



# AN ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO THE NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE

---

This self-advocacy guide is to assist and inform persons with disabilities, their family members, and other persons and organizations interested in working with and influencing the New Jersey State Legislature.



ADVANCING JUSTICE. ADVOCATING INCLUSION.



**New Jersey's designated Protection and Advocacy system,  
dedicated to representing and protecting  
the human, civil, and legal rights of people with disabilities.**

**DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW JERSEY**

1-800-922-7233 (New Jersey only)

609-292-9742

609-633-7106 (TTY); Dial "711" for Relay

210 S. Broad Street, 3rd Floor  
Trenton, New Jersey 08608

**[www.disabilityrightsnj.org](http://www.disabilityrightsnj.org)**

Se Habla Español



# AN ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO THE NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I: Introduction	3
II: Structure of the New Jersey Legislature	3
III: The Legislative Process	5
IV: Getting Around the Statehouse	7
V: What Can I Do?	9
Appendix	
Resources	11
Glossary of Terms	12

## I. INTRODUCTION

Every year the New Jersey Legislature passes new laws and amends old laws that have an impact on individuals with disabilities. These laws expand or cut funding to programs, create new programs, expand rights, create safeguards and establish studies.

In accordance with mandates that require DRNJ to promote the rights of individuals with disabilities and assist in self-advocacy, DRNJ has created this guide to provide information to individuals with disabilities regarding the workings of the state legislature. Many terms used in this guide are specific to the legislative process and may be new to you. We include; therefore, a glossary.

Legislators cannot be experts in all issues that come before them. Therefore, it is essential that citizens assist in educating them by providing information through personal experience and knowledge. You can make a difference in the outcome of proposed laws by educating your legislators. This guide provides the necessary information to inform you about how the New Jersey Legislature operates.

## II. STRUCTURE OF THE NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE

The New Jersey Legislature is a part-time body made up of two Houses: a 40 member Senate and an 80 member General Assembly. The State is divided into 40 districts from which the legislators are elected. Every ten years, after the Federal census, the districts are redrawn to maintain an approximately equal population in each district.

The voters in each district elect one Senator and two members of the General Assembly. Legislative elections are held in November of each odd-numbered year, e.g. 2005, 2007. Members of the Assembly serve a two year term and Senators serve a four year term, except for the first term of a new decade, which is only two years. The "2-4-4" year Senate cycle allows for elections from the legislative districts as soon as possible after they are redrawn in response to the Federal census.

The members of each House elect a presiding officer from among its members, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly are the second and third in line of succession to the Governorship after the Lieutenant Governor.

The Lieutenant Governor of the State of New Jersey is an elected constitutional officer, the second ranking officer of the executive branch and the first officer in line to succeed the Governor of New Jersey. The Lieutenant Governor is popularly elected every four years by a plurality. In New Jersey, the main duty of the Lieutenant Governor is to act as governor should the governor be temporarily absent from office. In addition, the Lieutenant Governor generally succeeds a governor who dies, resigns or is removed in trial by the Legislative branch.

The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly have broad powers within their Houses. They set the meeting schedules, the daily calendar of bills to be considered, appoint committee chairs and members, preside over sessions, refer bills to committees for consideration, and direct the business of their Houses. The Senate elects a Senate Secretary and the General Assembly elects a Clerk of the General Assembly to supervise the business operations of the two Houses.

New Jersey has two primary political parties: Democrat and Republican. Each party in each House chooses party leaders: the Majority Leader, the Minority Leader, assistant leaders, and whips. The party leaders assist in developing party policy on the issues before the Legislature.

Each House has a number of standing committees to review legislation. These are permanent committees where the merits of a bill are discussed. Members of the public and interest groups are generally given the opportunity to express their views at committee hearings by providing oral and/or written testimony.

The New Jersey Constitution provides that each Legislature meets for one two-year term that includes two annual sessions. All business from the first annual session may be continued into the second year. The two-year legislative term begins at noon on the second Tuesday in January of each even-numbered year, e.g. January 2006 and January 2008. At the end of the second annual session, all unfinished business expires.

## A. LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

Biannually (Even Numbered Years)	New Jersey Legislature begins the two-year legislative term
Annually	New Jersey Legislature convenes on the second Tuesday of January

### 1. FIRST SESSION

Even Numbered Years	First year of two-year session begins
First Action	Nomination and election of leaders for two-year session
Second Tuesday in January	Governor's State of the State Message
Third Tuesday in January	Governor's Annual Budget Message
February – June	Introduction and deliberation of legislative bills. Legislative deliberation and passage of budget.

July 1 State fiscal year begins

July-August Legislative Recess

## 2. SECOND SESSION

Odd-Numbered Years Second session begins

Second Tuesday in January Governor's State of the State Message

Third Tuesday in January Governor's Annual Budget Message

February – June Introduction and deliberation of legislative bills. Legislative deliberation and passage of budget.

