

Bill Deadlines

These are the deadlines for Senators and Representatives to introduce bills to the General Assembly. Also included is what is referred to as the crossover deadline—the date by which bills other than appropriations or finance bills must be approved by one chamber and received in the other chamber to be eligible for consideration in the first regular session.

	To Bill Drafting	Introduction by	Approval by
Senate	4 p.m.	3 p.m.	One Chamber*
Local	March 24	March 31	April 29
Public	April 7	April 14	April 29
Resolutions**	April 7	April 14	

	To Bill Drafting	Introduction by	Approval by
House***	4 p.m.	3 p.m.	One Chamber*
Study Commissions****	February 24	March 3	April 29
Agency Bills	February 24	March 3	April 29
Local Bills	March 24	March 31	April 29
Appropriations	April 21	April 28	
Finance	May 5	May 12	
Resolutions	None	None	

* This is known as the crossover deadline. To remain eligible, House bills must be approved by the House and received by the Senate by this date, and Senate bills must be approved by the Senate and received by the House. Exceptions are finance and appropriations bills, which are not subject to the deadline.

** Except adjournment resolution and resolutions memorializing deceased people.

*** House deadlines do not apply to bills redistricting Congress, the General Assembly, or local governments, nor to measures ratifying amendments to the United States Constitution.

**** The study commission bill deadline applies to public bills only. Local bills recommended by study commissions fall under local bill deadlines.

Source: N.C. House and Senate Rules

Besides these surprises, the legislature regularly faces deadlines such as the crossover deadline in which a bill must clear one chamber or the other in order to be alive for the next session of the General Assembly (April 29 for the 1999 session, though the date changes from session to session depending on a range of factors). Cooper believes the ultimate deadline—a constitutionally mandated end to the session—would work well by providing a specific time frame for resolving legislative issues.

As it stands, notes Cooper, the leaders of both chambers spend a great deal of time in stalled negotiations that drag out the session length. "It's the 'wait 'em out' strategy," says Cooper. "Who

will fold first? Having no time limits is like an adversarial court case with no judge and no trial date."

The 1999 bill calling for a public vote on a constitutional amendment to limit the length of legislative sessions passed the Senate and currently rests in the House Committee on Rules, Calendar, and Operations, where it remains alive for consideration in the 2000 short session. At least one committee member likes the idea. "I firmly support session limits to enable people with full-time jobs to serve," says McMahan. "If you knew you were going to adjourn at a date certain, you could do better planning."

Putting session limits in the state constitution