

RESULTS OF 2001 LEGISLATIVE PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Following the 2001 regular session, a questionnaire soliciting answers to seven questions on legislative rules and procedures was sent to each member of the Legislative Assembly.

Of the 146 questionnaires sent, 60 were returned--20 by senators and 40 by representatives. The questions asked and the answers and comments received have been reproduced in this memorandum. For question 5, the House total does not equal 40 because one member gave both "yes" and "no" answers.

1. By statute, the agenda for the organizational session in December includes orientation classes on legislative rules and procedure for new legislators and includes presentation of the budget and revenue proposals recommended by the Governor. Do you have any suggestions to improve the organizational session held in December?

	Senate	House
Yes	1	7
No	19	32
No response		
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)		1
Total	20	40

Comments by Members of the Senate

Announce dates early.

More organized computer training sessions - make sure equipment works before sessions start. Include tour of legislative library and explain services. Explain procedures for using new privatized programs - secretarial pool, bill room, telephone, fax, etc. Review on how to use ND law software.

Seems like years ago. Don't really remember the details but nothing of a negative nature rises to the surface.

I thought it worked very well.

I thought it went well.

Comments by Members of the House

We need to work out a better way to make sure freshmen understand they should attend all the orientation classes.

Freshman legislators could be assigned a mentor. The class information doesn't register until you are involved.

Make sure freshmen get a review and question period in January. Ex. One didn't know about letterhead until late in January. Maybe a cheat sheet on some of those items. Hard to suggest since it has been awhile for me.

I know I appreciated any orientation we received. Being warned of procedures like "laying on the table" or how you vote on the floor when you've voted yes on a "DNP" in committee. Just getting some "heads up info" so there are fewer surprises.

Better training on procedures - both on floor procedures and introducing bills.

Shorter - do it all in 1½ days - max - maybe 1 day?

Reserve time for both the 3 day and 2 day committees to have an organizational session and expectations of committee membership could be very helpful for new legislators and new committee chairs.

I feel hand outs to remind all of proper procedure "IE" proper format to carry a bill on the floor be available.

Found them informative even as a veteran legislator.

Have all caucuses for the election of legislative leadership at the organizational session (or the evening before it begins).

I would like to see the Rep. House Caucus do elections at that time. LC does a great job on orientation.

2. Are there any changes concerning floor procedures you would like to see implemented?

	Senate	House
Yes	5	7
No	10	31
No response	4	2
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)	1	
Total	20	40

Comments by Members of the Senate

We should recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Not sure. How can you eliminate long-winded speeches?

Consider using Department persons to testify on the floor to help explain complicated Bills.

Maybe not from a procedural aspect, but let's do away with the "no props" rule in the Senate. Some "reasonable" enhancement of a verbal presentation should be allowed.

I am not sure this is within the range of your survey, but I am always distressed by the movement of people in the balcony. They often (as groups) disturb the procedures and the speakers. Could we limit movement?

Include the previous day's votes on calendar. Allow LC to "connect" legislators with similar bill requests.

I believe things are working well!

Comments by Members of the House

Begin each day with the Pledge of Allegiance to the US flag.

Motion to limit debate should require a 2/3 vote. Motion to suspend rules should require a 2/3 vote.

Ask questions directly - without having to address speaker every time.

Bill carrier should never be one of the bill sponsors - in floor debate it gives them an unfair advantage--they can get up an unlimited number of times where everyone else is limited to 2 times.

I believe the motion "To Table" should be used in its proper context. In its place, the motion "To Postpone Indefinitely" should be used.

A desktop podium (reserved through the pages) would be a help in floor speeches.

Following day's calendar needs to be on legislator's desk at least by 3 PM the day before it is brought to the floor.

- 3. Are the various deadlines satisfactory (such as for introduction and crossover of bills, reporting bills out of committee, etc)?

	Senate	House
Yes	19	32
No	1	7
No response		
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)		1
Total	20	40

Comments by Members of the Senate

Move up deadline so that introduction of bills is earlier.

Always too short, but must have limits and these seem reasonable.

As long as the body has the ability to amend the rules to extend the deadlines.

Closer monitoring of appropriation bills in other committees and their reassignment to appropriations.

It works!

Comments by Members of the House

I would like to see the process work faster.

Deadlines for bills too short.

As a first term legislator, the deadline for introduction of bills in the House came very early - but, after going through the process once, I think it worked just fine.

