action of the Senate. The Senate Information Office learns of pre-introductory bill ideas from the newspapers, just as you do, and will try to direct you to the appropriate Senator or committee for information.

46. What is a resolution?

A Senate Resolution is usually used for matters concerning the internal operation of the Senate like a Concurrent Resolution is used for matters concerning the joint operation of the Senate and House, and must be adopted by both bodies. A Memorial Resolution follows the same procedure as a bill. It is introduced, may be amended, engrossed and enrolled in the same manner as a bill. If passed, resolutions are shown at the back of the Session Laws for that year. Memorial Resolutions usually petition the President, the Congress, or a department of the United States, a particular state, or a foreign government.

47. What is a companion bill?

In order to make the process of passing legislation easier, the companion bill system was instituted. The companion system allows the substitution of a bill passed by one body for the same bill that is still pending in the other body.

When bills are drafted in the Revisor's Office, the author of the bill is given two copies with Senate covers and two copies with House covers. The revisor's bill drafting number is on the bill and on the covers for identification. The same bill may be introduced in both the Senate and the House and given a Senate File number and a House File number. These are companion bills. At the time of introduction the bills are identical, but either one may be amended along the way.

In certain cases two bills of a similar nature, which do not have identical revisor's bill drafting numbers, may be considered companions and may be substituted for one another.

48. How are bills substituted? What is the Rule 45 Amendment?

When a House bill is passed by the House, it is transmitted to the Senate and referred to the standing committee possessing the Senate companion bill or, if there is no Senate companion bill, the House bill is referred to the appropriate standing committee. If there is a companion bill that has been reported to the floor, and if the companions are no longer identical, the House File is automatically amended pursuant to Rule 45 so that it is identical to the Senate File. The House File, then containing the Senate language, is substituted for the Senate File, and the Senate File is indefinitely postponed. This expedites passage of the bill through the Senate.

When the Rule 45 Amendment has been made and the bill is in the Senate language, the author may decide to pass the bill in the House language. In this case, the author makes a motion to strike the Rule 45 Amendment and the bill goes back to the form in which it passed the House, unless it is further amended.

49. What is an amendment?

A change in a bill or law.

50. How are laws amended?

A bill may propose an amendment to an existing law. The bill will contain all the language in that particular subdivision of the existing law, with the changes that are proposed shown by striking through the language intended to be removed (appearing like this) and underlining any new language intended to be added (appearing like this). The bill must be passed by both Senate and House and signed by the governor before the changes can be incorporated into the existing law.

51. When can a bill be amended?

A bill can be amended in committee, in the Committee of the Whole, on Special Orders, with unanimous consent on third reading, and by conference committee. A bill cannot be amended when concurrence is requested, nor can a conference report be amended by either body. An amendment must be adopted by the Senate in order to amend the bill. For example, if a bill is amended in a committee, the amendment is only recommended; it is not final until the Senate adopts the committee report containing the amendment. The bill is then engrossed.

52. What is meant by engrossing?

Engrossing is the process of incorporating the amendments that have been adopted by the Senate or House into a bill. Engrossing is done in the Revisor's Office.

53. What happens if the Senate amends a House bill?

If the Senate amends a House File, the bill, with the amendment attached, is sent back to the House. If the House concurs in the amendment and repasses the bill, it is sent to the Revisor of Statutes Office for engrossing and enrolling and presented to the governor for signature. If the House does not concur, the House requests the Senate appoint a conference committee to meet with conferees from the House. (See question No. 77 on conference committees.)

54. Can I get copies of bills?

After a bill is given a Senate File number and has been officially introduced, copies will be available from the Senate Office. You can also view the current version of the bill on the Senate's website (www.senate.mn) as well as previous versions, if the bill was amended. Copies of amended bills are available after a committee report is adopted by the Senate. Senate amendments to House bills can be found in the Senate Journal and in the Senate's unofficial engrossment of the House bill on the legislative website (www.leg.mn). House amendments to Senate bills can be found in the House Journal and in the House's unofficial engrossment of the Senate bill on the legislative website. The journals of both bodies as well as the text of bills are available on the legislative website.

55. How are bills assigned to committees?

Upon introduction, bills are assigned to committees of jurisdiction on the basis of subject matter under the authority of the President of the Senate. Any Senator may object to the reference of a bill under Senate Rule 4.10.

