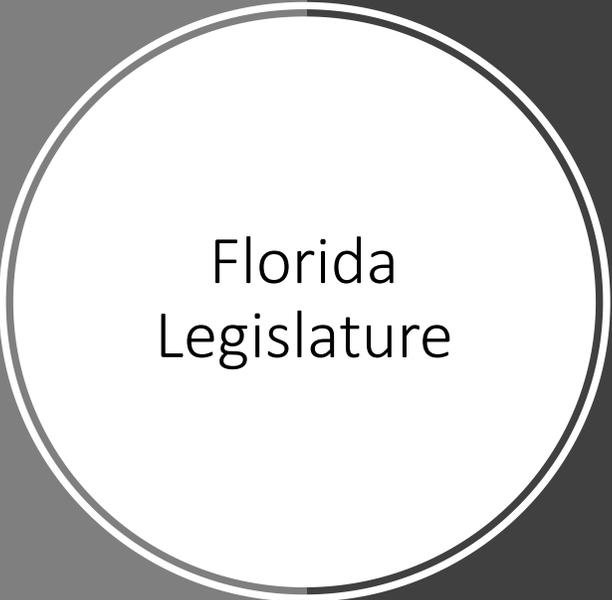




Understanding Florida
Government in Relation
to Mental Health Part 1



FLORIDA MENTAL HEALTH
ADVOCACY COALITION



Florida Legislature

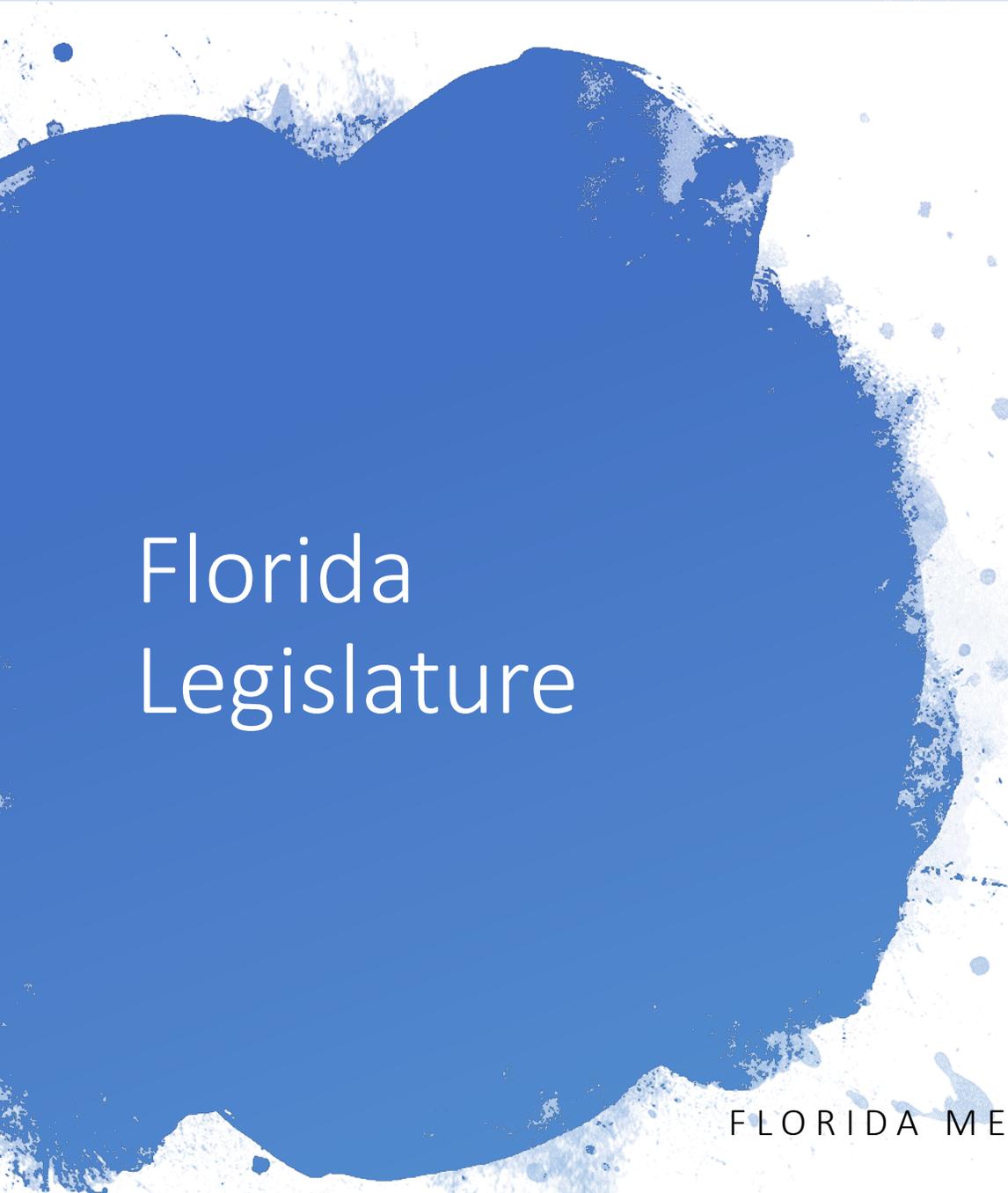
- Organizational Session:
 - In November of each even-numbered year, the legislature convenes for the sole purpose of organizing each chamber.
 - At this organizational session, held fourteen days after the general election, members are sworn in, officers are elected, rules are adopted, and the committee appointment process has begun.

