

Hello. My name is Erinn Ryberg and I'm the Legislative Director for Assembly Member Cristina Garcia. She represents the 58th District in Southern California. I'm an alumna of the McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento. This In Brief will cover Legislative Committees and the committee process.

There are generally two types of committees, standing and select. Within standing there are policy committees and fiscal committees. For standing committees, any bills that are introduced at the start of the legislative year are assigned to the Rules Committee and then Rules Committee assigns them out to a standing policy committee. Committees must wait 30 days after a bill has been introduced and in print before they can take action on it. This gives the public 30 days to look and read a bill before any changes are made to it.

Of the policy committees, there are 32 policy committees. Members are assigned to sit on them for an entire two-year legislative cycle. They're on a broad range of topics: from Education to Health to Public Safety to Judiciary.

Obviously there are committees in the Assembly and the Senate, but they don't necessarily match up. For example, the Assembly has a separate committee for Banking and one for Insurance, but the Senate has decided to combine these committees into one. So there are no rules, it's up to each respective House what they want to do.

The fiscal committees in both the Assembly and the Senate is Appropriations. The goal of the Appropriations Committee is to look at the fiscal impact of a bill - how much it's going to cost - and whether it's something that the state of California can take on given those costs. Even though the lens of Appropriations Committee is supposed to be very narrow and only look at fiscal, of course, policy and politics often come up as well.

Bills will be held in Appropriations because of their cost. A good way for a group to kill a bill is by getting a high price tag placed on it, saying that the implementation of it is going to be so high that it's just not feasible. Consequently, if the committee agrees, then they can hold that bill and the bill is effectively dead for that legislative year.

Bills can be referred to a policy committee and then fiscal. They can also be double- or triple-referred to two or three policy committees. An example is the controversial vaccine bill that we passed last year. It went through Judiciary, Health, and Education. Each of those committees looks at the bill through their particular lens, whether it's education or health. They're supposed to consider it and analyze the bill based only on those issues. If it passes, it will go to the next committee and then that committee will analyze it and consider the bill given the jurisdiction of their committee.

Having a bill double- or triple-referred is a good way to kill a bill. It's a lot more hurdles, not only is the timeline hard - because you have to move through committees fast - you also have more chances for the bill to die. If leadership of the Senate or Assembly don't

like a bill, a good way to get it killed is to have it double- or triple-referred, and then it's harder to get it through.

That was all standing committees. The other type are select committees. Standing committees, like I said, there's 32 of them, we have them every year, no changes. The makeup could change every two years, but select committees on the other hand are only active for a two-year legislative cycle, unless it's renewed. Select committees are different from standing committees in that they have no set jurisdiction and they can't actually act on any bills. They can hear them, they can consider, they can research them, but they can't actually vote to pass or kill a bill like a normal standing committee.

The select committees are actually created through the request of an Assembly member, or members, or Senators. The membership of the actual committee is chosen by the Speaker. Their subject matters are much more narrow compared to standing committees. For example, this year we have select committees on the 2024 Olympics, College Affordability, Domestic Violence, and Craft Beer.

The purpose of a select committee is simply to research a topic or an idea or a problem that we're experiencing. A good example of this is the Speaker of the Assembly recently created a Select Committee on Healthcare Delivery Systems and Universal Coverage in response to SB 562, which would have created a single-payer healthcare system in California. The Select Committee is responsible for determining the best and quickest path forward towards universal healthcare. They will do this through a series of hearings in which experts will discuss the different options that are out there. Government agencies and officials can comment on the positive and negative consequences of each of these approaches. And then ultimately, recommendations for legislation will be drafted by the end of it.

This is an example of a very organized select committee. One that's very focused given the Speaker's interest. Other select committees may only meet once every two years and their priorities may not be as set in stone for them and it's just more of an information gathering quest.

That's all for this In Brief on Legislative Committees. This has been Erinn Ryberg from the Office of Assembly Woman Cristina Garcia. Thanks for listening.