



Presentation to the  
Minnesota House Committee on Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections  
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## Introduction

Good morning, Mister Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Brenda Erickson. I am a program principal in the Legislative Management Program of the National Conference of State Legislatures. I have served as NCSL's expert on legislative process for almost 20 years.

The focus of my presentation will be to provide an overview of practices aimed at streamlining the legislative process.

My references throughout this presentation generally will be to "chambers" rather than "states," because the vast majority of senates and houses do not adopt the same rules. There are 99 legislative chambers within the 50 states; only Nebraska has a unicameral state legislature.

## Background

### *Citizen Legislatures*

"Perhaps the most trying aspect of a legislator's life is the frustration born of inadequate time to cope with the flood of issues and problems that a session involves."

This quote by Duane Lockard, a former Connecticut state senator, summarizes a main concern expressed by senators and representatives, especially those in part-time, citizen legislatures--that is, not enough time to study bills.

But what is a citizen legislature?

A citizen legislature focuses its work in specific time periods. It spends comparatively little time in session. An average session length for a part-time legislature is approximately 120 calendar days per year.

Since the legislature does not operate on a year-round basis, a citizen legislature must strive to maintain its status as a co-equal branch of government. This is important, because the legislature is the branch of government that most closely represents the citizens of the state. Thus, to the extent that a legislature is powerless, then so are the people.

Minnesota has a citizen legislature. The Minnesota Constitution limits the length of the legislative session to 120 legislative days within a biennium. Many Minnesota senators and representatives have careers outside the Legislature. As a result, you work under the laws that you enact just as your constituents and other citizens do.

I will be presenting options that this committee may consider to enhance time management, streamline the legislative process and preserve the Legislature's part-time status.

### *Purpose of Rules and Procedures*

According to Paul Mason, author of *Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure*, "The rules serve as a guide to the procedure of the body. They tell a member or others what the procedures are and how to accomplish their purpose. ..."

Edward Burdick, the former chief clerk of the Minnesota House, said, "The best parliamentary procedure is one that is simple. It should be in writing, be clearly stated to avoid conflicting interpretations and confusion, and be available to everyone--members, staff and the public."

### *Indications that rules may need changing:*

Not all rules are good rules. Because a rule is old or new does not prove it good or bad. A rule is as good as it is helpful to the organization or its members. A rule is as bad as it impedes the accomplishments of the organization or its members.

Chamber rules should reflect your *actual* legislative practices. Some indications that your rules may need changing are:

- Frequent references to precedents or custom and usage
- Frequent use of your parliamentary authority (Mason's Manual, Robert's Rules, etc.)
- Frequent suspensions of a rule or rules
- Frequent points of order because a rule is confusing
- Multiple interpretations of a single rule

There are other reasons that rules or procedures are changed. Revisions in rules or procedures may be triggered by:

- Changes in legislative structure
- Switches in party control
- Changes in leadership
- A desire to streamline or open the process
- Using technology to increase efficiency
- Public dissatisfaction

## Mechanisms to Streamline the Legislative Process

### *Organizational Sessions*

From a time management perspective, an organizational session is an option that should be considered. Time is a scarce resource in legislative operations, especially for part-time legislatures. From the initial stages of the legislative cycle, time management has a rippling effect. Early organization of the legislature usually leads to more effective use of its session days. Some states believe that pre-session organization helps preserve short sessions and part-time schedules.

The following activities typically occur during a formal organizational session:

- Members are sworn in.
- Chamber and caucus leaders are elected.
- Other chamber officers are selected.
- If necessary, the hiring of other staff is approved.
- Chamber rules are adopted.
- Session schedules (deadlines) are set.
- The number of, the names (sometimes, jurisdictions) of and the meeting schedule for standing committees are established. If possible, committee chairs and members are appointed.

Examples of states that have formal organizational sessions include:

State	Description
Alabama	Every fourth year (following the election of a new governor), the legislature will hold an organizational session beginning the second Tuesday in January and lasting 10 calendar days. Regular session convenes in March.
California	Following the even-year general election, the legislature convenes the first Monday in December for organizational session. When it has organized, the legislature then recesses until the first Monday in January.
Florida	The legislature meets to organize 14 calendar days after a general election (in November). Regular session begins in March.
Idaho	The legislature meets to organize in early December; regular session convenes in January.
Indiana	The legislature organizes in late November, then reconvenes in January.
Louisiana	A 3-day organizational session is held in January; regular session convenes in March.
New Hampshire	The legislature holds its organizational session on the first Wednesday in December in even-numbered years. Regular session convenes in January.
North Dakota	The legislature holds its organizational session in December and starts regular session in January.
Oklahoma	The legislature organizes in January; regular session convenes on the first Monday in February.
South Carolina	In even-numbered years, the legislature meets for a maximum of three days, beginning on the Tuesday after certification of election of members. Regular session begins in January.