Florida Legislature

- Interim Committee Weeks: can be held anytime when the legislature is not in session.
- During an even number year interim Committee Weeks typically begin in December, getting into full swing January-February in preparation for the annual session.
- In an odd number year, committee meetings typically start in September.

Florida Legislature

- Regular Session: The regular legislative session starts on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March (of each odd-numbered year) and on the second Tuesday after the first Monday in January of each even-numbered year), for a period not to exceed 60 days.
- To provide time for enactment and judicial review of redistricting plans prior to elections in redistricting years, the regular legislative session starts on January 10th of said years. *This happens every ten years.*



Florida Legislature

Special Session: Occurs outside of the regular session, typically to complete an unfinished task or to address a specific issue that has arisen and cannot wait until the next regular session in order to be resolved. The legislature or the Governor can call a special session. Typically it is agreed to in advance by leaders of the legislature and Governor.

Florida Legislature

- **Senate**

- 40 Senators
- Senate President
- Unlimited bills per member
- Senate bills receive even numbers and are prefixed by "S" or "SB."
- flsenate.gov

- **House of Representatives**

- 120 Representatives
- Speaker of the House
- 6 bills per member (though allocation bills do not count towards their 6)
- House bills receive odd numbers and are prefixed by "H" or "HB."
- myfloridahouse.gov

How an idea becomes a law

- Either the Senate or House may originate any type of legislation, however the processes differ slightly between chambers.
- Idea comes from a citizen, group, or legislator.
- A legislator decides to sponsor a bill and sends it to bill drafting. Once approved, the idea receives a bill number.

How an idea becomes a law?

- Per the Florida Constitution, all bills must be read three times before being voted on by either chamber.
- The 1st reading is by publication of the bill number, its sponsor, and title (short description of the bill) in the journal of the chamber it originated.
- The Speaker or Senate President refers the bill to one or more councils/committees related to the bill's subject.

How an idea becomes a law?

- The committee is the heart of the legislative process. Committees can and should do the fact-finding groundwork.
- *Committees do not just hear bills, they also hear presentations and workshop issues as well.*



How an idea
becomes a
law?

- Once a bill is referred, the Chair of a committee determines what bills will be heard in their committee and in what order.
- *Note in 2019, 1,861 bills were filed in the legislature (3,571 when including allocation bills). Of those, only 195 passed and went to the governor.*
- If a bill is put on a committee agenda, the committee studies the bill and decides if it should be amended, passed, or voted down (killed).
- If passed or passed as amended, the bill moves to other committees of reference or to the full chamber.

How an idea becomes a law?

- Once the bill is through all committees of reference it is placed on the house/senate calendar to signify it is ready for 2nd reading.
- Note a bill can be pulled from a committee of reference or if amended, assigned to additional committee(s) of reference. In order to be placed on the calendar for 2nd reading though, it must have been reported out of at least one committee of reference.

How an idea becomes a law?

- Being put on the calendar does not mean a bill will be heard by the full House/Senate.
- Both chambers have committees whose sole purpose is to determine when and if a bill will be sent to the floor.
- If a bill is to be read a 2nd time, it will be placed on the special order calendar by this committee.

How an idea becomes a law?

- If a bill is placed on the special order calendar, it is then explained on the chamber floor, questions asked and answered about the bill, and amendments are considered. This is the 2nd reading.
- After a bill is read a 2nd time, it is taken up on 3rd reading, this usually (but not always) happens the subsequent day. This is the final reading of the bill prior to being voted on.

How an idea becomes a law?

- 3rd reading requires the bill's title to be read and usually a brief explanation of the bill. Questions and amendments can also be offered, but amendments take a 2/3rds vote and questions are discouraged at this stage.
- The final action is debate on the bill, then the sponsor makes a closing statement and the bill is voted on by the chamber. If the bill does not receive a favorable vote, it dies on the floor.

How an idea becomes a law?

- If a bill passes in one chamber, it is sent to the other chamber for review.
- A bill typically goes through the same process in the second chamber as it did in the first.
- A bill can go back and forth between chambers until a consensus is reached. Of course, the measure could fail at any point in the process.

How an idea becomes a law?

- When bills go back and forth between chambers it is called receiving Senate or House messages.
- When a bill goes to the other chamber it can be referred to a committee (or committees) and never be heard, it can be brought up on the floor and passed as is, or passed as amended, requiring it to be sent back to the other chamber for reconsideration.

How an idea becomes a law?

- If the chambers cannot agree on final language of a bill, the bill dies.
- If a bill is passed by both chambers it is called an enrolled bill and that version is sent to the Governor for consideration.

How an idea becomes a law?

- If the bill is sent while the Legislature is still in session, the Governor has seven days to take action.
- If received after “sine die,” the Governor has 15 days.
- Typically the Legislature will only send so many bills to the Governor at one time.

How an idea becomes a law?

- The Governor can either:
 - Sign the bill into law
 - Allow the bill to become law without his signature
 - Veto the bill
- If the Governor vetoes the bill, the Legislature may override the veto by a 2/3 vote during the next session.
Recently happened.