Welcome to the Senate

You are in the Luxembourg Palace, the seat of the Senate. The Senate is one of the two chambers of the French Parliament, along with the National Assembly.

This building, whose foundations were laid by Marie de Médicis in 1615, was first a royal residence, then a revolutionary prison. Following the French Revolution, it was briefly the seat of the executive branch and has been home to the Senate of the Republic since 1879.

We hope you will enjoy your visit.
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The Luxembourg Palace

The Luxembourg Gardens

The Main Courtyard

The Meeting Courtyard

The Rue de Vaugirard
Senators sit in the Senate
What is the purpose of the Senate?

**Senators examine bills** that are submitted by the Government or by a member of Parliament.

Senators also **monitor the work of the Government** and ensure that the laws enacted are correctly implemented.

The Senate **guarantees the stability of the institutions**: unlike the National Assembly, it cannot be dissolved. Additionally, the President, or Speaker, of the Senate takes over as Acting President of the Republic in the event of vacancy or incapacity.

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The Senate votes on all bills. It controls the actions of the Government and evaluates public policies. It can amend the Constitution together with the National Assembly.
# The Senate through History

## 1795-1799
The Council of Ancients of the Constitution of 1795

## 1799-1814
The Senate of the Consulate and the Empire

## 1814-1830
The Chamber of Peers of the Restoration

## 1830-1848
The Chamber of Peers of the July Monarchy

## 1852 -
The Senate the Second

### 1795
The beginnings of bicameralism in France: the Council of Ancients sits at the Tuileries

### 1836-1841
Construction of the current Chamber

### 1848
The Second Republic is unicameral

## 1795-1799
The costume of a peer of France

## 1814-1830
A session at the Imperial Senate

## 1830-1848
The Chamber of Peers meeting in the Upper House
The Senate of the Fifth Republic
1946-1958
The Council of the Republic

Since 1958
The Senate of the Fifth Republic

1870
of Empire

1875-1940
The Senate of the Third Republic

1879
The Senate returns to Paris

1875
The Senate in Versailles

1940
The Senate is adjourned to Vichy

1944-1945
The Provisional Consultative Assembly

1948
The councillors of the Republic take back the title of “Senators”

1959
The first elections of the Senate of the Fifth Republic

1859
A fire in the Chamber

1969
The failure of a referendum intending to reform the Senate

2003
Senators’ term of office is reduced to 6 years

Paris City Council sits at the Luxembourg Palace
The 348 Senators are elected through indirect and universal suffrage by 162,000 officials, among which municipal, departmental and regional delegates. A Senator is elected for a term of 6 years.

The number of Senators elected for each constituency is subject to population: for example, 1 Senator for the Lozère département, 5 for the Bas-Rhin département and 12 for Paris.

Each renewal enables the election of around half of the Senators, divided into two series. 178 Senatorial seats in Series 2 were renewed at the Senatorial elections of 28th September 2014. Series 1, which will be renewed in September 2017, has 170 seats.

**VOTING METHOD**

Depending on the number of seats to be filled, Senators are elected by a two-round first-past-the-post system (constituencies designating 3 or fewer Senators) or by proportional representation lists (constituencies designating 4 or more Senators).

24 The minimum age requirement to run in Senatorial elections is 24.

6 Senators are elected for a term of office of 6 years. Half of the Senate is renewed every 3 years.
CONSTITUENCY MAP

Authorities, overseas départements and New Caledonia

12 (6+6)

Serie 1 - 170 seats
Serie 2 - 178 seats

Number of Senators per constituency

French citizens living outside France
What means do they have at their disposal?

In order to properly perform their duties, Senators have certain means at their disposal.

**PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY**

In order to protect their independence, Senators are granted immunity that allows them to express themselves with unrestricted freedom while fulfilling their duties. They cannot be arrested nor be subjected to any other custodial or semi-custodial measure without the prior agreement of the Bureau of the Senate (Managing Committee).

**CIVIL SERVANTS**

Almost 1,300 civil servants and contracted employees assist the Senators to carry out their office.

**ALLOWANCE**

As of 1st October 2014, a Senator receives a net monthly Parliamentary allowance of €5,379.12. Both the basic Parliamentary allowance and the residential allowance are subject to income tax.