The Minnesota Legislature does not hold a formal organizational session. The creation of one would require a change to the Minnesota Constitution.



## *Veto Sessions*

When a bill is received, the governor generally has three options:

1. To sign the bill.
2. To veto the legislation.
3. To do nothing.

The outcomes of the first two options are fairly clear cut. If the governor signs a bill, it becomes law. If the chief executive vetoes a bill, the legislature must decide whether to override the veto or let the measure die.

What happens, however, if a state's executive officer takes the third option--that is, does not act upon a bill within the requisite time frame? In Iowa, the governor does not have this choice; every bill delivered to the governor by the legislature must be signed or vetoed. In many chambers, the measure becomes law without the governor's signature.

The governors in 11 states--including Minnesota--have "pocket veto" power, which is the ability to kill a bill by inaction. In every case, however, pocket vetoes may take place only after the legislative session has adjourned. While the legislature is convened, measures become law without the governor's signature.

State	Pocket Veto Power Description
Alabama	A bill dies unless signed within 10 days after legislative adjournment.
Delaware	A bill dies unless signed within 30 days after final adjournment.
Massachusetts	A bill dies unless signed within 10 days after presentation to the governor.
Michigan	A bill dies unless signed within 14 days after presentation to the governor.
Minnesota	<b>A bill dies unless signed within 14 days after legislative adjournment.</b>
New Hampshire	A bill dies unless signed within five days after presentation to the governor.
New Mexico	A bill dies unless signed within 20 days after legislative adjournment.
New York	A bill dies unless signed within 30 days after legislative adjournment.
Oklahoma	A bill dies unless signed within 15 days after legislative adjournment.
Vermont	A bill dies unless signed if the legislature adjourns within three days of presentation of the bill to the governor.
Wisconsin	A bill dies unless signed within 60 days after presentation to the governor.

Every legislature should have a reasonable opportunity to override every executive veto, and no governor should be able to kill--by inaction--legislation passed by a legislature.

A veto session is one solution. For several legislatures, the state constitution establishes a process by which they reconvene a set amount of time after normal session to consider bills vetoed by the governor.

The creation of veto session would help clarify a confusing bill enactment/veto process. It would require a change to the Minnesota Constitution.

### *Bills and Bill Processing*

Bills and resolutions are the main mechanisms by which legislatures process their work.

An average total number of bills introduced in the 50 state legislatures is 109,235; and an average total number of resolutions is 19,094. So, an average legislature introduces about 2,185 bills and 382 resolutions per year.

How does Minnesota compare?

State	Average number of bills per year	Average number of resolutions per year
Arizona	1,129	85
Colorado	636	87
Connecticut	2,500	243
Illinois	3,699	758
Iowa	1,155	67
Michigan	1,848	25
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>3,359</b>	<b>66</b>
Missouri	1,528	411
New York	15,721	3,665
North Dakota	992	129
Oklahoma	1,460	128
South Dakota	571	24
Washington	1,844	74
Wisconsin	1,128	152

### *Deadline Systems*

Significant amounts of activity occur at the end of session in most state legislatures. A number of procedural reforms that legislatures have adopted have been designed to address "end-of-session logjam."

The rush of legislation at the end of the session makes it hard to understand all of the issues and keep track of what is going on. The end of session crunch is particularly difficult for new legislators who have limited legislative experience.

In most legislatures, the end-of-session logjam is a serious problem. Logjams come about in part because many issues require a good deal of time to resolve because they are complex, controversial or both. There is no reason, however, that the conclusion of the essential bargaining process must be postponed until the end of the session. It can--and should--occur in stages according to a series of deadlines that offer a reasonable amount of time for both study and compromise.

Since proper planning is absolutely essential for the orderly flow of work, more than three-fourths of legislative bodies have instituted deadline systems. This means that work at critical stages throughout the process must be finished by set dates.

The five most common deadlines are:

1. Introduction deadline--used by about 75 percent of legislative chambers.
2. Committee action deadline--about 50 percent.
3. First house action deadline-- about 50 percent.
4. Second house action deadline--about 40 percent.
5. Conference committee deadline--about 33 percent.

