



**Presentation to the Pennsylvania House State Government Committee  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania  
August 19, 2008**

Good morning, Madame Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Brenda Erickson. I am a program principal in the Legislative Management Program of the National Conference of State Legislatures. I will be providing a short overview on the sizes of legislatures and the arguments commonly offered when a change in size is considered.

**Sizes of Legislatures**

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of change for state legislatures. It was a period when legislatures were assessing themselves, looking to become more co-equal branches of government rather than "sometime governments." Twenty-two legislatures shifted from biennial to annual sessions. Many upgraded staffing and facilities in order to strengthen the legislative institution. *Baker v. Carr* and other "one man, one vote" redistricting decisions in the early 1960s also sparked an interest in state legislatures and legislative size.

Thirty-four states changed their legislative size during these years. Many--including Pennsylvania--made multiple modifications. Adjustments to the sizes of legislatures slowed after this flurry of activity. Only five states--Idaho, New York, North Dakota, Rhode Island and Wyoming--have made changes since 1990.

Overall, since 1960, there has been a slight downward trend in the total number of state legislators in the country--from 7,781 in 1960 to 7,382 today. Not all legislatures have gotten smaller, however. Examples of states where sizeable reductions or increases in the number of legislators have occurred are:

<i>Reduced size</i>	<i>Increased size</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connecticut</li><li>• Illinois</li><li>• Massachusetts</li><li>• Rhode Island</li><li>• Vermont</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Florida</li><li>• Maryland</li><li>• New Jersey</li><li>• Utah</li></ul>



## Common Arguments

When a change in the size of a legislature is considered, debate typically centers around three major themes:

1. Representation
2. Efficiency
3. Cost


I have provided a chart that illustrates the arguments typically offered by proponents of larger-sized and smaller-sized legislatures. This information was compiled based on a review of various academic studies, legislative reports, news articles, etc.

## In Summary

The authors of *The Sometime Governments* wrote:

"Ideally, a legislature should be large enough to represent and reflect the diverse elements of its constituency and small enough to get things done."

Each legislature represents a microcosm of its state's people, traditions and political cultures. These factors vary greatly across the country. Opinions about them often differ within a state. Consequently, there may never be consensus on what the "right size" for a legislature is.



NCSL Changes in the Sizes of Legislatures 1960-2006

State	Size in 1960	Size in 2006	Year(s) of Change(s)*
Alabama	141	140	1974
Alaska	60	60	No change
Arizona	108	90	1966
Arkansas	135	135	No change
California	120	120	No change
Colorado	100	100	No change
Connecticut	330	187	1966, 1972
Delaware	52	62	1964, 1968, 1972
Florida	133	160	1962, 1964, 1966, 1972
Georgia	259	236	1968, 1972
Hawaii	76	76	No change
Idaho	103	105	1962, 1964, 1966, 1984, 1992
Illinois	235	177	1972, 1982
Indiana	150	150	No change
Iowa	158	150	1964, 1966, 1970
Kansas	165	165	No change
Kentucky	138	138	No change
Louisiana	144	144	No change
Maine	184	186	1962, 1968, 1972, 1984
Maryland	152	188	1962, 1966, 1974
Massachusetts	280	200	1978
Michigan	144	148	1964
Minnesota	202	201	1972
Mississippi	189	174	1962
Missouri	191	197	1962
Montana	150	150	1966, 1972
Nebraska	43	49	1964
Nevada	64	63	1962, 1966, 1982
New Hampshire	424	424	No change
New Jersey	81	120	1966, 1968
New Mexico	98	112	1964, 1966
New York	208	212	1964, 1966, 1972, 1982, 2004
North Carolina	170	170	No change
North Dakota	164	141	1962, 1964, 1966, 1972, 1976, 1982, 1992, 2004
Ohio	177	132	1962, 1964, 1966
Oklahoma	165	149	1964, 1972
Oregon	90	90	No change
Pennsylvania	260	253	1964, 1966
Rhode Island	144	113	1962, 1966, 2004
South Carolina	170	170	No change
South Dakota	110	105	1972
Tennessee	132	132	No change
Texas	181	181	No change
Utah	89	104	1964, 1966, 1972
Vermont	276	180	1966
Virginia	140	140	No change
Washington	148	147	1972
West Virginia	132	134	1964
Wisconsin	133	132	1972
Wyoming	83	90	1964, 1966, 1972, 1982, 1992

\* The year is the election year in which a change took effect, not necessarily the year that the change was adopted.



