2023 Legislative Session

By MELISSA BIGGS

SESSION CONVENED

Connecticut's 2023 regular Legislative Session kicked off Wednesday, January 4 at the State Capitol. First, elected members of the General Assembly, constitutional officers, the governor, and lieutenant governor were sworn into office. Next is a well-established routine that General Assembly, directly following the swearing in process, formally take a vote of the new legislative leaders; Senator Looney was voted in as president pro tempore and Representative Ritter was voted in as speaker of the house. Following internal votes, the Senate and House convene to pass the joint rules of session, a standard practice that lays out procedures for how session will be conducted.

Once the rules are adopted the state legislature holds a joint House and Senate session to welcome to the governor to the floor where they present their State of the State Address.[1] This speech offers an outline as to what issues are important to the governor and provides a glimpse into their legislative agenda. Governor Lamont shared that he plans to focus the next four years on recovery, making it easier for people to get back to work, to provide minimum wage that keeps pace with inflation, and a focus on small business. Other major pillars the governor shared he will focus on are education and transportation. We anticipate his legislative priorities will be released shortly.

BUDGET

Connecticut alternates between a short session that runs from early February to early May in even-numbered years, and a long session that runs from early January to early June in odd-numbered years. This year marks a long session and one that is focused on setting the state's biennial budget cycle for fiscal year 2024 through fiscal year 2025. Traditionally, the governor announces the first draft of the state budget in February, and it then heads to the Appropriations Committee and Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, which are commonly referred to as the state's "money committees." Over the next few months, they will hold a series of budget subject matter public hearings to gather information, hear public input, and start to internally balance the state budget. Around mid to late March, the Appropriations Committee votes out an updated draft of the state budget and it then heads over to the House and Senate chambers for further debate. While this process is underway, creating a dialog with decisionmakers along the way can make a big impact on the outcome of your legislative objectives.

WHAT'S NEXT

The legislative session is a hybrid model this year, allowing elected officials and members of the public to attend committee meetings and public hearings both in person and virtually. During the months of January, February, and March proposed policies are largely debated and considered in the state's many subject matter specific committees. During this time, it is best to connect with leaders and members of the committee of cognizance to express your thoughts on proposed policies. Effective methods of communication involve meetings, email campaigns, and providing written and public testimony.

SESSION JOINT RULE HIGHLIGHTS

Below is a summary of the joint rules recently adopted. We will have a more in-depth summary in the coming weeks that will continue to break down how session will work this year.

- Wearing a mask is optional while inside
- First floor of the Legislative Office Building is open to the public
- First, second, and third floors of the State Capitol are open to the public
- Committee meetings will be held both in-person and virtual
- Public hearings will be held both in-person and virtual
- Public hearing sign up system that was implemented during the pandemic will continue ■

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NOTES

1. https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Speeches/Governor-Lamont-2023-State-of-the-State-Address