The implementation of deadlines creates a "domino effect" for the legislative process. Early introduction deadlines facilitate the referral of bills to committee. This, in turn, makes it easier and faster for committees to determine workload, establish agendas and begin working. Committee deadlines force committees to complete their work in a timely fashion, thus allowing their parent body (i.e., the Senate or House) to function more efficiently; and so on.

While the Minnesota Legislature operates with many of the above deadlines, it does not use the most common one--a bill introduction deadline. As a result, Minnesota legislators may introduce bills at any time, committees are never certain of their workloads, and citizens may need to testify on the same issue multiple times.

#### *Bill introduction limits for members*

State legislators are faced with two conflicting pressures. On the one hand, lawmakers are asked to sponsor a great deal of legislation. On the other hand, legal provisions specify the length of time that most legislative bodies may remain in session. The ability to consider a steadily increasing volume of bills is not necessarily compatible with restricted session time. In response, many chambers have experimented with ways to curb the amount of legislation that enters the process. The most direct approach is to set a numerical limit on bill introductions.

Most legislative bodies using introduction limits feel that they help reduce the number of bills entering the legislative process. However, there are other views.

In support	In opposition
Reduce the number of bills	Restrict members' rights to propose bills
Reduce the amount of time spent on superfluous proposals	Restrict members' abilities to carry out their legislative responsibilities
Allow more time to process substantive legislation	Interfere with legislators' abilities to respond to emergencies or the problems of changing times
Give legislators more time to read and understand bills	Require additional staff time to monitor the number of bills introduced by each member
Reduce costs for staff, printing and paper	Lead to bills that are more general in nature and scope rather than ones targeted to specific problems



Examples of chambers that currently have bill introduction limits are:

Arizona House  
First imposed in 1993, set by rule.

California Senate  
First imposed in 1991, set by rule.

California Assembly  
First imposed in 1994, set by rule.

Colorado Senate and House.  
First imposed in 1977, set by rule.

Florida House  
First imposed in 1980, set by rule.

Hawaii House  
Established in 1998, set by speaker's memorandum.

Indiana Senate  
Date first imposed unknown, set by rule.

Indiana House  
Imposed in 1973, set by rule.

Louisiana Senate and House  
First imposed 1995, set by constitution amendment in 1994.

Montana Senate and House  
Date first imposed unknown, set by rule.

Nevada Senate and Assembly  
First imposed in 1983 and set again in 1989, set by rule.

North Dakota Senate  
Date first imposed unknown, set by rule.

North Dakota House  
Date first imposed unknown, set by rule.

Oklahoma House  
First imposed in 1999, set by rule.

Tennessee Senate  
First adopted about 1980, set by rule.

Virginia Senate and House  
First adopted in 2001, set by joint resolution.

Wyoming Senate  
First adopted in 1994, set by rule.

Several legislative chambers-- including the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly, North Carolina House and Washington House--tried bill introduction limits, but subsequently eliminated the practice.

While the Nebraska Legislature no longer sets restrictions on individual senators, it does limit the number of bills that committees may introduce to eight.

### *Defeated Bills or Issues*

Given limited session lengths and the volume of legislation that must be processed, some legislatures prohibit bills that have been defeated (or bills that are substantially the same as ones defeated) from being reintroduced—either as a bill or as an amendment—during the same legislative biennium.

For legislatures—especially those with short sessions, this practice is an efficiency mechanism. Why should a chamber spend valuable committee and floor time on an issue that has already been rejected?

Examples of chamber rules on the reintroduction of a rejected measure in the form of another bill or an amendment are:

*Florida House Rule 12.9*

Amendments Out of Order

An amendment is out of order if it is the principal substance of a bill that has:

- (a) Received an unfavorable council report,
- (b) Been withdrawn from further consideration, or
- (c) Not been reported favorably by at least one council of reference, and may not be offered to a bill on the Calendar of the House and under consideration by the House. Any amendment that is substantially the same, and identical as to specific intent and purpose, as the measure residing in the council or councils of reference is covered by this rule.

*New Hampshire Senate Rule 18*

... (c) No bill the subject matter of which has been indefinitely postponed or made inexpedient to legislate in the Senate in the first-year session shall be admitted into the second-year session whether as a bill, an amendment, a committee of conference report or in any other manner.

