



## New York State Assembly

### Workgroup on Legislative Process, Operations, and Public Participation

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

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#### TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- ❖ Create and maintain a comprehensive free online portal providing timely public access to all official documents and records regarding legislation from introduction through enactment or veto, as well as related materials submitted by outside organizations.
- ❖ Make the content and searchability of the Legislative Retrieval System available on a free public website and improve access and usability.
- ❖ Provide public access to Support and Opposition Memoranda submitted by lobbyists, business interests, and advocacy organizations, indexed by bill and organization.
- ❖ Create a new online form for the public to comment directly to Members on legislation.
- ❖ Make records of bills reported and committee votes available promptly online, to all Members and the public, including through LRS and the portal when it is operational. (*Rules change.*)
- ❖ Make records of votes on motions to discharge a bill from committee available promptly online, to all Members and the public, including through LRS and the portal when it is operational. (*Rules change.*)

❖ **Make records of votes on amendments proposed on the Floor available promptly online, to all Members and the public, including through LRS and the portal when it is operational. (*Rules change.*)**

❖ **Make audio and video webcasts of committee meetings available on the Assembly website. (*Rules change.*)**

If it takes significant time and cost to implement full, high-quality video for all committees, a simple webcam and/or audio access should be implemented promptly, with full video access as soon as practicable, beginning with key committees like Codes and Ways & Means.

❖ **Ensure that archived video recordings of session, public hearings, and committee meetings are available promptly online to all Members and the public, on the Assembly website and through the new portal when it is operational. (*Rules change.*)**

❖ **Index recordings and transcripts of Session, and recordings of public hearings and committee meetings, so all of these are linked to bills and searchable by bill.**

Without delaying publication, recordings and transcripts of Session, and recordings of public hearings and committee meetings should be indexed, searchable, and linked to records of each bill via the new portal when it is operational.

❖ **Enhance and expand public affairs television programming, similar to that of C-SPAN, and enhance and better publicize channels in other media, such as YouTube.**

❖ **Make written testimony submitted in connection with committee hearings available promptly online, to all Members and the public, on the Assembly website and through the new portal when it is operational. (*Rules change.*)**

❖ **Provide online public access to home rule messages from localities, requests for committee consideration, impact statements required by statute or the Assembly Rules, and other key events in the legislative process. (*Rules change.*)**

❖ **Create online searchable indexes of the Legislative Library's materials, as well as a method for requesting them.**

❖ **Ensure wireless internet access throughout Assembly public spaces in the Capitol, the Legislative Office Building, Assembly Offices at 250 Broadway, Manhattan and district offices.**

❖ **Make the Assembly website more useful and accessible to the public.**

The site should be fully searchable, mobile-friendly, and better linked with relevant information available through LRS and the new legislative portal when it is operational. Content should be published in universal formatting such as RSS, XML and JSON, to permit subscribed individuals to view up-to-the-minute information on topics of their choice.

❖ **Improve and streamline the method by which content is posted to Member pages, as well as those related to committees and subcommittees.**

❖ **Require expenditure reporting to be available online. (*Rules change.*)**

## ADVANCING LEGISLATION

### Two-Year Session

- ❖ Create a two-year legislative process within the Assembly by amending the Assembly Rules to eliminate automatic regression of bills at the start of the second year. (*Rules change.*)
- ❖ Work toward a fully integrated two-year legislative session, so bills passed in the first year by one house may be passed in the second year by the other, and sent to the Governor. (*Would require agreement with the Senate, and Rules and statutory changes.*)

### Better Information on Bills

- ❖ Provide better information on bills introduced by creating a standard form, available electronically to all Members, to facilitate submission of each bill's Introducer's Memorandum and ensure that it has all elements required by the Rules. (*Rules change.*)

The Assembly Rules require that each Introducer's Memorandum include the purpose of the bill, a summary of its provisions, a statement of its fiscal impact on the state, a statement of its impact on the regulation of businesses and individuals, and a statement as to whether the bill imposes or changes any fine, term of imprisonment, forfeiture of rights or other penal sanction, together with the nature of such imposition or change. A standard digital form will ensure that the memoranda are complete so Members and the public have full information when evaluating bills.

- ❖ Allow Introducer's Memoranda and sponsorships to be submitted digitally. (*Rules change.*)
- ❖ Add a new requirement that each bill's Introducer's Memorandum covers the bill's fiscal impact on localities. (*Rules change.*)
- ❖ Require Local Fiscal Impact Notes to be available online for any applicable bill at the time it is considered by the Ways & Means Committee and for the remainder of the legislative process. (*Rules change.*)
- ❖ Add a new requirement that when a bill sponsor amends any bill the sponsor must describe the amendment in an amended Introducer's Memorandum. (*Rules change.*)

### Committee Process

- ❖ Give all Members the right to have up to five priority bills of their choice considered and voted upon in committee in the first year of the term, as well as an unlimited number in the second year, two weeks earlier in the session than the current Rules provide. (*Rules change.*)
- ❖ Whenever possible, hold committee meetings at fixed, pre-scheduled times, and not concurrently with sessions of the full Assembly.
- ❖ Provide for paperless committee meetings through electronic distribution of committee materials. (*Rules change.*)
- ❖ Review the necessity of current task forces, committees created by special rule, and other entities.
- ❖ Clarify the connection between committees and their respective subcommittees.

### Assembly Floor

- ❖ **Bring more bills up for debate and votes in the early months of session, to make more effective use of this time and reduce the crunch at the end of session.**
- ❖ **Make regular session hours begin no earlier than 8:00 a.m. and end no later than 10:00 p.m. rather than running 6:00 a.m. to midnight, as provided in the current Rules. (*Rules change.*)**
- ❖ **Better organize the Floor Calendar. Require bills receiving a Home Rule Message, bills amended on the Floor, and bills that require a Fiscal Impact Note to be clearly identified as such. (*Rules change.*)**
- ❖ **Create, publicize, and utilize a Floor Debate List throughout Session.**
- ❖ **Require that resolutions be available to Members and the public prior to a Floor vote. (*Rules change.*)**

### Conference Committees

- ❖ **Reconstitute and convene the Assembly Committee on Conference Committees, ensure it meets regularly, and more readily requests a conference committee with the Senate when similar bills pass the two houses. (*Rules change.*)**

The Joint Rules of the Senate and the Assembly provide for conference committees, but they have not been convened to reconcile bills in many years. The Assembly Committee on Conference Committees should be reconstituted and convened regularly to consider similar bills that pass both houses and formally requests conference committees with the Senate.

## RESOURCES AND EFFICIENCY

- ❖ **Provide technical resources and more flexibility in non-personnel budgets that are currently available exclusively for printed newsletters and notices, to enable Members to make more use of digital newsletters, referrals to websites, and other digital communications.**
- ❖ **Establish a comprehensive orientation and training program for new and returning Members. Work with an academic institution to host and provide training resources.**
- ❖ **Increase access to online resources that would increase Member efficacy, like legal research databases, online news publications, etc.**
- ❖ **Improve internal case management/CRM systems for constituent services.**
- ❖ **Modernize the phone system to include features standard in other public and professional services, such as caller ID, line transfers, and individual voicemail boxes, to enhance effectiveness of Member communications and constituent services.**
- ❖ **Increase use of text alerts for members and staff.**

\* “*Rules Change*” denotes requirement of Assembly Rules change