



## **The Budget and Legislative Process: A Brief Overview**

Each year, Delaware's fiscal calendar runs from July 1 through June 30. In the executive branch, State agencies (like the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Department of Transportation, for example) work over the summer and fall to develop their budgets and submit their requests to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in October. In November, the agencies make formal presentations of their requests to the OMB in a series of public hearings at which the public is invited to testify. The presented information forms the basis for the Governor's budget, which is submitted to the General Assembly in January.

On the legislative side, the Governor's budget is promptly introduced as two new pieces of legislation: the operating and capital budgets. The Joint Finance Committee (JFC), made up of six representatives and six senators, then holds six weeks of hearings at which the State agencies make their case for their requests in the operating budget, and again the public is invited to testify. The JFC works throughout the session on the operating budget and goes into a formal mark-up process in May. When a new Governor is elected, they may choose to make their own recommendations for the budget during the JFC workup. During this time, the JFC adds or removes budget lines, or increases or decreases the amounts allocated. A law passed in 2009 allows all of these deliberations to be open to the public. The Bond Bill Committee reviews the capital budget requests.

A final budget is presented to all legislators for their vote late in the session. Until 2010, legislators typically did not see the budget until the last day, when it had to pass. Because of the short amount of time for all legislators to review the budget, advocating budget policy issues is critical and should include JFC members as well as the advocate's own legislators.

**For information on how a bill becomes a law in Delaware, visit:**

<https://legis.delaware.gov/LawsOfDE/LegislativeProcess>