

## **A QUICK PRIMER ON THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE**

- Required to meet every two years for a regular session. That session may not exceed 140 days.
- The Legislature convenes in regular session on the second Tuesday of each odd-numbered year.
- Special legislative sessions may be called for the governor and may last only 30 days. Only matters submitted by the governor may be considered in the special session.
- Both the Senate and the House conduct their business through a committee system in which proposed legislation is first considered by various committees before being brought before the House for a vote. The organization and membership of the committees are governed by the rules of each house. The House of Representatives traditionally has more committees than the Senate because it has more members.

### **SENATE**

- Composed of 31 members
- Each member is elected for a four-year term. Half of the Senate is elected every two years.
- To run for the Texas Senate, candidates must be a U.S. citizen, registered to vote in Texas, be 26-year-old, have lived in Texas for five years immediately preceding the election and have been a resident of the district he or she would represent for one year previous to being elected.
- The lieutenant governor is elected by statewide vote and presides over the Senate. The lieutenant governor is designated the President of the Senate by the Texas Constitution and makes committee assignments. However, the lieutenant governor is not a member of the Senate and only votes in case of a tie. Other officers are elected by the Senate, which also creates and enforces its own rules and judges the qualifications and elections of Senate members.
- The Senate advises and consents on almost all appointments by the Governor to state commissions, boards and offices. It can conduct a closed door meeting or executive session during the nomination process but the Legislature must meet in open session to conduct all other business.
- The Senate acts as a court of impeachment to try persons impeached by the House of Representatives.

### **HOUSE**

- Composed of 150 members
- Each member is elected for a two-year term
- To run for the Texas House, candidates must be a citizen of the United States, registered to vote in Texas, be 21-years-old, have lived in Texas for two years immediately preceding the election and have been a resident of the district he or she would represent for one year previous to being elected.

- The House elects the Speaker of the House from among its members to preside over the session. The Speaker makes committee assignments and may vote at any time. The House creates and enforces its own rules and judges the qualifications and elections of House members.
- All revenue bills considered by the Texas Legislature must originate in the House of Representatives. The Senate has the opportunity to change or reject those measures during the legislative process.
- Only the House can bring impeachment charges, which are then tried in the Senate.

## **TYPES OF LEGISLATION**

- The legislature considers two major types of legislation: resolutions and bills. Bills are “introduced” and may be “passed” into law. Resolutions are “proposed” and “adopted” to show the intent of the Legislature.
- The majority of legislative action is on bills, which are proposals that when passed become the law of the state.
- Bills and resolutions are numbered consecutively and in separate series. For example, SB1 means Senate Bill 1 or HJR1 means House Joint Resolution 1.
- There are three types of resolutions: joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions and simple resolutions.
- Joint resolutions are more significant measures of importance to the legislature or the state. They are primarily used for proposing amendments to the state constitution, to memorialize Congress, to ratify amendments to the United States Constitution, to authorize the expenditure of legislative funds and to form joint legislative committees. Joint resolutions must be passed by each house. Joint resolutions that propose amendments to the state constitution must be approved by two-thirds of each house and by the voters of Texas.
- Concurrent resolutions are used for matters of concurrent interest to both houses such as fixing the time for final adjournment of the session; requesting action by the U.S. Congress, requesting information from state agencies; calling for a joint session of the legislature and adopting or changing joint rules. Concurrent resolutions must be adopted by the Senate and the House, enrolled, and then sent to committee. Except for resolutions regarding adjournment they are submitted to the Governor. Concurrent resolutions do not have the force of law.
- Simple resolutions are used for measures approved by one particular house. They are used for such things as adopting rules, appointing offices and employees, requesting Attorney General opinions and house organizations. They may be referred to committee or acted on without such consideration. Adoption requires a simple majority vote. Simple resolutions do not have the force of law.