



Conference Committees

How do they work? When do they meet? How do I find them?

What is a conference committee?

If one version of a bill comes out of the Senate, and another version comes out of the House of Representatives, it poses a problem: only one version can go to the Governor for consideration. As a result, unless one of the chambers agrees to the other's version, the bill moves into the *conference process*. For each bill that reaches this point, members of both chambers are appointed by the Senate President and the House Speaker to come to agreement on a final version. The members are often called "managers" or "conferees." The conference committee chairs are usually the subject matter committee chairs for a given measure (typically the bill's first committee referral).

Can the public testify?

The public has had opportunities to testify during committee hearings. Conference, on the other hand, is the time when legislators work out compromises among themselves. They'll be crafting the final language and logistics of the bills.

Meetings are open to the public though no testimony is accepted and, except for the budget bills, no new subject matter should be inserted. You still may find it helpful to attend.

Where can I stay informed about conference committee actions?

The bill's status sheet will be updated as its conferees are assigned and meetings scheduled. While the conference procedures* usually specify a minimum notice for posting notice of the *first* meeting, subsequent meetings can be convened just a few hours later. The procedures will specify what constitutes a required quorum for a vote to be taken. Legislators may serve on numerous conference committees and scheduling votes can be challenging for legislative staff.

There are many helpful tools for staying on top of conference -- go to the "[Reports and Lists](#)" page of the Legislature's website (capitol.hawaii.gov), and click on the "Conference Committee" bar. You'll be able to find measures, legislators, and summary reports during conference. Ask PAR if you need help.

How can I advocate at this stage?

- You may want to contact the conference members independently; concisely communicate what aspect of the bill you believe is a "must have" or an "absolutely not" to any final version they come up with. Be ready to answer any questions they may have.
- You may also want to ask your own Senator or Representative for assistance in influencing the legislation.
- You may want to encourage constituents from the conferees' districts to communicate with their legislators about the legislation.

What's the deadline for the conference committee to come to a decision? Final decking for non-fiscal bills is April 29, 2026. For fiscal bills, it is May 1, 2026. That means the final form of any conference draft must be delivered to the House and Senate Chief Clerk by then (placed on the clerks' "decks" or desks). This allows the required 48-hour notice for final readings to take place on May 6th or May 8th, the last two session days of the 2026 Regular Session. [Fiscal bills are those which received referrals to the Senate Ways and Means committee and/or the House Finance committee.]

*Conference committee procedures are usually agreed upon in early April. Once available, they're posted under "Session Info" at the bottom on the Legislature's homepage (capitol.hawaii.gov); you'll also see them on the [Legislative Information](#) page (accessible by using the drop-down menu of the "Laws & Research" tab).

Tidbit

House Rule 16.2 (3) specifies that any Representative who has voted against a measure on 3rd reading will not be eligible to serve on the conference committee for that measure. This is one of the reasons that a legislator in opposition to a measure may choose to vote 'aye with reservations' rather than against the measure. In this way, that person can still be eligible to serve on the conference committee, and can attempt to have input on the bill's final form, or work to prevent a final compromise from being reached.