



Common Questions about the Legislative Process in Texas

(source: [Texas Legislature Online](#))

Who leads each chamber?

The Texas House of Representatives is led by the Speaker of the House, who is elected by the House members at the beginning of each session ([Texas Constitution, Article III, Section 9\(b\)](#)). The Texas Senate is led by the Lieutenant Governor, who is elected by the voters of Texas every four years ([Texas Constitution, Article IV, Section 16](#)).

How long do legislators serve?

Members of the Texas House of Representatives serve two-year terms, and members of the Texas Senate serve four-year terms ([Texas Constitution, Article III, Sections 3 and 4](#)). There are no limits on the number of terms a legislator can serve in either chamber.

When does a newly elected legislator's term of office begin?

House and Senate members begin their terms on the first day of the regular session directly following their election ([Texas Constitution, Article III, Sections 3 and 4](#)).

How much are legislators paid?

The salary for Texas Legislators is set in [Texas Constitution, Article 3, Section 24](#) and is currently \$7200 per year. Legislators are also paid a per diem for each day during a regular or special session. The per diem is \$221 for the Regular Session. The per diem is set by the Texas Ethics Commission in [Texas Administrative Code Title 1, Part 2, Rule § 50.1](#). Most legislators also work separate, full-time jobs in addition to serving in the Texas Legislature.

What do legislators do when they are not in session?

Most legislators work separate, full-time jobs in addition to serving as members of the Texas Legislature. When the legislature is not in session, the Speaker and the Lt. Governor direct committees in the House and Senate to conduct interim studies on specific issues. Topics of study can depend on what bills were passed or failed during the previous legislative session or on issues that are gaining importance for the next legislative session. Interim committees meet as often as necessary to conduct their studies and usually issue a final report that contains the results of their research; many times, the recommendations contained in the reports result in legislation being filed during the next session. The Legislative Library makes current and previous interim reports available in its [Legislative Reports system](#).

How do I find out who my representative or senator is?

The Texas Legislature Online has a tool that allows you to find your state and U.S. representatives and senators by using your street address, zip code, county, and/or city: <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/>. The Legislative Library also provides helpful information on its [Contacting your legislator](#) page.

When does the Legislature meet?

The Texas Legislature meets every two years in odd numbered years ([Texas Constitution Article 3, Section 5](#)). The session begins at noon on the 2nd Tuesday in January and lasts 140 calendar days. Holidays (ex: Easter, Memorial Day) are considered calendar days.

What is a special session?

After the end of a regular session and before the start of the next regular session, the Governor may call special sessions to cover specific topics. Special sessions can last no longer than 30 days and are limited to the topics designated by the Governor ([Texas Constitution Article 3, Section 40](#)). For a list of special sessions, see the library's [Special Sessions and Years](#) page. See also the library's [FAQ on Special Sessions](#).