NCSL Changes in the Sizes of Legislatures 1960-2006

State	Year*	Chamber	Starting Size	Ending Size	Net Change
Alabama	1974	House	106	105	-1
Arizona	1966	Senate	28	30	+2
		House	80	60	-20
Connecticut	1966	House	294	177	-117
	1972	House	177	151	-26
Delaware	1964	Senate	17	18	+1
	1968	Senate	18	19	+1
		House	35	39	+4
	1972	Senate	19	21	+2
House		39	41	+2	
Florida	1962	Senate	38	45	+7
		House	95	124	+29
	1964	Senate	45	44	-1
		House	124	112	-12
	1966	Senate	44	48	+4
		House	112	119	+7
1972	Senate	48	40	-8	
	House	119	120	+1	
Georgia	1968	Senate	54	56	+2
		House	205	195	-10
	1972	House	195	180	-15
Idaho	1962	House	59	63	+4
	1964	House	63	79	+16
	1966	Senate	44	35	-9
		House	79	70	-9
	1984	Senate	35	42	+7
		House	70	84	+14
1992	Senate	42	35	-7	
	House	84	70	-14	
Illinois	1972	Senate	58	59	+1
	1982	House	177	118	-59
Iowa	1964	Senate	50	59	+9
		House	108	124	+16
	1966	Senate	59	61	+2
	1970	Senate	61	50	-11
House		124	100	-24	
Maine	1962	Senate	33	34	+1
	1968	Senate	34	32	-2
	1972	Senate	32	33	+1
	1984	Senate	33	35	+2
Maryland	1962	House	123	142	+19
	1966	Senate	29	43	+14
	1974	Senate	43	47	+4
		House	142	141	-1
Massachusetts	1978	House	240	160	-80
Michigan	1966	Senate	34	38	+4
Minnesota	1972	House	135	134	-1

State	Year*	Chamber	Starting Size	Ending Size	Net Change
Mississippi	1962	Senate	49	52	+3
		House	140	122	-18
Missouri	1962	House	157	163	+6
Montana	1966	Senate	56	55	-1
		House	94	104	+10
	1972	Senate	55	50	-5
		House	104	100	-4
Nebraska	1964	Unicameral	43	49	+6
Nevada	1962	Assembly	47	37	-10
	1966	Senate	17	20	+3
		Assembly	37	40	+3
	1982	Senate	20	21	+1
Assembly		40	42	+2	
New Jersey	1966	Senate	21	29	+8
	1968	Senate	29	40	+11
		Assembly	60	80	+20
New Mexico	1964	House	66	77	+11
	1966	Senate	32	42	+10
		House	77	70	-7
New York	1964	Assembly	150	151	+1
	1966	Senate	58	57	-1
		Assembly	151	150	-1
	1972	Senate	57	60	+3
	1982	Senate	60	61	+1
	2004	Senate	61	62	+1
North Dakota	1962	House	115	113	-2
	1964	House	113	109	-4
	1966	House	109	98	-11
	1972	Senate	49	51	+2
		House	98	102	+4
	1976	Senate	51	50	-1
		House	102	100	-2
	1982	Senate	50	53	+3
		House	100	106	+6
	1992	Senate	53	49	-4
		House	106	98	-8
2004	Senate	49	47	-2	
	House	98	94	-4	
Ohio	1962	House	139	137	-2
	1964	Senate	33	32	-1
	1966	Senate	32	33	+1
		House	137	99	-38
Oklahoma	1964	Senate	44	48	+4
		House	121	99	-22
	1972	House	99	101	+2
Pennsylvania	1964	House	210	209	-1
	1966	House	209	203	-6

State	Year*	Chamber	Starting Size	Ending Size	Net Change
Rhode Island	1962	Senate	44	46	+2
	1966	Senate	46	50	+4
	2004	Senate	50	38	-12
House		100	75	-25	
South Dakota	1972	House	75	70	-5
Utah	1964	Senate	25	27	+2
		House	64	69	+5
	1966	Senate	27	28	+1
	1972	Senate	28	29	+1
		House	69	75	+6
Vermont	1966	House	246	150	-96
Washington	1972	House	99	98	-1
West Virginia	1964	Senate	32	34	+2
Wisconsin	1972	Assembly	100	99	-1
Wyoming	1964	Senate	27	25	-2
		House	56	61	+5
	1966	Senate	25	30	+5
	1972	House	61	62	+1
	1982	House	62	64	+2
	1992	House	94	90	-4

\* The year is the election year in which a change took effect, not necessarily the year that the change was adopted.



