

# EFFECTIVE USE OF THE INTERIM

As extracted from  
Attributes of an Effective Legislature

## BALANCING POWER

### The legislature effectively shares power with the governor

*How do we get there?*

- Although some other state legislatures do propose their own budget such is not necessary to share power with the governor. However, **substantial budget review prior to session**, legislative review and action during session to make budget changes determined by the legislature, and effective budget oversight during the interim are essential to sharing power with the governor.
- Awareness by the membership that **interim committee study of issues and various kinds of legislative oversight** can be highly effective. Such committee activities should include **policy formulation and program development through effective committee studies of issues and effective oversight of executive department programs.**

### The House initiates and enacts its own legislation

*How do we get there?*

- **Conduct studies in a substantive way** and propose legislation to seek solutions to state problems. Such studies should include the taking of testimony, seeking solutions, issuing reports, and proposing legislation.

### The legislature makes independent decisions about the Governor's legislative package

*How do we get there?*

- **Standing committees should be expected to study major issues within their subject matter jurisdiction** and to offer to the House leadership or directly to the governor appropriate proposals for possible inclusion in his package. House committees should also **conduct subsequent oversight of such legislation enacted** and offer the governor the opportunity to make any necessary legislative or executive changes thereto, but House membership needs to be willing to institute such changes even if the governor declines to do so.

### The legislature makes independent decisions about the state budget.

*How do we get there?*

- Dedicating the time and resources necessary to **review the state budget in great detail** and an expectation by the membership that this review process will be very time consuming and, at times, painstaking.
- **Enhancing member education on the budget process**, including information on agency budget development, the role of division of administration, the expected role of the House, and appropriations control and oversight.

## **REPRESENTING CONSTITUENTS**

**Citizens and groups in the state have ready access to information on agendas and proceedings of the legislature.**

*How do we get there?*

- Conducting more **legislative committee hearings** at sites throughout the state.

**The legislature is responsive to public demands and needs.**

*How do we get there?*

- Conduct **ongoing policy analysis** to identify good public policy and evaluate whether existing programs measure up to that standard.
- Conduct **effective committee studies**, with problems brought to the attention of standing committees with jurisdiction; **conduct site-specific hearings on oversight and issues.**
- Conduct **statewide and district-level "major issues" forums**, using webcast, teleconferencing, and other venues to maximize public input.

## **MAKING LAWS**

**Legislative leaders are effective and have strategic, problem-solving and consensus-building abilities.**

*How do we get there?*

- Legislative leaders who **use legislative committees effectively in studying issues and initiating proposals.**

**The legislature is deliberative. It does allow for give and take and the open exchange of ideas at all stages of the formal and informal legislative process.**

*How do we get there?*

- Maintain and enhance current committee practice on deliberation. **Create opportunities for committee deliberation during the interim.**

**The legislature does engage in consensus building. Opposing sides are willing to negotiate differences and find compromises to difficult problems.**

*How do we get there?*

- Use interim studies and interim negotiation to resolve differences in advance of sessions where possible. Increase the use of hearings on pre-filed legislation to negotiate differences and find compromise to difficult issues.

**The legislature does address and solve the most important problems in the state.**

*How do we get there?*

- The establishment of a system for identifying state needs in advance through consultation with key House members, the Senate, and the governor, and the use of committee studies and staff resources.
- Use of all tools available for legislative policy making, including:
  - Effective interim committee work
  - Use of all legislative oversight tools
  - Effective floor deliberation
  - Use of constitutional authority for calling sessions as needed

## **FACILITATING FACTORS**

**The legislature has the resources (time, staff, facilities, and technology) to do its job effectively.**

*How do we get there?*

- Time: Identify and commit suitable time to the most pressing needs of the state; provide committee meeting schedules based on difficulty of subject and importance of issues (though not at the expense of advance scheduling); utilize gate-keeping function of committees; utilize House floor calendar to schedule specific bills for specific dates thereby allowing members, as well as the public, suitable notice and opportunity to read the bills and have amendments drafted in advance; work full days, work full weeks; utilize time during "limited" odd-numbered year sessions to actively engage all committees; utilize interims; select chairs and members of committees for their subject matter expertise and interest; emphasize member training in procedural and policy issues; develop time outside of floor debate for expressing commendation and condolences and making introductions; find alternative process for consideration of cultural legislation such as prestige plates and state symbols; consider use of technology such as teleconferences and webcast to maximize available time and travel needs.