56. How can I determine to what committee a bill has been referred?

The "Senate Bill Introductions," which is the Eighth Order of Business, indicates where the President of the Senate has referred the bill. However, the President of the Senate may indicate a change of referral when we reach the order of business, or the bill may be objected to under Rule 4.10. The Daily Journal will note the final reference of the bill.

57. Can a Senator object to the reference on a committee report? What is Rule 21?

Under Rule 21, a Senator may object to the reference of a bill reported by a standing committee. When either rule is invoked, a bill is automatically sent to the Rules and Administration Committee which determines whether to let the initial reference stand or to send the bill to another committee.

58. What is the Senate Agenda?

The Senate Agenda (Orders of Business) is a list of items scheduled for action by the Senate during the floor session for a particular day. The practice of printing the various items, such as governor's appointments, messages from the House, first reading of House bills, reports of committees, motions and other printed material eliminates the time-consuming process of having all of this material read aloud. The Agenda follows the order of business listed in Senate Rule 18. This agenda is available to the public the morning of session. These also can be found on the website at www.senate.mn under Daily Business - Orders of Business

59. What is the Senate Bill Introductions?

The Senate Bill Introductions is a listing of Senate bills being introduced and receiving their first reading. The Senate authors are shown along with the Senate File number, title and committee reference. This agenda is available to the public the workday afternoon before a floor session.

60. What is the Calendar?

The Calendar is a list of bills previously approved on General Orders and ready for third reading, or final passage. It is made available to Senators at least one calendar day before the bills listed are considered.

Each bill has been previously reported on two different days and has been printed; it has also been favorably recommended for passage by the Senate acting as the Committee of the Whole. Bills on the Calendar cannot be amended without the unanimous consent of the Senate. They are given a third reading just before the final roll call vote.

61. What is the Consent Calendar?

The Consent Calendar is a list of Senate and House bills placed there by a recommendation of a standing committee that considered the bills to be non-controversial. Each bill has been previously reported on two different days and has been printed. Copies of the bills and the Consent Calendar are available to members for at least one calendar day before the bills are considered.

If three or more members object to a bill on the Consent Calendar, it will be stricken and placed at the bottom of General Orders, unless by motion it is placed at the top. It need not lie over one calendar day before consideration in the Committee of the Whole.

Bills may be amended while on the Consent Calendar if the amendment is proposed before the bill is given its third reading. Bills on the Consent Calendar are given a third reading just before the final roll call vote.

62. What is meant by the General Orders of the Day?

General Orders is a list showing the Senate and House bill numbers, authors, titles, committee action, and any other action that has taken place on all bills that have been favorably reported out of a committee and received their second reading. Bills are placed on General Orders in the order the Desk receives them from the Engrossing Secretary and are taken up in that order unless otherwise ordered by the chair of the Committee on Rules and Administration or by a majority of the Senate acting as one large committee.

63. What is the Committee of the Whole?

The Committee of the Whole is the entire membership of the Senate acting as one large committee to consider bills listed on General Orders. The president may appoint another member to preside and act as chair of the Committee of the Whole. Each bill on General Orders must be available to members at least one calendar day before consideration in the Committee of the Whole. The members debate the pros and cons of a bill; offer and adopt amendments; and vote to recommend that the bill pass, pass as amended, be stricken and re-referred to another committee, or be stricken and returned to its author.

Bills in the Committee of the Whole are usually considered in the order directed by the chair of the Committee on Rules and Administration. An author may choose to “progress” a bill, which means postponing consideration of it to another time.

64. What is a Special Order?

Rule 26 provides for immediate consideration and third reading of bills that have been given their second reading and are on General Orders. Rule 26 states that the chair of the Committee on Rules and Administration, or the chair’s designee, may designate a Special Order for a bill that has been given its second reading. When a bill is made a Special Order, the author explains the bill, amendments may be offered, and the bill is given its third reading and placed on final passage. Making a bill a Special Order speeds up the legislative process because the bill does not have to be put on the Calendar and lie over one day before final passage.

65. How can I tell when a particular bill will be taken up for consideration?

It is difficult to predict a definite time when a particular bill will come up for debate on the floor. When leadership decides what bills will be taken up on the floor, it is posted on the Senate’s website. To find this link you need to go to Orders of Business on www.senate.mn, and look under the Twelfth Order, Scheduled Bills. Paper copies are available in Senate Information Office. The Information Office is unable to predict the length of time that will be spent on the orders of the day, the length of the session or the time spent in debate. The Senate does not limit debate, and a Senator has some discretion as to when a bill will be taken up.