*North Carolina House Rule 42*

Effect of a Defeated Bill. – (a) Subject to the provisions of subsection (b) of this rule, after a bill has:

- (1) Been tabled,
  - (2) Been postponed indefinitely,
  - (3) Failed to pass on any of its readings, or
  - (4) Been placed on the unfavorable calendar, the contents of that bill or the principal provisions of its subject matter shall not be considered in any other measure originating in the Senate or originating thereafter in the House. Upon the point of order being raised and sustained by the Chair, that measure shall be laid upon the table, and shall not be taken therefrom except by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.
- (b) No local bill shall be held by the Chair to embody the contents of or the principal provisions of the subject matter of any statewide measure which has been laid on the table, has failed to pass on any of its readings, or has been placed on the unfavorable calendar.

*Oklahoma House Rule 6.8.* ... (b) If final action is such as to defeat a bill or resolution, no other bill or resolution having the same effect and covering the same specific subject matter shall be considered by the House during either session of the current Legislature.



### *Committees and Committee Procedures*

As I have mentioned several times, in a citizen legislature, there never seems to be enough time for all the necessary legislative business. It is not possible for all legislative business to be conducted by the full membership; some division of labor is essential. Therefore, deliberative assemblies usually establish committees, because it enables them to:

- Do many things that, because of sheer size, they otherwise would be unable to do.
- Conduct more business—by dividing the work among the members—than could be done if the whole body were obliged to devote itself to each particular subject.
- Act with a greater degree of freedom than usually is observed in full assembly.
- Be assured of the presence during floor debate of members who have made some examination of the question.
- Provide a major access point for direct involvement by citizens and interest groups, providing a formal opportunity for input into the legislative process.

Committees do the homework of the legislature. They are the central vehicles through which legislation must pass for scrutiny, debate and modification. During committee consideration, members have an opportunity to:

- Hear from supporters and opponents of a bill;
- Look closely at the details of proposed legislation;
- Give thoughtful consideration to proposed amendments;
- Acquire considerable information about the subject; and
- Become knowledgeable enough to make an informed decision about whether to vote for or against a proposal.

By dividing the workload among committees, each committee focuses upon a single subject area and, through committee work, so does each legislator. Lawmakers can become specialists in some areas.

There is no magic "correct" number of committees that a legislature should create. However, the number of standing committees should be manageable. There should be enough committees to enable each legislative body to develop some expertise in different subjects and to examine individual proposals in detail. However, there should not be so many committees that it becomes difficult to relate different bills to one another and to consider the proposals in terms of a single, unified policy. When the number of committees is too large, and their jurisdictions too narrow:

- Policy interrelationships may be missed;
- Policies may work at cross purposes; or
- Committees may wrangle with each other over the custody of measures and activities.

The number of committee assignments per member also should be reasonable. Lawmakers should not have so many committee assignments that they cannot do justice to any one of them or to the work of the legislature as a whole. On average, legislators are assigned to three committees.

In the early 1970s, the Citizens Conference on State Legislatures conducted a review of the 50 state legislatures and made recommendations on how legislatures and legislative processes could be improved--both generally and specifically for each state. The review was published in a book entitled *The Sometime Governments: A Critical Study of the 50 American Legislatures*.

It made the following general recommendations about committees (among others):

General Recommendation #8: *Reduce the number of committees*. Ideally, there should be from 10 to 15 committees in each house, parallel in jurisdiction. This would reduce the general complexity of the legislature and would permit reducing the number of committee assignments per member.

General Recommendation #9: *Reduce the number of committee assignments*. In order to make it possible for members to concentrate their attention and contribute effectively, there should be no more than three committee assignments for each member of the lower house and four committee assignments for each member of the senate. Multiplicity of assignments introduces problems of scheduling, strains the focus of attention on the part of the members, and creates an inordinately heavy work load for members if committees are as active as they should be.

General Recommendation #16. *Committee hearings*. There is no justification for permitting any major piece of legislation to become law without having been subjected to extensive, thorough, well-planned and prepared public hearings, in which representatives of the public, civic organizations, and interest groups are not only invited but encouraged to participate.

For the Minnesota Legislature, it specifically recommended [in part]:

2. *Reduce the number of committees*. (General Recommendation #8.) There are 28 committees in the House and 18 in the Senate. Ideally, there should be from 10 to 15 committees in each house, parallel in jurisdiction.
3. *Reduce the number of committee assignments*. (See General Recommendation #9.)

