



Connecting People to Policy

LEGISLATIVE MODERNIZATION

JOINT INTERIM STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS AND ELECTIONS

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OVERVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE MODERNIZATION

Legislative modernization refers to the enhancement of the legislature's capacity to perform its role in the policy-making process.

- Legislative sessions
- Legislator salary
- Legislative staff
- Technology and infrastructure

LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS IN NEVADA

- Upon adoption, the *Nevada Constitution* provided that the first and second sessions of the Nevada Legislature would convene in December 1864 and January 1866, respectively, and that the first biennial session would convene on the first Monday of January 1867
- In 1958, voters approved a constitutional amendment providing for annual sessions, but then two years later approved an initiative returning to biennial sessions
- The Nevada Legislature has held biennial sessions since 1867, except for the additional regular session held in 1960
- Regular sessions limited to 120 days ([Section 2 of Article 4](#) of the *Nevada Constitution*)
 - 1864: Regular sessions limited to 60 days
 - 1958: *Constitution* amended to allow sessions to continue for as long as necessary, but limited legislator salaries to 60 days
 - 1998: *Constitution* amended to limit sessions to 120 days and changed the first day of session to the first Monday in February

LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS IN OTHER STATES

- 4 states have biennial sessions: Montana (90 L), Nevada (120 C), North Dakota (80 L), and Texas (140 C)
- 11 states have no limit on annual session lengths: ID, IL, MI, NJ, NY, NC, OH, PA, RI, VT, WI
 - CA and KS have no limit in odd years
- 16 states have equal length sessions every year
 - Lengths vary from 30 L (Alabama) to 120 C (Colorado)
- 19 states have different length sessions for odd and even-numbered years
 - Mississippi has limit of 90 C a year, except for the year after a gubernatorial election (125 C)
 - Minnesota has a limit of 120 L over the biennium, but annual sessions may be of different lengths

C = Calendar day; L = Legislative day (a day on which floor session is held)

<https://www.ncsl.org/resources/details/legislative-session-length>

AVERAGE TOTAL DAYS IN SESSION PER BIENNIUM

	State	Total Days in Session Per Biennium, 10-Year Average (2003/04–2013/14)	2010 Census Population (Rank)
50.	Wyoming	57	563,626 (50)
49.	North Dakota	68	672,591 (48)
48.	New Mexico	71	2,059,179 (36)
47.	Utah	73	2,763,885 (34)
46.	New Hampshire	75	1,316,470 (42)
...			
38.	Nevada	94	2,700,551 (35)
...			
5.	Arizona	225	6,392,017 (16)
4.	Ohio	269	11,536,504 (7)
3.	Massachusetts	275	6,547,629 (14)
2.	California	349	37,253,956 (1)
1.	New York	476	19,378,102 (3)

Bowen, Daniel; Greene, Zachary, 2014, "Legislative Professionalism Component Scores, V1.1.1",
<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/27595>, Harvard Dataverse, V3, UNF:6:ytWAFegnSWO4LazQsoDY2Q== [fileUNF]

COMPENSATION FOR NEVADA LEGISLATORS

- Minimum daily salary of \$130/day (NRS [218A.630](#))
 - Unchanged since 1985, though [Assembly Bill 462](#) (2005) allowed the rate to increase by an amount equal to the cumulative percentage increase in state employee salaries
 - Legislators only receive a salary for the first 60 days of a regular session and up to 20 days of a special session ([Section 33 of Article 4](#) of the *Nevada Constitution*)
- Per diem allowance equal to the federal rate for Carson City for each legislative day (NRS [218A.635–218A.645](#))
- Travel allowance of up to \$10,000 during a regular session, \$1,200 during a special session, and \$3,000 during the interim (NRS [218A.645](#))
- Allowance of \$2,800 during a regular session and \$300 during a special session for expenses related to legislative business (NRS [218A.645](#))

