Welcome to the Senate

You are in the Palais du Luxembourg, 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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Palais du Luxembourg

Main Entrance

Chamber

Luxembourg Gardens

« Golden Book » Room

Library Annex

Main Courtyard

Rue de Vaugirard
What is the role of the Senate?

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

Senators also scrutinise the action of the Government and ensure that enacted laws are implemented accordingly.

The Senate is a guarantee of institutional stability: 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.
Under Article 24 paragraph 4 of the Constitution, the Senate «shall ensure the representation of the territorial communities of the Republic.»
How are the Senators elected? _____

The Senate represents the authorities of Metropolitan France and its overseas territories as well as French citizens living abroad.

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 in proportion to the population: for example, 1 Senator for the département of Lozère, 5 for the département of Bas-Rhin and 12 for Paris.

Every three years, half the sieges are submitted to election. Therefore, the sieges are divided into two series. 170 seats in Series 2 were renewed in elections of September 2017. Series 1, to be renewed in September 2020, comprises 178 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).
Constituency map

Authorities, overseas départements and New Caledonia

12 (6+6)

Number of Senators per constituency

French citizens living abroad

Serie 1 - 170 seats
Serie 2 - 178 seats
Who are the Senators?

PROPORTION OF SENATORS BY:
(AS OF 19TH OCTOBER 2017)

- **Authority (number of Senators)**
- **Socio-professional category**
- **Sex**

**Women**
- **32%**

**Men**
- **68%**

**Employees**
- **19.7%**

**Civil servants (excl. teachers)**
- **14.8%**

**61**
Average age of Senators at the beginning of their term
Agricultural occupations 5.2%
Other sectors 5.5%
No occupation declared 7%
Trade and industry 9.6%
Medical professions 7.8%
Teachers 18%
Legal and liberal professions 12.5%

Metropolitan France départements (315)
French citizens living abroad (12)
New Caledonia (2)
Overseas authorities (6)
Overseas départements (13)
What are their means of action?

**Means of action**

Each Senator has an office in the premises of the Palais du Luxembourg or nearby. Almost 1,300 civil servants and contracted employees assist the Senators to carry out their office. Senators may hire up to 3 (full-time) staff, whose combined gross monthly salaries cannot exceed €7,638.95.

Whether elected in Metropolitan France, overseas or representing French citizens living abroad, Senators using public transportation have their travel expenses covered for trips between Paris and their constituencies.

Cost of the Senate per year and per French citizen. 5€

In order to properly perform their duties, Senators are provided with different means of action.
Financial holdback

Since October 2015, Senators who fail to attend all the Committee meetings or plenary sessions shall pay a fine (art 23 bis of the Standing Orders of the Senate).

Allowances

As of 1st January 2018, a Senator receives a net monthly Parliamentary allowance of €5,599.68 and a residential allowance of €167.99. He also receives a service allowance of €1,441.95.

The total amount of parliamentary allowances and other elective offices allowances cannot exceed once a half the amount of the basic parliamentary allowance.

Since January 1st, 2018, Senators receive a general monthly advance of €5,900 to cover expenses related to their mandate. All expenses must be justified and compared to the amount of the general advance previously paid. The surplus is returned to the Senate. The comparison and repayment take place at the end of each year.
The role of the President of the Senate

He chairs two key bodies: the Bureau of the Senate (the Board*) and the Chairperson’s Conference.

He has important constitutional prerogatives.
He is entitled to appoint members of the Constitutional Council and may refer to it if provisions of enacted laws or treaties appear to be contrary to the Constitution. He can temporarily exercise the functions of President of the Republic in the event of vacancy or incapacity of office.

Thus, the Presidency of the Senate is considered as the second highest office of the Republic.

* See glossary page 28
Gérard Larcher, who has been Senator of the department of Yvelines since 1986, was re-elected as President of the Senate after the elections of September 2017.
Senators decide on the guidelines of the bill and then examine it in detail, article by article. They modify it by tabling amendments.*

Ministers must answer the questions asked by Senators during specific sessions.

**Breakdown of political groups in the chamber**
(by number of seats, as of 3 September 2018)

* See glossary page 28
Averages over a Parliamentary year
(1st Oct. 2017 - 30 June 2018)

29 Bills passed (not including international conventions)

22% of the legislation starts in the Senate (not including international conventions)

6,316 amendments tabled

1,355 amendments adopted
The President of the session is the Speaker of the Senate, or one of the 8 Deputy Speakers, who leads the debates.

The Government is represented by the Minister in charge for the matter.
The Senators

are placed in the Chamber by political group

The orator
talks from the rostrum. He may also use the microphones in the rows.

The Committee

a Rapporteur, appointed among its members, is tasked with defending the Committee's position to his or her colleagues.
Before the plenary sitting, bills are first considered by the relevant Committee on the subject.

Members of the Committee appoint a Rapporteur for the bill, who analyzes the draft and proposes amendments: for example, delete, add or modify an article.

The Committees regularly hold hearings of Ministers, public officials, ambassadors, foreign ministers, European Commissioners and representatives of civil society or of the private sector.

