
THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM



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New Legislative Staff Training Ohio Legislative Service Commission



ABOUT THIS COURSE

- In this course, you will learn:
 - The types of committees in the Ohio General Assembly;
 - How members are appointed;
 - The work that committees do.
- If your employer is tracking your course completion, be sure to click on the course completion link at the end of the course.
- Additional reference:
 - *A Guidebook for Ohio Legislators – Chapter 4: Organizing the General Assembly* (PDF), available on the LSC website

PURPOSE OF COMMITTEES

- Committees provide a system of managing a large volume of legislation in an organized way.
- Committee members are responsible for detailed work on the bills that are referred to a particular committee.
- For example, if a representative is assigned to the House Ways and Means committee (the committee that deals with tax legislation), the member will be hearing testimony on bills related to tax issues during this committee's hearings.



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ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEES

- Committees are established in the first days of a General Assembly.
- The number and names of committees usually vary from one General Assembly to the next.
- List of House Committees
- List of Senate Committees



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HOUSE COMMITTEES

- House committee membership is proportional to the partisan composition of the House.
- The Speaker names all committees and subcommittees and appoints the chairpersons and the majority members of each committee.
- The Minority Leader appoints the ranking members and the minority members of each committee.
- See House Rule 13

SENATE COMMITTEES

- In the Senate, the President names all committees and appoints the chairpersons and all members of each committee.
- The Minority Leader may recommend minority member assignments, including ranking minority members, to committees.
- See Senate Rules 19 and 20.

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

A committee chairperson exercises a great deal of authority by determining most operating procedures for the committee. For example, the chairperson:

- Sets the agenda for committee meetings (hearings);
- Determines how long testimony may last;
- Decides when amendments may be offered; and
- Schedules bills for a committee vote.

RULES GOVERNING COMMITTEES

- Both the House and Senate Rules include requirements governing:
 - Committee duties and functions;
 - Committee reports;
 - What constitutes a quorum necessary for a committee to conduct business;
 - Voting procedure; and
 - “Keeping the roll open” to allow members to vote on a bill if they have checked in at the committee and left to attend another meeting held at the same time.

RULES OF THE COMMITTEE

The chairperson may establish additional rules, such as:

- The procedure to submit written testimony about a bill that is before the committee; or
- The deadline to submit amendments that are to be offered at a committee meeting.

WHICH BILLS MUST BE HEARD

- A bill must receive at least one public hearing if:
 - The bill is ***introduced in the House*** on or before May 15 of the second year of a General Assembly (see House Rule 37); or
 - The bill is ***referred to a Senate committee*** on or before April 1 of the second year of a General Assembly (see Senate Rule 35).
- The bill's sponsor may waive a hearing.

TYPES OF COMMITTEES

- Standing committees
- Rules and reference committees
- Permanent subcommittees
- Ad hoc subcommittees
- Conference committees

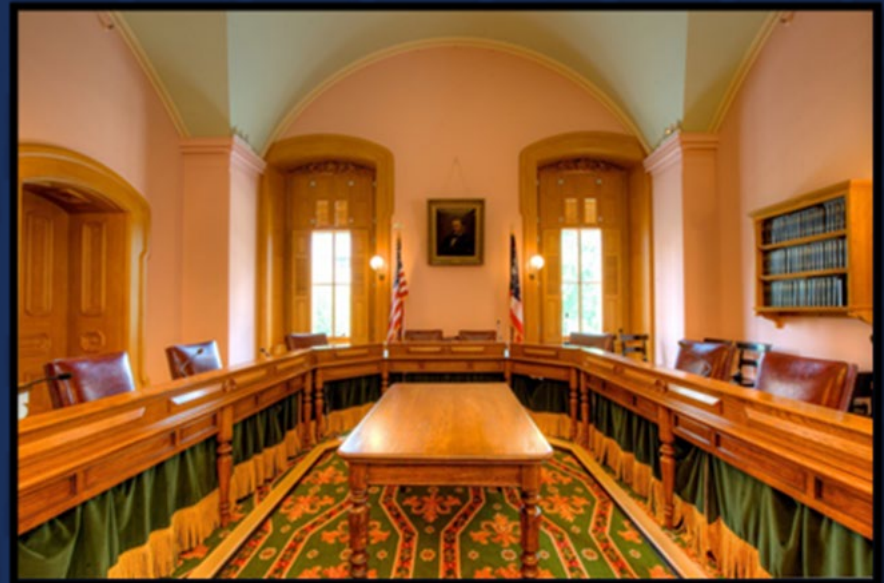


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STANDING COMMITTEES

- Standing committees are the most active type of committee.
 - The majority of the work on bills is done there.
 - Each standing committee deals with a broad subject matter area.



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RULES AND REFERENCE COMMITTEES

- Both houses have established rules and reference committees.
- These committees are “housekeeping” committees that facilitate the flow of legislation.
- A reference committee refers bills to standing committees.
- A rules committee schedules bills for floor votes.
- Often, the rules committee and the reference committee are combined into a single committee.

PERMANENT SUBCOMMITTEES

- A permanent subcommittee is an established body under a standing committee that has members appointed at the beginning of the General Assembly by the presiding officers.
- The House and Senate Finance committees typically have permanent subcommittees to hear budget proposals and testimony. For example:
 - Transportation
 - Health and Human Services
 - Education

AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEES

- The chairperson of a committee may create an ad hoc subcommittee to review a certain bill or several bills on the same subject.
- The chairperson appoints the members of an ad hoc subcommittee.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

- When the first house refuses to concur in changes made to a bill by the second house, a conference committee may be appointed to reach a compromise.
- The presiding officers of the House and Senate each appoint three members of their respective houses to serve on the committee.
- A conference committee is almost always called to resolve points of difference between the House and Senate versions of the main operating budget bill.
- For more on conference committees, see [Course 2 – How a Bill Becomes a Law](#).

Time for a pop quiz!



QUESTION 1

True or False?

The number and names of committees do not change from General Assembly to General Assembly.

QUESTION 1 – ANSWER

False

Each General Assembly meets for a period of two years and establishes committees to conduct its business during that period. When a new General Assembly begins, the members of each house adopt new rules and reorganize, and thus the number and names of committees usually change from General Assembly to General Assembly.

QUESTION 2

Which of the following applies to Ohio General Assembly committees?

1. Ad hoc subcommittees exist for every standing committee.
2. The Governor appoints standing committees and subcommittees.
3. The House and Senate Rules require bills introduced and referred to committee early in a General Assembly to have at least one public hearing.

QUESTION 2 – ANSWER

#3 is the correct answer.

The House and Senate Rules require bills introduced and referred to committee early in a General Assembly to have at least one public hearing.

In the Senate, bills referred to a committee by April 1 of the second year of a GA must be scheduled for at least one public hearing. In the House, bills introduced by May 15 of the second year of the GA must be scheduled for at least one public hearing.

QUESTION 3

Which of the following applies to Ohio General Assembly committees?

1. Standing committees are the committees that do the bulk of the work on legislation.
2. There are no permanent subcommittees.
3. The Speaker of the House or the Senate President sets the agenda for committee meetings.

QUESTION 3 – ANSWER

#1 is the correct answer.

Standing committees are the committees that do the bulk of the work on legislation.

Standing committees are the most active type of committee where most of the work on bills is done.

QUESTION 4

True or False?

Conference committees have an equal number of House and Senate members.

QUESTION 4 – ANSWER

True

Conference committees have an equal number of House and Senate members. The presiding officer of the House and Senate each appoint three members.

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