July 1 State fiscal year begins

Early January (Sine Die) The Legislature concludes its work for the two year term. All unfinished business ends.

## III. THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS - HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

### A. INITIAL STAGES

A legislator decides to sponsor a bill, sometimes at the suggestion of a constituent, interest group, public official, or the Governor. The legislator may ask other legislators in the same House to join as co-sponsors. At the legislator's request, the Office of Legislative Services, a non-partisan agency of the Legislature, provides research and drafting assistance, and prepares the bill in the proper technical form. During a session, the legislator gives the bill to the Senate Secretary or Assembly Clerk, who reads the bill's title out loud. This is known as the first reading. The bill is printed and released to the public. The Senate President or Assembly Speaker usually refers the bill to a committee for review, but may send the bill directly to the second reading in order to speed its consideration.

### B. COMMITTEE ACTION

The committee considers the bill at a hearing scheduled by the committee chair and it is usually open to the public. The bill may leave to committee to the floor in one of three ways: as is, with amendments, or by a substitute bill. If the bill is not considered or reported then it is "tabled", to remain in committee until such time as the committee chooses to reconsider it.

## C. FLOOR ACTION

Once the bill is reported to the floor (or referred directly without committee review), its title is read out loud for the second reading. At this time, the bill is eligible for amendments on the floor. After the bill is given a third reading, the House must vote to return it to the second reading for any additional amendments.

When scheduled by the President or Speaker, the bill is given a third reading and considered on the floor. The bill may not go through the second and third reading on the same day, except by an emergency vote of three-fourths of the members (30 votes in the Senate, 60 in the Assembly). When approved by a majority of members (21 votes in the Senate, 41 in the Assembly) the bill passes and is sent to the other House. If a final vote is not taken, the bill may be considered at another time or may be returned to a committee by a majority vote of the House.

## D. SECOND HOUSE

The bill is delivered to the second House where it goes through the same process. If the second House amends the bill, it is returned to the first House for a vote on the changes. A bill receives final legislative approval when it passes both Houses in an identical form. There are no conference committees in the State Legislature as there are in the U.S. Congress. Each House must pass an identical bill for it to move on to the Governor.

## E. GOVERNOR'S ACTION

After final passage in the legislature, the bill is sent to the Governor for consideration. The Governor may sign it, conditionally veto it (returning it for changes) or veto it absolutely. The Governor may also veto single line items of appropriation bills. Bills passed in the last 10 days of the 2-year session may be "pocket vetoed." This occurs if the Governor does not take formal action.

A bill becomes law upon the Governor's signature or after 45 days if no action is taken. If vetoed, a bill may become law if the Legislature overrides the veto by a 2/3 vote (27 in the Senate, 54 in the Assembly). A law takes effect on the day specified in its text or, if unspecified, on July 4th following its passage.

## IV. GETTING AROUND THE STATEHOUSE

### A. PHYSICAL ACCESS

Accessible parking spaces are available for individuals with disabilities. These parking spaces are located in the Capitol Complex parking garage, the parking lot behind the State House, and on West State Street near the State House.

Accessible entrances are located at various sites around the State House. The West State Street entrance to the State House has two exterior wheelchair-accessible ramps, and is also equipped

with an automatic door. The east-side ground level entrance has an interior ramp. Although the east-side door is not automatic, it meets the Barrier Free Access subcode opening-force requirement. The State House Annex front entrance is equipped with a wheelchair-accessible ramp and power-assisted doors.

There are two elevators in the Legislative State House that are wheelchair-accessible. One elevator with signage for handicapped use stops at Level B and avoids the four steps that separate Level B from B1. This elevator is not reserved solely for individuals with disabilities. The Executive State House has two additional elevators along the main corridor on opposite sides of the rotunda. Only the elevator behind the rotunda services offices on Level 4. Three wheelchair-accessible elevators in the center of the Annex provide access to each of the building's main levels. A wheelchair-accessible elevator also provides access to sublevels of the basement and the first floor in the east wing of the State House Annex.

On session days during legislative activity, sergeants-at-arms of both Houses are required to provide access to the chamber floors for visitors using wheelchairs, who may enter through the first floor main entrance. Legislative Leadership offices, which are located on the 2nd floor of the Legislative State House, are accessible through key-operated platform lifts. To obtain a key to a lift, visit the Assembly Clerk's Office in Room L214.

Each Committee room is equipped with built-in, ADA-compliant, FM-assistive listening devices for the hearing impaired. The assistive listening devices are available for use in the chambers and committee rooms when requested 24 hours in advance by calling:

Legislative Committee Rooms: 609-847-3353

Senate Chamber: 609-292-6828

General Assembly Chamber: 609-292-5222

Real-time reporters and sign language interpreters are available with a minimum notice of five working days. Accommodations can be arranged by calling 609-847-3353.

Accessible public rest rooms are located on floors A, B1, 1, 3, and 3 in the Legislative State House. At the State House Annex, bathrooms and employee facilities throughout the building contain accessible sinks and lavatories.