LEGISLATOR COMPENSATION IN OTHER STATES

- State legislators from 14 states have not seen a salary increase since 2007
 - New Hampshire: \$100 per year since 1889
 - Texas: \$7,200 per year since 1976
 - South Carolina: \$10,400 per year since 1991
 - Wyoming: \$150 per legislative day since 2005 (40-day sessions in odd years, 20-day sessions in even years)
 - New Mexico: No salary, but receive per diem
- 10 states pay legislators an annual salary considered to be a living wage when considering session length and district size
 - Alaska, California, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin
 - 2023 annual legislator salaries ranged from \$50,400 (Alaska) to \$142,000 (New York)
- 8 states do not provide per diem to legislators
 - Connecticut, Delaware, **Massachusetts**, **Michigan**, New Hampshire, New Jersey, **Ohio**, Rhode Island

<https://www.ncsl.org/cls/legislative-compensation-overview>

<https://www.ncsl.org/about-state-legislatures/full-and-part-time-legislatures>

<https://www.ncsl.org/about-state-legislatures/2023-legislator-compensation>

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

2021

Map image: <https://www.ncsl.org/about-state-legislatures/size-of-state-legislative-staff>

LEGISLATIVE STAFF CENSUS (NCSL, 2015)

- Nevada:
 - 4.51 **permanent** staff/legislator (#13)
 - 9.29 **total** staff/legislator (#6)
- California:
 - 17.5 **permanent** staff/legislator (#1)
 - 17.5 **total** staff/legislator (#1)
- North Dakota:
 - 0.26 **permanent** staff/legislator (#50)
 - 0.87 **total** staff/legislator (#48)

Full list: <https://www.commoncause.org/new-mexico/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2023/01/Legis-Modernization-Paper-Updated-Dec.-2022-6.pdf>

COMPARISON OF STATES WITH SIMILAR POPULATION TO NEVADA

	Population (2020 Census)	Regular Session Limit (calendar days)	Average Total Days in Session Per Biennium, (2003/04–2013/14)	Legislator Compensation (2023)
Utah	3.28 million	Annual; 45	73 days	\$293/legislative day (~\$9,000/session) + per diem
Iowa	3.20 million	Annual; 110 (odd), 100 (even)	164 days	\$25,000 annual salary + per diem
Nevada	3.12 million	Biennial; 120	94 days	~\$160/legislative day for 60 days (~\$9,600/session) + per diem
Arkansas	3.01 million	Annual; 60 (odd), 30 (even)	94 days	\$44,356 annual salary + per diem
Mississippi	2.96 million	Annual; 125 in year after gubernatorial election, otherwise 90	176 days	\$23,500 annual salary + per diem

COMPARISON OF STATES WITH SIMILAR POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS TO NEVADA

	Daily Kos 2020 State Similarity Index	Regular Session Limit (calendar days)	Average Total Days in Session per Biennium (2003/04–2013/14)	Legislator Compensation (2023)
Nevada	0	Biennial; 120	94 days	~\$160/legislative day for 60 days (~\$9,600/session) + per diem
Arizona	29.1	Annual; about 100 (Sat. of week in which 100 th calendar day falls)	225 days	\$24,000 annual salary + per diem
Texas	30.1	Biennial; 140	130 days	\$7,200 annual salary + per diem
Florida	33.9	Annual; 60	102 days	\$18,000 annual salary + per diem
Illinois	42.0	Annual; No limit	150 days	\$85,000 annual salary + per diem

<https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2020/2/19/1917029/-How-similar-is-each-state-to-every-other-Daily-Kos-Elections-State-Similarity-Index-will-tell-you>

ADDITIONAL LEGISLATIVE MODERNIZATION POLICIES

- Technology and infrastructure
 - Videoconferencing and virtual participation
 - Family-friendly legislative building infrastructure (changing tables, pumping rooms, and onsite childcare)
- Paid family and medical leave for legislators
 - Colorado [SB22-184](#)

STATE APPROACHES TO MODERNIZING THE LEGISLATURE

Legislative session length

- Legislative studies and/or public commissions to gather input
- Testing different lengths and frequencies of sessions through special sessions
 - Before moving to annual sessions in 2011, the Oregon Legislature called itself into special sessions in 2008 and 2010 to specifically address budget issues

Legislator compensation

- Compensation commissions to study and recommend—and sometimes directly set—legislative pay (19 states)
- Tying pay to median household income (Massachusetts)
- Providing cost of living increases tied to the Consumer Price Index (Pennsylvania) or providing percentage increases equal to those for state employees (Nevada, Florida)

Questions?



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