An Overview of the Legislative and Administrative Processes in the State of Iowa

2015

The **Iowa General Assembly** (**IGA**) is the legislative branch of the state government of Iowa. It is a bicameral body, composed of the Iowa Senate and the Iowa House of Representatives. The General Assembly is made up of 50 senators and 100 representatives.

One senator is elected from each of the state's 50 electoral districts, with each Senate district containing two House of Representatives districts. Each senator represents about 60,927 people and each representative about 30,464 people as of the 2010 United States Census. Senators serve four-year terms and House members serve 2-year terms.

Following the 2014 mid-term elections:

The balance in the 50-seat Iowa Senate:

26 Democrats 24 Republicans

President of the Senate	Pam Jochum (D)
President pro tempore	Steve Sodders (D)
Majority Leader	Michael Gronstal (D)
Minority Leader	Bill Dix (R)

The balance in the 100-seat Iowa House:

57 Republicans 43 Democrats

Speaker of the House	Kraig Paulsen (R)
Speaker pro tempore	Matt Windschitl (R)
Majority Leader	Linda Upmeyer (R)
Minority Leader	Mark Smith (D)

Helpful Links for Additional Information

Find your legislator and district: www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators
Link to Iowa General Assembly Home Page: www.legis.iowa.gov

For legislative updates and additional resources and to read Iowa Catholic Conference newsletter:
www.iowacatholicconference.org

An Iowa General Assembly (IGA) is comprised of two annual sessions. The 2015 legislative session is the first year of the 86th Iowa General Assembly.

The General Assembly convenes its regular session on the second Monday of January. The session commonly lasts 100-110 days, adjourning "sine die" in the late spring.

Each legislative session operates under a schedule of deadline dates—the "funnel." The schedule exists to make the session more manageable. The funnel dates are set by joint rule and chamber rules.

See the calendar for the 2015 session:
https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/Schedules/SessionTimetable.pdf

The Legislative Service Agency FACTBOOK is an annual publication. It covers a broad range of topics with facts, tables and maps that provide current and historical information on the state of Iowa.

Find the current edition at:
https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/FCT/632824.pdf

An Overview of How a Bill Becomes a Law

1. A legislator decides to sponsor a bill. Ideas come from many sources.
2. The legislative sponsor requests the proposal be drafted into a bill by the Legislative Services Agency.
3. The bill draft is sent to the Senate or House where it is assigned a number and then sent to the President of the Senate or Speaker of the House.
4. The President (Senate) or the Speaker (House) assigns the bill to the standing committee within the chamber. The standing committee assigns the bill to a subcommittee. The subcommittee studies the bill and reports findings back to the standing committee. The subcommittee may chose to ignore the bill.
5. The standing committee may report the bill to their respective chamber with or without recommendations. The standing committee also has the option to take no action on the bill.
6. If the bill comes out of committee, it is placed on the Calendar, a list of all bills eligible for debate. At this time legislators may file amendments to the bill.
7. The Senate Majority Leader and Speaker of the House decide if a bills will be called up for debate in their chamber.
8. The bill, including any amendments filed, is debated by the full chamber.
9. Amendments must be approved by a simple majority of those members voting.
10. A constitutional majority must vote "yes" for the bill to proceed to the next chamber.
11. The bill goes through the same process in the second chamber. If the bill passes the second chamber without amendment, it is sent to the Governor. If the second chamber amends the bill, it must be sent back to the chamber or origin for approval of those amendments. If the chamber cannot come to an agreement on the version of the bill, a conference committee is appointed.
12. After the bill passes both chambers in identical form, it is sent to the Governor. The Governor may sign the bill, veto the bill, or take no action on the bill.
13. The bill becomes law upon the Governor's signature or after three days during the session if the Governor takes no action.

The Code of Iowa is the Law of the State of Iowa It is created and adopted through the legislative process by legislators introducing a bill during the legislative session.

Committee Options

The committee may recommend to pass the bill, to pass the bill with amendment, to refer the bill to another committee for study, to postpone the bill indefinitely, or to send the bill to the floor for debate with no recommendation.

The Conference Committee If the chamber of origin refuses to concur with the other chamber's amendment(s), the bill is returned to the other chamber, which may "recede" or insist upon their amended version of the bill. If they recede, the bill is sent to the Governor; however; if they insist upon their amendment(s), a conference committee is appointed to work out the differences.

A Primer on Bills

Most legislation is drafted as bills that originate in the Senate or House and are numbered in order of their introduction. The preface SF, for Senate File, or HF, for House File, indicates the chamber of origination.

A bill with 3 numbers (HF123) indicates it is a house or senate file introduced in the first session, and a bill with four numbers, beginning with 2 (HF2456), indicates the second session.