There are benefits to having fewer committees:

- Members are exposed to a broader range of issues within a single committee's jurisdiction.
- There are fewer committee assignments per member. This affords members greater control over their time and allows members to concentrate on key issues.
- Committees may be larger; therefore, more members will understand an issue when it reaches the floor.
- Facility scheduling and management is improved.

However, there are downsides as well:

- Committees may have a lesser degree of specialization.
- Committees may become too large.
- There are fewer chairmanships to be allocated.

As noted above, one of the main purposes for committees is to allow the legislature to conduct more business.

In committees, do you hear the phrases "We'll fix it on the floor" or "Let's just pass it now; it will get killed on the floor?"

A "yes" answer indicates that committees are not fulfilling their main objective. A committee's purpose is to reduce the work of the full body, not increase it. Inadequate or incomplete work on bills in committee:

- Consumes valuable floor time; and
- Is one of the a major causes of to end-session-logjam.

*The Sometime Governments* expresses it well--"A legislature ...cannot function smoothly without an operative committee system."

### *Floor Processes*

#### *Debate Limits*

As previously noted, time is a precious commodity for state legislatures. As a result, they try to save time by limiting debate or by establishing mechanisms to end debate.

Most legislative chambers limit debate by setting parameters on how often a member may speak. Generally, a member is allowed to speak only once or twice per question. In the Minnesota House, a limitation is set by House Rule 2.32.

While many chambers also restrict how long a member may speak, the Minnesota House does not. The Minnesota House is a very large legislative body--ranking ninth in the size of American lower chambers. This committee may wish to consider adding parameters on how long a representative may speak. There is no "perfect" amount of time to allocate. A limit should balance the need for open and free discussion with the need to complete floor work. Time limits in other legislatures usually range from five to 15 minutes.

The most frequently used mechanism to end debate is a motion calling for the previous question. Rule 3.13 sets forth the process for using a previous question motion in the Minnesota House.

Other mechanisms to end debate are a motion to close debate at a specific time and a motion to close debate after a certain amount of discussion. Some chambers allocate time for debate on an issue-by-issue basis.

The Oklahoma House has an interesting process. On any debatable question, debate is limited to 15 minutes, equally divided between the proponents and opponents. A member cannot debate twice on the same issue nor can any member speak longer than 10 minutes on the same question.

#### *End-of-Session Logjam*

End-of-session logjams are, in large part, a political reality of the legislative institution. As James R. Ruhl wrote, they are a phenomenon "recognized as one of the most predictable aspects of state legislative processes nationwide."

All legislatures, whether they meet for only 60 days or for more than six months, experience a crunch of activity as the session draws to a close. The reasons for logjams are not difficult to understand.

Al Abrams, former secretary of the New York Senate, regarded end-of-session logjam as "a result of the essential bargaining process that goes on in legislative halls." The legislative process is based on freedom of expression, consensus building and compromise. Legislators need time to work toward agreement on controversial and complex legislation.

Time is a scarce resource in legislative operations. In a citizen legislature, there never seems to be enough time for all the necessary legislative business. However, the availability of ample time is no guarantee that the time will be well spent.

To minimize logjam, a 1998 survey revealed that it is important to make optimum use of session time and to dispose of business promptly and in an organized manner. To accomplish this, three points were emphasized.

- Manage the overall flow of work from legislative committees to the floor, so that early session time is maximized.
- Plan the time actually spent in floor debate in order to expedite each day's business.
- Minimize time spent on non-controversial matters.

Many suggestions offered in 1998 mirror the recommendations made by Delaware Senator Everette Hale in 1969. Based on his own 50-state survey, Senator Hale prescribed the following improvements.

- Presession organization and orientation.
- Presession filing of bills.
- Consent calendars.
- Self-imposed deadlines at important points in the legislative process.

Deadlines are the most common mechanism for managing the overall work flow. However, they are not a panacea; cooperation between the chambers, direction on the part of leaders and discipline on the part of members are essential.



