

# The Texas Legislature at a Glance

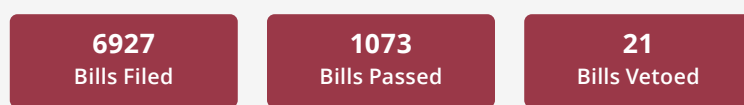
The Texas Legislature meets every two years and has a deep history of inefficiency by design. A legislative or issue campaign in Texas will require a thoughtful, targeted strategy that should be designed and implemented months before the session begins. If you want your bill passed, or even heard in the first place, the odds are stacked against you.

## Key Facts


-  The Texas Legislature meets on odd years for 140 days from January to May. According to the Handbook of Texas, the biennial schedule was established by the state constitution in 1845 to account for the difficulty and danger of traveling to the state capital.
-  Lawmakers can begin to hold committee meetings once assignments have been made, but according to the state constitution they cannot pass a bill during the first 60 days UNLESS the governor declares it an emergency item.
-  During the session, the Texas Legislature's ONLY constitutional obligation is to pass a balanced budget.
-  Special sessions may be called at the discretion of the governor when the legislature is adjourned. During special sessions, lawmakers can only consider items the governor has placed on the call.
-  During the interim the House and Senate are tasked with studying issues assigned by the Lt. Governor and Speaker, referred to as interim charges.
-  Meeting with legislators during the interim is a great opportunity to get your issue on their minds before the whirlwind of session. Priorities quickly become crowded during session, so discussing your issue early is key.
-  Legislators tend to focus heavily on their district constituencies in the first 75 days, especially new leaders or those in recently re-drawn districts. It's important to identify these legislators, as they're often hyper-aware of the voices of their local stakeholders.
-  The Texas Legislature will have a significant impact on spending and policy for, at minimum, the next two years. Going into session blind is not a viable option for businesses and industries with interests in the state.
-  For the most part, Texas state legislators are not career politicians, because they cannot afford it. Total pay for a two-year term typically equals less than \$46,000.
-  Many staffers are seasonal "session only" hires and are often working in the legislature to gain policy experience.

## Key Numbers

From 2021 87th legislative session



## Setting the Landscape

 The "Big Three" of Texas politics - the Governor, the Lt. Governor and the House Speaker - wield the most influence over what issues will receive attention during session, acting essentially as the absolute deciders of what is heard at all.

The Lt. Governor's power is the strongest of the three. He can delegate key committee assignments to allies, strip opponents of their assignments, and when presiding over a Senate session, he can literally pick and choose what is heard on the Senate floor.

The Governor is the most visible of the three and sets the tone for the session. By communicating his policy priorities and noting what he will and won't consider, he wields his influence - and veto power - with considerable weight.

The Speaker of the House determines committee memberships, refers bills to committees, manages debates on the floor and must do so deftly to earn the 75 or more votes from Members of the House required to elect him to the position.

## Legislature Timeline

When a session begins, legislative progress will likely be slow. **The legislature only meets for 140 days**, but your issue won't be debated until well into the session, thanks to committee assignments and rules on proceedings.

**Jan. 10, 2023** The 88th Texas Legislative Session gavel in



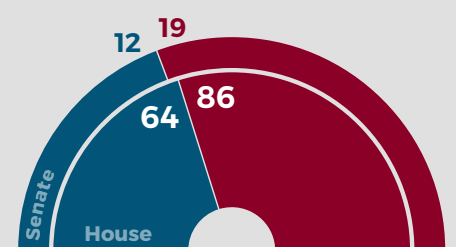
### Want to meet with a legislator?

Your window is within the first 60 days. After that, schedules become extremely full with committee hearings, policymaking and floor proceedings to find the time.

- 7th-14th days** Committee assignments are announced
- 60th day** Deadline to file bills, and committee debate begins the following week
- 119th day** Last day for House committees to report bills and joint resolutions to be placed on the calendar
- 131st Day** Last day for House to report bills to the calendar
- 140th Day** Sine die, the adjournment of regular session
- 20th day following adjournment** Last day the governor can sign or veto bills passed during the regular session

## Party Distribution

On opening of the 2023 88th Legislature



**State Senate:** Republicans: 19 Democrats: 12  
**State House:** Republicans: 86 Democrats: 64

### Legislative Leadership:

**Lt. Governor**  
Dan Patrick (R)  
**Speaker**  
Dade Phelan (R)

## Key Media Outlets

**Texas has 20 media markets.** Identifying local outlets that reach target legislators is a key part of any legislative communications strategy. A diminished number of reporters are dedicated to covering the session, creating a cohort of important outlets that cover statewide news, political news, and relevant legislative updates



Looking to follow the conversation online? Search **#txlege** on Twitter for the latest updates in Texas politics and policy.