### **B. LEGISLATIVE MATERIALS**

Large print versions of bills, resolutions and committee statements are available from the Legislative Information and Bill Room, located in the State House Annex. The Legislative Information and Bill Room can be contacted at 609-842-3905 or 800-792-8630. For hearing impaired users dial 711 for NJ Relay. The office keeps the following large print materials on hand, including: Legislative Calendar, Legislative Roster, Legislative Process Brochure, Guide to the Capitol Complex, and Information for Visitors with Special Needs. Other publications can be enlarged or transferred in an audio format upon request.



## C. STATE LEGISLATURE'S WEBSITE

The New Jersey Legislature maintains a website at <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>. The website allows real-time access to legislative proceedings. The proceedings are available in video and/or audio format (depending on room location). Text archives of proceedings are available upon request. Users can also view the legislative schedule for each day, find out information about their representatives, and view legislative publications.

Users can search for specific bills on the Legislature's website, using one or more search terms. Users do not have to choose every search term available, just those that will help to find the bill requested.

The search terms available on the website are as follows:

- **Bill Number.** Each bill introduced in a session has its own number, or code. The numbers of all bills that are introduced in the Senate start with the letter S (i.e., S28, S1969). The numbers of all bills that are introduced in the General Assembly start with the letter A (i.e., A113, A502). If you know the number of the bill, you can enter it here. Other searching tips include:
  - Entering just the letter "S" will bring up all Senate bills, and entering just the letter "A" will bring up all General Assembly bills.
  - Entering a number like "525" will bring up both S525 and A525.
- **Legislative Session:** You can search by each two-year session of the Legislature (i.e., the 2004-2005 session). The earliest bills that are available online are from the 1996-1997 session.
- **Subject:** Selecting the "List of Bill Subject headings" link brings up a pop-up window that allows you to select a subject, such as taxation, health care, or elections. You can only select one subject at a time. Once you select a subject, you may search on that subject by itself or add additional search terms.
- **Sponsor:** You may choose the name of the sponsor or co-sponsor of the legislation. This pull-down menu allows you to choose the name of either a Senator or General Assembly member. Selecting just this option allows you to find all the bills sponsored or co-sponsored by a given legislator.
- **Keyword:** You may search bills by keyword. Entering a key word like "disability" or "civil rights" or "parking" allows you to find bills with that word in the text.
- **Last Date of Action:** You may search by the last date that a given bill had action. For example, if a bill was signed by the Governor on July 1, 2004, you can conduct a search for that date and find that bill and any other bills that had their last action on that day. A bill's "last date of action" is the day that the bill is signed by the Governor, or the day that it has had its last action (i.e., first, second or third reading, committee hearing, etc.)
- **Governor's Action:** You may search for bills that have been approved or vetoed in some way by the Governor. This search only works for bills that pass both houses and are sent to the Governor's desk.

Each bill has a page with the bill number, a list of sponsors, a list of actions by the Legislature or Governor, and links to various documents about the bill. The website uses two separate document formats, as follows:

**ACROBAT** - Provides an electronic duplicate of a legislative document with browse and search capability.

The Adobe ® Acrobat format, with the .pdf extension, is intended for individuals who would like to quickly obtain a copy of a legislative bill or other document. By selecting the Acrobat version, users may view and print a replica of a legislative document -- just as it would appear from our Trenton Office.

HyperText Markup Language (HTML) - Provides for immediate online viewing and searching of a legislative document, without the need for a special viewer such as Adobe ® Acrobat.

The HTML version is intended for individuals who need to quickly view an entire legislative document. The HTML document is not a replica nor is it in the official document format. The HTML version is also intended for users who would like to download the entire or selected text of bills and work on the text in word processing software such as Microsoft Word. Different browsers may produce slightly different results in HTML texts.

The New Jersey Legislature Transcribed Public Hearings and Meetings are available in Acrobat and HTML formats for the years 1996 – 2019.

For more information, contact the Administrative Unit of the Office of Legislative Services at 609-847-3350, 711 for NJ Relay.

### V. WHAT CAN I DO?

- Visit your legislators' offices. You can call their offices and introduce yourself. Mention what you would like to discuss and set up an appointment. Be prepared for your visit, and be specific and brief.
- Sometimes a legislator will not be personally available, but you will be able to speak to the legislator's staff members. Legislators rely heavily on their professional staff members for information gathering and analysis. You can play an equally supportive role by making sure staff are aware of the perspective your personal knowledge and experience can provide.
- Write letters to your legislators. Express your views and request their response to a matter of specific concern. Make your letters brief, to the point, clear and formal. Include your mailing address and phone number so they know where to respond.
- Call your legislators on the phone. Be ready to state briefly your specific concern.

However you choose to participate in the process, it helps to follow some basic steps.

