

Senate President

The Senate president is elected by a majority of senators voting for the office to serve as chief officer of the Senate and as party leader. The president:

- may administer the oath of office to senators and to officers and employees of the Senate;
- is responsible for preserving order and decorum in the Senate chamber;
- presides over Senate proceedings and recognizes members who wish to speak on the floor;
- makes initial rulings on questions of procedure;
- determines who will preside during second reading of bills when the Senate convenes as a Committee of the Whole;
- approves the calendar for each legislative day;
- assigns all bills to standing committees;
- serves as an ex officio member of all standing committees;
- appoints conference committee members;
- controls access to the Senate floor, including media access and placement;
- has general control over room assignments for members and staff.

President Pro Tempore

The president pro tempore is elected by a majority of Senate members voting for the office. The president pro tem:

- serves as president of the Senate during the absence of the president;
- may administer the oath of office to senators and to officers and employees of the Senate.

Majority Leaders

The majority leader is the leader of the majority party (party with the most members). One is elected for each chamber by each party caucus. The majority leader:

- helps the speaker or president develop the calendar;
- monitors committee work to ensure a steady flow of bills for floor debate;
- helps the presiding officer to calendar bills;
- is the lead speaker for the majority party in floor debate;
- helps the speaker or president with program development, policy formation, and policy decisions;
- presides over majority caucus meetings.

Minority Leaders

The minority leader is the leader of the party with the second most members. A minority leader is elected for each chamber by the respective party caucuses. The minority leader:

- develops the minority position;
- negotiates with the majority party;
- directs minority caucus activities on the floor;
- directs floor activity for the minority party;
- leads floor debate for the minority party.

Whips

A majority and a minority whip are elected for each chamber by their respective party caucuses to assist their respective leaders. The whip is the agent through whom the party machinery works to influence the business of the legislative body. The whip:

- generally communicates the majority position;
- ensures that party members are present for important votes;
- counts votes (and may arrange pairing).

Published by

Montana Legislative Services Division

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Legislative Leadership

**A Guide to the Roles
and Responsibilities
of Legislative Leaders**

October 2008

Good Leadership Is Key

Leadership is a key ingredient to a successful Legislature. Serving as a legislative leader is tough and challenging, but it also can be very rewarding.

Every legislator has a responsibility to represent constituents and promote good public policy. But the role of the leader goes even farther: it reaches across the entire lawmaking institution

Good legislative leaders can bolster the Legislature's effectiveness, build loyalty among its members, and enhance its image.

– its procedures, membership, staff, facilities, and image. No other lawmaker is vested with the same perspective of, or responsibility for, the Legislature.

Good leaders can bolster the Legislature's effectiveness, build loyalty among its members, and enhance its image. They can affect

the future of the Legislature and the state by fostering the development of potential new leaders.

A Leader's Role

Legislative leaders are spokespeople for the entire Legislature and for their party. They need to have a firm idea of where the Legislature is going and how best to get it there.

Leaders are endowed with certain powers by the Montana Constitution, state law, and legislative rules, but they often find persuasion a more effective tool than force of will.

Legislative leaders have several tools at their disposal to help them guide the deliberative process. They may:

- assign members and legislation to committees;

- schedule legislative proceedings;
- preside effectively over proceedings;
- use legislative rules to expedite decisionmaking.

Scheduling. Legislative leaders are responsible for scheduling legislation for floor action and otherwise planning the legislative workload. Dividing the work among other leaders can be an effective strategy. Regular leadership meetings and close working relationships with committee presiding officers may also help to keep proceedings running smoothly.

Policy Guidance. The task of policy management requires a leader to take an active role in setting legislative priorities and guiding the policy process through committee operations, caucus deliberations, and staff organization. To ensure consistency in state policy, a leader needs clear foresight and a working understanding of the budget process.

Bipartisan Relations. These are important to the maintenance of the institution and the effective use of the deliberative process. Leaders must respond to members' needs by fostering communication, handling requests for cosponsorship or assigning members' legislation to certain committees, and providing certain resources, such as office space.

Leaders are best-served by maintaining effective working relationships with others outside the Legislature, too. These include the governor, staff of state agencies, media representatives, and constituents. Regularly scheduled meetings with the various entities may help to alleviate miscommunication in the heat of battle.

Staff Management. Leaders are responsible for delegating tasks to their respective legislative staff while maintaining a reasonable "span of control." The short timeframe available for hiring and training session staff is a consideration that requires timeliness and sensitivity to the responsibilities to the institution.

Parts of this text were adapted from "A Guide to Legislative Leadership," published by the National Conference of State Legislatures, 1981.

Each leader has specific responsibilities that are enumerated in the Montana Constitution, Montana Code Annotated, and Joint, House, and Senate Rules. Other resources include *Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure* and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Speaker of the House

The speaker is elected by a majority of House members voting for the office. The speaker serves as the chief officer of the House and as party leader. The speaker:

- may administer the oath of office to representatives and to officers and employees of the House;
- is responsible for preserving order and decorum;
- presides over House proceedings and recognizes members who wish to speak on the floor;
- makes initial rulings on questions of procedure;
- determines who will preside during second reading of bills when the House convenes as a Committee of the Whole;
- serves as an ex officio member of all standing committees;
- appoints House members to standing, select, and conference committees, taking into consideration the recommendations of the minority leader for appointment of minority members and vice chairs;
- decides how many members from each party will sit on the Rules Committee (each party appoints its own members);
- assigns bills to committees;
- arranges the agenda for second and third reading of bills;
- Supervises House employees.

Speaker Pro Tempore

The speaker pro tem is elected by a majority of House members voting for the office. The speaker pro tem:

- serves as speaker during the absence of the speaker;
- may administer the oath of office to representatives and to officers and employees of the House;
- performs other duties as assigned by the speaker.