The Texas Legislature

Bicameral
- 49 states are bicameral, Nebraska is unicameral

Biennial sessions
- 43 states have annual session, 7 states have biennial

Regular sessions limited to 140 calendar days
- Florida limits their annual sessions to 60 days (may extend session with 3/5 vote), many states have no limits

30-day Special Sessions may be called by the governor

The Legislative Session
The Texas Constitution defines 3 phases:

First 30 days - introduction of bills, emergency appropriations, recess appointments, and matters declared an emergency by the governor

Second 30 days - committee action

Final 80 days - floor debate and action
The effect of the 140 day session:
The funnel

Early January

140 Day Session

Early June
80% of the votes come in the last two weeks

Special Sessions
Called by governor for specific reasons
- For example, in 2003 Governor Perry called the legislature together “For the purpose of considering congressional redistricting.”

Membership
House of Representatives 150
- Representing about 152,000 people each
- Other states range from Alaska’s 40 to New Hampshire’s 400 representatives

Senate 31
- Representing about 738,000 people each
- Other states range from Alaska’s 20 to Minnesota’s 67 Senators
Citizens per Legislator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Citizens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Congress</td>
<td>354,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>150,2608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>136,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>111,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>90,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>40,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>4,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>3,461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>3,089</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nacogdoches-area districts

- Texas Senate District 3 (Bob Nichols)
- Texas House District 9 (Wayne Christian)

Term in Office

- House: 2 year terms
- Senate: 4 year terms
Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House</th>
<th>Senate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 years of age</td>
<td>26 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas resident for 2</td>
<td>Texas resident for 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>years</td>
<td>years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualified Texas voter
US citizen
Resident of district for one year

Immunities
Legislators cannot be sued for slander for statements made during legislative proceedings. Except for treason, felonies, or breaking the peace, legislators cannot be arrested during a legislative session or while journeying to or returning from a legislative session.

Presiding Officers
Speaker of the House

- Elected by members of the House
- Appoints committee chairs
- Appoints members to procedural committees
- Recognizes members to speak
- Serves as vice chair of Legislative Budget Board
- Serves on Legislative Council and Criminal Justice Board

Joe Straus

The Lieutenant Governor

- Elected by Texas voters to four-year terms
- First in line of succession for governor
- Appoints Senate committee members and chairs
- Recognizes members to speak on the floor
- Votes to break ties in Senate
- Chairs Legislative Budget Board
- Serves on Legislative Council, Legislative Audit Committee, and Legislative Criminal Justice Board

David Dewhurst

House Committees
House Committees

28 Substantive Committees
- Deal with policy issues
- Most have 9 to 11 members
- Requirement that seniority be used in selecting half the members
- Members may only serve on two substantive committees each session
  - For example: Wayne Christian serves on Business & Industry as well as Criminal Jurisprudence.
  - For example, Jim McReynolds (Lufkin) serves on the Corrections Committee and the Public Health Committee.

House Committees

6 Procedural Committees
- Members appointed by the Speaker
- Focus on House/government processes
  - Calendars
  - Local and Consent Calendars
  - Redistricting
  - Rules and Resolutions
  - General Investigating
  - House Administration

House Committee Process

All bills must go to committee before committee action
- Fiscal Notes
- Impact Statements
  - Criminal Justice Policy Statement
  - Equalized Education Funding Impact Statement
  - Water Development Policy Impact Statement
  - Tax equity Notes
Senate Committees
Composed of 5 to 15 Senators appointed by Lt. Governor
Most Senators sit on 3 or 4 committees
18 Standing Committees
- Deal with policy issues or ongoing administrative matters
Select Committees
- Committees formed to deal with special issues that may extend across the jurisdiction of several committees

**Support Organizations**

Legislative Budget Board
Created in 1949 to help coordinate budgeting
Prepares initial budget estimate
Prepares “fiscal notes” on proposed legislation
Between session the LBB may (with the approval of the governor) stop the spending of a state agency or transfer money from one agency to another
Texas Legislative Council
Created in 1949
Staff conduct legal and public policy research and drafts bills and other legislative documents for members of the Legislature.
Governed by a group consisting of the Lt. Governor, Speaker, chairs of the Senate and House committees on Administration, four members of the Senate appointed by the Lt. Governor, and nine members of the House appointed by the Speaker.

Reform

Recorded Votes
There are proposals to make all or most votes roll call votes that are recorded.
Legislative Salaries

Base salary of $7,200 a year

*Plus* $128 per diem allowance ($17,920)

- One of the lowest salaries in the nation
- The highest is California pays about 99,000 a year

Who can afford to be a legislator in Texas?

Legislatures in Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Regular Legislative Session</th>
<th>Special Legislative Sessions</th>
<th>Size of the State House</th>
<th>Size of State Senate</th>
<th>Annual Legislative Salaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>140 days, every other year</td>
<td>30-day limit, called only by the governor</td>
<td>150 (8th)</td>
<td>31 (40th)</td>
<td>$7,200 (39th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>200 days</td>
<td>No limit, called only by the governor</td>
<td>80 (30th)</td>
<td>40 (19th)</td>
<td>$99,000 (1st)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>No limit on length</td>
<td>No limit, called by 2/3 of legislators</td>
<td>150 (9th)</td>
<td>61 (2nd)</td>
<td>$79,000 (2nd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>60 days</td>
<td>20-day limit, called by legislative leaders</td>
<td>120 (10th)</td>
<td>40 (19th)</td>
<td>$26,288 (19th)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who represents Texas?

Occupation
- Over 1/3 are lawyers
- Many business owners, real estate and insurance professionals

Education
- Most have a college education
Who represents Texas?

House
- 76 Democrats
- 74 Republicans

Senate
- 19 Democrats
- 12 Republicans

The Texas House
Gender
- 118 Male
- 32 Female

Ethnicity
- 110 White
- 28 Hispanic
- 12 Black

The Texas Senate
Gender
- 27 Male
- 4 Female

Ethnicity
- 24 White
- 5 Hispanic
- 2 Black
Annual Legislative Session
Budgeting easier
Less rushed/more thoughtful legislation

Term Limits?
15 states have term limits for legislators
- Texas does not have any limits on officeholders.

“Politicians are like diapers.
They need to be changed regularly...
and for the same reasons.”

Simplify the Legislative Process

House
Senate
Conference/Governor