- Make yourself an expert on the issues that you want to advocate. Be aware of whom the issue affects and what others think about it. If you have done your homework, you will be able to present your views with confidence.
- Know your legislators. Effective legislative advocacy requires you to know and build positive relationships with your legislators. For that reason it is important for you to take opportunities to get to know them, even before you might need to request their support on a particular matter. One tip: the best time to meet with your legislators to get to know them is between legislative sessions, when they are home. While it may be unlikely that you will agree with your legislators on every issue, you can still build a positive and lasting relationship in the long run.
- Get to know legislative staff. Legislative staff members face an incredible number and variety of issues that they are expected to understand. They always appreciate new sources of clear and accurate information. If you establish yourself as a person they can trust for reliable information on an issue, you will be a much more effective advocate and have greater access.
- Network with other citizens and groups. Much of the information you need to be effective in the legislative process can be obtained from other concerned and active citizens. Informal or formal citizen groups represent most issue areas.
- Find out whether there are groups that share your concerns and establish a network. A group of concerned citizens can be much more effective working together, rather than as separate individuals trying to accomplish the same goal.
- Find your state representative at: <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/members/abcroster.asp>

### KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

You will be far more effective by following these points:

1. Be well prepared for your discussions and be brief.
2. Provide a written statement to go along with your verbal presentation.
3. Make letters formal, specific and concise.
4. Do not berate or argue with your legislator if they disagree with you. Simply thank them for their time and express a desire for further discussion.
5. Do a brief follow-up letter thanking your legislator for his or her time and attention.

## Resources

Office of Legislative Services  
State House Annex  
125 South Warren Street  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
1-800-792-8630 / 711 for NJ Relay  
[www.njleg.state.nj.us/legislativepub/ols.asp](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/legislativepub/ols.asp)

This office provides information on bill status, calendar of events, legislative rosters and legislative procedures.

Assembly Majority Office  
State House  
P.O. Box 098  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
609-847-3500  
609-695-2795 (fax)

Assembly Minority Office  
State House  
P.O. Box 098  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
609-847-3400  
609-633-9806 (fax)

Senate Democratic Office  
State House  
P.O. Box 099  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
609-358-0708  
609-633-7254 (fax)

Senate Republican Office  
State House  
P.O. Box 099  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
609-847-3600  
609-984-8148(fax)

Governor's Office  
State House  
P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
609-292-6000 / 609-633-7106 (TTY)

Disability Rights New Jersey  
210 S. Broad Street, 3rd Floor  
Trenton, New Jersey 08608  
800-922-7233 (In state only)  
[www.disabilityrightsnj.org](http://www.disabilityrightsnj.org)

United Spinal Association  
75-20 Astoria Boulevard  
Jackson Heights, New York 11370  
718-803-3782/732-246-2525  
[www.unitedspinal.org](http://www.unitedspinal.org)

The Arc of New Jersey  
985 Livingston Avenue  
North Brunswick, New Jersey 08902  
[www.arcnj.org](http://www.arcnj.org)

New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities  
P.O. Box 700  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0700  
609-292-3745 / 609-777-3238 (TDD)  
[www.njdcc.org](http://www.njdcc.org)

## Glossary of Terms

**ABSOLUTE VETO** The Governor's rejection of a proposed law passed by the Legislature. A bill vetoed in this manner cannot become law unless the Legislature overrides the veto by a vote of at least two-thirds of the members of each house. (27 votes in the Senate; 54 votes in the General Assembly)

**AD HOC STUDY COMMITTEE OR COMMISSION** A committee or commission established by law, resolution, or order of the presiding officer to investigate special issues and make recommendations for legislative or executive agency action.

**ADJOURNMENT SINE DIE** Literally adjournment "without a day," it is an adjournment without definitely fixing a day for reconvening. Since 1970 in New Jersey, it is the final adjournment of the two-year legislative term and the end of all legislative business.

**ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE** A committee that deals with the internal housekeeping functions of the Senate or General Assembly.

**ADMINISTRATIVE RULES** Rules and regulations issued by state executive branch agencies.

**ADOPT** To vote official approval or acceptance.

**ADVANCE LAWS** Advance copies of each law published and distributed prior to printing of the annual volumes.

**ADVICE AND CONSENT** The power vested in the Senate by the State Constitution to review and approve or reject the Governor's nominations for judges, cabinet officers, and other officials. Appointments are confirmed by an absolute majority of 21 votes in the Senate. (See SENATORIAL COURTESY)

**AMENDMENT** Any modification made or proposed in a bill, resolution or motion by adding, substituting or deleting language.

**AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION** A change to the State Constitution proposed by the Legislature. Proposed constitutional amendments are presented to the voters as a public question on the general election ballot. If rejected by the voters, the proposal or a similar one may not be resubmitted to the public for three years.

**APPORTIONMENT** The allocation of legislative seats among the legislative districts according to district population. (See REAPPORTIONMENT)

**APPROPRIATION** A legislative enactment authorizing the expenditure of public funds for a specific governmental purpose.

