

New Member Orientation

Candidates who run for senate or house seats are not required to have knowledge about or experience with the legislative process. Given this fact, many new lawmakers are unfamiliar with the structure, organization and administration of the institution to which they are elected. Success in the legislature, however, depends upon a member's understanding of its function. In addition, smooth operation of the legislature is enhanced when new members are instructed about legislative rules, procedures and resources.

Program organization, length, reimbursements and training tools. Teaching incoming lawmakers about the legislative process is extremely important. Nearly every legislative body gives this task pre-session priority and conducts an orientation conference of some dimension. In fact, 14 legislative bodies feel the orientation program is so valuable that they require new members to attend. These chambers are:

Colorado Senate and House	New Jersey Senate
Connecticut House	New Mexico House
Florida House	New York Assembly
Indiana Senate	Oklahoma House
Kentucky Senate	Oregon House
Minnesota Senate and House	Pennsylvania House

A successful orientation program hinges on careful planning and logistics; therefore it is important who organizes it. Table 96-2.5 illustrates to whom the responsibility is usually given. Most often, the clerk or secretary or a nonpartisan legislative agency coordinates the program. The Alabama House, California Assembly, Georgia House, Texas Senate and House and West Virginia House work with a nearby university or college to prepare their new member orientations. A committee of veteran members develops the training for the Minnesota House.

As shown in table 96-2.6, most states conduct one- to two-day orientation programs for new lawmakers; the Hawaii House, however, conducts a seminar that lasts more than 10 days, and the training for Missouri senators and representatives continues for three weeks.

Are legislators reimbursed for their expenses while attending orientation programs? Most often, mileage is reimbursed; this is true in 51 legislative assemblies. Thirty-one chambers do repay vouchered or unvouchered costs associated with attendance. Members from 42 chambers receive a per diem.

Because time for these programs often is limited, handbooks detailing the information presented during the training often are provided given to participants. In fact, 85 percent of the chambers use handbooks. Sixty-one legislative assemblies use audio-visual aids during their new member orientation programs. Both written materials

and audio-visual aids can act as handy future references for members and eliminate the need to discuss some matters. Mock floor sessions are used by 49 legislative bodies, and mock committee hearings are conducted by 26 chambers. Both these training tools allow new lawmakers to practice important skills, such as gaining recognition to speak from the presiding officer or chair, making motions, raising points of order, and talking for or against a bill. Table 96-2.6 illustrates other training tools frequently used by legislatures to enhance their orientation programs.

Program content. A comprehensive orientation program should provide new members with a basic understanding of the legislative process. Training often focuses on the fundamentals—namely, an introduction to how a bill becomes a law and the formal legislative rules of procedure. But it is also important for new members to understand the powers and duties of legislative leaders and the role of party caucuses, so more than one-third of the states cover these issues. Support services, retirement, insurance, travel expenses, parking and other administrative details are covered by almost all states. Briefings on the functions performed by legislative agencies and other legislative staff help new lawmakers understand where to turn for assistance when they need a bill drafted, a fiscal note written or even a letter typed. More than three-fourths of the chambers include staff resources as part of their orientation programs. Table 96-2.7 provides more detail about the procedural topics that states cover during new member orientation.

Not only do lawmakers need to know how to get bills passed, they also need to have a basic understanding of major issues that bills contain. Because budgets, taxes, schools, health, welfare, environment and natural resources frequently are debated, most chambers provide overviews on these topics during their orientation programs (see table 96-2.8). Three chambers—the Alabama House, the Delaware House and the Maryland Senate—responded that they did not deal with substantive issues during training for new members.

Other educational programs. Although a majority of the orientations focus on preparing new members for their legislative duties, many states have identified a need for other educational programs.

