
Wisconsin Legislative Council

Anne Sappenfield
Director



Checklist for Floor Session

Legislative Calendars

There are two kinds of legislative calendars: the biennial session calendar and the daily floor calendar:

- The biennial session calendar divides the biennium into floor periods and committee work periods. Adopted by joint resolution at the beginning of the session.
- Daily floor calendars list the business to be taken up on each day the Assembly or Senate meets. Adopted by the Assembly Committee on Rules or the Senate Committee on Organization and distributed to members in advance.

Prepare for Floor Session

Prior to a day on the floor, familiarize yourself with the bills and amendments on which you will be voting:

- Review the calendar.
- Read available materials, such as the bill analysis, hearing testimony, amendments, Legislative Council amendment memos and other memos, fiscal estimates.
- Consult with caucus leaders, colleagues, personal staff, advisors, service agency staff, lobbyists, and organizations.
- Have amendments drafted, if necessary.
- Prepare remarks if you plan to speak on any bills or amendments.

In Caucus

Partisan caucuses typically meet at the start of a session day, or the day before, to discuss the calendar:

- Learn about bills on the calendar. Caucus leaders will establish the format in which members will speak on bills.
- Learn about known or anticipated amendments.
- Learn the positions of your caucus leaders and members on bills and amendments.

Persons and Procedures on the Floor

Each house follows fairly formal procedures, as specified in the Assembly and Senate Rules:

- Key people on the floor:
 - *The Presiding Officer*. Primary responsibilities include maintaining decorum, recognizing members to speak, calling for votes, and ruling on matters of parliamentary procedure. In the Assembly, typically the Speaker or Speaker Pro Tem; in the Senate, typically the President or President Pro Tem.
 - *The Majority and Minority Leaders*. Primary roles include leading debate by offering motions on behalf of their respective caucuses.

- *Chief Clerk*. Primary roles include assisting the presiding officer and maintaining a record of actions taken.
- *Sergeant-at-Arms*. Primary responsibilities include maintaining order and quiet in and about the chamber, and supervising the messengers who distribute documents and run errands for members.
- Key points about daily floor sessions:
 - Business is taken up in the order shown on the daily calendar, but this may be changed if needed. For example, if an amendment is being drafted, a bill may be moved to a later place on the calendar.
 - Session continues until the calendar is finished, but occasionally an unfinished calendar will be held over until a later date.
 - The Assembly and Senate Rules provide rules of parliamentary procedure. For example, rules specify the motions needed to act upon proposals, the order of taking up amendments, and raising points of order.
 - The Assembly and Senate Rules also provide rules of decorum all members must follow. For example, members must address other members by district number, not by name.
 - Personal staff and service agency staff may be present in designated areas of the chambers, as well as the Assembly or Senate Parlor.