

Joint Rules Reforms

Joint committees structure and process

- Hearings will be conducted jointly on all House and Senate bills, with the administrative responsibility of conducting hearings being shared equally between the two branches.
- House staff will prepare materials related to bills filed in the House for House members on the joint committees, and Senate staff will do the same for Senate bills.
- After a bill is heard by the joint committee, the House or Senate Chair may unilaterally poll members of the committee from their respective branch on a bill filed in that branch.

Summaries and other materials

- Joint committees will be required to produce plain-language summaries of all bills in time for their hearings, which will be posted to the General Court's website.
- For favorable reports, committees must also provide a document showing changes made by the committee to the underlying bill, if applicable, and any changes made to existing law.
- Testimony will be made publicly available, and the manner in which testimony will be available will be determined by committees via their own committee rules.

Hearing attendance and committee votes

- Members of a joint committee cannot participate remotely and must be physically present in the hearing room. Remote participation is reserved for members of the public only.
- How each individual member votes on polls conducted by the committees will be posted on the General Court's website, along with the relevant hearing attendance of the member voting on the poll.

Bill reporting

- Committees must make final report not later than 60 days after a matter is heard by the committee, but Chairs may request an additional 30 days, at their discretion.
- Additional extensions must be approved by the branch seeking the extension.
- Bills cannot be extended beyond the third Wednesday in March of the second annual session.
- Any bill not acted upon will be ordered to a study, by default.

Conference committees

- Requires all conference committees to file summaries with reports.

Formal lawmaking

- Extends the time allowed for formal sessions in the first year of session to the third Wednesday in December.
- The second year of formal session will end on July 31, but the House and Senate may return to a formal session for: reports of conference committees formed by July 31, appropriation bills filed after July 31, and gubernatorial actions related to conference reports (vetoes or bills returned with amendments).

House Rules Reforms

Summaries and other materials

- Require, to the extent practicable, summaries of bills to be posted online before the House takes them up for a vote. The committee chair of the relevant subject matter would be responsible for producing the summary.

Hearing attendance and committee votes

- Members cannot participate remotely and must be physically present in the hearing room. Remote participation is reserved for members of the public only.
- How each individual member votes on polls conducted by the committees will be posted on the General Court's website, along with the relevant hearing attendance of the member voting on the poll.
- A 72-hour notice for hearings will be required for House committees.

Bill reporting

- Ensures timely consideration of bills heard by committee by committing House chairs of joint committees to the same bill reporting timeline proposed in the joint rules.

Voting

- Members of the House will continue to be required to be physically present to cast their votes, unless the Member has active reserve military duty, a serious health condition, or limitations related to a member's pregnancy, including pregnancy loss.
- Expands remote voting option for Members for up to 20 weeks of parental leave.

House operations

- The Committee on Operations, Facilities and Security will appoint the House Business Manager and provide oversight.
- The Committee on Operations, Facilities and Security, upon receipt of the recommendation of the State Auditor, shall provide that an outside, independent financial audit of the House's financial accounts be conducted for each fiscal year.
- Requires the House to contract with an outside, independent Equal Employment Opportunity Officer.