66. If a bill is placed on the Calendar or the Consent Calendar on Tuesday, when can the Senate vote on final passage?

According to Senate rules, bills placed on the Calendar or the Consent Calendar must lie over for one day before the vote on final passage may be taken. Therefore, Thursday would be the earliest day. However, there are occasions when the rules are suspended and the “lie over” is waived, so final passage may occur sooner. Also, if the author is not present, or does not wish to have the bill considered that day, it will remain on the appropriate calendar.

67. What happens to a bill that is defeated in the Committee of the Whole?

The bill remains on General Orders and may be taken up again at a later date.

68. What happens if a bill is defeated on final passage?

Several things may occur:

- (1) The bill may have been so badly defeated that the author takes no further action and the bill dies at the Desk;
- (2) The author may try to find a Senator who voted against the bill but is willing to make a motion for reconsideration of the vote. If that motion passes a couple of things could happen: the author can move that the Senate vote on final passage again; the author can move to suspend the rules in order to amend the bill, and then vote on final passage; the author can move to place the bill back on General Orders; or the author can move to refer the bill back to a committee;
- (3) The contents of the bill could be amended to a more popular bill, provided it is germane—or relevant—to the subject of that bill, and thus gain the support of some members who do not wish to vote against the contents of the remainder of the more popular bill;
- (4) The contents of the bill may be put into an omnibus bill and pass the Senate as part of a compromise package of legislation;
- (5) The bill may be introduced in a future session.

Reconsideration of a vote on an amendment or final passage of a bill may occur only once and must be done within two calendar days or, if later, the first day the Senate meets after the vote was taken.

69. How many votes does it take to pass a bill? To pass an amendment?

Amendments may pass by a simple majority of those voting. In committees and in the Committee of the Whole, a bill may also be recommended for passage by a simple majority of those voting. Passage on third reading and repassage after a conference committee report requires an absolute majority (34 Senators and 68 House members). Bonding bills require a 3/5 majority vote (41 Senators and 81 House members).

70. Are votes recorded in Committee of the Whole and on final passage?

A member may request a roll call vote in the Committee of the Whole, and all bills on final passage must have a roll call vote. Votes are recorded in the Journal of the Senate on final passage. The Constitution requires 34 Yes votes for a bill to pass the Senate. (Article IV, Section 22). All roll call votes are recorded in the Senate Journal.

71. How do the Senators vote?

Each Senator's desk has a set of buttons, a green one for a "yes" vote and a red one for a "no" vote. The Senator's vote is recorded electronically and is visible on a board on each side of the Senate Chamber. Sometimes a voice vote is used instead of the electronic system in Committee of the Whole or on a motion. In some cases a division will be called to clarify the results of a voice vote. During a division, supporters and opponents alternately stand and are counted.

72. Where do I find out how my Senator voted on a bill?

The Journal shows all roll call votes taken during floor sessions. Journals are available on the Senate website (www.senate.mn). If you know the bill number you can also find the roll call by clicking on the link on the status page.

The final vote on a bill is called a third reading. A bill may have several third readings: if it should fail initially, if it is reconsidered, if it is amended by the other body, or if there is a conference committee report on the bill. Certain amendments are of great importance as well, and a roll call vote on General Orders in Committee of the Whole is recorded in the Journal. Votes occurring during a committee hearing on a bill are available in the committee book. All committees post their minutes, including roll call votes, on the legislative website (www.leg.mn).

73. How do I find out my Senator's entire voting record?

Sometimes a Senator's staff or supporters will have this information compiled and available. If not, go to the Journals and check the roll calls. Each Daily Journal for the current session has an index in the back that makes it easy to look for a particular order of business or a particular bill. Indexes for the Permanent Journal from previous sessions are available in the Senate Information Office and Legislative Reference Library.

74. What is a conference committee?

When the House and Senate pass bills that are different from each other a conference committee consisting of three or five members from each body may be appointed to resolve the differences. The committee will meet, work out a compromise and make a report to each body. If the committee does not agree, the panel may be discharged and a new conference committee appointed. When the conference committee report is adopted by both houses, the bill is repassed by both bodies and sent to the governor.

