

## The Colorado Legislature – at a Glance



- There are three branches of government in the US and in CO. The *Legislative* branch makes the laws, the *Judicial* branch interprets the laws, the *Executive* branch carries out the laws.
- The *Executive* and *Legislative* branches work out of this building.
- The Colorado Legislature is also referred to as the *General Assembly*.
- There are 100 *legislators* (35 Senators and 65 Representatives). Together, they are *members* of the General Assembly.
- As of 2020, the Senate and House both have a majority of Democrats (In the Senate – 19 Democrats, 16 Republicans; in the House – 41 Democrats, 24 Republicans).
- The Legislative Session in CO begins in January and ends in May, and is 120 days long.
- The period of time when the Legislature is not in session is called the *Interim*.
- During the Interim, legislators continue to conduct official business (meeting with constituents, attending committee meetings, etc) as well as working in their various professional fields.
- Ours is a part-time citizen's legislature and the members come from all walks of life and different career backgrounds.
- Legislators *represent* the people living in their *districts*. Senators represent 144,000 *constituents* (citizens in the district) and Representatives represent 77,000 constituents.
- Senators are term limited to 2 four-year terms and representatives to 4 two-year terms. Term limits are consecutive and members can run again after sitting out the length of a term.
- Starting in 2019, incoming members of the General Assembly receive \$40,242 payable in twelve monthly payments. (Members whose terms began before 2019 receive \$30,000 annually).
- The members vote to make certain members *leaders* who help carry out the rules of the legislature. Rules are important to make sure that all legislators and bills are fairly considered. In the House - *Speaker of the House*. In the Senate - *President*.
- Our legislators make laws to improve the lives of people living in our state.
- Discussion and debate are a very important part of the process. Members may not agree on an idea, and this gives them an opportunity to share why they think their idea should become law or to answer questions from their fellow members.
- The first step in the process of an idea becoming a law is the *Introduction of the bill*. The bill will later be discussed in *committee hearings*, which are an important part of the law-making process. In committee, a small group of legislators hear from the public about why a bill should or should not be made into law.
- Did you know that you can come to testify before a committee? All citizens of our state are encouraged to express their ideas in *public testimony* during the committee process.
- Once a committee has met and our legislators have heard from the public, they will then take the ideas that were discussed back to their fellow members and share what they have learned.
- Each legislator may present 5 bills per session.

- The Senate votes by voice and the House electronically.
- Each passed bill will eventually be discussed in both the House and Senate, so that all 100 members can consider the good and bad effects a bill might have on the lives of people in our state.
- There are many opportunities to change or *amend* a bill before it becomes a law.
- If a bill *passes*, or is approved, by both the House and the Senate, it will go to the Governor.
- The Governor can do 3 things with the bill – he or she can sign it, to make it a law or not sign the bill (that will allow it to become a law but without his or her approval) or *veto* the bill.

*Visit our website at **[www.leg.colorado.gov](http://www.leg.colorado.gov)** to learn more about the members and work of the Colorado General Assembly*