## Size of a Legislature: The Common Arguments

When a change in the size of a legislature is considered, debate typically centers around three major themes--representation, efficiency and cost.

Proponents for larger-sized legislatures usually argue that:	Proponents for smaller-sized legislatures usually argue that:
<p>The more the members, the fewer the constituents. With fewer constituents, a legislator is more likely to have face-to-face dealings with them.</p>	<p>Fewer legislators does not mean less responsive legislators. Using modern communications, a legislator can easily reach, and be reached by, many more constituents.</p>
<p>One political party can more easily dominate a smaller-sized legislature. A smaller-sized legislature also may increase regional rivalries, particularly between rural and urban areas</p>	<p>Legislative elections will be more competitive.</p>
<p>Relatively few political positions are well known by the general population--for example, the president or governor. Reducing the number of legislators probably will not change this fact.</p>	<p>In a smaller body, the role of legislator will be more prestigious and more satisfying. A smaller legislature increases the responsibility of each member. Individual legislators have more opportunity to influence decisions. Each legislator should be more visible and therefore more responsive to the voting public.</p>
<p>The legislative process was not intended to be neat and efficient. The legislature is designed to provide a cross-section of all points of view. Legislators are to study, debate and argue, and finally reach a compromise position that is acceptable to a majority of members.</p>	<p>With a smaller legislature, there will be better discussion and clearer debate. There is more opportunity for each member to make his or her views known, to have his or her voice heard.</p>
<p>A larger number of members allows for a more effective division of labor and specialization. The oversight of administrative agencies is greater among larger legislatures.</p>	<p>Larger legislatures tend to have more committees. Too many committees result in overlapping and fragmentation of work--making it more difficult for a legislature to formulate coherent, comprehensive policies on broad public questions.</p>
<p>There is a greater correlation between a state's population and legislative costs than between legislative size and cost.</p>	<p>Larger legislative bodies cost more.</p>

Source: Various academic studies, legislative reports, news articles and other papers.



Population and Legislative Size

State	2005 Population	Rank	Total Size	Rank*	Senate Size	Rank*	Approximate Senate District Size	Rank	House Size	Rank*	Approximate House District Size	Rank
Alabama	4,557,808	23	140	24	35	16	130,223	19	105	16	43,408	21
Alaska	663,661	47	60	39	20	25	33,183	44	40	30	16,592	41
Arizona	5,939,292	17	90	35	30	20	197,976	10	60	26	98,988	8
Arkansas	2,779,154	32	135	26	35	16	79,404	30	100	18	27,792	32
California	36,132,147	1	120	29	40	12	903,304	1	80	22	451,652	1
Colorado	4,665,177	22	100	34	35	16	133,291	18	65	25	71,772	12
Connecticut	3,510,297	29	187	9	36	15	97,508	27	151	6	23,247	36
Delaware	843,524	45	62	38	21	24	40,168	41	41	29	20,574	38
Florida	17,789,864	4	160	17	40	12	444,747	3	120	13	148,249	3
Georgia	9,072,576	9	236	3	56	4	162,010	16	180	3	50,403	20
Hawaii	1,275,194	42	76	36	25	22	51,008	38	51	27	25,004	34
Idaho	1,429,096	39	105	32	35	16	40,851	40	70	24	20,416	39
Illinois	12,763,371	5	177	13	59	3	216,328	9	118	14	108,164	7
Indiana	6,271,973	15	150	18	50	6	125,459	21	100	18	62,720	14
Iowa	2,966,334	30	150	18	50	6	59,327	34	100	18	29,663	31
Kansas	2,744,687	33	165	16	40	12	68,617	33	125	10	21,957	37
Kentucky	4,173,405	26	138	25	38	14	109,826	26	100	18	41,734	23
Louisiana	4,523,628	24	144	22	39	13	115,990	24	105	16	43,082	22
Maine	1,321,505	40	186	10	35	16	37,757	42	151	6	8,752	45
Maryland	5,600,388	19	188	8	47	9	119,157	23	141	8	39,719	25
Massachusetts	6,398,743	13	200	6	40	12	159,969	17	160	5	39,992	24
Michigan	10,120,860	8	148	20	38	14	266,338	6	110	15	92,008	9
Minnesota	5,132,799	21	201	5	67	1	76,609	31	134	9	38,304	26
Mississippi	2,921,088	31	174	14	52	5	56,175	35	122	12	23,943	35
Missouri	5,800,310	18	197	7	34	17	170,597	14	163	4	35,585	27
Montana	935,670	44	150	18	50	6	18,713	48	100	18	9,357	44
Nebraska	1,758,787	38	49	40	49	7	35,894	43	Unicameral		NA	NA
Nevada	2,414,807	35	63	37	21	24	114,991	25	42	28	57,495	18
New Hampshire	1,309,940	41	424	1	24	23	54,581	36	400	1	3,275	49
New Jersey	8,717,925	10	120	29	40	12	217,948	8	80	22	108,974	6
New Mexico	1,928,384	36	112	31	42	11	45,914	39	70	24	27,548	33
New York	19,254,630	3	212	4	62	2	310,559	5	150	7	128,364	4
North Carolina	8,683,242	11	170	15	50	6	173,665	13	120	13	72,360	11
North Dakota	636,677	48	141	23	47	9	13,546	50	94	21	6,773	47
Ohio	11,464,042	7	132	28	33	18	347,395	4	99	19	115,798	5
Oklahoma	3,547,884	28	149	19	48	8	73,914	32	101	17	35,128	28



