

Hawaii State Legislature: A Quick Overview



The government of the State of Hawaii is structured with a system of checks and balances so that power is not confined to just one branch. There are three separate but equal branches whose powers are outlined in the [Constitution of the State of Hawaii](#). Roughly speaking:

The [Legislative Branch](#) makes the laws.

The [Executive Branch](#) implements the laws.

The [Judicial Branch](#) interprets the laws.



Hawaii State Capitol
at Punchbowl and Beretania
415 S. Beretania St., HNL, HI 96813

The Legislature consists of two chambers:
the [Senate](#) and the [House of Representatives](#).



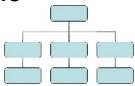
Senate
25 members
4-year terms

Legislative Branch
Makes the laws Leaders: President of Senate, Speaker of House of Representatives Legislators (Senators, Representatives)



House of Representatives
51 members
2-year terms

Executive Branch
Implements the laws Leader: Governor Executive Departments



Judicial Branch
Interprets the laws Leader: Supreme Court Hawaii Courts



As a **representative democracy**, the registered voters in Hawaii choose the people to serve as their voices in legislative government. The Hawaii legislature is "bi-cameral" (has two chambers): the Senate (25 elected members who serve staggered four-year terms) and the House of Representatives (51 elected members who serve two-year terms). Every street address in the state is located in a particular Senate District and House District. To find your districts (and the legislators who currently represent you), visit the Legislature's website at capitol.hawaii.gov. Elections are held in even-numbered years and are overseen by the [Office of Elections](#).

Hawaii operates with a **biennial (two-year) legislative session** and is considered a **part-time legislature**. Legislators may hold other positions of employment. The legislature convenes in Regular Session from January through late April or early May (a total of sixty session days, which excludes weekends, holidays and recess days). The rest of the year is the **interim**. While legislators are not in session, their offices remain open as they research issues, help **constituents** (people who live in their district), discuss proposals, and draft legislation.

Bills are introduced by legislators at the beginning of session; if successful, they become **acts** of law. (See next page.) Legislators may also propose **resolutions** and **constitutional amendments**. A calendar of deadlines requires legislation to move quickly through **committee hearings** (where lawmakers hear **testimony** from the public) and the mandatory **readings** (floor votes) in order to survive.

Both chambers establish **rules** governing their procedures, and organize themselves into various **leadership roles** and standing **committees**. Such roles and assignments allocate power and responsibility, and anyone attempting to influence legislation is aided by an understanding of these dynamics.

For additional information:

Public Access Room (PAR), phone 808/587-0478, email par@capitol.hawaii.gov, website lrb.hawaii.gov/par/