



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, 02133-1053

## Joint Rules Agreement of the 194<sup>th</sup> General Court of Massachusetts

### *Fact Sheet and Highlights*

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**Joint Committee Reform.** Senate and House committee members will vote only on bills filed in their branch after joint hearings, improving efficiency and the pace at which bills move through the legislative process. Money bills filed in the Senate, constitutional amendments filed in the House, and any matters not filed by a member of the General Court will continue to be voted on by all members of a joint committee.

**Public Hearing Notice.** Notice time for joint committee hearings will increase from 72 hours to 10 days, giving residents and stakeholders more time to prepare. Joint committees must also post a schedule of hearing dates within three weeks of committee appointments.

**Reporting Deadline.** To prevent legislative backlogs, joint committees will be required to report bills by the first Wednesday in December of the first year of session, unless otherwise provided for in a branch's rules. House Chairs will follow the reporting deadline under House Rule 27. This requires bills to be reported no later than 60 days after they're heard, and at the discretion of the Chair, an additional 30 days can be added to consider the bill. The previous deadline was the first Wednesday in February of the second year of session.

**Committee Votes.** All joint committee votes shall be recorded and posted on the General Court website.

**Committee Participation.** Members of the public will be able to participate remotely in joint committee hearings, as will members of the General Court, unless prohibited by the rules of their respective branch. Attendance of joint committee members will be taken at hearings and posted on the General Court website.

**Conference Committees.** The first conference committee meeting will be open to the public and media for greater transparency. A minimum of 24 hours of will be required between a conference committee report filing and a legislative vote, allowing more time for review by legislators and members of the public. If a conference committee report is filed after 8:00pm, it cannot be voted on until the second calendar day following the day on which it was filed.

**Bill Summaries.** Joint committees will be required to make a summary of each bill publicly available on the General Court website prior to its hearing.

**Publicly Available Testimony.** Joint committees will be required to make written testimony publicly available, with limitations for testimony that includes sensitive personal information, obscene content, or information that may jeopardize the health, wellness or safety of the testifier or others.

**Joint Rules Review.** At the end of the two-year session, the Joint Committee on Rules will conduct a comprehensive review of the joint rules. As part of the review, it will conduct a public hearing and solicit testimony from the public and other interested parties.

**Formal Sessions after July 31.** Permits the Legislature to meet in formal session after July 31 in the second year of the legislative session to take up the following matters: reports of conference committees formed on or before July 31; appropriation bills filed after July 31; gubernatorial vetoes or amendments.