Bills introduced in the first year of the general assembly are also eligible for debate in the second, but not beyond that point.

A proposal or idea can have several different bill numbers before it finally passes.

Bills Legislative proposals drafted for consideration by the General Assembly usually take the form of a bill. Bills propose changes to existing statutes, create new laws, or appropriate funds.

Study Bills Study bills are used to determine reception of an issue by the General Assembly. They are developed under committee sponsorship for committee consideration. The Governor and state agencies may also have their ideas drafted as study bills. Study bills are called either Senate Study Bills (SSB) or House Study Bills (HSB). If a study bill gains committee approval, it will receive a Senate or House File number.

Senate or House Resolutions These proposals (SR or HR) are filed for consideration only by their chamber of origin. Resolutions usually express appreciation, congratulations, or sympathy.

Standing Committees in the Iowa Senate and House

A standing committee is one of a number of permanent committees made up of legislators designated to consider and make recommendations on bills assigned to the committee. They also introduce legislative bills relating to their specific subject areas. There are 17 standing committees in the Iowa Senate and 19 in the Iowa House.

Three Veto Options

The Governor has the option of three types of vetoes: the veto, item veto, and pocket veto. The veto indicates the Governor's disapproval of an entire bill. The item veto may be used only for bills which appropriate funds. It strikes a specific item in a bill. A pocket veto occurs when the Governor fails to take action within 30 days on a bill received within the last three days of session. The entire bill fails to become law.

The Appropriation Process

This is the process that allocates public funding for all government spending each year. Without an annual appropriation, a state agency or program cannot operate. The appropriations process has several steps. First, the Governor submits a budget for all state agencies and programs. The Appropriations Committee, broken down into subcommittees, considers the categories of spending. The Budget Committee gives each subcommittee an overall spending figure, and the subcommittees determine funding levels for the agencies and programs in their jurisdiction. The final appropriations bill follows the normal legislative process. Once approved a budget bill is sent to the Governor.

Officially Iowa Law

After the bill is signed by the Governor the original copy is sent to the Secretary of State. Enacted bills normally go into effect July 1, unless another date is specified in the bill. The enacted bills are printed in the Acts of the General Assembly, published after each legislative session. Portions of the enacted bills that are laws that are permanent in nature are incorporated into the Code of Iowa, the compilation of Iowa laws published every other year.

State departments and agencies are administered by the governor and executive branch after they created and given authority by the legislative branch through the legislative process.

Iowa Administrative Code

The entire administrative rulemaking process takes a minimum of 108 days to complete and involves two main procedures including 1) public notice, and 2) implementation for the final adoption, publication and distribution of the actual rules.

The process does not provide the public the power to reject the agency's rulemaking. Agencies have the authority to adopt administrative rules they determine are the most effective in implementing the law. However, procedures do ensure that agency decision making is subject to public scrutiny and that agencies give full and fair consideration to public comments.

An Overview of How Rules are Adopted

The Iowa Administrative Code is the rules for each of the agencies within state government. In order for an agency to adopt a rule, authority must be given to the agency through an act or law of the legislative body. The following is a brief overview of the steps an agency must take in adopting, amending, or repealing any rule.

1. The agency gives notice of its intended action by submitting copies of the notice for publication in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin, which is published at least thirty-five days in advance of the action.
2. The agency must allow twenty-five days for submission of comments in writing regarding the notice. Additionally, a public hearing is held to allow for oral presentations regarding the notice.
3. Upon completing the public hearing, the proposed rule is presented to the Administrative Rules Review Committee.
4. Upon adoption of the rule, the agency files the rule in the Office of Administrative Rules Coordinator. Thirty-five days after this date is typically when the rule becomes effective.
5. In some instances an agency can file for emergency adoption when public participation would be unnecessary, impracticable, or contrary to public interest.

A more comprehensive description of how a bill becomes a law can be found in Iowa Code Chapter 17A – Iowa Administrative Procedure Act.

Fiscal Services

Fiscal Services provides analysis and evaluation of expenditures, revenues, and operations of state government and the potential impact of legislative proposals to state and local government.

Throughout the year, Fiscal Services provides information to legislators and staff regarding the State's financial condition and the potential fiscal impact of legislative and administrative rules proposals.

Beginning in late Fall, Fiscal Services provides analysis of the annual budget requests submitted by the Executive Branch departments, followed in January by an analysis of the Governor's budget recommendations submitted to the General Assembly.

In addition, Fiscal Services provides detailed analysis of the budget requests and Governor's recommendations by department for the appropriation subcommittees.

https://www.legis.iowa.gov/agencies/nonpartisan/lsa/fiscalServices

The source of this handout is information published by the LSA and found at the Iowa General Assembly site:

https://www.legis.iowa.gov