

Legislative Leaders

Leadership positions. At the beginning of each legislative session, decisions are made concerning leadership positions. Among the first is the determination of which titles will be used and the number of individuals who may hold each position. The most common leadership titles are president of the Senate, speaker of the House, majority leader and minority leader. However, there usually are no limits to the names and numbers of leadership positions that may exist, and table 99-2.13 illustrates the variety used by legislative chambers.

Selection and terms. Once titles and the number of individuals to hold each position have been set, the actual selection of legislative leaders commences. It is one of the key steps taken to organize a legislative chamber, and tables 99-2.14 through 99-2.18 illustrate how state legislatures choose their leaders.

The presiding officer—that is, the president of the Senate or speaker of the House—typically is elected by a vote of the full body. However, in the states shown below, the person who is elected by the people to serve as lieutenant governor acts as the president of the Senate.

Alabama	New Mexico
Arkansas	New York
California	North Carolina
Connecticut	North Dakota
Delaware	Oklahoma
Georgia	Pennsylvania
Idaho	Rhode Island
Indiana	South Carolina
Michigan	South Dakota
Mississippi	Texas
Missouri	Vermont
Nebraska	Virginia
Nevada	Washington

The president pro tem selects other caucus leaders in three states. In Alabama, the president pro tem appoints the Senate majority leader and assistant majority leader. The Senate assistant majority leader and the majority whip are appointed by this leader in Connecticut. In the Indiana Senate, the president pro tem chooses the majority leader, assistant majority leader and majority whip.

The majority leader appoints other caucus leaders in the Connecticut Senate and House, Florida Senate and House, Iowa Senate, Minnesota Senate, Oregon Senate and Rhode Island Senate. The specific leaders who are selected by the majority leader are:

Connecticut Senate	Assistant majority leader, majority whip
Connecticut House	Deputy majority leader
Florida Senate	Majority whip
Florida House	Majority floor leader, majority caucus chair
Iowa Senate	Majority caucus secretary
Minnesota Senate	Majority whip, majority caucus secretary
Oregon Senate	Assistant majority leader, majority whip
Rhode Island Senate	Majority whip

In the Delaware House, the speaker pro tem is the most senior member of the majority caucus. The chairman of the District of Columbia Council is elected by the citizens of Washington, D.C.

In most legislatures, there is no limit to the number of years that an individual may hold a leadership position. However, 24 chambers reported that some of their leadership positions have term limits—either official or unwritten. Table 99-2.19 highlights these limits.

Roles and responsibilities. The roles and responsibilities of legislative leaders vary considerably among the states. Shown below are brief synopses of the duties typically associated with selected leadership positions. Tables 99-2.20 through 99-2.36 provide more detailed information on leaders' duties.

President of the Senate. The president is the principal leader of the Senate. The president typically will 1) preside over the daily sessions of the Senate, 2) preserve order in the chamber, 3) state parliamentary motions, 4) rule on parliamentary questions, 5) appoint committee chairs and members, 6) refer bills to committee, 7) sign legislation, writs and warrants, and 8) act as the official spokesperson for the chamber. In about 26 states, the lieutenant governor serves as the president of the Senate, and many of these duties often are assumed by the president pro tem.

President pro tem of the Senate. The primary roles assigned to the president pro tem are to 1) preside over the Senate in the president's absence, 2) exercise the powers and duties of the president in his or her absence, and 3) assume other duties as assigned by the president. Sometimes, this is an honorary position, with few substantive duties assigned. In states where the lieutenant governor presides over the Senate, the president pro tem often assumes duties associated with a president.

Speaker of the House or Assembly. The speaker is the principal leader of the House or Assembly. The speaker typically will 1) preside over the daily sessions of the House or Assembly, 2) preserve order in the chamber, 3) state parliamentary motions, 4) rule on parliamentary questions, 5) appoint committee chairs and members, 6) refer bills to committee, 7) sign legislation, writs and warrants, and 8) act as the official spokesperson for the chamber.

Speaker pro tem. The primary roles assigned to the speaker pro tem are to 1) preside over the House or Assembly in the speaker's absence, 2) exercise the powers and duties of the speaker in his or her absence, and 3) assume other duties as assigned by the speaker. In some states, this is an honorary position, with few substantive duties assigned.

Majority leader or majority floor leader. The primary functions of a majority leader usually relate to floor duties. The majority leader 1) is the lead speaker for the majority party caucus during floor debates, 2) develops the calendar, and 3) assists the president or speaker with program development, policy formation and policy decisions.