An allowance representative of Parliamentary expenses is intended to cover all expenses related to the fulfilment of a Senator’s duties. This amounts to €6,037.23 net monthly as of 1st October 2014.
OTHER AVAILABLE MEANS

Each Senator has an office in the Luxembourg Palace or nearby.

Senators may employ up to 3 (full-time) staff, who together must earn no more than €7,548.10 gross monthly, as of 1st October 2014.

Whether elected in Metropolitan France, overseas or representing French citizens living outside France, Senators using public transport to travel between Paris and their constituency have their travel expenses covered for.
The role of the President of the Senate

The President of the Senate, also known as the Speaker, represents the Upper Assembly and leads the debates.

The President of the Senate holds the second highest office of the Republic.

He presides over two essential organs: the Bureau of the Senate (Managing Committee) and the Chairperson’s Conference.

He has considerable constitutional prerogatives. He exercises powers of appointment and may refer matters to the Constitutional Council if he deems the provisions of laws voted or of treaties to be contrary to the Constitution. He becomes Acting President of the Republic in the event of vacancy or incapacity of office.
Gérard Larcher, who has been the Senator of the Yvelines département since 1986, was elected President of the Senate at the Senatorial elections in September 2014. He had previously served as President of the Senate from 2008 to 2011.
Public sessions

During public sessions in the Chamber, Senators debate, vote and control the Government.

Senators adopt a position on the broad guidelines of each bill then examine it in detail, article by article. They modify it by tabling amendments.

Ministers must answer the questions put by Senators during dedicated sessions.

BREAKDOWN OF POLITICAL GROUPS IN THE CHAMBER
(BY NUMBER OF SEATS, AS OF 8TH OCTOBER 2014)

- Communist, Republican and Citizen Group (CRC)
- Socialist Group (SOC)
- Ecologist Group (Ecolo)
- Democratic, Social and European Rally Group (RDSE)
- Democrats and Independents Union Group (UDI-UC)
- Union for a Popular Movement Group (UMP)
- Senators not appearing on the list of any group (Non-Registered)
Averages over the Parliamentary year (1st Oct. 2013 - 30th Sep. 2014)

- 64 bills adopted (half of which are international conventions)
- 1/7 of legislation has its origin in the Senate
- +10,000 amendments tabled
- 4,099 amendments adopted
- +70% of amendments voted by the Senate are adopted by the National Assembly

Averages over the Parliamentary year (1st Oct. 2013 - 30th Sep. 2014)
A public session in the Chamber

The Senators are placed in the Chamber by political group.

The Government is represented by the Minister responsible for the matter.
The orator talks from the rostrum. He may also use the microphones in the rows.

The commission a Rapporteur, appointed from its members, is tasked with defending the Commission’s position to his or her colleagues.

The President of the session, the Speaker of the Senate, or one of the 8 Deputy Speakers, leads the debates.
Committee work

Each Senator is a member of one of the 7 Standing Committees.

Before the public session, bills are initially examined by the Committee competent in the subject.

Within the Committee, the Senators designate a Rapporteur for each bill, who analyses it and makes proposals: for example, to delete, add or amend an article.

The Committees regularly organise hearings with Ministers, public officials, and representatives from civil society or the private sector.

Moreover, the European Affairs Committee plays an informative and supervisory role in European activities.
THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- Economic Affairs
- Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces
- Social Affairs
- Culture, Education and Communication
- Sustainable Development, Infrastructures, Facilities and Town and Country Planning
- Finance

And also:
- European Affairs
An overview of the legislative process:

Introducing legislation (BILLS (TABLED BY THE GOVERNMENT OR BY PARLIAMENT))

1st reading

2nd reading

Senate (COMMITTEE + PLENARY SESSION)

Disagreement

National Assembly (COMMITTEE + PLENARY SESSION)

Agreement
For a bill to become law, it must generally be examined several times by Members of Parliament: find out about the legislative process.