State	2005 Population	Rank	Total Size	Rank*	Senate Size	Rank*	Approximate Senate District Size	Rank	House Size	Rank*	Approximate House District Size	Rank
Oregon	3,641,056	27	90	35	30	20	121,369	22	60	26	60,684	16
Pennsylvania	12,429,616	6	253	2	50	6	248,592	7	203	2	61,230	15
Rhode Island	1,076,189	43	113	30	38	14	28,321	45	75	23	14,349	42
South Carolina	4,255,083	25	170	15	46	10	92,502	28	124	11	34,315	29
South Dakota	775,933	46	105	32	35	16	22,170	46	70	24	11,085	43
Tennessee	5,962,959	16	132	28	33	18	180,696	12	99	19	60,232	17
Texas	22,859,968	2	181	11	31	19	737,418	2	150	7	152,400	2
Utah	2,469,585	34	104	33	29	21	85,158	29	75	23	32,928	30
Vermont	623,050	49	180	12	30	20	20,768	47	150	7	4,154	48
Virginia	7,567,465	12	140	24	40	12	189,187	11	100	18	75,675	10
Washington	6,287,759	14	147	21	49	7	128,322	20	98	20	64,161	13
West Virginia	1,816,856	37	134	27	34	17	53,437	37	100	18	18,169	40
Wisconsin	5,536,201	20	132	28	33	18	167,764	15	99	19	55,921	19
Wyoming	509,294	50	90	35	30	20	16,976	49	60	26	8,488	46
TOTAL	296,410,404		7,382		1971				5,411			

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, population figures based on the U.S. Bureau of the Census state and county quick facts for FY 2005, April 2007

\* Due to equal sizes, rankings may not range from 1 to 50.

**Legislative Branch Expenditures for FY 2006  
with Rankings by Legislative Branch Expenditure, Per Capita,  
and Percentage of General Government Expenditures**

