



INFORMATION ABOUT THE WYOMING LEGISLATIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT

Introduction to the Legislative Branch

The Wyoming Legislature is a 90-member citizen legislature, meaning the members elected serve part-time and this is typically not the members' primary occupation. Wyoming remains one of the few states that have a true part-time citizen legislature. While the part-time nature of the institution allows members to stay in close contact with their constituents, it also means that they do not enjoy the same accommodations provided to full-time legislators in larger states, such as personal staff.

The Legislature employs a small number of non-partisan staff to provide administrative and professional services for the state's legislative branch of government. Some of these staff work year round for the Wyoming Legislative Service Office (LSO) and others work part-time during the session for the Wyoming Senate and the Wyoming House of Representatives. The LSO, and the House and Senate staff work closely to provide staffing support to the Legislature. More information on these staff is provided below. As mentioned above, legislators do not have personal staff or caucus staff.

Legislative Leadership Organization

After every November general election in even-numbered years, the legislators hold party caucuses to elect legislative leadership for each party for the upcoming biennium (two-year period). Leadership elected in the caucuses includes the President, Vice President, Majority Floor Leader, Minority Floor Leader, Minority Whip, and Minority Caucus Leader in the Senate and the Speaker, Speaker Pro Tempore, Majority Floor Leader, Minority Floor Leader, Majority Caucus Leader, and Minority Caucus Leader in the House. These members of leadership serve for a two-year biennium beginning in January after the elections.

A legislative committee called the Management Council serves as the leadership of the Legislature and serves as the administrative arm of the legislative branch of state government and serves as the policymaking body when the Legislature is not in session. The Management Council consists of 13 members representing both parties and consists primarily of legislators in the leadership positions mentioned above. The Management Council appoints the director of the Legislative Service Office and approves staff hired by the director, while the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House each hire temporary staff for their respective bodies during legislative sessions.

Wyoming Senate and House of Representatives

Article 3, Section 1 of the Wyoming Constitution states that "the legislative power shall be vested in a senate and a house of representatives ..." Senators are elected to serve four-year terms and representatives serve two-year terms. There are 30 legislators elected to the Wyoming Senate and 60 legislators elected to the Wyoming House of Representatives. The President of the Senate is the presiding officer of the Senate, while the Speaker of the House is the presiding officer in that chamber.

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Legislative Committees

A great deal of the Legislature's work is accomplished through the efforts of legislative committees. There are 12 permanent parallel committees in the Wyoming Senate and Wyoming House of Representatives. These committees are called "standing" committees. Standing committees meet during legislative sessions to review bills, hear testimony, and recommend action on legislation for the consideration of the full body of the Senate or House. Standing committees meet before and after the daily general session of the House and Senate and during the noon recess. These committees generally consist of nine members in the House and five members in the Senate. Most legislators serve on several committees.

The 12 permanent standing committees in the Senate and House include: Judiciary; Appropriations; Revenue; Education; Agriculture, Public Lands and Water Resources; Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources; Corporations, Elections and Political Subdivisions; Transportation, Highways and Military Affairs; Minerals, Business and Economic Development; Labor, Health and Social Services; Journal, and Rules and Procedure.

In the interim – the period between sessions – the standing committees in each body merge to form joint interim committees. Joint interim committees study topics assigned by the Management Council during the interim between the sessions of the legislature. In addition to the 12 permanent committees, members also serve on a variety of select committees and task forces during the interim. Some of these select committees are permanent entities and others are authorized for a limited time to address an identified issue of concern to the Legislature.

Legislative Service Office Staff

The Legislative Service Office (LSO) is the permanent, non-partisan central staff office of the Wyoming Legislature. Legislators in Wyoming do not have individual staff. Rather, staff services for Wyoming legislators are provided by the LSO. LSO was created by the Legislature in 1971 to provide permanent staffing resources for the legislative branch of government. Policies, rules, and regulations governing the general operations of the LSO are made by the Management Council. The LSO director is employed by, and subject to the direction of, the Management Council. Other employees are employed by the LSO director with the approval of Management Council. The staff is selected and services are performed on a non-partisan basis for both the Senate and the House.

The LSO provides research and bill-drafting services, including pre-filing and distribution of proposed legislation before legislative sessions. The office is also responsible for revision and recompilation of the laws of Wyoming; preparation of copy and contracting for the printing and publication of all revisions, compilations, session laws, journals and digests; and accounting for all legislative expenditures, supplies, and properties. In addition, members of the staff prepare administrative rules reviews and reports, conduct oversight evaluations of executive agency programs, conduct fiscal studies and budget analyses, coordinate legislative activities related to school finance, and provide general research and information services to the Legislature. The Office serves the public by providing services to the legislative branch of government. Thirty-two staff members work within the LSO.

Session-Only Staff

The session staff for each house work directly for the chief clerk who is a temporary staff member appointed by the presiding officer in each house, subject to the approval of the membership of each house. Session staff are hired to help ensure the orderly flow of legislative proceedings during legislative sessions. Session staff in each house include the chief clerk, assistant chief clerk, staff supervisor, assistant staff supervisor, journal clerk, floor team operators, reading clerk, sergeant at arms, doormen, watchmen, telephone receptionist, pages, messengers, committee secretaries, copy clerks, leadership secretary, minority secretary, collators, hotline receptionists, bill status clerk, and mail clerks.