



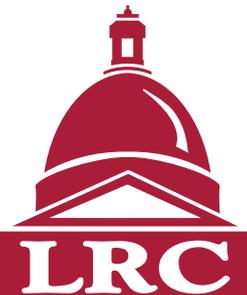
# Inside the Legislative Research Commission



**Legislative Research Commission**

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Research  
Commission**



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**LRC**



## Legislative Research Commission

### Foreword

Of the three branches of state government, the legislative branch is the one closest to the people. Citizens elect legislators from their communities to be their voice in Frankfort. Learning how the legislative branch functions is helpful in understanding its role in state government as a whole.

The Legislative Research Commission serves as the administrative and research arm of the General Assembly. Its staff is composed of a diverse group of people who bring a wealth of knowledge to the process of helping the state's lawmakers make decisions regarding the future of Kentucky.

This publication is intended to give citizens a better understanding of the role the Legislative Research Commission plays in state government.

Robert Sherman  
Director

Legislative Research Commission  
Frankfort, Kentucky  
February 2011

# Legislative Research Commission

The Legislative Research Commission was created in 1948 as a nonpartisan fact-finding and service agency.

Under Chapter 7 of the Kentucky Revised Statutes, the Commission operates as the administrative and research arm of the General Assembly. The Commission also directs the business of the legislature between sessions of the General Assembly.



LRC was created in 1948 by the General Assembly.

The Legislative Research Commission is a 16-member statutory committee made up of the majority and minority party leadership of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House serve as co-chairs of LRC. The Commission employs a director who serves at its pleasure. The LRC director supervises the nonpartisan staff of the Commission and the General Assembly.

The term “Legislative Research Commission” is also typically used to refer to legislative staff, which comprises two units: a larger nonpartisan staff and a smaller partisan staff. The nonpartisan professional support staff is hired by the LRC director and serves all 138 members of the legislature. Partisan staff serves the legislative leadership of either chamber and serves at their pleasure.

The structural work of the Legislative Research Commission is performed by committees. There are three types of LRC committees, which are also considered to be subcommittees of the Legislative Research Commission: interim joint committees, statutory committees, and special committees/task forces. These committees are staffed by LRC nonpartisan professional staff.

## Interim Joint Committees

Interim joint committees are an important part of the legislative process. Many consider the establishment of the interim joint committee system as a major reason that the legislative branch has achieved co-equal status with the other branches of Kentucky state government.

The General Assembly meets for a specified number of days in regular session every year. The period between legislative sessions is called the “interim,” and a great deal of legislative business continues at this time. During the interim, the individual Senate and House standing committees that were organized during the session meet together as interim joint committees. For example, the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations and Revenue and the House Standing Committee on Appropriations and Revenue become the Interim Joint Committee on Appropriations and Revenue after a legislative session.



LRC is the nonpartisan fact-finding and service body of the General Assembly.

The interim joint committee system enables continued study and in-depth discussion of issues after a legislative session during the period leading to the next session. It lends a degree of continuity to the operation of the Kentucky legislature. An interim joint committee may prepare, review, and “prefile” legislation. Prefiled legislation is introduced on the first day of the next regular session and assists standing committees in becoming active immediately as that session begins.



The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House serve as co-chairs of LRC.

The legislative interim period has been statutorily defined to begin on June 1 and continue through December 1 of each year. Interim joint committee meetings are open to the public. Citizen participation in these meetings is encouraged.

The following is a listing of the interim joint committees:

- **Agriculture**
- **Appropriations and Revenue**
- **Banking and Insurance**
- **Economic Development and Tourism**
- **Education**
- **Special Subcommittee on Energy**
- **Health and Welfare**
- **Judiciary**
- **Labor and Industry**
- **Licensing and Occupations**

- **Local Government**
- **Natural Resources and Environment**
- **State Government**
- **Transportation**
- **Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection**



The Commission directs the business of the legislature between sessions of the General Assembly.

## **Statutory Committees**

Statutory committees were established by the General Assembly (by statute) to perform specific tasks related to oversight of the executive branch of state government.

## **Administrative Regulation Review Subcommittee**

The Administrative Regulation Review Subcommittee reviews regulations proposed by state administrative bodies. After review by the subcommittee, the Legislative Research Commission refers proposed regulations to an appropriate interim joint committee for further review.