Both Houses (Chambers) should have the same date deadlines for bill introduction.

Set a deadline for completion of committee action once a bill hearing is completed. Set deadline for committee action once a bill is rereferred.

We may want to look at some type of deadline on how many days a bill can be in any committee, except appropriations.

I realize the difficulty, but it would seem prudent to move the larger budget bills to the forefront and avoid the emotional conflicts that cloud the issues at the end of the session. We could deal with hunting bills when we're tired!

- 4. Do you have any suggestions to change the standing or conference committee structure or procedures?

	Senate	House
Yes	4	5
No	16	35
No response		
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)		
Total	20	40

Comments by Members of the Senate

Standing Committee Comments

Scheduling bills for a hearing all at one specific time is poor management. It makes it difficult for those interested and for the sponsors. It requires all interested to sit thru all the other hearings. This happens more frequently after crossover. Committee chairmen should be required to schedule each bill separately.

More geographic and gender balance.

Would it be possible to tell visitors (high school groups in particular) to not be so disruptive as they come and go in committee hearings?

The issues are well covered!

Conference Committee Comments

I've wondered why we need (if we need) floor action for the routine appointment of conf. committees.

Committees should be made up of legislators who voted for the bill - not some who are bent on killing it.

Conference committees should not delay the entire legislature. If necessary to accomplish their work, they should meet on Saturday.

I like it the way it is!

Comments by Members of the House

Standing Committee Comments

When requesting membership for various committees - maybe legislators could identify their strongest areas (strengths) for assignments to committees and major reasons for their committee choice. Maximize resources of legislators.

There should be greater emphasis placed on the "policy" standing committees to decide the policy in question before referring a bill to appropriations to decide **both** policy and fiscal matters.

Vice chair from the minority party.

Better orientation and/or training for new committee chairs would improve efficiency.

It seems to work pretty well.

These are very good!

House members of Leg. Council should be elected.

Conference Committee Comments

I feel freshmen should be more involved than they are allowed.

Every one on each committee should serve on a conference committee.

All conferees, regardless of seniority, should be expected to work a full work day (until at least 5:00 p.m.), and a limit should be placed on the maximum number of conference committees any

given legislator may chair and/or serve as a conferee.

5. Were you satisfied with the services provided by staff (legislative employees, interns, Legislative Council staff)?

	Senate	House
Yes	18	40
No		1
No response		
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)	2	
Total	20	41

Comments by Members of the Senate

Legislative Council staff gets better every year - and that's tough when there is very little room for improvement.

I do not request much attention by L. C. Staff but courtesy and interest in my concerns is only fair and important to me and my constituents. This didn't always happen.

The staff is exceptionally capable and cooperative, which must be a challenge with the pace of the session. **Thank you** to everyone for your fine work!

The staff does an outstanding job. Legislative Council staff - The Best!! Legislative Clerks - What a great job they did this past session. Legislative Interns and chamber staff - Hard workers!

Outstanding in every way - friendly, helpful and gracious - Thank you!

Outstanding!

Excellent support staff in all respects!

I believe the staff and interns as well as the legislative employees have done an exceptional job over the years.

Interns need to file similar reports with a synopsis that is useful to committee members.

Comments by Members of the House

The employees vary in ability, but are courteous, the interns, helpful, council staff responsive and quick.

I felt we had an excellent staff at all levels. I appreciate all the help from all employees, interns and members of the Legislative Council staff.

The staff did an outstanding job. However, we new legislators need to know what is available to us!!

Very nice professional as well as personable. Good job.

I think the staff services & responsiveness of the staff is extraordinary!

Very responsive and helpful.

Very satisfied - staff was very helpful.

Very, very satisfied. You have an excellent staff.

Excellent.

Exceptional.

I think the staff performs with exceptional efficiency and courtesy.

All were very accommodating.

Everyone was most accommodating.

It was great. What a super group of people. Thank you!

- 6. Were you satisfied with the services provided by the private secretarial service, telephone service, and printing firm in the bill and journal room during the session?

	Senate	House
Yes	16	34
No		1
No response		1
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)	4	4
Total	20	40

Comments by Members of the Senate Secretarial Service Comments

I suggest we eliminate the 25 sheet leader permission form (if we do not want legislators to do mailings we should eliminate the paper and postage which I do not recommend).

Most of the time. Needed improvement.

They went out of their way to make sure things were correct for me!!

Very good.

