

SUBCOMMITTEE TIMELINE AND COMMUNICATION

Legislative Fiscal-Policy Interaction

At the request of Senator Esp

PROPOSAL:

Accelerate subcommittee schedules to have all decisions made by mid-February (2 weeks prior to transmittal) and use the extra time to schedule joint meetings of policy committees and budget subcommittees to have the subcommittee summarize their priorities, objectives, and modifications to the budget.

Scheduling

Scheduling meetings between policy committees and subcommittees may be difficult in the tightly compressed session timeline. There is a logistical challenge in simply finding times where applicable committees can meet together, and there is an additional challenge in some cases in identifying which subcommittee aligns best with the policy committee. Interim policy committees generally give agency oversight responsibilities, but the session committees have a less direct tie to agencies as bills can be assigned based on a variety of factors. In some cases, it might be very simple to align a subcommittee like Section B (DPHHS) with the (H) Human Services committee and the (S) Public Health, Welfare, and Safety committee, assuming both policy committees could set aside the same afternoon. However, it is still possible that a Senate member of the subcommittee would be unavailable if they serve on a different afternoon policy committee.

Additionally, there are cases where a subcommittee may align with multiple different policy committees. Section C (Natural Resources & Transportation) would need to coordinate with (H) Natural Resources, (S) Natural Resources, (H) Agriculture, (H) Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, (S) Agriculture, Livestock, & Irrigation, (S) Fish & Game, (H) Transportation, and (S) Highways & Transportation (a total of 8 policy committees).

During the 2021 Interim, the LFD did look at how to align interim committee legislators with IBCs for a similar fiscal/policy joint training approach. The spreadsheet utilized to develop this plan includes 19 different tabs with committee membership and a cross-walk between committees to assign legislators to groups at different times and locations. This planning did not have to consider policy committee times and obligations.

Depending upon the workload and number of bills, some policy committees will be facing a crunch in the second half of February with the impending transmittal deadline. Those committees may have a difficult time giving up a day of bill hearings.

Policy Committees	Time Block
Human Services (H)	afternoon all
Education (H)	afternoon MWF
Energy, Tech, Fed (H)	afternoon MWF
Natural Resources (H)	afternoon MWF
Transportation (H)	afternoon MWF
Ed & Cultural Resources (S)	afternoon MWF
Local Government (S)	afternoon MWF
Natural Resources (S)	afternoon MWF
Public Health & Safety (S)	afternoon MWF
State Admin (S)	afternoon MWF
Agriculture (H)	afternoon T Th
FWP (H)	afternoon T Th
Local Government (H)	afternoon T Th
Ag, Lvstck, Irrigation (S)	afternoon T Th
Energy & Telecom (S)	afternoon T Th
Fish & Game (S)	afternoon T Th
Highways & Transport (S)	afternoon T Th
Business and Labor (H)	morning all
Judiciary (H)	morning all
State Admin (H)	morning all
Taxation (H)	morning all
Business, Labor, econ (S)	morning all
Judiciary (S)	morning all
Taxation (S)	morning all
Leg Admin (H)	on call
Leg Admin (S)	on call

One potential solution to the scheduling challenge might be to utilize a working Saturday. After a one-hour floor session, the budgeting subcommittees could have a schedule where they are spread out around the Capitol building and policy legislators are invited to join them for their overview. This would eliminate scheduling conflicts but would require legislators to commit time to the process, and the risk exists that legislators would leave town and not stay around for these conversations.

Process:

If the HB 424 working group wishes to encourage this process, the next step would be to propose a specific plan to the LFC. Part of the proposal should be to communicate the proposal and plan to the Legislative Council for their consideration as they develop and approve a preliminary schedule for the 2025 Legislative Session.