



THE FLORIDA SENATE
SENATOR WILTON SIMPSON
President

Senate COVID-19 Protocols
Updated 1.26.21

Required Testing

Senators and all Senate Professional Staff, as well as district staff based in or traveling to Tallahassee will test prior to each interim committee week.

Masks

In keeping with CDC guidelines, there is a mask requirement in the Senate. Speakers in a committee meeting may temporarily remove their mask. The risk of transmission in Senate committee rooms is extremely low because all Senators and professional staff are PCR tested prior to meetings, social distancing guidelines are observed and the Senate is temporarily closed to the public.

Virtual Meetings

Senators are asked to avoid in person meetings and to utilize available platforms to schedule meetings virtually.

Guests

Senators are asked not to bring outside visitors, including lobbyists, into the Senate Office Building. Senators are encouraged to hold meetings via phone or video conferencing. Additionally, meeting in an outdoor setting greatly reduces (not eliminates) the risk of transmitting COVID-19. The Senate has set up additional tables around the Senate portico to help accommodate outdoor meetings.

Committee Blocks

Committee blocks have been reduced so no more than three committees are meeting at one time. This schedule allows the Senate to utilize the committee rooms with the largest seating area for Senators, 412 Knott, 110 SB, and 37 SB, to accommodate appropriate social distancing.

Committee Room Admittance

There is very limited seating in each committee room due to social distancing guidelines. The Senate encourages staff and state agency personnel to remotely view committee meetings; however, as space is available, elected officials or individuals employed by a government entity will be admitted to committee rooms. Credentialed media are also admitted.

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Remote Committee Viewing/Public Testimony

Input from various stakeholders and members of the public is critical to the legislative process, and the Senate is working diligently to ensure Floridians have access to their elected officials as we consider important legislation for our state. The Senate worked in partnership with Florida State University to reserve three remote viewing rooms at the Leon County Civic Center, which provide the opportunity to for members of the public to view meetings and virtually address Senate committees in a safe, socially distant manner.

Each committee notice published in the Senate calendar includes the room number within the Civic Center where members of the public may gather should they wish to address the committee.

Committee Appearance Cards

The Senate has determined that the quickest and most reliable way to transmit appearance cards is by collecting cards at the Civic Center and delivering them to the Senate.

As always, there will be members of the public who want to provide testimony, but did not complete an appearance card before the committee begins.

As is traditional practice in the Senate, the Chair will ask the audience if anyone else who has not filled out an appearance card would like to speak. The individual(s) who would like to speak should state their name and position on the bill (or amendment). The Chair will then ask the speaker to make sure and fill out an appearance card. Those cards will be provided to the committee after the meeting. Committees do not need to wait for a card to be delivered to the committee from the Civic Center if someone decides to speak after the committee meeting has started.

Written Testimony

Members of the public who wish to provide written testimony should email members of the committee directly to share their comments.

In Case of Audio Difficulties

The Senate is working to minimize any potential technical difficulties between the Civic Center and the Senate committee rooms. In the event of a problem, Senate Committee Chairs are directed to take a five minute recess in order to employ back-up options.