While their new member orientations are underway, special training programs for veteran members are conducted in the:

Arizona Senate and House	Maine Senate and House
Arkansas House	Nebraska Senate
Colorado Senate	Nevada Assembly
Florida Senate and House	New Jersey Senate
Georgia House	South Dakota Senate and House

Seminars to educate lawmakers' spouses about the legislative process have been implemented in the following legislative bodies:

Arizona Senate	Louisiana House
Colorado Senate and House	Maine Senate and House
Connecticut Senate and House	Nebraska Senate
Delaware House	Nevada Senate and Assembly
Florida House	Oklahoma House
Illinois Senate	Texas Senate and House
Indiana House	Utah Senate and House
Iowa Senate and House	Virginia Senate and House
Kansas Senate and House	West Virginia House
Kentucky House	

Many legislative issues are very complex and cannot be learned in just a few days. As a result, several legislative chambers offer continuing education programs to their members. These forums are designed to supplement other training programs and provide more in-depth information about selected topics. For example:

- The Arizona House, California Senate and Assembly, Idaho Senate, Iowa House, Kansas House, Kentucky House, Michigan House, Minnesota House, New Hampshire House, Oregon House, Pennsylvania House, Texas Senate, Utah House and West Virginia House provide additional training on process and procedure.
- Updates on ethics and conflict of interest laws are given to members in the Arizona House, California Senate and Assembly, Hawaii House, Kentucky Senate and House, Michigan House, New Mexico Senate and House, New York Assembly, Texas Senate, Utah House and Washington Senate and House.
- The California Senate and Assembly, Hawaii House, Idaho Senate, Kentucky House, Minnesota House, New Hampshire House, New York Assembly, Texas Senate, Utah House and Washington Senate and House offer further training on sexual harassment policies.
- Discussions on emerging or other substantive issues continue for policymakers in the Idaho Senate, Iowa House, Kansas House, Kentucky House, Michigan House, New Hampshire House, New York Assembly and Utah House.
- Additional training on the budget process is offered by the houses in Kentucky and Maine.

Table 96-2.5 Who Plans New Member Orientation

State (1)	Clerk or secretary	Nonpartisan legislative agency	Presiding officer	Partisan caucus leader or staff	University or college	Other
Alabama	B				H	
Alaska		B				
Arizona	B			S		
Arkansas	S	H				2
California	H				H	3
Colorado	B	B				
Connecticut		B				
Delaware		H				
Florida	S		H			
Georgia					H	
Hawaii	S			H		
Idaho	B	B				
Illinois		B				
Indiana		B				
Iowa		B				
Kansas	B	S	S			
Kentucky		B				
Louisiana	B	H				
Maine	B	B				
Maryland		B	B			
Massachusetts						
Michigan	B					
Minnesota	S					4
Mississippi						
Missouri		B				
Montana		B	B			

Table 96-2.5 Who Plans New Member Orientation, cont'd.

State (1)	Clerk or secretary	Nonpartisan legislative agency	Presiding officer	Partisan caucus leader or staff	University or college	Other
Nebraska	S					
Nevada		B				
New Hampshire	B	H	H			
New Jersey	H	B		H		
New Mexico	B	S				
New York	S		H			
North Carolina	H	H				
North Dakota		B				
Ohio		S		H		
Oklahoma		H		S		
Oregon	S	H				
Pennsylvania		H		S		
Rhode Island	S					
South Carolina		H				
South Dakota		B				
Tennessee	B					
Texas	S	H			B	
Utah		B				
Vermont	B	S				
Virginia	B					
Washington	B					
West Virginia	B				H	
Wisconsin		B				
Wyoming		B		B		

Table 96-2.5 Who Plans New Member Orientation, cont'd.

Key:

S=Senate

H=House or Assembly

B=Both chambers

Notes:

1. The following chambers did not respond to the survey: Delaware Senate, Georgia Senate, Massachusetts Senate and House, Mississippi Senate, North Carolina Senate, Rhode Island House, South Carolina Senate; nor did any legislatures from the U.S. territories respond.
2. Arkansas House: The House parliamentarian works with other legislative agencies in setting up the orientation program.
3. California Senate: The Rules Committee coordinates the program planning.
4. Minnesota House: A committee of five to seven veteran members develop the orientation training.