Majority whip. The duties of the majority whip are to 1) assist the floor leader, 2) ensure member attendance, 3) count votes, and 4) generally communicate the majority position on issues.

Majority caucus chair. The majority caucus chair generally 1) develops the majority caucus agenda with other principal leaders, 2) presides over the majority caucus meetings, and 3) assists with the development of policy.

Majority caucus secretary. The main responsibility of the majority caucus secretary is to keep records of caucus meetings.

Minority leader or minority floor leader. The minority leader is the principal leader of the minority party caucus. The minority leader is responsible for 1) developing the minority position, 2) negotiating with the majority party, 3) directing minority caucus activities on the chamber floor, and 4) leading floor debate for the minority caucus.

Minority Whip. The major responsibilities for the minority whip are to 1) assist the minority leader on the chamber floor, 2) count votes, and 3) ensure attendance of minority party members.

Minority caucus chair. The minority caucus chair 1) presides over caucus meetings and 2) assists the minority leader with policy development.

Minority caucus secretary. The main responsibility of the minority caucus secretary is to keep records of caucus meetings.

Table 99-2.22 Major Roles and Responsibilities—President Pro Tem or Vice President

State (1)	Acts as official spokesperson for the chamber	Acts as official spokesperson for the caucus	Presides over floor sessions	Preserves order during meetings	States parliamentary motions	Rules on parliamentary questions	Appoints other caucus leaders	Appoints committee chairs	Appoints committee members	Sets calendar(s) or agenda(s)	Refers bills to committee
Alabama			S					S	S		S
Alaska			S								
Arizona											
Arkansas	S										
California	S	S	S	S	S	S					
Colorado			S						S		
Connecticut		S	S				S	S	S		
Delaware											
Florida											
Georgia			S		S	S					
Hawaii											
Idaho	S	S	S		S			S	S		S
Illinois											
Indiana	S				S		S	S	S		S
Iowa											
Kansas			S								
Kentucky									S	S	S
Louisiana											
Maine											
Maryland	S	S	S	S							
Massachusetts											
Michigan			S	S	S	S					
Minnesota											
Mississippi			S	S	S	S					
Missouri	S	S	S	S	S	S		S	S		S
Montana											

Table 99-2.22 Major Roles and Responsibilities—President Pro Tem or Vice President, cont'd.

State (1)	Acts as official spokesperson for the chamber	Acts as official spokesperson for the caucus	Presides over floor sessions	Preserves order during meetings	States parliamentary motions	Rules on parliamentary questions	Appoints other caucus leaders	Appoints committee chairs	Appoints committee members	Sets calendar(s) or agenda(s)	Refers bills to committee
Nebraska											
Nevada	S		S	S	S	S					
New Hampshire											
New Jersey											
New Mexico											
New York											
North Carolina	S							S	S		
North Dakota			S		S	S					S
Ohio					S						
Oklahoma	S		S	S	S	S		S	S		
Oregon			S		S	S					
Pennsylvania	S	S	S	S	S	S		S	S		S
Rhode Island											S
South Carolina	S		S			S					S
South Carolina								S	S	S	
Tennessee											
Texas											
Utah											
Vermont									S	S	
Virginia			S								
Washington			S			S					
West Virginia			S								
Wisconsin											
Wyoming											
American Samoa											
District of Columbia											
Puerto Rico			S		S	S					

Table 99-2.22 Major Roles and Responsibilities—President Pro Tem or Vice President, cont'd.

Key:

S=Senate

H=House or Assembly

B=Both chambers

Note:

1. The following chambers did not return a survey: Delaware Senate, Hawaii Senate, Maryland House, New Hampshire Senate, New York Senate, American Samoa House, Guam Senate, Northern Mariana Islands Senate and House, Puerto Rico House and Virgin Islands Senate.

Table 99-2.23 More Duties of the President Pro Tem or Vice President

State (1)	Signs legislation, writs and warrants	Has jurisdiction over employees	Leads floor debate	Presides over caucus meetings	Ensures member attendance	Counts votes	Develops caucus agenda	Coordinates information dissemination to members	Other
Alabama									
Alaska									
Arizona									
Arkansas									
California			S	S	S	S	S	S	
Colorado									
Connecticut				S			S	S	
Delaware									
Florida									
Georgia					S				
Hawaii									
Idaho	S	S	S			S	S	S	
Illinois									
Indiana	S	S	S		S				
Iowa									
Kansas									
Kentucky		S							
Louisiana									
Maine									
Maryland									
Massachusetts									
Michigan									
Minnesota									
Mississippi									
Missouri	S	S	S		S			S	
Montana									

Table 99-2.23 More Duties of the President Pro Tem or Vice President, cont'd.

