



Effective date

Most bills passed and approved by the governor become law three calendar months after the Legislature adjourns. However, a bill may take effect before that date if it contains an emergency clause. It takes a vote of two-thirds (33 members) of the Legislature to pass a bill with an emergency clause.

Legislative documents

Physical copies of bills and amendments are available through a print on demand service in the Bill/Mail Room, Room 1126. Physical copies of daily agendas and Legislative Journals are available in the Clerk's Office. All legislative documents are available on NebraskaLegislature.gov. The Speaker of the Legislature sets the daily agenda, which is usually available late in the afternoon for the following day.

Every day during the session, the Legislature's Journal Clerk publishes a journal summarizing the previous day's floor activities. Amendments are read into the record and included in the Journal. Roll call, record and machine votes are included. Roll call and record votes record the position of each senator, while machine votes give totals only. Legislative Journals also contain announcements, appointments, attorney general's opinions and correspondence from the governor or secretary of state.

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Media Guide

Procedures for journalists covering the Nebraska Legislature



Welcome

The Nebraska Legislature is nationally recognized for its openness and accountability, which are reflected in the privileges it extends to the news media. The Legislature allows journalists on the chamber floor and gives them access to all committee hearings and most committee executive sessions. With these privileges, we ask you to understand our basic operations and to follow a few guidelines.

Media passes

All journalists who enter the chamber or cover committee hearings in hearing rooms must have press credentials issued by the office of the Clerk of the Legislature in Room 2018. Media credentials require a letter from the director of the news agency naming the journalists who need passes, which will be provided to regularly accredited media outlets only.

Permanent passes feature the journalist's photograph and are valid for two legislative sessions. These are issued to media members who cover the Legislature on a daily basis. Temporary passes, which are valid for one day, are issued as needed to those covering the Legislature less regularly. We ask that the passes be prominently displayed at all times while you are in the legislative chamber or hearing rooms.

Contact the Clerk's Office at 402-471-2271 with any questions or requests for credentials. To ensure you will have credentials in time for session, we recommend that you submit your request as early as possible.

Floor procedures and etiquette

While much of floor etiquette is common sense, following these procedures will help you avoid any confusion that may arise while in the chamber:

- Seating is available at the tables beneath the balconies.

- Photos should not be taken from the floor of the Legislature.
- Reporters and photographers are not allowed on the floor during Final Reading or under a Call of the House. Electronic message boards at the front of the chamber indicate whether such procedures are in effect.
- Stand-ups and on-camera interviews are not allowed in the chamber during session and should be conducted in the courtyard hallways or the Rotunda. Non-taped or background interviews should generally occur outside the chamber or under the balconies.
- Do not interrupt senators who are engaged in debate or whose white lights at their desks are lit, indicating they are waiting to speak. Also, avoid walking in front of or behind senators who are speaking, and avoid engaging in conversation with someone in their immediate vicinity.
- Eating in the chamber is discouraged. While bringing beverages such as coffee and soft drinks into the chamber is allowed, common sense should be exercised. Smoking in the State Capitol is prohibited by law.
- Please remain quiet in the chamber during roll call votes. Photographers should refrain from taking photographs during roll call votes.
- Legislative rules prohibit the use of any wireless communication devices that emit audible signals in the chamber during session unless authorized by the Legislative Council or used by licensed medical persons on duty.
- TV cameras may be set up between the second and third columns at the front of the chamber. When those areas are full, check with either the Chief Sergeant at Arms, the Clerk or the Assistant Clerk. They will direct you to an appropriate location in the rear of the chamber.
- No supplemental lighting or flashes are allowed in the chamber.
- Live broadcasts from the chamber should be cleared with the Clerk as early as possible, preferably several days prior to the event.

Hearing procedures and etiquette

Press credentials are required to cover public hearings. Much of a hearing's protocol is determined by the committee chairperson, but here are some general tips on how to cover hearings effectively:

- Journalists may sit anywhere in the designated audience seating. Filming is prohibited from behind committee members and must be done from designated areas, as instructed by the Sergeant at Arms.
- Talk with the committee staff before the hearing if you need special lighting for photographs or video cameras. Hearing rooms are equipped with special lighting to meet these needs. No additional lighting or camera flashes are allowed.
- Let the committee staff know beforehand if you will need copies of documents handed out during the hearing. If you arrive late, you may obtain copies upon the conclusion of the hearing.
- If you have questions about a bill, the bill's sponsor and the committee counsel are good resources. However, these individuals and other committee members and staff should not be distracted or approached during a hearing.
- People testifying are asked to state and spell their names and sign in. However, signing in is sometimes overlooked, so it is important to pay attention. If you have any questions about someone's name, you should discreetly and quietly approach witnesses after they have testified.
- Interviews should be conducted outside the hearing room.

Executive sessions

Journalists are allowed to observe executive sessions, which are closed to the rest of the public. Journalists may report on committee action and discussion, but video, photographs and direct quotes are not allowed.