



**THE FLORIDA SENATE**  
**SENATOR WILTON SIMPSON**  
*President*

**Senate COVID-19 Protocols for the 2021 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature**  
*Updated 2.19.21*

**Required Testing**

Senators and all Senate Professional Staff, as well as Professional District Staff based in or traveling to Tallahassee, are required to test for COVID-19 prior to each week of session.

**Masks**

In keeping with CDC guidelines, there is a mask requirement in the Senate. Speakers in a committee meeting may temporarily remove their mask while addressing a committee. The risk of transmission in Senate committee rooms is extremely low because all Senators and staff are tested prior to meetings, social distancing guidelines are observed, and the Senate is closed to the public.

**Virtual Meetings**

Senators are asked to avoid in person meetings and to utilize available platforms to schedule meetings virtually.

**Guests**

Senators are asked not to bring outside visitors, including lobbyists, into the Senate Building. Senators are encouraged to hold meetings via phone or video conferencing. Additionally, meeting in an outdoor setting greatly reduces (not eliminates) the risk of transmitting COVID-19. The Senate has set up additional tables around the Senate portico to help accommodate outdoor meetings.

**Gallery**

The public gallery is closed.

**Media**

The press gallery is open and media will be admitted to committee rooms and floor sittings. All media must be tested weekly for the duration of the 2021 Regular Session.

## **Senate COVID-19 Protocols**

Page 2

### **Committee Blocks**

Committee blocks have been reduced so no more than three committees are meeting at one time. This schedule allows the Senate to utilize the committee rooms with the largest seating area for Senators, 412 Knott, 110 SB, and 37 SB, to accommodate appropriate social distancing.

### **Committee Room Admittance**

There is very limited seating in each committee room due to social distancing guidelines. The Senate encourages staff and state agency personnel to remotely view committee meetings; however, as space is available, elected officials or individuals employed by a government entity will be admitted to committee rooms. Credentialed media are also admitted.

### **Remote Committee Viewing/Public Testimony**

Input from various stakeholders and members of the public is critical to the legislative process, and the Senate is working diligently to ensure Floridians have access to their elected officials as we consider important legislation for our state. The Senate worked in partnership with Florida State University to reserve three remote viewing rooms at the Leon County Civic Center, which provide the opportunity for members of the public to view meetings and virtually address Senate committees in a safe, socially distant manner.

Each committee notice published in the Senate calendar includes the room number within the Civic Center where members of the public may gather should they wish to address the committee.

### **In Case of Audio Difficulties**

The Senate is working to minimize any potential technical difficulties between the Civic Center and the Senate committee rooms. In the event of a problem, Senate Committee Chairs are directed to take a five-minute recess in order to employ back-up options.

### **Committee Appearance Cards**

The Senate has determined that the quickest and most reliable way to transmit appearance cards is by collecting cards at the Civic Center and delivering them to the Senate.

As always, there will be members of the public who want to provide testimony, but did not complete an appearance card before the committee begins.

## **Senate COVID-19 Protocols**

Page 3

As is traditional practice in the Senate, the Chair will ask the audience if anyone else who has not filled out an appearance card would like to speak. Individual who would like to speak should state their name and position on the bill (or amendment). The Chair will then ask the speaker to make sure to complete an appearance card. Those cards will be provided to the committee after the meeting. Committees do not need to wait for a card to be delivered to the committee from the Civic Center if someone decides to speak after the committee meeting has started.

### **Written Testimony**

Members of the public who wish to provide written testimony should email members of the committee directly to share their comments.

### **Senate Sitings**

Senators will be temperature checked prior to entering the Chamber. The Chamber will be sanitized after each sitting, and portable HEPA filters will continue to run before, during, and after Senate sittings. The public gallery will be closed.

### **Doctor of the Day/Chaplain Programs**

Senators who wish to sponsor a Chaplain or Doctor of the Day should contact Secretary Brown. All participants in these programs will be tested for COVID-19.

### **Vaccines**

The Senate will continue to offer vaccines for Senators and staff according to the state-issued criteria.

### **Senate Spouse Program**

Senate spouses are welcome during Session, but must be tested for COVID-19 each week. Spouses who have not tested will not be permitted to enter Senate areas of the Capitol, including private offices. The Spouse Lounge will be open for a very limited spouse program.

### **Page Program**

The Senate Page Program has been suspended for the 2021 Session.