Table 96-2.6 New Member Orientation Program Length, Reimbursements and Training Tools

State (1)	Program Length					Reimbursements			Training Tools							
	Less than 1 day	1-2 days	3-6 days	7-10 days	11-14 days	Other	Per diem	Vouchered expenses	Unvouchered expenses	Mileage	Case studies	Mock floor session	Mock committee hearing	Handbooks	Audio-visual aids	Other
Alabama	B		2											B	B	2
Alaska			B				B	B			H	B		B		
Arizona		B												B		
Arkansas		S	H				B		B					B	H	
California	H	S					H					H	H	H	H	
Colorado			H	S			B	B	B		B	B	B	B	B	
Connecticut		B							B		B	B	B	B	B	
Delaware	H								H		H			H		
Florida	S					3	B	H	B				S	S	S	3
Georgia		H												H		
Hawaii		S			H		B							B	B	4
Idaho		B					B	B	S		H			B	B	
Illinois			B					5	5		H			B		
Indiana		B					B		B					B	B	6
Iowa		B						B	B					B	B	7
Kansas		H	S				B	S	H	B		B	S	B	B	8
Kentucky			B				S	B	B	B				B	B	

Table 96-2.6 New Member Orientation Program Length, Reimbursements and Training Tools, cont'd.

State (1)	Program Length					Reimbursements				Training Tools						
	Less than 1 day	1-2 days	3-6 days	7-10 days	11-14 days	Other	Per diem	Vouchered expenses	Unvouchered expenses	Mileage	Case studies	Mock floor session	Mock committee hearing	Handbooks	Audio-visual aids	Other
Louisiana		B									H	B	B	B	B	
Maine		S	H					B	B			B	S	B	S	
Maryland		S	H			9		B	B			H		B	B	
Massachusetts																
Michigan			B					H	H			B	H	B	B	
Minnesota		S	H				B		B		H	S		B	B	10
Mississippi		H												H		
Missouri						11		B	H			B	H	B	B	11
Montana												B	B	B		
Nebraska			S											S	S	
Nevada			B				B		B			B	B	B	B	
New Hampshire		S	H								H	B	B	B	B	
New Jersey	B													B	H	
New Mexico		B					H		H			S		B	B	
New York	S	H						H	H					S		
North Carolina		H					H		H			H		H	H	
North Dakota		B					B	B	B						B	

Table 96-2.6 New Member Orientation Program Length, Reimbursements and Training Tools, cont'd.

State (1)	Program Length					Reimbursements			Training Tools							
	Less than 1 day	1-2 days	3-6 days	7-10 days	11-14 days	Other	Per diem	Vouchered expenses	Unvouchered expenses	Mileage	Case studies	Mock floor session	Mock committee hearing	Handbooks	Audio-visual aids	Other
Ohio	H		S					S		S			B			
Oklahoma	S	H					B		B		H		H			
Oregon		B					B		B		B	H	B	B		
Pennsylvania		S	H				S		B		H		B	B		
Rhode Island	S												S			
South Carolina		H					H						H	H		
South Dakota		B						B	B	B			B	B		
Tennessee	S	H					B		S		H		B	B	12	
Texas			B					B	S		S		B	B	S	
Utah	H	S					S		S		B		B	B		
Vermont		B									B	B	B			
Virginia		B						S	B	B	B	S	B	B	H	13
Washington		S	H				B	S	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	14
West Virginia		S	H				H	S	B		H	H	B	B	H	
Wisconsin		B					B							B	B	
Wyoming		B					B			B	B		B	B	B	

Table 96-2.6 New Member Orientation Program Length, Reimbursements and Training Tools, cont'd.

Key:

S=Senate

H=House or Assembly

B=Both chambers

Notes:

1. The following chambers did not respond to the survey: Delaware Senate, Georgia Senate, Massachusetts Senate and House, Mississippi Senate, North Carolina Senate, Rhode Island House, South Carolina Senate; nor did any legislatures from the U.S. territories respond.
2. Alabama House: The clerk's orientation lasts less than one day, but the program held by the Alabama Law Institute runs for three to six days. Presentations by private sector and press representatives also are used to enhance the new member orientation.
3. Florida House: The length of the new member orientation and the training tools used during the program vary each term, depending upon directions from the speaker of the House.
4. Hawaii House: Media techniques are discussed by panels. Meetings are scheduled with executive department heads and staffs.
5. Illinois Senate: New senators will receive per diem and mileage if the orientation takes place after they are officially sworn in.
6. Indiana Senate: Presentations also are given by representatives of the media and various lobbyist organizations.
7. Iowa House: Lobbyists and the press explain their roles.
8. Kansas House: Tours are used to enhance the orientation program.
9. Maryland House: In addition to the regular orientation program, a five-day bus tour of the state is arranged for new lawmakers.
10. Minnesota House: A panel discussion is held by members of the press.
11. Missouri Senate and House: A tour of various state facilities is included as part of the orientation; as a result, the entire program is completed in about three weeks.
12. Tennessee House: New members hear presentations by representatives from the Attorney General's office, the Registry of Election Finance and the press corps. In addition, a lunch is scheduled with the state constitutional officers.
13. Virginia House: Panel discussions with lobbyists and the media, as well as tours of legislative facilities, are included in the new member orientation.
14. Washington House: The program features a presentation by a special guest speaker.