75. May a conference committee report be amended?

The conference committee report is the final form of the bill agreed upon by both Senate and House conferees. It cannot be amended by either body, but it could be rejected and sent back to the conference committee for further consideration.

76. Who appoints conference committees?

In the Senate, conference committees are appointed by the Subcommittee on Conference Committees of the Committee on Rules and Administration, subject to approval by the entire Senate. In the House, the Speaker of the House appoints the members. Rule 46 instructs the Subcommittee on Conference Committees to appoint members who are in accord with the position of the Senate, and when possible to give preference to the authors of the bills in dispute and to members of standing committees in which the bills were considered.

77. What is an omnibus bill?

An omnibus bill incorporates several aspects of a broad subject. For example, the omnibus tax bill covers various changes in several kinds of tax laws, such as income tax law, corporate tax law and sales tax law. Usually several bills are incorporated into an omnibus bill.

78. Can I find out what was put into an omnibus bill?

Sometimes bills that are incorporated into an omnibus bill are noted in the status of that bill. The best way to find out what bills were included is to contact the committee or the chief author's office to find a list of bills included in the omnibus bills. The committee staff is the appropriate source of detailed information.

79. How do I find out the names of Senate committees and who serves on these committees?

The Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112 can supply a list of the committees and the names of the Senators assigned to each committee. This information is also available on the Senate website (www.senate.mn).

80. How do I find out about committee meetings?

Meeting schedule information is available electronically through the Legislative website and an e-mail list. Email list subscription instructions are available on the website (www.leg.mn). Each committee has a listserv used to e-mail notices of committee meetings to those who have signed up. Contact the specific committee you are interested in or the web page of that committee for instructions on how to subscribe.

You may also want to check directly with the committee for agenda or room changes, to find out who is testifying, to offer to testify, or to express an opinion about the legislation. To find out about conference committee meetings, it is best to check with the office of the chair of the conference committee. The Senate Information Office staff will know the names of conferees as soon as they are announced to the Senate.

The Senate Information Office has paper copies of the schedules available to the public. The office phone number, 651-296-0504, has a recorded message after 5:30 p.m. each day with information concerning the day's highlights and items to note the following day.

81. May I testify at a committee hearing?

Yes. If you wish to testify, please contact the committee before the hearing.

82. Can I find out what bills my Senator sponsored and how my Senator voted in a previous session?

The number of bills introduced by a Senator can be obtained by searching by chief author in the "Bill Search & Status" function on the Legislature's website. The Author Index to the Permanent Journal will list all bills that were sponsored by a particular Senator. An individual Senator's web page also provides a link to bills authored by the Senator. To find a Senator's vote on a particular issue, look up the number of the bill in question and check the Journal pages listed.

83. How do I find bills on a particular subject that were introduced and passed in a previous session?

The Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112 can answer this question. It is sometimes more convenient to check the permanent Journal and index directly for bill introductions, and Session Laws and index for laws passed. The index section of the permanent Journal for a particular session contains a numerical list of Senate bills and House bills that shows official titles, Journal page references, and chapter numbers for all bills considered by the Senate. There is also a subject index with cross references, an author index, and a companion bill list. Also, there is a comprehensive search function on the legislative website (www.leg.mn).

84. Where can I hear the debate on a bill?

Audio and video recordings of floor and committee sessions are available on the Senate website (www.senate.mn) or copies may be purchased from Senate Supply, 651-296-5720, or toll free 1-888-234-1112. You may also listen to recordings in the Legislative Reference Library archive located in Room 645 on the sixth floor in the State Office Building, or you may listen to recordings archived on the Senate website. Committee books may include written statements given in testimony on a bill. Some committee meetings and all floor sessions are televised by Senate Media Services and may be available on local cable television services. Televised floor sessions and audio recordings of all committees are archived on the Senate website (www.senate.mn). No verbatim written transcripts are maintained by the Senate.

85. What is the procedure to purchase a recording of the committee meeting or floor session?

A recording is reproduced for a price sufficient to cover the cost of duplicating it. Checks are to be made payable to the Minnesota State Senate. Contact Senate Supply, 651-296-5720, or toll free 1-888-234-1112, for information on purchasing a copy.

