

CHAPTER 12: INTERIM ACTIVITIES

Introduction

The regular biennial legislative session occupies only about one-sixth of the life span of a Legislature. Members do not escape from legislative responsibilities during the 20 months between legislative sessions.

Members may be involved in the following activities during the interim between legislative sessions:

- ✓ serving on interim committees or the Legislative Council, Legislative Audit Committee, or Legislative Finance Committee;
- ✓ serving on other statutory or ad hoc committees;
- ✓ participating in interstate organizations;
- ✓ communicating with constituents and others about the activities of the Legislature and policy issues;
- ✓ responding to constituents' concerns; and
- ✓ developing new policy proposals for consideration by the next Legislature.

This chapter provides information about interim committees, interim studies, and information requests. See Chapter 3 for more information about the duties of the Legislative Council, the Legislative Audit Committee, and the Legislative Finance Committee.

Interim Committees

The following are statutorily established interim committees:

- ✓ Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee;
- ✓ Economic Affairs Interim Committee;
- ✓ Education and Local Government Interim Committee;
- ✓ Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee;
- ✓ Law and Justice Interim Committee;
- ✓ Revenue and Transportation Interim Committee; and
- ✓ State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee.

The Environmental Quality Council and the State-Tribal Relations Committee also meet during the interim and conduct interim studies.

Other interim committees may be added through legislation. Committees are generally formed for topics that the Legislature wants to focus attention on, e.g., water policy or fire suppression. The statutory committees are assigned study resolutions by the Legislative Council.

■ Duties

Duties of interim committees are listed below:

- ✓ review administrative rules within the jurisdiction of the committee;
- ✓ conduct interim studies;
- ✓ monitor the operation of assigned Executive Branch agencies;
- ✓ review legislation proposed by assigned agencies or entities and request that legislation be drafted; and
- ✓ prepare bills and resolutions that are considered necessary for the next regular session of the Legislature.

Some committees have additional responsibilities. The Environmental Quality Council performs the same duties as an interim committee and is also subject to additional statutory requirements.

The State-Tribal Relations Committee is required to act as a liaison with tribal governments, encourage state-tribal and local government-tribal cooperation, conduct interim studies as assigned, and report on its activities, findings, and recommendations.

■ Members and Officers

Senate interim committee members are appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees. House interim committee members are appointed by the Speaker of the House.

Most interim committees have four members from each house. No more than two members of each house may be from

the same political party. With two political parties, each interim committee has an equal number of members from each party. The Legislative Council may ask the appointing authority to add one or two additional members from each political party to a committee if warranted because of the committee's workload.

A presiding officer and vice presiding officer for each interim committee are elected by the members. These officers may not be members of the same political party.

■ Budget

The Legislative Council allocates a budget for each interim committee. Reallocations may be made by the Legislative Council if warranted.

■ Interim Studies

The Legislature identifies prospective interim studies through resolutions requesting interim studies. Usually requests for studies exceed the resources available to conduct the studies. A process has been established in statute for prioritization and assignment of studies. The steps are as follows:

- ① The Legislative Services Division compiles a list of study requests contained in bills or resolutions approved by both houses of the Legislature.
- ② The list is mailed to legislators who are asked to rank the study requests in order of importance.

- ③ The poll results are compiled by Legislative Services Division staff. The poll results, estimated staff time requirements, and other relevant background information are presented to the Legislative Council.
- ④ The Legislative Council determines which studies will be assigned and assigns studies to interim committees and other statutory legislative committees. The sponsor is invited to attend the Legislative Council meeting and speak to the request.
- ⑤ An interim committee or statutory committee may recommend to the Legislative Council that an interim study be assigned to another committee.

According to Legislative Council guidelines, interim studies are to be completed by September 15 of the year before a regular legislative session.

Information Requests

Legislators may request information from Legislative Branch staff. Examples of common requests include:

- ✓ information about requirements in current law;
- ✓ research about potential options to address a problem through legislation; and
- ✓ legal opinions regarding the application of current law.

In order to ensure that staff resources are allocated appropriately among interim and statutory committee responsibilities and the requests of individual legislators, requests that require more than 40 hours of staff time require approval by the appropriate oversight committee (i.e., the Legislative Council, Legislative Audit Committee, or Legislative Finance Committee). Consultation with the presiding officer and vice presiding officer of the appropriate oversight committee is required for requests that are expected to be completed in 16 to 40 hours.