State (1)	Signs legislation, writs and warrants	Has jurisdiction over employees	Leads floor debate	Presides over caucus meetings	Ensures member attendance	Counts votes	Develops caucus agenda	Coordinates information dissemination to members	Other
Nebraska									
Nevada	S								
New Hampshire									
New Jersey									
New Mexico									
New York									
North Carolina				S					
North Dakota	S								
Ohio									
Oklahoma	S	S	S			S		S	
Oregon									
Pennsylvania	S	S					S	S	
Rhode Island									
South Carolina		S							
South Carolina		S							
Tennessee									
Texas									
Utah									
Vermont			S						
Virginia									
Washington									
West Virginia									
Wisconsin									
Wyoming									
American Samoa									
District of Columbia									2
Puerto Rico									

**Table 99-2.23 More Duties of the President Pro Tem or Vice President,
cont'd.**

Key:

S=Senate

H=House or Assembly

B=Both chambers

Notes:

1. The following chambers did not return a survey: Delaware Senate, Hawaii Senate, Maryland House, New Hampshire Senate, New York Senate, American Samoa House, Guam Senate, Northern Mariana Islands Senate and House, Puerto Rico House and Virgin Islands Senate.
2. District of Columbia: The chairman pro tem acts in the chairman's absence.

Table 99-2.26 Major Roles and Responsibilities—Speaker Pro Tem

State (1)	Presides over floor sessions	Preserves order during meetings	States parliamentary motions	Rules on parliamentary questions	Ensures member attendance	Counts votes	Develops caucus agenda	Coordinates information dissemination to members	Other
Alabama									
Alaska	H								
Arizona	H	H	H	H					
Arkansas									2
California	H		H	H					3
Colorado									
Connecticut	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	4
Delaware	H								
Florida	H								
Georgia	H			H					5
Hawaii									
Idaho									
Illinois									
Indiana	H	H		H					
Iowa	H		H	H			H		
Kansas	H								
Kentucky	H								
Louisiana									6
Maine									
Maryland									
Massachusetts									
Michigan	H								
Minnesota	H	H	H	H	H	H	H		
Mississippi	H	H	H						
Missouri									
Montana									

Table 99-2.26 Major Roles and Responsibilities—Speaker Pro Tem, cont'd.

State (1)	Presides over floor sessions	Preserves order during meetings	States parliamentary motions	Rules on parliamentary questions	Ensures member attendance	Counts votes	Develops caucus agenda	Coordinates information dissemination to members	Other
Nebraska									
Nevada									7
New Hampshire									
New Jersey									
New Mexico									
New York	H		H	H					
North Carolina	H								8
North Dakota									
Ohio									
Oklahoma	H	H		H					9
Oregon									
Pennsylvania									
Rhode Island									10
South Carolina	H	H	H	H					11
South Dakota									
Tennessee	B	H	H	H					12
Texas	H								
Utah									
Vermont									
Virginia									
Washington									
West Virginia									
Wisconsin									
Wyoming									
American Samoa									
District of Columbia									
Puerto Rico									

Table 99-2.26 Major Roles and Responsibilities—Speaker Pro Tem, cont'd.**Key:**

S=Senate

H=House or Assembly

B=Both chambers

Notes:

1. The following chambers did not return a survey: Delaware Senate, Hawaii Senate, Maryland House, New Hampshire Senate, New York Senate, American Samoa House, Guam Senate, Northern Mariana Islands Senate and House, Puerto Rico House and Virgin Islands Senate.
2. Arkansas: In the House, the speaker pro tem performs the duties of the speaker in his or her absence.
3. California: The speaker pro tem of the House also may preside over caucus meetings.
4. Connecticut: The speaker pro tem of the House also refers bills to committee and has jurisdiction over employees.
5. Georgia: The speaker pro tem also may act as the official spokesperson for the House.
6. Louisiana: In the House, the speaker pro tem performs the duties of the speaker in his or her absence.
7. Nevada: In the Assembly, the speaker pro tem performs the duties of the speaker in his or her absence.
8. North Carolina: In the House, the speaker pro tem performs the duties of the speaker in his or her absence.
9. Oklahoma: The speaker pro tem of the House also may sign legislation, writs and warrants.
10. Rhode Island: In the House, the speaker pro tem performs the duties of the speaker in his or her absence.
11. South Carolina: In the House, the speaker pro tem also refers bills to committee.
12. Tennessee: The speaker pro tem of the Senate also sets calendars or agendas.