

## **THE LEGISLATURE POSITION IN DETAIL**

The League believes:

Legislators should:

- Regard the office as a full-time job and a primary obligation during their time in office.
- Account for all expenses subsidized by public monies.
- Have sufficient trained staff to support legislative obligations and provide constituent services.
- Have the capability to make optimum use of current technology, particularly electronic communications technology.
- Abide by a code of ethics, compiled from current legal requirements and other ethics precepts, applicable to all legislators and staff, and easily accessible to citizens as well as legislators. Enforcement and administration of the Code of Ethics should be strengthened, with clear procedures for filing a complaint and penalties and sanctions sufficient to encourage compliance. Enforcement and administration of the Code of Ethics should not be solely the responsibility of the Ethics Committees of the House and Senate but also involve an independent agency. Review and training on the Code of Ethics should be provided for both legislators and staff at the beginning of each legislative session. At a minimum, a code of ethics should:
  - Limit the value of gifts received to a small amount (e.g., \$50), requiring all gifts to be reported.
  - Require an annual statement of financial interests, including real estate and business interests.
  - Forbid acceptance of honoraria.
  - Prohibit conduct that would constitute a conflict of interest.
  - Require legislators to abstain from voting on matters that may constitute a conflict of interest.

The legislature could be made more effective by:

- A substantial reduction in size.
- An increase in the terms of representatives to four-year staggered terms.
- The use of joint hearings.
- Access to all pertinent information on executive programs through periodic reports of departments, agencies, and commissions.
- The use of a simple majority for Senate confirmation of all gubernatorial appointees, including those appointed to the judiciary and to state regulatory positions.
- Changes in the Rules of Procedure that would:
  - Limit the number of bills each legislator could introduce.
  - Set a deadline after which only bills addressing an emergency could be introduced.
  - Provide for an automatic calendar.
  - Set a limit of 5 legislative days for the Appropriations Committee to release bills requiring fiscal notes.
  - Provide for committee membership that more closely reflects the ratio of party members in the House and Senate.
  - Require committee chairs to be elected by committee members.
  - Be uniform for both House and Senate.
  - Require a supermajority vote (2/3) to suspend the rules.
  - Establish a training program on the rules for all legislators at the beginning of each session.

To increase public trust in and improve public access to the legislative process:

- The rules requiring open committee meetings and public reports should be enforced.

- A suitable mechanism for advertising public meetings in a timely manner should be provided.