86. What are the other sources for bill history?

You may consult the committee book for formal actions of the committee, a list of those testifying for or against the bill, the testimony itself if offered in written form, the text of amendments, the names of those offering amendments to the bill, roll calls, subcommittee actions, and so on. Recordings of floor sessions and committee sessions are available for recent years. The Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112 can assist you in obtaining these records. Audio recordings of all committee hearings and video recordings of televised committee hearings are also archived on the Senate website (www.senate.mn). Not all hearings are televised.

87. Where can I read an old bill?

Bills from previous years are kept on microfilm in the Legislative Reference Library. In addition, bills from 1995 to the present are available on the legislative website (www.leg.mn). Chapters from the previous session will be available in the Senate Office during the first several months of the current session. The Senate microfilms Senate bills, and bills are available in the Legislative Reference Library. Hard copy prints can be made if required. The indexes to the permanent Journals refer to these bills by number. (Remember, a session is composed of two years).

88. How can I find the law on a particular subject?

Laws of a general and permanent nature having statewide application are coded in Minnesota Statutes. Special acts, appropriation acts, and certain other legislation are found only in the Session Laws of the year in which enacted. Session laws since 1849, and Minnesota Statutes, are available and can be searched on the legislative website (www.leg.mn). In addition, there are federal laws, administrative rules of state departments and agencies, and local ordinances and regulations.

If the law is a state law and if it is coded, it can be found by using the index in volumes 13-14 of the Minnesota Statutes. A table showing local and special acts for a number of sessions can be found in a volume 13 of Minnesota Statutes labeled Tables and Index. The table is arranged by the names of local units. Subject indexes in the Journals of past legislative sessions can be used.

The Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 or toll free 1-888-234-1112 can help you determine if your question pertains to state, federal, or local law and help locate the materials to answer your questions. The Legislative Reference Library and local libraries are often willing to help with extensive research projects.

The General Federal Information service may answer your question or refer you to the proper source for information about federal laws. The telephone number is 1-800-688-9889.

89. What is the difference between Session Laws and Statutes?

Session Laws include all the bills passed during a particular session, arranged in the order in which they are passed by the Legislature. Minnesota Statutes include a subject arrangement of all laws in force that are of a general and permanent nature. Local bills and appropriations are usually not codified in the statutes and can be found in Session Laws for the year in which they were passed.

Divisions of both Session Laws and Statutes may be called chapters, but a reference to Minnesota Statutes will usually be to a section number. For example, Chapter 335 of the Statutes will be divided into sections, perhaps beginning with 335.01. The proper citation for this would be “Minnesota Statutes, section 335.01” or “Minnesota Statutes 2014, section 335.01.” Session Laws are cited “Laws 2015, chapter 107, section 29” for the laws passed during the 2015 Session.

Minnesota Statutes are completely reprinted in even numbered years and incorporate all new coded laws, amendments or repeals of old law. A supplement is issued in odd numbered years to show changes made during that legislative session. The citation for laws contained in the supplement is “Minnesota Statutes, 2015 Supplement, section 335.01.”

Included with the Minnesota Statutes are the Constitution of the United States, the Minnesota Constitution, information on the courts, tables relating to local and special acts, and allocation of acts. There is also a detailed subject index to the statutes.

The Appendix at the back of the Session Laws contains tables that show statutes or Session Laws amended, repealed or new session laws not coded; special laws; Senate and House Files enacted; and a detailed subject index.

90. Where do I find Minnesota Statutes and Session Laws?

Minnesota Statutes and Session Laws are available for staff in the committee suites and in many other legislative offices. The Legislative Reference Library and other libraries have the printed Journals, Minnesota Statutes, and Session Laws available for public use. They are also available on the legislative website (www.leg.mn).

Some Minnesota Statutes and Session Laws from previous years are available for reference on a limited basis in the Senate Information Office.

91. When are the numbers assigned to the sections of the statutes?

Section numbers, or coding, may be proposed in a bill for a new law, or in a bill that adds a new section to a chapter of the statutes. However, coding may be changed by the Revisor of Statutes when necessary. Coding is done at the time of editing and publishing the statutes. Each chapter of the statutes covers a broad subject and has a number. Sections under that chapter have the same number followed by a decimal point and another number.

