

Legislative Branch

Mission, Goals, and Objectives

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I. Mission of the Legislature and Legislative Branch

The mission of the Legislature is to exercise the legislative power of state government vested in the Legislature by The Constitution of the State of Montana -Article V. The mission of the Legislative Branch; i.e., the consolidated legislative agency as defined in 5-2-503, MCA, is to provide the administrative structure to support the accomplishment of the mission of the Legislature.

The consolidated Legislative Branch entities include the Senate and the House of Representatives (which together compose the Legislature), the Legislative Council, the Legislative Services Division, the Legislative Finance Committee, the Legislative Fiscal Division, the Legislative Audit Committee, and the Legislative Audit Division.

II. Description of the Legislative Branch

Montana Senate

The Senate consists of 50 members representing single-member districts composed of two House districts. Senators are elected for 4-year terms with half the members elected every 2 years. The Senate serves as an equal partner with the House of Representatives in the consideration of most matters related to the exercise of the legislative power of the state. The unique functions of the Senate include confirming gubernatorial appointments and conducting trials of impeachment.

The officers of the Senate are the President, the President pro tempore, the majority and minority floor leaders, and the majority and minority whips. The President of the Senate is the presiding officer and budget-approving authority for the Senate.

Montana House of Representatives

The House of Representatives consists of 100 members representing single-member districts. Representatives are elected to 2-year terms. The House of Representatives serves as an equal partner with the Senate in the consideration of most matters related to the exercise of the legislative power of the state. The unique functions of the House of Representatives include the introduction of appropriations measures and the bringing of impeachment.

The officers of the House of Representatives are the Speaker, the Speaker pro tempore, the majority and minority floor leaders, and the majority and minority whips. The Speaker of the House is the presiding officer and the budget-approving authority for the House of Representatives.

Legislative Services Division

The Legislative Services Division, headed by the Executive Director, works within policy set by the 12-member bipartisan Legislative Council. The Council is composed of the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, the majority and minority leaders of each house, and four additional members from each house.

Legislative Services Division employees provide objective and nonpartisan research, reference, legal, technical, information technology, communications and information, and management and business support services to the House, Senate, and divisions of the Legislative Branch. Principal statutory authority for the Division is found in Title 1, chapter 11, and Title 5, chapters 5 and 11, MCA.

Division services include:

- bill and amendment drafting, preparation of bills for introduction, and the engrossing and enrolling of bills;
- publication of legislative documents of record;
- provision of legislative research and reference services;
- legal counseling on legislative matters, agency legal support, and support for the functions of code commissioner;
- review of the text of proposed ballot measures;
- agency business management and human resource services;
- committee services and staffing for standing and select committees, and interim legislative committees;
- broadcasting of state government and public policy events in accordance with Title 5, chapter 11, part 11;
- provision of legislative information and communications to the public;
- preparation, publication, and distribution of the Montana Code Annotated text and annotations; and
- planning, installation, and maintenance of branch information technology resources.

Legislative Fiscal Division

The Legislative Fiscal Division, headed by the Legislative Fiscal Analyst, works within policy set by the 12-member bipartisan Legislative Finance Committee. The committee is composed of four members of the House Appropriations Committee, four members of the Senate Finance and Claims Committee, and two members appointed at large from each house.

Legislative Fiscal Division employees provide the Legislature with objective fiscal information and analysis relevant to Montana public policy and budget determination. Principal statutory authority is found in The Legislative Finance Act (Title 5, Chapter 12, MCA).

Division services include:

- fiscal analysis of state government and the furnishing of information bearing upon the financial matters of the state;
- identification of ways to affect economy and efficiency in state government;
- estimation of revenue and analysis of tax policy;
- analysis of the executive budget;
- compiling and analyzing fiscal information for legislators and legislative committees; and
- staffing and support for legislative committees, including the preparation and processing of the appropriation bills for the legislative, judicial, and executive agencies.

Legislative Audit Division

The Legislative Audit Division, headed by the Legislative Auditor, works in consultation with the 12-member bipartisan Legislative Audit Committee.

The mission of the Legislative Audit Division is to provide government leaders and citizens, through a disciplined approach and an independent and objective manner, reliable information to improve accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and compliance and to promote financial and operational integrity of operations of state agencies, the judicial branch and higher education institutions.

Article V, Section 10(4) of the 1972 Montana Constitution mandates a legislative post-audit function.

The Legislative Audit Act (Title 5, Chapter 13, MCA) governs the Legislative Audit Division and directs that each agency of state government be audited for the purpose of furnishing the legislature with factual information vital to the discharge of its legislative duties.

III. Goals and Measurable Objectives

Legislative Services Division

1. Provide the Legislature with effective, high-quality support services within the areas of responsibility assigned by 5-11-112, MCA.