## **Capital Planning Advisory Board**

The Capital Planning Advisory Board develops in each biennium a comprehensive statewide six-year capital improvements plan and

submits it to the heads of the three branches of government. The plan includes recommendations of projects to be undertaken or continued and recommendations as to priority and means of funding capital projects. The board is composed of 16 members appointed by the three branches of state government.

## **Capital Projects and Bond Oversight Committee**

The Capital Projects and Bond Oversight Committee monitors implementation of capital projects authorized by the General Assembly or by the committee through an interim review process. The committee reviews any cost overruns on authorized projects and receives quarterly reports from those agencies that manage capital projects. The committee also reviews all bonds issued by state agencies and school systems.

## **Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee**



LRC employs a nonpartisan director to oversee staff.

The Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee reviews administrative regulations and advises the Kentucky Board of Education concerning the implementation of the state system of assessment and accountability. The subcommittee also

advises and monitors the Office of Education Accountability, which was established by the 1990 General Assembly's passage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act.

## **Government Contract Review Committee**

The Government Contract Review Committee reviews proposed state personal service contracts and memoranda of agreement to determine the need for the service, whether the service can be performed by state personnel, and the cost and duration of the contract.

## **Medicaid Oversight and Advisory Committee**

The Medicaid Oversight and Advisory Committee monitors the implementation of Medicaid within the Commonwealth, including access to services, utilization of services, quality of services, and cost containment.



Partisan staff serve the legislative leadership of either chamber and serve at their pleasure.

## **Program Review and Investigations Committee**

The Program Review and Investigations Committee reviews the operations of state

agencies to determine that funds are being spent appropriately and if state programs are implemented effectively by the executive branch. The operations, practices, and duties of state agencies are studied as they relate to efficiency in the utilization of space, personnel, equipment, and facilities. The committee reports its findings to the state agency involved and to the General Assembly.

## **Tobacco Settlement Agreement Fund Oversight Committee**

The Tobacco Settlement Agreement Fund Oversight Committee reviews each project being submitted to the Agricultural Development Board for funding from the Tobacco Settlement Fund.

## **Special Committees/ Task Forces**

When necessary, the Legislative Research Commission or the General Assembly authorizes special committees or task forces to study a specific topic and report their findings, usually by a specified date during the interim, to LRC or the General Assembly. As such, these committees are temporary in nature. After the study has been completed and reported, the special committee or task force ceases to exist.

## **LRC Nonpartisan Professional Support Staff**

LRC employs a nonpartisan director who oversees a nonpartisan professional staff of bill drafters; committee administrators, analysts, and assistants; researchers; fiscal analysts; attorneys; economists; librarians; secretaries; computer technicians; and other trained specialists who provide a multitude of services for the General Assembly.

The LRC nonpartisan staff also print bills, research reports, and informational bulletins in its print shop; maintain official legislative records and provide research materials in its Legislative Reference Library; dispense information to the media and the public about the activities of the General Assembly and its members through its Public Information Office; and maintain a website for Internet access by the public to the General Assembly.



Nonpartisan staff serve the entire legislature and report to the LRC director.

## **Functions of the LRC Nonpartisan Committee Staff**

Major responsibilities of the LRC committee staff are bill drafting, research, and committee meeting facilitation.

## **Bill Drafting**

Nonpartisan LRC staff draft legislation at the request of any legislative member. Bill draft requests are assigned to a member of the staff of the standing or interim joint committee that has jurisdiction over the subject matter of the request. Staff draft legislation both during legislative sessions for consideration during that session and during the interim periods between regular sessions for introduction at the next session.

## **Research**

A major responsibility of LRC is to research issues confronting lawmakers. These research tasks and projects are completed by nonpartisan LRC staff at the request of the General Assembly, the Legislative Research Commission, an LRC subcommittee, or an individual legislator and can encompass any state program or policy. Any resulting research reports and research memoranda are made available to the public at little or no cost. Research publications are among the holdings of the LRC Legislative Reference Library and many also are available on the LRC website.

## **Committee Meeting Facilitation**

There are four types of committees. Senate and House standing committees are creatures of the General Assembly and exist during legislative sessions only. Interim joint committees, statutory committees, and special committees/task forces are considered subcommittees of the Legislative Research Commission. LRC nonpartisan staff are assigned to and facilitate meetings for all of

these types of committees. Meeting facilitation includes but is not limited to scheduling meetings and coordinating agendas in consultation with committee chairs, arranging testimony from witnesses, preparing background materials for use by committee members, and preparing and distributing committee reports and minutes.

