



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF
HILTON HEAD ISLAND/BLUFFTON AREA
LWVHHI/BA

South Carolina's Legislative Process

Sources:

https://www.scstatehouse.gov/publicationspage/Booklet_2016_15thedition.pdf;

"Know Your State": SC Government by LWV of South Carolina, 2014

Please refer to these publications for additional details and definitions.

Who represents you?

Senate, elected to 4-year terms, 46 members

House of Representatives, elected to 2-year terms, 124 members

Together, these two bodies comprise the General Assembly

When do they meet?

The General Assembly is in session from the second Tuesday in January to the second Thursday in May, unless there is a special extension agreed to by 2/3 of both bodies.

Both bodies are in session 3 days per week during the season. Each member is paid \$10,400 annual salary.

How does a bill become law?

- Bills and resolutions generally start with a request from a member, or members, to the Legislative Council who prepares the bill.
- Once approved by the submitting member(s), it is submitted to the clerk of the appropriate body.
- **A bill or joint resolution cannot become law until it has been read 3 times on 3 separate days in each body, has the Great Seal of the State put on it, and has been signed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.** There are exceptions to this, for example, when a bill is vetoed by the Governor and overridden, or the Governor fails to act and the bill becomes law after 5 days with no action. A Constitutional amendment requires a 2/3 vote of both the House and Senate and does not require a signature from the Governor.
- Bills received during the session introduced, and read the first time, are given a number and referred to the proper committee. (However some bills may be placed on the calendar (agenda) without being sent to a committee.)
- Bills may be read by title only on the first and third reading.

- Standing committees (13 for the House and 15 for the Senate) examine the bills referred to them and are assigned to staff for research and investigation. **Most of the legislative work is done in the assigned committee and is the backbone of the legislative process.**
- When a standing committee completes its work, it prepares a report detailing its recommendations. The report is then submitted to the respective body in the daily session at the appropriate time. The bill, with the committee report is put on the calendar for the second reading and “is taken up.” A bill on the second reading may be debated, amended, committed, or recommended, or tabled, etc. In the Senate, this debate occurs after the third reading.
- After the bill has been discussed, there is a vote on the bill. Generally, only a majority vote is required for passage. A tie in the House is considered negative and a tie in the Senate may be broken by a vote of the President (who only votes in the case of a tie).
- During the third reading, a bill may be acted upon. If passed, it is then signed by the clerk and sent to the other house and follows the same process pursuant to that body’s rules. Once approved by that body, it is sent to the Governor for signature. If not signed within 5 days, it becomes law. Or it can be vetoed by the Governor which then sends the bill back to the General Assembly where it is either sustained or overrides the veto. Override requires a 2/3 vote of members present.
- If the other body does not accept the bill as passed by the first body, then the bill is amended or changed, passed as amended, and sent back to the original body. If the original body agrees to the amendment, it is passed as amended. If there is disagreement, the bill is referred to a conference committee consisting of members of both houses to resolve the differences. If the conference committee fails to agree, the measure is generally lost.

There are a lot of nuances and definitions not listed here for the sake of brevity. Please refer to the cited publications for more information.

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