

What is a Session?

From **Chapter III** of the **2013 Legislative Manual**:

Regular sessions of the Nevada Legislature are held biennially in odd-numbered years. They convene on the first Monday in February after the election of members of the Senate and Assembly. At other times, the Governor may, for a specific purpose, call the Legislature into special session, or the Legislature may, upon a petition signed by two-thirds of the members elected to each house of the Legislature, convene a special session for a specific purpose without action by the Governor.

Sessions are limited to 120 calendar days following the approval by voters of a constitutional amendment in 1998. Previous sessions were unlimited in length following the repeal in 1958 of a constitutional provision setting a 60-day maximum limit on the duration of a session. Since 1958, there has been only one regular session of less than 60 days, that being the single annual session of 1960, which lasted 55 days. Between 1975 and 1997, regular sessions in Nevada ran between 113 and 169 days. Conversely, the 1989 Special Session was the shortest in history, lasting just over two hours in the Senate.

The **Nevada Constitution** also limits the number of days for which legislators may receive compensation. Since 2005, the salary of members has been set by **NRS 218A.630** at a maximum of \$130 per day, adjusted by an amount equal to the cumulative increase or decrease in the salaries of State employees. However, the **Constitution** forbids compensation for services to be paid to legislators for more than 60 calendar days for any regular session and 20 days for any special session. Reimbursement for certain expenses of members, however, may continue for the entire length of a session..

Special sessions of the Legislature may be convened on the call of the Governor or by petition of the Legislature. After both houses have organized in special session, the Governor is required by the **Nevada Constitution** to state the purpose for which they have been convened. If the Legislature convened itself in special session, the purpose of the special session is included in the petition. The Legislature may not enact any bills or joint resolutions pertaining to subjects other than those for which it was convened. The Governor, however, may expand the reasons for calling the Legislature into session at any time during that session, thereby reducing the restrictions on legislative initiative. The Legislature, at times, has adopted simple or concurrent resolutions to express its sentiments on matters not contained in the Governor's call. The last special session, which was the twenty-sixth in State history, was conducted during the interim period in 2010.

Legislative activities, including committee hearings, are open to the public. The **Constitution** also stipulates that neither house may, without the consent of the other, adjourn for more than three days nor move to any place other than where it is holding its session. The Joint Rules of the Senate and Assembly specify that one or more adjournments, for a duration of more than three days, may be taken to permit standing committees, select committees, or the Legislative Counsel Bureau to prepare the matters respectively entrusted to them for the consideration of the Legislature as a

whole. The total time taken for all such adjournments is not to exceed 20 days during any regular session. The 1991, 1993, and 1995 Legislatures adjourned for two weeks early in the session to allow the Senate Committee on Finance and Assembly Committee on Ways and Means to work full-time on the review of proposed State agency budgets. During this same period, the remaining "morning" committees of the Legislature held hearings on bills and other legislative matters in the Las Vegas area. Beginning in 1999, the two money committees have conducted informational hearings in Carson City as a subcommittee acting under the auspices of the Legislative Commission during the two weeks immediately preceding the start of session.

In the case of a disagreement between the two houses with respect to the time of the Legislature's final adjournment, the Governor is constitutionally empowered to adjourn the Legislature to such a time as deemed proper, but not, however, beyond the time fixed for the meeting of the next Legislature.