## 1998 Recommendations to Minimize End-of-Session Logjam

- Elect or appoint strong leaders.
- Encourage cooperation among members and between chambers.
- Hold more caucuses or other meetings to keep rank-and-file members informed.
- Establish a deadline system or timetable to which both chambers adhere.
- Make the schedule reasonable.
- Provide copies of the schedule to members, staff and the public.
- Adhere to the deadline schedule.
- Limit the number of bills introduced, either by numeric limit or deadline.
- Allow members to identify a certain number of bills as priorities.
- Establish an early filing deadline for priority bills.
- Require prefilings of state agency bills.
- Have leaders work with committee chairs to keep measures flowing through the process.
- Encourage better committee work.
- Do not require all bills to be heard by committee.
- Reduce the number of bills sent by committee to the floor.
- Publicize and provide copies of each day's calendar well in advance.
- Attempt to consistently clear each day's calendar.
- Develop a workable consent calendar.
- Encourage members to give the presiding officer advance warning of objections to amendments or procedures in order to allow a bipartisan legal counsel to draft options.
- Pass the budget earlier in session.
- Use a 24- or 48-hour "cooling off" period before voting on final passage of a measure.
- Streamline the process by which bills are transferred between chambers.
- Establish rules that set out special processes to be used during the last days of session.
- Set a cutoff after which chambers cannot pass bills.
- Establish joint rules for conference committees.
- Limit the number of conference committees.
- Limit the number of days that a conference committee may consider a bill.
- Reserve the last day of session for passage of conference committee reports.
- Establish timing requirements for the production and distribution of conference reports before any action may be taken.
- Have sufficient staff and equipment.
- Use improved technology.

## Interim Planning

During the session, legislators are immersed in the immediate issues and preoccupied with assessing particular bills and appropriations. They have little, if any, time to explore broad policy issues or conduct research and investigation in any depth. Indeed, the more severely the length of a legislative session is limited, the more important it is to carry out these activities during the interim. As a result, interim activity often becomes the "homework" of a legislature. The more a legislature can do during the interim, the more it can do during session.

Just as regular session time should be planned with care, so should time during the interim. The interim must be looked at strategically and realistically to ensure that the most important issues are being addressed.

### *Use of Standing Committees*

Mechanisms that enhance the flow and continuity of the legislative process save valuable legislative time and increase efficiency. As a result, many legislatures use their standing committees to perform interim work. By using the existing standing committees, there is no delay in beginning interim work. The committee chairs and members are already set. Standing committee members typically have some background in the issues to be studied, so there is a shorter "learning curve." Standing committees already have procedural rules under which to function, so no time is taken to establish process.

Also, these are the committees that more than likely will deal with the issue the next session. If they do the work during the interim, there is less chance that they will "redo" it during session, resulting in less repetition of efforts. Chambers often encourage their standing committees to meet jointly during the interim; again, this is an attempt to minimize duplication of effort.

### *Scheduling*

The ability for legislators to plan ahead increases their effectiveness. Advance planning probably is even more important during the interim, when citizen-legislators are trying to balance their private jobs with their public responsibilities. Fixed schedules for meetings allow citizen legislators to know when interim work will take place.

- In Arkansas, the Legislative Council meets the third Friday of each month during the interim. Interim committees also hold meetings throughout that week, alternating months between Group "A" and Group "B" committees.
- Florida has interim committee weeks each month.
- Interim committees in Washington hold "committee weekends," which usually are the first Thursday, Friday and Saturday of each month.
- In Kentucky, a schedule is approved by Legislative Research Commission. Committees meet on a particular day each month.
- In West Virginia, interim committee meetings are held once each month. The exact meeting dates are set by the Joint Government and Finance Committee. Typically, most interim committee meetings begin on the second Sunday of the month and run for three consecutive days, ending on Tuesday.

## *Reporting*

To be of use during the next regular session, interim study results or legislation must be reported in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, this often is not the case. It is common for study committees or commissions to still be meeting in December. At this time of the year, however, legislators and staff typically switch their focus to the upcoming session. As a result, interim reports are "put on the back burner" and frequently are not published until *after* the session, if at all.

## **Closing**

What I have expressed here today are ideas, suggestions, and theories that you might consider.

Parliamentary procedure is not an exact science. It is based on decisions or judgments made by human beings. As a result, parliamentary practices vary greatly from state to state and even from chamber to chamber. Each legislative assembly illustrates the unique character that is created by blending numerous individuals within different political environments. So, what may be right for one legislature, may not be right for another.

Finally, I want to leave you with another quote from Edward Burdick:

"The vitality of government flourishes when public officials continually seek to better the institutions they serve. What's essential, however, is a willingness to look for weaknesses or to identify processes to be revamped. Otherwise, policymakers end up trying to operate modern legislatures with old rules and procedures."

I commend you for taking the time to review your rules and processes. Good luck with this important endeavor.