1. **Promulgation of the law**
   - By the President of the Republic

2. **Introducing legislation**
   - Bills (tabled by the Government or by Parliament)
   - Senate
     - Plenary session
   - National Assembly
     - Plenary session

3. **Joint Committee**
   - 7 Senators
   - 7 Députés (Members of the National Assembly)

4. **In the event of disagreement following the Joint Committee, the Government can ask the National Assembly to vote on the bill (final reading).**

5. **Promulgation of the law**
   - By the President of the Republic
Keeping the Government in check

the Senate’s second core function

Control over the Government is exercised in public sessions and, permanently, through the work of the committees and delegations. The supervisory actions take the form of questions, committees of enquiry, fact-finding missions, hearings and debates.
SUPERVISORY TOOLS

**GOVERNMENT QUESTION TIME (QAG)**
Every other Thursday, Senators question Ministers.

**IN-DEPTH THEMATIC QUESTIONS (QCT)**
Every other Thursday, a session is dedicated to questions on a specific topic.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**
These are put forward during public sessions on Tuesday mornings twice a month.

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS**
A Senator may send these to every Minister who has a month in which to reply.

**COMMITTEES OF INQUIRY AND JOINT FACT-FINDING MISSIONS**
These allow specific subjects to be studied in depth and for reforms to be proposed.

**BUDGETARY CONTROL**
The members of the Finance and Social Affairs Committees may be required to travel in order to carry out document-based, on-the-spot checks. This prerogative may be granted to other Senators by order of the Senate.

**DELEGATIONS AND DUTY**
7 delegations are tasked with monitoring activity in a particular sector. One of these delegations, the Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Choices (OPECST), an organ shared by the two assemblies, is responsible for providing expertise and information.

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**Averages over the Parliamentary year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information reports</td>
<td>107</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours dedicated to supervision</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written questions tabled</td>
<td>4,268</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government Question Time (QAG) sessions</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Senate-related terminology

**Amendment**
Modification of a bill.

**Bicameralism**
The organisation of Parliament into two distinct assemblies.

**Bureau of the Senate (Managing Committee)**
This steers the Senate and, besides the Speaker of the Senate, is made up of 8 Deputy Speakers who lead the debates, 3 Questeurs who run the finances and 14 Secretaries who ensure fairness in voting.

**General Rapporteur**
The General Rapporteurs of the Finance and Social Affairs Committees have extended powers to control the Government and public administration bodies.

**Joint Committee (CMP)**
Made up of 7 Senators and 7 Députés (Members of the National Assembly), it is tasked with ensuring that the two assemblies reach agreement on a joint bill.

**Chairperson’s Conference**
Made up of the President of the Senate, the Vice-Presidents, the Presidents of the political groups, the Presidents of the committees and the 2 General Rapporteurs, this conference determines the agenda of plenary sessions at the Senate in the presence of the Minister for Relations with Parliament.

**Questeur**
The 3 Questeurs are the Senators responsible for the administration and finances of the Senate.
Every year, the Senate welcomes over 250,000 people.

ATTEND SESSIONS IN THE CHAMBER

Debates in the Senate, most often on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, are open to the public.

GROUPS (30 people maximum)
Make a reservation with the Reception and Security Department (on 0033 (0)142 342 060 or by e-mail: visites@senat.fr).

INDIVIDUALS
Report to the Senate reception at 15 rue de Vaugirard in Paris and ensure that you have identification. The “gallery tickets” are distributed subject to availability.

VISIT THE LUXEMBOURG PALACE

Visits of the Luxembourg Palace are organised every Monday, Friday and Saturday for a maximum of 40 people, provided that the Senate is not sitting.

GROUPS
Make a reservation with the Reception and Security Department from 1st October for the first half of the calendar year and from 1st April for the second half (on 0033 (0)142 342 060 or by e-mail: visites@senat.fr).

INDIVIDUALS (visits one Saturday per month)
Please contact the Centre des monuments nationaux [National Monuments Centre] on 0033 (0)144 541 930 or by e-mail: visites-conferences@monuments-nationaux.fr

THE SENATE ON THE WEB

- www.senat.fr
- Follow the session live with the application www.senat.fr/enseance
- Subscribe to the Senate’s newsletters : www.senat.fr/lettre
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- www.youtube.com/user/PublicSenat
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FINDING THE SENATE

15, rue de Vaugirard - 75006 Paris
Tel: 0033 (0)142 342 000

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