

The Policy Committee Role in Budget Matters: Joint Rule 314

Joint Rule 314 establishes the role of policy committees -- any joint standing or joint select committee other than the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee (Appropriations Committee) -- in budget matters.

Policy committees:

1. Advise the Appropriations Committee on those portions of State budget bills that affect subject matter within the jurisdiction of the policy committee; and
2. Advise the Appropriations Committee on the policy committee's budgetary priorities relating to certain bills having a fiscal impact.

Advising on the budget bill

According to the subject matter jurisdiction of each policy committee, the Appropriations Committee schedules a series of joint public hearings with policy committees on the relevant portions of the Governor's budget bill. The relevant portions of the budget bill for a policy committee include the initiatives in the proposed budget that affect all agencies within the policy committee's jurisdiction and any proposed changes to statutory language affecting laws under the policy committee's jurisdiction. The policy committee can attend the hearing as a whole or send an appointed subcommittee to attend the public hearing and serve as a liaison to the Appropriations Committee.

After the joint public hearing, policy committees typically hold their own work sessions and develop their recommendations on the relevant portions of the budget bill. The Appropriations Committee may direct that policy committees' recommendations stay within budgetary constraints established by the Appropriations Committee.

The policy committee then reports its recommendations on the relevant portions of the budget bill to the Appropriations Committee in a format specified by the Appropriations Committee. Typically, the Appropriations Committee asks policy committees to report back using a document that allows the committee to record a vote on each budget initiative or language part.

Policy committee recommendations are not binding on the Appropriations Committee; the Appropriations Committee must consider policy committee recommendations but retains sole decision-making authority on budget matters.

Prioritizing bills with fiscal impact

Bills with fiscal impact that have been reported out of committee and received initial approval in both houses are tabled before final enactment on the Senate's Special Appropriations Table. Near the end of session, the Appropriations Committee, with input from the policy committees, makes final recommendations to the Senate on which, if any, such legislation should be enacted, not enacted or amended given budgetary considerations. The policy committees may provide input by submitting a list expressing the committee's priorities for bills on the Special Appropriations Table, including an indication of how each committee member voted on the priority recommendation.

For more information visit www.legislature.maine.gov/ofpr and click on **Publications**.