Objectives:

- The division employs and retains well-qualified professional staff.
 - Division services are provided in an objective, non-partisan manner.
 - Services are provided collaboratively across legislative divisions whenever the efficient operation of the Legislative Branch is served.
2. Support effective policy development by the Legislative Council.

Objectives:

- A committee strategic planning session is held each interim.
 - Notice of current and emerging issues is provided to committee members with sufficient opportunity to formulate well-considered policy.
 - Information provided is accurate and timely and suggests decision-making options.
 - Committee policy is incorporated into division budget development.
3. Support effective and efficient completion of duties assigned to the Code Commissioner in Title 1, chapter 11, parts 1 and 2, MCA.

Objectives:

- The Montana Code Annotated statute text is codified, indexed, updated, published and distributed by required deadlines.
 - Annotations to the code, a legislative review, and additional publications meet defined requirements.
4. Support interim activity of the Legislature's interim committees and other statutory and study committees established by legislative action.

Objectives:

- Committee work plans respond to the statutory responsibilities assigned to the committee (5-5-215, MCA) and to required deadlines.
 - Staff members produce well-researched reports and meeting materials which support committee work on policy issues.
 - Public notice of hearings and meetings is provided as required by statute through electronic postings, electronic and traditional mailings, and scheduling public comment at each meeting of the committee.
 - Findings and recommendations of the committee, including issues requiring legislative action, are clearly expressed in publications and electronic postings.
 - Accurate records of committee activities and proceedings are maintained and published to the Legislative Branch website.
5. Provide information and notices to the public about the Legislature, the legislative process, state law, and state government.

Objectives:

- The state broadcasting service (TVMT) provides citizen access as required by Title 5, chapter 11, part 11, MCA, through a public affairs television and internet broadcasting service.
- The Interim newsletter reports legislative activities and is published and distributed each

- month of the interim between regular legislative sessions.
- The workflow of the drafting of legislation through the publication of law is managed by automated systems and provides user-friendly public access to information throughout the process.
- Information complies with the right-of-participation and the right-to-know requirements of Article II and Article V of the Montana Constitution, and Title 5, MCA.

Legislative Services Division, Interim Committees and Activities Program

1. Support Legislative Council efforts to promote and develop mutually constructive contact and relations with interstate, international and intergovernmental entities.

Objectives:

- To the extent appropriations are provided for dues and travel expenses, legislators participate in interstate organizations and conferences with peers.
- To the extent appropriations are provided, legislators participate in the formulation of policy statements of interstate legislative organizations.
- To the extent appropriations are provided, legislators participate in activities promoting cooperation and information exchange between international and intergovernmental entities.

2. Accomplish duties assigned to interim committees under Title 5, chapter 5, part 3, MCA. *(Note: staff support of interim committees is provided under the Legislative Services Division program)*

Objectives:

- Committee members adopt and follow a work plan, fulfill their statutory duties, including administrative rule review, conduct interim studies as assigned, monitor the operation of assigned executive branch agencies, and provide public notice and participation in each committee meeting.
- To the extent appropriations are provided, legislator salaries and expenses and related costs of conducting interim studies are paid.
- Funding is allocated efficiently among committees and activities; funding includes a reserve for emerging issues of statewide importance.

Legislative Fiscal Division

In order to deliver the best services possible to the Legislature, the Legislative Fiscal Division has identified the following goals:

1. Improve communication with legislators to better meet mission
 - A. Improve outreach to legislators both in person and on the web
 - Annual trips to visit legislators around the state to explain state financial status
 - Increase web usage through enhanced information, performance, and accessibility
 - B. Continuously improve education of legislators through any of the following:
 - Orientation training
 - Brown bags during session
 - Educational materials
2. Continuously invest in staff for these skills:
 - A. Non-partisan and independent
 - B. Knowledgeable with highly technically skills
 - Accounting/Legal
 - Programmatic understanding
 - Computer systems, data sets, and tools
 - C. Able to perform rigorous analysis that with stands scrutiny
 - Forecasting and modeling
 - Fiscal Policy
 - D. Communication skills: Informative, efficient, professional and understandable
 - E. Adaptable to the changing legislative environment

Strategies for goal 2:

- Continue to develop peer review process
- Continuous staff training both internally, and through NCSL and other national organizations
- Quarterly Budget Status Report
- Encourage participation in user groups and other professional groups

Legislative Audit Division

The goal of the Legislative Audit Division is to conduct timely and responsive audits and analyses while considering the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes for recommending purposeful change.

Objectives:

- Determine whether an audited agency's financial operations, in relation to generally accepted accounting principles, are properly conducted; the financial reports are presented fairly; and the agency has complied with applicable laws and regulations;
- Determine whether an audited activity, in relation to the principles of proper management, is accomplishing its purposes and whether those purposes can be achieved with greater efficiency and economy; and
- Determine whether controls exist and are operating to provide assurance over the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of the financial and management information processed and reported.