

Hi, this is Chris Micheli with the Sacramento governmental relations firm of Aprea & Micheli, and an adjunct professor at McGeorge School of Law in its Capital Lawyering program. Today's podcast is on the work of the Legislature's joint committees.

The California State Legislature has a number of joint committees that are comprised of members of the Senate and Assembly, and are intended to cover issues of mutual interest between the two houses.

The three main joint committees deal with legislative rules, the state budget, and state audits. Capitol observers should be aware of the work of all three of these joint committees.

The first is the Joint Rules Committee, which actually rarely meets. It consists of members of the Assembly Committee on Rules, the Assembly Majority and Minority Leaders, the Speaker of the Assembly, four members of the Senate Committee on Rules, and other Senators that are appointed by the Senate Rules Committee.

The Joint Rules Committee is required to have an equal number of Assembly Members and Senators. Among its responsibilities are: the relations between the two houses and making recommendations to improve that relationship, changes in the law to cure defects affecting the Legislature, adjustments in legislative procedures governing the processing of proposed legislation, and coordination of the work of the Assembly and the Senate and their committees by eliminating duplication of efforts. In addition, the Joint Rules Committee approves the involvement of the Legislative Counsel in litigation affecting the Legislature.

Under the Joint Rules of the Assembly and Senate, Joint Rules Committee has a continuing existence and it may meet, act, and conduct its business during sessions of the Legislature or during any recess.

The next is JLBC - the Joint Legislative Budget Committee. It was established in state statute over 60 years ago, and it employs the Legislative Analyst - whose job it is to provide nonpartisan budget advice to the Legislature. The JLBC has equal representation from both Houses - 8 Assembly Members who are appointed by the Speaker and 8 Senators who are appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules.

The essential function of the JLBC is to make recommendations to both houses concerning the state budget, the revenues and the expenditures of the state, as well as concerning the organization and functions of the state in its departments, its subdivisions, and its agencies. Under the Joint Rules of the Assembly and the Senate, the JLBC is a continuing body.

And the third is JLAC - Joint Legislative Audit Committee. The purpose of JLAC is to have Legislators determine which state or local activities they want reviewed by the state's Auditor General. JLAC has existed for more than 50 years in state law. Here too there's an equal number of legislators who sit on JLAC - 7 members of the Assembly who are appointed by the Speaker and 7 members of the Senate who are appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules Committee.

During the session, they meet roughly every other month to review pending audit requests and review and vote on any new audit requests. The results of these audits are made public on the State Auditor's website, and there's a subscription service for these reports. The audit reports are also transmitted to the policy committees of both houses of the Legislature.

At the hearings of JLAC legislators present their audit requests and the auditor's staff provide background and an estimate of the time and cost of the proposed audit. Thereafter public testimony is allowed and JLAC votes whether to request the audit or deny the audit request.

Under the Joint Rules of the Assembly and Senate, JLAC is created pursuant to the Legislature's rulemaking authority under the California Constitution and pursuant to the Government Code found at Section 10500. Now, four members of each House constitute a quorum of JLAC and the number of votes necessary to take action on any matter.

The Chair or Chairwoman of JLAC upon receiving a request by any member of the Legislature or committee for a copy of a report that's prepared or being prepared by the Bureau of State Audits must provide the member of committee with a copy of the report when it's submitted by the Bureau of State Audits to JLAC.

According to the Joint Rules of the Legislature, JLAC must establish priorities and assign all work that is being done by the Bureau of State Audits. Any bill requiring action by the Bureau must contain an appropriation for the cost of the study or audit. Any bill or concurrent joint Senate or House resolution that assigns a study or an audit to JLAC, or the Bureau of State Audits, must be referred to the respective Rules Committee of either house of the Legislature. Before the respective Rules Committee may act upon or assign the bill or resolution, that committee must obtain an estimate from JLAC of the amount required to be expended to conduct the study or audit.

So these three main joint committees serve an important role for the two houses of the California Legislature. While the Joint Rules Committee only occasionally meets, both JLAC and JLBC meet to conduct important work related to audits and the state budget. Capitol observers should monitor their activities to determine whether any actions will impact their interests.

Thanks for joining today's podcast.