State	Popul*	Rank	Gen'l Gov't Expend*	Rank	Legis Branch Expend*	Rank	Per Cap	Rank	% Gen'l Gov't	Rank
Alabama	4,599	23	\$20,010,410	23	\$27,087	31	\$5.89	37	0.14%	41
Alaska	670	47	\$7,528,220	39	\$36,726	21	\$54.81	1	0.49%	2
Arizona	6,166	16	\$23,284,278	19	\$25,612	32	\$4.15	48	0.11%	48
Arkansas	2,811	32	\$13,302,770	32	\$33,600	24	\$11.95	11	0.25%	10
California	36,458	1	\$191,607,263	1	\$311,559	2	\$8.55	29	0.16%	32
Colorado	4,753	22	\$16,965,585	27	\$21,381	37	\$4.50	46	0.13%	44
Connecticut	3,505	29	\$17,771,850	26	\$52,447	13	\$14.96	7	0.30%	8
Delaware	853	45	\$6,019,481	42	\$11,674	43	\$13.69	9	0.19%	24
Florida	18,090	4	\$67,862,305	4	\$156,666	4	\$8.66	27	0.23%	15
Georgia	9,364	9	\$31,300,124	13	\$35,884	22	\$3.83	49	0.11%	46
Hawaii	1,285	42	\$8,090,272	38	\$24,879	34	\$19.36	4	0.31%	7
Idaho	1,466	39	\$5,659,741	44	\$11,339	44	\$7.73	33	0.20%	22
Illinois	12,832	5	\$48,051,530	7	\$66,362	10	\$5.17	41	0.14%	39
Indiana	6,314	15	\$24,955,887	18	\$33,326	25	\$5.28	40	0.13%	43
Iowa	2,982	30	\$13,470,126	31	\$25,435	33	\$8.53	30	0.19%	25
Kansas	2,764	33	\$11,439,941	34	\$18,160	40	\$6.57	36	0.16%	33
Kentucky	4,206	26	\$19,335,386	25	\$45,845	17	\$10.90	16	0.24%	14
Louisiana	4,288	25	\$21,026,980	22	\$45,988	16	\$10.72	19	0.22%	18
Maine	1,322	40	\$7,231,514	41	\$23,538	36	\$17.80	5	0.33%	5
Maryland	5,616	19	\$25,721,600	17	\$84,753	7	\$15.09	6	0.33%	4
Massachusetts	6,437	13	\$36,036,961	11	\$54,123	12	\$8.41	31	0.15%	36
Michigan	10,096	8	\$46,793,387	8	\$100,717	6	\$9.98	21	0.22%	19
Minnesota	5,167	21	\$27,449,035	15	\$49,563	15	\$9.59	24	0.18%	28
Mississippi	2,911	31	\$14,554,388	30	\$19,664	38	\$6.76	35	0.14%	42
Missouri	5,843	18	\$21,721,267	21	\$29,964	27	\$5.13	42	0.14%	40
Montana	945	44	\$4,583,636	46	\$11,139	45	\$11.79	12	0.24%	12
Nebraska	1,768	38	\$7,357,894	40	\$14,638	41	\$8.28	32	0.20%	23
Nevada	2,496	35	\$9,152,975	37	\$29,142	28	\$11.68	13	0.32%	6
New Hampshire	1,315	41	\$5,212,161	45	\$11,998	42	\$9.12	26	0.23%	16
New Jersey	8,725	11	\$43,349,868	9	\$75,130	8	\$8.61	28	0.17%	29
New Mexico	1,955	36	\$12,278,379	33	\$19,133	39	\$9.79	22	0.16%	34
New York	19,306	3	\$115,453,948	2	\$210,072	3	\$10.88	17	0.18%	27
North Carolina	8,857	10	\$37,179,612	10	\$41,638	19	\$4.70	45	0.11%	47
North Dakota	636	48	\$3,360,266	49	\$6,122	48	\$9.63	23	0.18%	26
Ohio	11,478	7	\$52,719,823	6	\$43,240	18	\$3.77	50	0.08%	50
Oklahoma	3,579	28	\$14,766,688	29	\$33,841	23	\$9.46	25	0.23%	17
Oregon	3,701	27	\$16,564,827	28	\$27,831	29	\$7.52	34	0.17%	30
Pennsylvania	12,441	6	\$55,565,739	5	\$312,831	1	\$25.15	3	0.56%	1
Rhode Island	1,068	43	\$5,872,054	43	\$27,438	30	\$25.69	2	0.47%	3
South Carolina	4,321	24	\$19,785,364	24	\$49,573	14	\$11.47	14	0.25%	11
South Dakota	782	46	\$3,175,403	50	\$4,401	50	\$5.63	38	0.14%	38
Tennessee	6,039	17	\$22,412,778	20	\$32,246	26	\$5.34	39	0.14%	37
Texas	23,508	2	\$75,895,975	3	\$117,017	5	\$4.98	44	0.15%	35
Utah	2,550	34	\$10,966,239	35	\$10,989	46	\$4.31	47	0.10%	49
Vermont	624	49	\$4,378,513	47	\$9,148	47	\$14.66	8	0.21%	21
Virginia	7,643	12	\$31,831,209	12	\$38,819	20	\$5.08	43	0.12%	45
Washington	6,396	14	\$29,056,032	14	\$68,909	9	\$10.77	18	0.24%	13
West Virginia	1,818	37	\$9,199,607	36	\$24,003	35	\$13.20	10	0.26%	9
Wisconsin	5,557	20	\$26,277,439	16	\$55,552	11	\$10.00	20	0.21%	20
Wyoming	515	50	\$3,563,917	48	\$5,867	49	\$11.39	15	0.16%	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>299,398</b>		<b>\$1,347,150,647</b>		<b>\$2,627,009</b>		<b>\$8.77</b>		<b>0.20%</b>	

\* Figures in these columns are shown in thousands.

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, based on the U.S. Bureau of the Census state government finance data series and its state and county quick facts for FY 2006, February 2008.