Table 96-2.7 Procedural Topics Covered During New Member Orientation

State (1)	Bill enactment process	Leadership responsibilities, powers and duties	Role of party caucus	Committee system	Role of clerk, secretary or other legislative officer	Legislative staff and staff resources	Rules and procedures	Legislative etiquette	Media relations	Lobbyist relations	State government organization	Travel expenses, retirement, insurance, other benefits	Support services, parking, other administrative details	Other
Alabama	B			S	B	B	B		B	B		B	B	
Alaska	B	B		B	B	B	B					B	B	
Arizona	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Arkansas	B	B	S	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
California	B	B	B	B	B	S	B	S	B	B	S	B	S	
Colorado	B	S	S	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Connecticut	B	H	H	B	B	B	B	H	H	H	H	B	B	
Delaware					H	H		H	H	H	H			
Florida	B	H	H	B	B	B	B	H	H	B	H	B	B	
Georgia														
Hawaii	B	B	H	H	H	B	B		H		H	B	B	1
Idaho	B	B	B	B	B	B	S	S	S	S		S	S	
Illinois	B	S	S	S	B	B	B	B	S	S	S	B	B	2
Indiana	B	S	S	H	B	B	B					B	B	
Iowa	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	H	B	B	
Kansas	B	H		B	S	B	B	B	B	B		B	B	
Kentucky	H	B	B	B	B	B	H	H	B	B	H	B	B	

Table 96-2.7 Procedural Topics Covered During New Member Orientation, cont'd.

State (1)	Bill enactment process	Leadership responsibilities, powers and duties	Role of party caucus	Committee system	Role of clerk, secretary or other legislative officer	Legislative staff and staff resources	Rules and procedures	Legislative etiquette	Media relations	Lobbyist relations	State government organization	Travel expenses, retirement, insurance, other benefits	Support services, parking, other administrative details	Other
Louisiana	B	B		B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	4
Maine	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Maryland	S				S	B		S		S		S	S	
Massachusetts														
Michigan	B	S	B	B	S	B	B	S	H	H	B	B	B	5
Minnesota	B	H	H	B	B	B	B	B	H	H	H	B	B	
Mississippi	H	H		H	H	H	H		H	H	H	H	H	
Missouri	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Montana	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Nebraska	S	S		S	S	S	S	S	S			S	S	
Nevada	B	B		B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
New Hampshire	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
New Jersey	S	S	S	S		S	S		S			H	H	
New Mexico	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	S	S	B	H	B	
New York	B	H	H	H	B	B	H	H	H	H	H	B	B	
North Carolina	H	H			H	H	H	H			H	H	H	
North Dakota	B			B		B	B	B			B	B	B	

Table 96-2.7 Procedural Topics Covered During New Member Orientation, cont'd.