92. What is the meaning of the italicized numbers and letters in brackets at the end of sections of the statutes?

This is a history of that particular section. For example, [1959 c 67 s 3; 1963 c 861 s 10; 1974 c 370 s 20] means that the section was new in 1959 and was contained in Laws 1959, Chapter 67, Section 3; was amended in Laws 1963, Chapter 861, Section 10; and amended again in Laws 1974, Chapter 370, Section 20. If you look up those chapters of those particular Session Laws, you will find the changes that were made.

93. How can I find bills introduced or passed that amend or repeal a particular section of the law?

Senate Information can search by statute number to determine which bills affect specific laws. The title of a bill being considered will note sections of the law to be amended or repealed in that bill. Session Laws include tables showing sections of the law amended or repealed. The comprehensive bill search function on the legislative website (www.leg.mn) allows users to search bills by statutory citation.

94. Can I find out when a particular law was enacted or if any legislation was enacted on a particular subject after a certain date?

Following each section of Minnesota Statutes, in brackets, there are references to the Session Laws that comprise the current law. From Session Laws you can find the numbers of the bills that became law and then, use the Journal Indexes for that year, authors and bill histories, if needed. Also, check the tables in Session Laws for statutes amended.

95. Are there any legislative deadlines?

Bills that contain the governor's budget recommendations must be introduced within 15 days after the governor's budget was submitted. Otherwise, there is no yearly deadline for the introduction of bills. Each year the Legislature establishes deadlines for committee action on bills. However those deadlines don't apply to the Committee on Taxes, the Finance Committee, the Capital Investment Committee, and the Committee on Rules and Administration in the Senate, and the corresponding committees in the House.

Bills acted on by committees after the deadline are automatically referred, pursuant to Joint Rule 2.03, to the Rules and Administration Committee in the Senate and the Rules and Legislative Administration Committee in the House of Representatives for disposition.

96. What happens to bills remaining on the various calendars or in a conference committee at the end of the odd year of a biennium?

In the Senate pursuant to Rule 47, a bill remaining on General Orders, the Calendar, or the Consent Calendar is returned to the standing committee (other than the Committee on Rules and Administration) from which it was last reported to the Senate. Bills must receive a favorable committee hearing again before being returned to the floor in the even year. The same procedure applies in the House. Pursuant to Joint Rule 3.02, bills still being considered by a conference committee are returned to the house of origin and laid on the table, and the conference committee is discharged.

97. What is an enrollment?

When a bill has been passed by both houses and is ready for the governor's signature, it is enrolled by the Revisor of Statutes Office and assigned a chapter number. It is copied on special paper and called "An Act" instead of "A bill for an act." A signature sheet is prepared for the President and Secretary of the Senate, the Speaker and Chief Clerk of the House, the Revisor of Statutes, the governor, and the secretary of state. After signature by the governor, the enrolled bill is filed in the Office of the Secretary of State.

98. When do new laws go into effect?

Unless a specific effective date is provided in the bill, the act will take effect on August 1 following its final enactment. Appropriation bills, though, take effect on July 1. A special law that requires approval of a local government unit becomes effective on the day following the day the certificate of approval is filed with the secretary of state, unless a specific later date is specified in the act. Each act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day it becomes effective, unless a different time is specified in the act.

99. Who is allowed on the floor of the Senate?

The only persons admitted to the floor of the Senate Chamber are members of the Senate and House, the constitutional officers, ex-governors of Minnesota, judges of the Trial and Appellate Courts, members of Congress, members of the press and Senate staff. Past members of Congress or of the Legislature who are not interested in any claim or directly in a bill pending before the Legislature may be personally admitted by a Senator. The President of the Senate may admit the head of a department of state government. A member of

another state, provincial, or national legislative body may be admitted to the floor by any Senator. When the Senate is not meeting, a person who is not a member may be admitted to the floor at the request of a Senator or an officer of the Senate. (Admission to the Senate Chamber is governed by Rule 15).

100. Are visitors allowed to attend sessions of the Senate and House?

Yes. Public galleries are accessible from the third floor of the Capitol. No passes are required except for opening day and when the Legislature meets in joint session. The Sergeant at Arms may be contacted for seats for groups in the galleries. No visitors are allowed on the floor of the Senate. Flash photos are prohibited. Applause, demonstrations, and food and beverages are also prohibited in the galleries.

