



The Joint Legislative Council

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The Joint Legislative Council was created by state law in 1947 and is composed of 22 legislators, including all of the legislative leadership.

ESTABLISHMENT OF STUDY COMMITTEES

Under s. 13.82, Stats., the Joint Legislative Council may, for the purpose of providing information to the Legislature, appoint committees consisting of members of the Legislature and of citizens having special knowledge on the subject assigned by the Council to be studied. The Council establishes study committees each biennium to meet during the Legislature's interim in the even-numbered years.

The Joint Legislative Council, through its committees, may also make surveys and studies, and compile data, information, and records, on any questions that, in its judgment, will be beneficial to the general welfare of the State. To this end, the Council, under current law:

- Must maintain liaison with federal, state, and local officials and agencies.
- May conduct research and secure information or data on any subject concerning the government and general welfare of the State and its political subdivisions.
- Must make recommendations for legislative or administrative action on any subject or questions it has considered and, with the approval of a majority of the membership, submit, for introduction, legislation recommended for passage by one of its committees.

Therefore, once a study committee completes its work, the chair of the committee submits a report of the committee's recommendations to the Joint Legislative Council. The Council holds public hearings to review legislation recommended by each study committee and determine which legislative recommendations to introduce. Bills introduced by the Joint Legislative Council follow normal legislative process, beginning with standing committee review.

Over the years, the Joint Legislative Council study committees have made various contributions to Wisconsin law, including:

- Creation of the State Building Commission.
- School district reorganization.
- Insurance law revision.
- Court reorganization.
- Mediation-arbitration for municipal employees.
- Groundwater protection law.
- Marital property implementation.
- Recycling law.
- Laws relating to children, including crimes against children, children in need of protection or services, and child custody.
- Various recodifications of existing state law, including topics such as alcohol beverage, town property tax collection, and general municipal governance.

PERMANENT STUDY COMMITTEES

Under s. 13.83, Stats., there are two permanent Joint Legislative Council study committees: the Law Revision Committee and the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations.

Law Revision Committee

The Law Revision Committee is required to be appointed prior to June 1 of each odd-numbered year. The membership consists of members of the Senate and the Assembly, including at least one member of the majority party and at least one member of the minority party from each house. The Law Revision Committee is required to consider:

- Court and attorney general decisions, referred to it by the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB), in which Wisconsin statutes are stated to be in conflict, ambiguous, anachronistic, unconstitutional, or otherwise in need of revision, to determine whether revisions are needed.
- Bills referred to it by the LRB that set forth statutory revisions identified to eliminate defects, anachronisms, conflicts, ambiguities, and unconstitutional or obsolete provisions.
- Bills referred to it by the LRB that include technical revisions.
- Minor substantive remedial measures proposed by state agencies to improve the administration of their agencies or proposed by the Law Revision Committee, a standing committee, or a legislative service agency to improve the language or organization of the statutes.

The Law Revision Committee introduces legislation prepared, as described above, directly into the Legislature. Each proposal must include a note or series of notes providing an explanation of the proposed changes and an analysis by the LRB.

Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations

The Joint Legislative Council must, in each biennium, create a special committee on state-tribal relations. The special committee studies issues related to American Indians and the American Indian tribes and bands in the State and develops specific recommendations and legislative proposals relating to these issues. The special committee must report its findings and its legislative and other recommendations to the Joint Legislative Council, like study committees established by the Council.

The special committee membership includes six to 11 members appointed by the Joint Legislative Council from names submitted by the federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands in the State or the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC). The Council may not appoint more than one member based on the recommendation of any one tribe or band or of GLITC. The special committee's membership also includes six to 12 legislators, including at least one member of the majority party and at least one member of the minority party from each house.

The special committee is assisted by a technical advisory committee composed of eight members representing the Departments of Health Services, Workforce Development, Children and Families, Justice, Natural Resources, Public Instruction, Revenue, and Transportation.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF

The Legislative Council is a nonpartisan legislative service agency that provides legal and policy research to legislators and legislative committees. Legislative Council staff provide these services to study committees, as well. Specifically, the Legislative Council staff prepare background materials for each committee, arrange for testimony to the committee, and draft the committee's legislative recommendations.

All of the materials and minutes for every study committee meeting are posted on the Legislative Council website.