State (1)	Bill enactment process	Leadership responsibilities, powers and duties	Role of party caucus	Committee system	Role of clerk, secretary or other legislative officer	Legislative staff and staff resources	Rules and procedures	Legislative etiquette	Media relations	Lobbyist relations	State government organization	Travel expenses, retirement, insurance, other benefits	Support services, parking, other administrative details	Other
Ohio	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	B	S	S	S	B	B	
Oklahoma	B	B	S	S	B	B	B	B	B	B	S	B	B	
Oregon	B	H	B	B	B	B	B	H	B	B	S	B	B	
Pennsylvania	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	S	B	B	
Rhode Island	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S				S	S	
South Carolina	H	H		H	H	H	H					H	H	
South Dakota	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Tennessee	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	H	B	B	
Texas	B	S		B	B	B	B	S	B	S	S	B	B	
Utah	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Vermont	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B		B	B	
Virginia	B	B	S	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	S	B	B	
Washington	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
West Virginia	H	B	H	H	B	B	B	S	H	H		B	B	
Wisconsin	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Wyoming	B	B	H	B	B	B	B	B	H	H	H	B	B	

Table 96-2.7 Procedural Topics Covered During New Member Orientation, cont'd.

Key:

S=Senate

H=House or Assembly

B=Both chambers

Notes:

1. The following chambers did not respond to the survey: Delaware Senate, Georgia Senate, Massachusetts Senate and House, Mississippi Senate, North Carolina Senate, Rhode Island House, South Carolina Senate; nor did any legislatures from the U.S. territories respond.
2. Hawaii House: The separation of branches doctrine also is addressed.
3. Illinois Senate and House: District office operations and administration are covered as well.
4. Louisiana Senate: New senators are instructed on the process used to confirm gubernatorial appointments.
5. Michigan Senate: The freshmen legislators are briefed on employment practices and standards such as how to handle an office budget and hire staff.

Table 96-2.8 Substantive Issues Covered by New Member Orientation

State (1)	Budget process	Taxes and tax policy	Education system	Health, welfare, and other human services programs	Environment and natural resources	Oversight process	Ethics and conflict of interest laws or policies	Sexual harassment policies	Other
Alabama	S	S					S		
Alaska							B	B	
Arizona	B					S	B	S	
Arkansas	B	H	H				S		
California	B						S	S	
Colorado	B	B	B	S	S	B	B	B	
Connecticut	S	S					B	H	
Delaware									
Florida	H	H	H	H	H	H	B		
Georgia									
Hawaii	B	H	H	H	H	H	B	B	
Idaho	B					B	B	B	
Illinois	B	S	S	S	S	B	B	S	
Indiana	B						S		
Iowa	B					H	B	H	
Kansas	S					B	B	B	
Kentucky	S	S	B	S	S	S	B		
Louisiana	S	S	S	S	S	B	B		2
Maine	B					S	B	S	
Maryland	H	H	H	H	H	H	H		
Massachusetts									
Michigan	B	B	S	S	S	S	B		
Minnesota	H	H	H				B	B	
Mississippi	H		H	H			H		
Missouri	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	3
Montana									4

Table 96-2.8 Substantive Issues Covered by New Member Orientation, cont'd.

State (1)	Budget process	Taxes and tax policy	Education system	Health, welfare, and other human services programs	Environment and natural resources	Oversight process	Ethics and conflict of interest laws or policies	Sexual harassment policies	Other
Nebraska	S						S	S	
Nevada	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
New Hampshire	B						B	H	
New Jersey	S								
New Mexico	B	B	S	H	H	H	B		
New York	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	
North Carolina							H		
North Dakota	B						B	B	
Ohio	S	S	S	S	S	S	B	S	
Oklahoma	B	H					B	S	
Oregon	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	B	
Pennsylvania	B						S		
Rhode Island	S						S		
South Carolina							H		
South Dakota	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Tennessee	B						B	B	
Texas	B	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	
Utah	B	B				B	B	B	
Vermont	B								
Virginia	B						B		
Washington	B	H					B	B	
West Virginia	H	H	H	H	H		B		
Wisconsin	B	H							
Wyoming	B		B						

Table 96-2.8 Substantive Issues Covered by New Member Orientation, cont'd.

<p>Key:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">S=SenateH=House or AssemblyB=Both chambers <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The following chambers did not respond to the survey: Delaware Senate, Georgia Senate, Massachusetts Senate and House, Mississippi Senate, North Carolina Senate, Rhode Island House, South Carolina Senate; nor did any legislatures from the U.S. territories respond.2. Louisiana Senate: Redistricting also is discussed during new member training.3. Missouri Senate: New senators receive briefings on various subjects while touring the state facilities.4. Montana Senate and House: The substantive issue areas covered during new member orientation varies each session.
