
Wisconsin Legislative Council



Anne Sappenfield
Director

Checklist for Standing Committee Members

Identify the Bills and Other Proposals That will be Taken up in Committee

All meetings are scheduled at the discretion of the chairperson. All bills and proposals to be taken up by the committee at a hearing will be listed on the hearing notice, which will be emailed to you by the committee clerk.

- Each committee is assigned a meeting day and a meeting room.
- The frequency of hearings is dependent on which bills are referred to the committee.
- The committee clerk is a good source of information about scheduling and committee plans. The clerk is the personal staff of the committee chair.

Review the Bills

Personal staff will generally prepare a bill file for each bill. The bill file contains the bill, any introduced amendments, and the fiscal estimate, if any.

- The author or their staff may be contacted for background about a bill.
- The Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) analysis provides a “plain language” description for each bill.
- The Legislative Council (LC) staff person assigned to the committee may be contacted to get information or answer questions about the bills.
- The narrative portion of the fiscal estimate may provide useful information from administering agencies.

Public Hearing

A member’s role at standing committee hearings is to become an expert on the bill in order to make a recommendation to the Assembly or Senate and be a resource person for other members. Committee members may also work to amend the bill, as needed, to prepare it for consideration by the Assembly or Senate.

- The LC staff for the committee will be present at all hearings and executive sessions.
- If you cannot attend all or part of a hearing, contact the committee chair to let them know. You may want to ask personal staff to sit in the audience and report back to you.
- Testimony will be given by the bill author, affected agencies, lobbyists, and members of the public.
- Written testimony may also be distributed during or after the hearing to add to the bill file. Copies of most of these handouts will also be available on the LC website.
- With permission of the committee chair, you may ask questions of people testifying and of LC staff. The LC staff serves the entire committee, not only the chairperson.
- All hearings are open to the public and many are recorded or broadcast by WisconsinEye.
- Note if there are concerns or issues raised during the hearing that you think should be addressed. You may have amendments drafted before the bill is voted on to address these concerns; LC staff can help.

Executive Session

At the executive session, members vote on the bills that the chairperson schedules for executive session.

- Like hearings, all executive sessions are open to the public.
- Review the bills and any amendments to bills. These may be sent by the committee clerk, but you may need to follow bills on the Legislature's website, or use the legislative notification system, to see if any amendments have been offered.
- The chairperson may institute a rule that he or she must receive an amendment at least 24 hours before the executive session or it will not be considered at that time.
- The policy and merits of the bill and any amendments are debated during executive session.
- Assembly and Senate Rules apply to executive sessions.
- If questions arise, ask the LC staff person for an explanation of any amendments or bills.
- Following an executive session, LC Staff will prepare amendment memos on adopted amendments.

Administrative Rules

Proposed administrative rules, developed by state agencies, are also referred to standing committees for legislative review.

- Feel free to call LC for help in reviewing a proposed rule.
- A committee has a minimum of 30 days to review rules referred to the committee.
- Typically, a committee takes no action on a rule, but it has the power to request modifications or object to the rule.
- Grounds for committee objection include absence of statutory authority, conflict with state laws, and failure to comply with legislative intent.