## **Budget Review**

LRC is directed by statute to study and examine the expenditures of state agencies. For this purpose, the Commission has a budget review staff that examines agency budgets, conducts fiscal studies, and provides data required for effective legislative review of budget proposals. During General Assembly sessions, budget review staff prepare fiscal notes on the cost implications of pending legislation. The principal function of this staff is to work with the Appropriations and Revenue Committees in formulating the state budget.

## **Office of Education Accountability**

The legislature established the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) in 1990 as part of the Kentucky Education Reform Act. OEA is under the jurisdiction of the Legislative Research Commission with oversight by its Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee (EAARS). OEA is required to ensure that public schools in Kentucky operate efficiently and effectively. OEA also monitors the implementation of education reform throughout

the state and reviews the state's system of school finance. OEA conducts studies relating to public education as directed by EAARS.

## **LRC Services**

### **Legislative Reference Library**

The Peggy King Legislative Reference Library provides materials that support the research activities of LRC. The LRC library has holdings of more than 4,000 volumes, 300 periodicals, and video and audio collections that help legislators and staff with their work. The library is located in the Capitol Annex and is open to the public.



The "interim" is the time between regular sessions of the General Assembly.

### **Informational Publications**

LRC and its staff prepare a number of informational publications as part of the legislative process. These publications also are available to help citizens learn about and participate more effectively in their state government. For more information about topics and how to get copies, visit the LRC website at [lrc.ky.gov](http://lrc.ky.gov).

Some of the informational publications prepared and distributed by LRC are listed below.

The *Legislative Record* shows the daily status of all bills and resolutions when the General Assembly is in session. Final executive action on each bill also is recorded. Between sessions, the *Interim Legislative Record* is published monthly and provides information about the Commission and interim committees.

- The *Kentucky General Assembly Directory and Visitor's Guide* is published before each session and has a picture and a brief biography of each legislator.

- *Kentucky Acts* contains all bills enacted during a session.

- The *House Journal* and the *Senate Journal* are the official daily records of proceedings in each chamber during a session.

- *General Assembly Action* contains summaries of all bills and resolutions delivered to the governor each session.

- *Administrative Register of Kentucky* is a monthly compilation of regulations proposed by administrative agencies of the Commonwealth and serves as public notice of such proposed regulations.

- *Kentucky Administrative Regulations Service* is published annually and contains regulations enacted by administrative agencies.



Interim joint committees may draft and approve bills to be prefiled for the next session.

- *Final Reports of the Interim Joint, Special, and Statutory Committees* provides a summary of the proposals discussed and acted upon by each committee during the interim.

- *Issues Confronting the General Assembly* is a collection of reports on the major topics that are likely to receive attention during the legislative session.

## Educational Materials

LRC provides school students and teachers with materials that can help them better understand the legislative process. Teachers can also arrange to bring their classes to visit the Capitol. Contact the Public Information Office for more information.

## On the Web

LRC also hosts a website at [lrc.ky.gov](http://lrc.ky.gov) that contains information on members, committees and committee meeting schedules, the legislative process, contacting legislators, bill status, and available publications.



Statutory committees perform specific tasks related to oversight of the executive branch.

# Contacting Legislators

Kentucky's is a representative government with legislators elected by their peers to speak for them in government. Input from citizens is vital to the legislative process.

## Letters

Receiving letters from constituents is an effective way for legislators to learn the support of or opposition to issues. It is helpful for letters to specifically identify the bill supported or opposed. A letter should discuss only one issue, if possible. The name and mailing address of the letter writer should be included. The names and mailing addresses of legislators may be obtained on the LRC webpage or by contacting the LRC Public Information Office.

## Telephone

A legislator's office may be contacted any time during normal business hours by calling LRC at (502) 564-8100.

People with hearing or speech impairments may use the toll-free Kentucky Relay Service by calling 1-800-648-6057; TTY/VCO users may call 1-800-648-6056.

LRC sets up toll-free telephone numbers for citizens to use to leave a message for legislators and to determine meeting schedules. During legislative sessions, an additional toll-free number is available to determine bill status. Spanish-language operators also are available during

legislative sessions. The numbers are posted on the LRC webpage and are publicized across the state by the media.

## E-mail

All legislators have e-mail addresses that can be accessed on the LRC webpage at [lrc.ky.gov](http://lrc.ky.gov).