**ASSEMBLY MINUTES** The official record of the actions of the New Jersey General Assembly. This record is published in an annual volume.

**BICAMERAL** A legislature composed of two houses. The New Jersey houses are the Senate and the General Assembly.

**BIENNIAL SESSION** A two-year meeting period of a legislative body.

**BILL** A proposal to establish a new law, or to change or repeal an existing law.

**BILL DRAFTING** The writing of bills and resolutions according to a prescribed form.

**BILL GUIDE** A publication produced by the Office of Legislative Services' Data Management Unit containing a cumulative listing of bills by subject, by sponsor and in numerical order, passed into law and vetoed. It also includes a list of chapter laws organized by subject matter and leadership and committee assignments.

**BILL STATEMENT** A brief statement printed at the end of a bill or resolution that describes its provision or purpose. It is also called a "sponsor's statement."

**BIPARTISAN** A committee or organization composed of members of both major political parties, or an action or idea that has support from members of both parties. (See **PARTISAN**)

**BUDGET** A document of proposed governmental expenditures for a given fiscal year and the proposed means of financing those expenditures.

**BUDGET MESSAGE** A general description of the proposed annual budget presented by the Governor before a joint session of the Legislature and in writing.

**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION** A formal statement by which a house honors an individual or organization or pays tribute to the memory of a deceased citizen. Ceremonial resolutions are not subject to the same strict rules of form and procedure as other resolutions. A ceremonial resolution does not have the force of law and does not require action from the Governor.

**CHAMBER** The official room or location for meetings of a legislative body.

**CHAPTER LAW** Each act passed by the Legislature and approved by the Governor. Chapter Laws are organized numerically in order of the Governor's approval and compiled annually.

**CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY** The chief administrative officer of the General Assembly. The clerk is not a member of the Legislature, but is elected by the General Assembly. The Clerk's duties include reading all bills and resolutions on first, second and third reading; recording the vote on all bills and resolutions; and providing general supervision over certain employees of the house.

**CODIFICATION OF LAWS** The systematic arrangement of laws in a code. In New Jersey, chapter laws are codified according to subject matter.

**COMMITTEE AIDE** A professional legislative staff member, provided by the nonpartisan Office of Legislative Services or partisan offices, to assist each committee in administrative, technical and research capacities.

**COMMITTEE, COMMISSION** A group established by law, resolution or order of the presiding officer to investigate a particular issue or area and make recommendations for legislative or administrative action. Committees or commissions are frequently comprised of legislators of one or both houses, subject area experts, or public members appointed by merit of the positions they hold in state agencies and private organizations.

**CONCURRENT RESOLUTION** A resolution adopted by both the Senate and General Assembly to express the policy or opinions of the Legislature. Such resolutions are often used to petition Congress to take certain actions, to establish legislative study commissions, to adopt joint rules, or to propose amendments to the State Constitution. A concurrent resolution requires no action by the Governor.

**CONDITIONAL VETO** A veto in which the Governor objects to parts of a bill and proposes amendments that would make it acceptable. If the Legislature re-enacts the bill with the recommended amendments, it is presented again to the Governor for signature.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST** A situation occurring when an official's private interests may benefit from his or her public actions.

**CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT** One of 13 districts in New Jersey from which a congressional representative is elected. The districts are established by state law and are redrawn every ten years after the federal census to maintain equal population in each. (See REDISTRICTING)

**CONSENT LIST** A list of bills which, by prearrangement of the two parties, are passed without objection or debate.

**CONSTITUENT** A resident of a legislator's district.

**CONSTITUTION** A written instrument defining and limiting the duties and powers of a government and guaranteeing certain rights to the people who are subject to that government's laws. New Jersey's first constitution was adopted in 1776, its present one in 1947.

**CO-SPONSOR(S)** The sponsor(s) of a bill or resolution in addition to the prime sponsor.

**DEBATE** The formal discussion and arguments of a matter by the members of the Senate and General Assembly during a session. Precise limitations on debate in the New Jersey Legislature have been set by the rules of each house.

**DISTRICT OFFICES** The offices maintained by legislators in their respective districts for the purpose of serving their constituents.

**DRAFT** The copy of a preliminary bill not yet officially introduced.

**EMERGENCY RESOLUTION** A motion used to expedite the passage of legislation by advancing a bill with a second and third reading on the same day. An emergency resolution requires 30 votes in the Senate or 60 votes in the General Assembly.

**EX-OFFICIO** Membership on a committee or board by virtue of a particular office or position held.

**EXPENDITURE** Charges incurred, whether paid or unpaid.

**FIRST REPRINT (SECOND, THIRD, ETC.)** The designation that indicates the number of times that a bill or resolution has been reprinted after being amended either by committee or floor action.

**FISCAL NOTE** A statement that indicates the anticipated financial impact of proposed legislation on state or local government.

**FISCAL YEAR** An accounting period of 12 months. In New Jersey State Government, this period runs from July 1 to June 30.

