

What is the General Assembly?

The General Assembly is the name of the legislature of the state of Indiana. The Constitution of the state of Indiana divides the powers of state government into three departments: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial. Article 4, Section 1, of the state constitution provides: Legislative authority of the state shall be vested in a General Assembly.

How is the General Assembly organized?

The General Assembly is organized into two "houses": the House of Representatives and the Senate. The two houses have co-equal powers, although all bills with a purpose of raising revenue must be originally filed in the House of Representatives.

How many legislators are there?

The Senate has 50 elected members. The Lieutenant Governor presides over the Senate but is not considered a "legislator" and can vote on legislation only when there is a tie vote. A member of the Senate is called a "senator".

The House of Representatives has 100 elected members. The leader of the House of Representatives is one of the 100 members. A member of the House of representatives is called a "representative".

Who can become a Senator or Representative?

The state constitution says that a person, prior to the time of election, must:

- 1) Be a citizen of the United States
- 2) Have lived in Indiana at least two years
- 3) Have lived in the district for at least one year.

The state constitution also says that a person who wants to be a senator must be at least 25 years old and a person who wants to be a representative must be at least 21 years old.

Who elects the members of the General Assembly?

Indiana is divided into 50 Senate districts and 100 House or Representative districts. A member of the Senate must be elected by the citizens registered to vote in the Senate district in which he or she resides. A member of the House of Representatives must be elected by the citizens registered to vote in the House of Representative district in which he or she resides. The term of a senator is four years, and the term of a representative is two years. Senators and representatives are not subject to term limits.

Where does the Legislature meet?

The state constitution requires that the sessions of the General Assembly be held at the state capitol. Indianapolis became the Indiana state capitol in 1821. Before Indiana became a state the capitol of the Indiana Territory was first in Vincennes from 1800 to 1810 and then in Corydon from 1813 . In June of 1816, 43 delegates met in Corydon to draft the first state constitution. Much of their work was done under the shade of a large elm tree. In November 1816, the first General Assembly of 29 representatives, 10 senators and the lieutenant governor met in the new capitol building in Corydon. On Dec. 11, 1816, Indiana was formally admitted as the 19th state. Corydon remained the state capital until the government moved to Indianapolis in December 1824. The current state capitol building in Indianapolis was commissioned in 1877. The General Assembly held its first session in the new capitol building on January 6, 1887. The General Assembly continues to meet in the same capitol building located at 200 West Washington Street in Indianapolis.

How often does the General Assembly meet?

During the 1970s, an amendment to the Constitution passed, allowing the General Assembly to meet annually. Prior to the constitutional amendment, the Senate and the House of Representatives convened a session only once every two years. Currently, both houses of the General Assembly meet annually for a regular session. The regular session lasts between three and four months. On the call of the Governor, the General Assembly may meet for additional days in one or more special sessions. While not in session, members of the General Assembly may be assigned to interim study committees that meet between the sessions. Several interim study committees have been enacted in state law. Others may be established by the elected officers of the General Assembly.

Who leads the General Assembly?

Each house of the General Assembly selects its own leaders. The General Assembly also forms a 16-member committee called the "Legislative Council" to handle a number of administrative matters affecting both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The Senate is unique in that the state constitution requires the Lieutenant Governor to preside over the Senate as its "President"; however, the Lieutenant Governor is not a member of the Senate for most other purposes. When the Lieutenant Governor is not present, a member of the Senate selected as the "President Pro Tempore" presides. The Senate also has a number of other officers.

The Speaker of the House presides over the House of Representatives. The Speaker is also a member of the House of Representatives. The House of Representatives also has a number of other officers.

How is a change in state law made?

The state constitution requires all changes in the statutory law to be enacted by the General Assembly in the form of a bill. A bill must be considered by both the House of Representatives and the Senate to be enacted into law. If there are differences between the versions of a bill adopted by the Senate and the House of Representatives, the two houses appoint a conference committee to present compromise language to each house. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives must approve any conference committee report. When the Senate and the House of Representatives agree to the language of a bill, the leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives sign the bill and send it to the Governor. The Governor may approve the bill or veto the bill. The Governor may approve a bill by signing it. A bill can become law without the Governor's signature if the Governor does not sign the bill for at least seven days after it is presented. If the Governor vetoes the bill, the Governor sends a message to the House of Representatives and the Senate indicating why the Governor has vetoed the bill. A vetoed bill can still become law if the House of Representatives and the Senate both vote to override the Governor's veto.

How is a change in the state constitution proposed and adopted?

Only the citizens of Indiana who are registered to vote can change the state constitution by approving an amendment proposed by the General Assembly. To propose a change in the state constitution, the Senate and the House of Representatives must approve a joint resolution containing the language of the proposed change in two different years. The state constitution requires a general election to occur between the times that the joint resolution is approved. If the language in the joint resolution is approved twice, the language is placed on the ballot for approval by the voters.