Did not use it.

Didn't use.

Telephone Service Comments

Would like to return to the procedure of putting phone messages into e-mail notes. Would also like to do away with

toll free constituent phone to encourage more e-mail use.

Need a better system to let people know when there are phone messages on computer.

Used very little - but would appreciate correct spelling of names of callers.

Usually accurate.

Call notices to non-computer senators seemed to lag and be disorganized.

They did a good job!

I like the summaries given of phone messages.

Bill and Journal Room Service Comments

Good - some shortages of popular bills and amendments did exist.

Pleasant people! Always took care of me!

Excellent service!

Good.

Didn't use.

Comments by Members of the House Secretarial Service Comments

Never used.

Did not use.

Some spelling and grammatical errors in letters and committee testimony.

Spelling mistakes, not always a draft for review.

Made very limited use, but that was very good.

I only used them a couple times. I think by improving the letterhead in our computer we could send more ourselves.

Could make it easier to send letters up to them for type.

Nice people willing to help.

They did an excellent job.

Excellent.

They were very efficient.

Telephone Service Comments

With e-mail, constituent phone contact may be a thing of the past. Most of my return calls were not answered.

There were fewer telephone messages now that we have e-mail.

We need a better way of getting phone messages into our constituents views in our computer.

Terrible! They never got a message correct!

I miss the yellow notes, but it works ok.

Had a few errors.

Only wish we could have a "pop-up" notice when we have phone messages.

Excellent.

Good.

OK.

OK.

OK.

Bill and Journal Room Service Comments

Excellent!

Excellent.

Excellent.

Excellent job.

Great.

Very good service.

Good.

Good.

Very helpful.

Fine - nice people.

Fine.

OK.

- 7. Do you have any other comments or suggestions that you believe would result in improving the legislative process (rules, procedures, facilities, staff, etc.)?

	Senate	House
Yes	4	12
No	11	22
No response	3	3
Other (comments but neither "yes" nor "no" answers)	2	3
Total	20	40

Comments by Members of the Senate

If we're going to outlaw smoking behind the Senate chamber, it should be done soon (long

before convening the next session this fall or January 2003).

We need to convert the smoking room into a Senate Select & Confirmation Hearing Room which would also be available as a lounge for legislators and their guests and family to use when a committee is not meeting.

Forgive my snobbishness, but could the dress code for visitors (high school groups) be enforced more rigorously? As a teacher, I know they could be more dignified and respectful.

Need storage space - one drawer is not enough. No room for a book case near the internal seats. Short course in Mason's rules.

More cooperation between House and Senate leadership especially in the closing days.

We've traded the pages we had in the 1980's for computer support staff today. We used to wait for amendments to be put in bill books, now we wait when the computer goes down. I like the computers but wonder if we are really ahead.

L.C. does a great job. I also appreciate the people at the front desks at L.C. Really appreciate L.C. long hours and willingness to help.

The whole staff period did a great job! They make the session successful. I don't know how we are able to find these people to work. The N. Dak. Legislature is Blessed!

Comments by Members of the House

Get rid of the smoking room!

We will soon need to address the need to improve legislative committee room space - Highway Patrol space, smoking room, legislative lounge/doctor of day - may at some time need to be reconfigured to better accommodate the needs of committee and section hearings.

Committee report is without recommendation. Can bill be re-referred to appropriations without a motion? Divided report on a bill. If part of report that amends bill prevails, should it go to 6th order?

There needs to be a time limit that bills can be held at the front desk!

Leave the board "black" until voting is completed and tallied.

Regarding letter head, would like options on size of stationery.

The last OMB bill in the legislative policy should not include government policy changes, no committee or public hearing held. Must vote without study (time) or committee action. A necessary bill, but includes too many issues or government policy.

The final days need some adjustment. To me it is very frustrating to work on something for months and then rush through important budgets & not even have copies. The scheduling of floor sessions at that time could be much better. I'd be happy to work on that.

I think every legislator should be required to take & pass a course on Mason's Rules!

Bill carriers to the floor, committee chrmn. should choose the one who can best describe

the bill. Who we can all understand this is not a big problem, but has caused some confusion.

I wonder if Corrections and Revisions Procedural Committee should meet occasionally.

If space were available - there is a lot that could make us more efficient.

We need a better computer system, they were "down" too much.

You people do your job, and do your job "very good"!

More Democrats need to be elected but I don't believe you can change that.