**FLOOR** The area of the legislative chamber occupied by the members and staff of the house. A legislator "has the floor" when he or she has been granted permission by the presiding officer to address the house.

**GALLERY** The area of the legislative chamber from which visitors may view the proceedings.

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY** In New Jersey, one of the two houses that comprise the state Legislature. The General Assembly has 80 members - two elected from each legislative district - and is presided over by the Speaker of the General Assembly.

**GOVERNOR** Serves as the chief executive officer and commander-in-chief in each of the fifty states and in the five permanently inhabited territories, functioning as both head of state and head of government therein.

**GRANDFATHER CLAUSE** A provision within a bill that exempts certain activities, individuals or groups that were involved prior to its enactment from the effects of the legislation.

**HEARING** A formal meeting, usually of a committee or commission, at which testimony on a question or issue is accepted from the general public and /or invited witnesses.



**HOUSE** This term can refer to the room or chamber in which a legislative body meets, but most often refers to the body itself. The Senate is one house and the General Assembly another. (See UPPER HOUSE)

**HOUSE UNDER CALL** A motion requiring all members of a house to remain in the legislative chamber during a voting session until the house concludes its business. This may be done to maintain a quorum, or during consideration of an important issue.

**IMMUNITY** The legislative privileges afforded by the New Jersey Constitution. Legislators are exempt from arrest while attending a session or when traveling to and from a session (except in cases of treason or high misdemeanor, now classified as a crime of the third degree or greater). Legislators are also exempt from questioning on remarks made in speech or debate during a session or committee meeting.

**INTRODUCTION** The presentation of a bill or resolution to the legislative body for its consideration. The Secretary of the Senate or Clerk of the General Assembly formally introduces a bill in open session by announcing the bill's number and sponsor(s), and reading its title.

**JOINT RESOLUTION** A formal action adopted by both houses and approved by the Governor. A joint resolution has the effect of a law and is often used instead of a bill when the purpose is of a temporary nature. A joint resolution can also be used to establish a commission or express an opinion.

**JOINT SESSION** A combined meeting of the Senate and General Assembly for a special purpose, such as receiving the Governor's annual "State of the State" and budget messages. A joint session may also include other addresses by the Governor or distinguished visitors, or to hold special commemorative ceremonies. Also, the Constitution provides that the two houses meet in joint session when appointing the State Auditor.

**JURAT** A certificate attached to a bill confirming its passage in one house before being delivered to the second house for consideration.

**LAW** All the official rules and codes adopted by the state, including the Constitution, statutory laws enacted by the Legislature, case laws established by court decisions, and administrative laws as set forth by executive branch agencies.

**LEGISLATIVE AIDES** Assistants employed by a legislator to perform a variety of duties, including addressing concerns of constituents, researching and tracking legislation, and handling administrative functions.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL** The chief legal officer of the Legislature and adviser to the legislative and committee leadership. The chief legal officer provides advice on matters of parliamentary procedure and legal matters affecting the Legislature as well as issues pertaining to the Conflicts of Interest Law and the Legislative Code of Ethics.

**LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION** All the legislators representing one district or county.

**LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT** One of the forty areas in New Jersey from which one senator and two General Assembly members are elected. A special Apportionment Commission redraws the district lines every ten years. Districts are designed to be of approximately equal population and may cross county lines. (See REAPPORTIONMENT)

**LEGISLATIVE INDEX** A private publication that provides a cumulative listing of all bills and resolutions introduced in each house. The index also includes the action taken on each bill and provides a synopsis.

**LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION AND BILL ROOM (LIBR)** A unit under the Director of Public Information of the Office of Legislative Services that supplies a variety of information about the Legislature to legislators and the public.

**LEGISLATIVE LIAISON** A person who represents an executive department before the Legislature. A legislative liaison testifies at committee hearings and assists the Legislature with technical expertise and information about the department.

**LEGISLATIVE MANUAL** A private publication (commonly referred to as Fitzgerald's Red Book) that serves as an almanac of information about the State of New Jersey and its government, including biographies of present and former governors, legislators and cabinet officials.

**LEGISLATIVE SERVICES COMMISSION** A bipartisan panel comprised of eight members from each house. The Commission oversees the non-partisan Office of Legislative Services and coordinates other services for the Legislature, including legislative facilities, computer services, legislative printing, the district office program and personnel policies.

**LEGISLATIVE SESSION** The formal two-year term for each New Jersey Legislature. The term is divided into two annual sessions. Scheduled voting meetings of either house are also called legislative sessions. Voting sessions (meeting days) of the New Jersey Legislature are usually held on Mondays and/or Thursdays. (See SESSION YEAR)

**LEGISLATURE** The elected, representative branch of State government. The Legislature makes and revises laws, approves certain executive nominations, and proposes constitutional changes. The New Jersey Legislature is comprised of the Senate and the General Assembly.

**LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR** is an elected constitutional officer, the second ranking officer of the executive branch and the first officer in line to succeed the Governor of New Jersey.

**LINE-ITEM VETO** This veto action allows the Governor to approve the bill but reduce or eliminate monies appropriated for specific items. The line-item veto can only be applied to bills that contain an appropriation. (See VETO)

**LOBBYIST** A person who communicates with the Legislature and the Governor to support or oppose legislation. Officially, a lobbyist is called a legislative agent.

**MAJORITY, MINORITY** These terms refer to the political party having the most (majority) or fewest (minority) representatives in either house.

**MAJORITY LEADER** The floor leader of the majority party in each house, elected by the members of the majority party.

**MINORITY LEADER** The floor leader of the minority party in each house, elected by the members of the minority party.

**MOTION** A proposal calling for specific action.

**NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE DIGEST** A publication produced by the Office of Legislative Services, Legislative Information and Bill Room (LIBR), the day after each session of either house. The digest provides up-to-date information of each day's legislative activity. The publication contains various categories of bill status including bills introduced, bills passed, and bills signed into law since the last session. Single copies are available free of charge through the LIBR office.

**OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES** An agency of the Legislature that provides professional, non-partisan staff services to the Legislature and its officers, members, commissions and committees. These services include general, legal and fiscal research and analysis, bill drafting committee staffing, and computer data base management.

**ONE-HOUSE RESOLUTION** A resolution adopted by one house to express policy or opinions, regulate its internal organization or procedures, or establish a study committee under its sole jurisdiction.

**OVERRIDE** The process by which the Legislature overrules the Governor's veto of legislation. A two-thirds majority in both houses is necessary to override a veto.

**PAMPHLET LAWS** The official name of the collection of New Jersey's Chapter Laws. (See CHAPTER LAWS)

**PARTISAN** Relating to a political party. "Non-partisan" refers to individuals or organizations that do not support one specific political party. State employees, such as those in the Office of Legislative Services, are required to be non-partisan in their jobs. (See BIPARTISAN)

**PARTISAN STAFF** Each house has staff members who serve under the direction of the majority and minority leadership. Partisan staff provide research, policy, public relations and administrative services to their respective party leaders and legislators.

**PARTY CONFERENCE** A meeting of members of the same political party from one house of the Legislature to discuss legislative business. Also called a caucus.

**PERSONAL PRIVILEGE** The parliamentary procedure whereby members of both houses have the opportunity to express their feelings regarding the “safety, dignity, and integrity” of the proceedings or the “rights, reputation and conduct of members”. Members must first gain recognition from the presiding officer.

**POCKET VETO** The only type of veto in which the Governor does not return the bill to the Legislature for a possible vote to override. This veto applies only to bills passed within the last 10 days of a 2-year legislative session. The Governor, in essence, “pockets” the bill, which never becomes law.

**PRE-FILING OF BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS** Members and members-elect of the Legislature may file bills and resolutions for introduction in the new annual legislative session before that session begins. The pre-filing period runs from November 15 to the first Tuesday in January, according to the Joint Rules of the Senate and General Assembly. Bills and resolutions filed in this way are numbered, printed and available for distribution prior to the start of the new session. Formal introduction of pre-filed bills occurs after the session is commenced, at either the first or second meeting of the house.

**PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE** The chief presiding officer of the Senate. The Senate elects one of its members to serve as President of the Senate. The President chairs the Senate during sessions, appoints committee chairs and members of committees and commissions, refers bills and resolutions to reference committees, sets the agenda for session days, and supervises the administration of the day-to-day business of the Senate. When there is a vacancy in the Governor’s Office, the President of the Senate serves as Acting Governor.

**PRESIDENT OR SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE (PRO TEM)** A member of the Senate or General Assembly who is selected to serve as that house’s presiding officer in the absence of the President or Speaker.

**PRIME SPONSOR** The legislator whose name appears first among the sponsors of a bill or resolution. The prime sponsor has the right to select co-sponsors and may exercise a number of other prerogatives in regard to the proposed legislation.

**QUORUM** The minimum number of members of a house of the Legislature who must be present for the house to conduct business. (21 members in the Senate; 41 members in the General Assembly)

**QUORUM CALL** A roll call to determine whether a quorum of that house is present.

**READING** The reading of a bill’s number, sponsor(s) and title in open session by the Senate Secretary or Assembly Clerk. A bill must be read three times before it can be passed. A bill is given first reading upon introduction, second reading when reported by a committee (or may be sent directly to second reading without committee reference), and third reading when posted for a final vote.