101. Where do I park when I visit the Capitol?

Parking is difficult in the Capitol area. Metered spaces are available along the side streets adjacent to the Capitol complex as well as surface lots. The Capitol Complex is also served by Metro Transit’s Green line light rail. Lot Q at the intersection of Sherburne Avenue and Cedar Street is conveniently located near the Minnesota Senate Building.

102. What public services are available in the Capitol?

During session, a quick lunch counter is located on the second floor of the Capitol and the Rathskeller Café in the basement is open. Throughout the year, there are cafeterias in the other state office buildings.

Tours of the Capitol are given on the hour every day. Contact the Information Desk on the first floor of the Capitol for group tours. The telephone number is 651-296-2881.

103. What is a lobbyist?

According to Minnesota Statutes, Section 10A.01, Subdivision 21 (2016):

(a) “Lobbyist” means an individual:

- (1) engaged for pay or other consideration of more than \$3,000 from all sources in any year for the purpose of attempting to influence legislative or administrative action, or the official action of a metropolitan governmental unit, by communicating or urging others to communicate with public or local officials; or
- (2) who spends more than \$250, not including the individual’s own traveling expenses and membership dues, in any year for the purpose of attempting to influence legislative or administrative action, or the official action of a metropolitan governmental unit, by communicating or urging others to communicate with public or local officials.

(b) “Lobbyist” does not include:

- (1) a public official;
- (2) an employee of the state, including an employee of any of the public higher education systems;
- (3) an elected local official;
- (4) a nonelected local official or an employee of a political subdivision acting in an official capacity, unless the nonelected official or employee of a political subdivision spends more than 50 hours in any month attempting to influence legislative or administrative action, or the official action of a metropolitan governmental unit other than the political subdivision employing the official or employee, by communicating or urging others to communicate with public or local officials, including time spent monitoring legislative or administrative action, or the official action of a metropolitan governmental unit, and related research, analysis, and compilation and dissemination of information relating to legislative or administrative policy in this state, or to the policies of metropolitan governmental units;
- (5) a party or the party’s representative appearing in a proceeding before a state board, commission, or agency of the executive branch unless the board, commission, or agency is taking administrative action;
- (6) an individual while engaged in selling goods or services to be paid for by public funds;

- (7) a news medium or its employees or agents while engaged in the publishing or broadcasting of news items, editorial comments, or paid advertisements which directly or indirectly urge official action;
- (8) a paid expert witness whose testimony is requested by the body before which the witness is appearing, but only to the extent of preparing or delivering testimony; or
- (9) a party or the party's representative appearing to present a claim to the legislature and communicating to legislators only by the filing of a claim form and supporting documents and by appearing at public hearings on the claim.

(c) An individual who volunteers personal time to work without pay or other consideration on a lobbying campaign, and who does not spend more than the limit in paragraph (a), clause (2), need not register as a lobbyist.

(d) An individual who provides administrative support to a lobbyist and whose salary and administrative expenses attributable to lobbying activities are reported as lobbying expenses by the lobbyist, but who does not communicate or urge others to communicate with public or local officials, need not register as a lobbyist.

104. Where do I register as a lobbyist?

At the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, 1st Floor South, Centennial Bldg., 658 Cedar St., St. Paul, MN 55155-1614; telephone number 651-296-1180.

105. How can I get answers to questions about the federal government?

The general federal information service can often answer your question, or send you to the proper source for information. The local telephone number is 1-800-688-9889 and the federal website is www.usa.gov.

106. What assistance is provided for persons with special needs?

The Minnesota Legislature is committed to making the legislative process open and available to everyone, including persons with special needs. Toward that end, the Legislature has initiated a number of services designed to enable individuals with disabilities to participate in legislative activities, programs, and services.

Assistive listening devices are available in hearing rooms, the House Chamber, and the Senate Chamber. Assistance for persons with other special needs can be arranged by calling the Senate Sergeant's office at 651-296-1119 or the House Sergeant's office at 651-296-4860.

The Minnesota Legislature is committed to complying with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and supports the goal that individuals with disabilities shall not be excluded from participating in or be denied the benefits of any program, service or activity offered by the Legislature. Effective communication is a necessary step in meeting that goal. Thus, the Legislature welcomes comments and suggestions from the public on services that will improve communication between the Legislature and individuals with special needs. Please direct comments to Director, Legislative Coordinating Commission, Room 51 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155-1280, 651-296-9002.

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