**REAPPORTIONMENT** The redrawing of district lines for the New Jersey Legislature. An Apportionment Commission redraws the lines to maintain an equal population in each district. New Jersey's districts are reapportioned every ten years following the federal census. (See REDISTRICTING)

**RECESS** A temporary break during a floor session, or a period when no legislative sessions are held.

**REDISTRICTING** The redrawing of district lines for the United States Congress. The New Jersey Legislature redraws the lines of congressional districts to maintain an equal population in each district. New Jersey's Congressional seats are redistricted every ten years following the federal census. (See REAPPORTIONMENT)

**RESCIND** To annul or undo a previously taken action.

**RESOLUTION** An action of the Legislature that expresses the policies, sentiment, opinions or direction of one or both houses. Types include joint, concurrent, ceremonial, and one-house resolutions.

**REVENUE** Income generated by the State from taxes, fees, fines, federal grants and other sources.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** The recording of each legislator's vote, usually electronically. Roll call votes are also known as recorded or machine votes.

**ROUTINE BUSINESS** A period during a daily legislative session, usually after all voting is concluded, when the Secretary of the Senate or Clerk of the General Assembly records and reads bill introductions, committee reports and takes administrative actions.

**RULES OF THE HOUSES** Each house adopts rules independently to regulate its internal organization, operation and procedures. Houses also adopt joint rules to govern matters of mutual interest.

**SECRETARY OF THE SENATE** The chief administrative officer of the Senate. The Secretary is not a member of the Senate, but is elected by Senate members. The Secretary's duties include reading all bills and resolutions on first, second and third reading; recording the vote on all bills and resolutions; and providing general supervision over certain Senate employees.

**SELECT COMMITTEE** A legislative committee designated to study a specific subject area. A select committee is established for a limited period, may be created by either house, and may include members of one or both houses.

**SENATE** In New Jersey, one of the two houses that comprise the state Legislature. The Senate has 40 members, one elected from each legislative district. The President of the Senate manages the Senate.

**SENATE JOURNAL** The official record of the actions of the New Jersey Senate.

**SENATORIAL COURTESY** A Senator who represents the county where an individual nominated by the Governor for a position may choose to block that individual's nomination as part of the "advice and consent" process. The Senate will not consider a nomination if such a block exists.

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS** A member of the session day staff who assists in maintaining the security and decorum of the house. The Sergeant-at-Arms serves under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Senate or the Clerk of the General Assembly

**SESSION DAY STAFF** Part-time personnel, including sergeants-at-arms, clerks, supervisors of bills, and pages who perform functions related to the conduct of a session.

**SESSION YEAR** New Jersey's session year begins on the second Tuesday of each January. All business conducted during the first year of the two-year legislative term may be continued into the second year or session, but unfinished business expires at the end of the second year.

**SPEAKER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY** A member of the General Assembly who is elected by the members of the house to serve as the chief presiding officer during sessions, who appoints committee chairs and members of committees and commissions, refers bills and resolutions to reference committees, sets the agenda for session days, and supervises the administration of the day-to-day business of the General Assembly.

**SPONSOR** A legislator who introduces a bill or resolution.

**STANDING REFERENCE COMMITTEES** Committees established by each house to consider bills and resolutions referred by the presiding officer and to review activities of state agencies.

**STATE HOUSE** New Jersey's capitol building, located on State Street in Trenton. It serves as the official location of state government and houses both the executive (Governor's offices) and legislative branches (Senate and General Assembly chambers and offices).

**STATE HOUSE ANNEX** The building adjacent to the State House that houses the Office of Legislative Services, legislative offices and committee rooms.

**STATE HOUSE PRESS CORPS** Reporters who cover legislative news. Members of the press corps represent daily and weekly New Jersey newspapers, national news wire services, and area radio and television stations. Most have offices in the State House complex. Press corps members are also known as "capitol reporters" or "legislative correspondents."

**STATE OF THE STATE** An annual address by the Governor setting forth his priorities for that year's legislative session.

**STATUTES** The laws created by acts of the Legislature. (See LAW)

**STOPPING THE CLOCK** The annual legislative session ends at noon on the second Tuesday in January of each even-numbered year. Infrequently, the legislators may agree to “stop the clock” at noon and continue the proceedings. The journal indicates that the actions taken after noon occur on the final legislative day.

**TABLE** To defer action on legislation until a later date. Often, bills that are “tabled” do not proceed to the next step of the process.

**THE OTHER SIDE OF THE AISLE** During debate, a legislator’s way of referring to members of the “other” political party. The phrase refers to the custom of seating all Democrats in one area of the legislative chamber and Republicans in another, separated by an aisle.

**UNICAMERAL** A legislature composed of one house. Nebraska is the only state with a unicameral legislature.

**UPPER HOUSE** Term used to describe the Senate. The General Assembly is referred to as the “lower house”.

**VETO** An official action of the Governor to nullify or reject legislative action. Forms include absolute veto, conditional veto, line item veto and pocket veto. The legislature may override the Governor’s veto with a two-thirds vote.

**VOICE VOTE** A method of voting in which legislators respond orally, in unison, to vote yes or no. The house does not record the individual vote of each legislator.

**WHIP** A legislator who assists the party floor leader in maintaining party discipline. The whip also ensures attendance at legislative sessions and committee meetings.