In addition, the European Affairs Committee is in charge of informing the members about EU issues and checking the activities of the European Union.
The standing Committees

- Economic Affairs
- Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Force
- Social Affairs
- Constitutional Laws, Legislation, Universal Suffrage, Standing Orders and General Administration
- Culture, Education and Communication
- Country Planning and Sustainable Development
- Finance
- European Affairs

Each Senator is a member of one of the 7 Standing Committees.
An overview of the legislative process

Introducing legislation
Bills (tabled by the Government or by Parliament)

1st reading

Senate
Committee + plenary session

Disagreement

National Assembly
Committee + plenary session

2nd reading

Senate
Committee + plenary session

National Assembly
Committee + plenary session

Agreement

Accelerated procedure
A bill is considered several times by Members of Parliament before becoming law: find out about the legislative process.

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

**Joint Committee**
- 7 Senators
- 7 Députés (members of the National Assembly)

**Senator**
- Committee + plenary session

**National Assembly**
- Committee + plenary session

**Promulgation of the law**
- by the President of the Republic
The Senate examines the work of the Government through debates in plenary sessions and, permanently, through the work of Committees and delegations. The principal methods are questioning ministers, Committees of investigation, fact-finding missions, hearings and debates.
Supervisory tools

government question time (QAG)
Every week, Senators question Ministers. After the minister’s response, they have a right of reply.

oral questions
Regular oral question times take place in plenary sitting on Tuesday mornings once a month.

written questions
A Senator may address such questions to ministers whose answers must be made within one month (exceptionally two).

committees of inquiry and joint fact-finding missions
Specific subjects are scrutinized and considered in depth, providing reforms proposals.

budgetary control
Members of the Finance Committee and the Social Affairs Committee can travel in order to carry out document-based, on-the-spot checks. This prerogative may be granted to other Senators by decision of the Senate.

delegations and duty
7 delegations oversees the activity of a specific area. Among them, the bicameral Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Options (OPECST), provides expertise and information.

4530
written questions tabled

30
Government Question Time (QAG) sessions
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 Restauration

1830 / 1848
The Chamber of Peers of the July Monarchy

1848
The Second Republic is unicameral

1852 / 1
The Senate of the Second Empire

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

1836 / 1841
Construction of the current Chamber

A session at the Imperial Senate

The Chamber of Peers meeting in the Upper House
Senators’ term of office is reduced to 6 years

1875
The Senate in Versailles

1879
The Senate returns to Paris

1870
The Senate of the Second Empire

1875/1940
The Senate of the Third Republic

1940
The Senate is adjourned to Vichy

1944/1945
The Provisional Consultative Assembly

1946
The failure of the referendum on the draft Constitution of 19 April 1946 proposing a unicameral regime

1946/1958
The Council of the Republic

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

1959
The first elections of the Senate of the Fifth Republic

Since 1958
The Senate of the Fifth Republic

1969
The failure of a referendum intending to reform the Senate

1970
The Senate is adjourned

Paris City Council sits at the Luxembourg Palace

2003
“The French Republic” Act

2003
Senators’ term of office is reduced to 6 years
Senate-related terminology

**Amendment**
Modification of a bill.

**Bicameralism**
Organization of Parliament in two separate chambers.

**Bureau of the Senate (Board)**
The Bureau of the Senate and includes the Speaker, the 8 Deputy Speakers who conduct the debates, the 3 Questeurs who manage the finances and the 14 Secretaries who ensure fairness in voting.

**General Rapporteur**
The General Rapporteurs of the Finance Committee and of the Social Affairs Committees have extensive powers to control the Government and public administrations.

**Joint Committee (CMP)**
Composed of 7 Senators and 7 Members of the National Assembly (députés), its mission is to reach agreement of both assemblies on a bill.

**Chairpersons’ Conference**
Composed of the Speaker, the Deputy Speakers, the chairpersons of the political groups, the Presidents of the committees and the 2 General Rapporteurs. This conference, attended by the Minister of Relations with Parliament sets the agenda of plenary sessions.

**Questeur**
The 3 Questeurs manage the functioning and the finances of the Senate.
The Senate on social media

Senat.fr

Legislative matters, reports, briefs, questions to the Government
Biographical information on Senators
Live sessions, analysis of texts, and many debates available via VOD

www.senat.fr/espace_presse - www.senat.fr/agenda.html

Facebook

Senate news delivered in all formats: articles, videos, photos, infographics, dossiers
A space for information, conversation and debate

www.facebook.com/senat.fr

Twitter

Keep up to date with real-time news from the Senate and Senators
Follow the great parliamentary moments in real time and take part in the debates

@Senat - @Senat_Direct

@Senat
394 000 followers
@Senat_Direct
86 000 followers
@JardinLuco
8 600 followers

Instagram

Discover and share the finest photos of the Senate

senat_fr

Snapchat

The Senate’s news and activities in "stories"

senatfr

70 000 fans

22 300 followers

591 700 views

27 800 views

22 300 followers
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 (Maximum 30 people)
Groups must obtain sponsorship from a Senator (www.senat.fr/elus.html) not later than one month before the planned date.

Individuals
Individuals must obtain an invitation from a Senator (www.senat.fr/elus.html). Bearing this invitation and some identification, they must then report to the Senate reception at 15 rue de Vaugirard in Paris. Access to sessions is granted subject to availability.

Visit the Palais du Luxembourg

Visits of the Palais du Luxembourg are organized every Monday, Friday and Saturday, provided that the Senate is not sitting.

Groupes (maximum of 40 people)
Groups must obtain sponsorship from a Senator in order to visit (www.senat.fr/elus.html).

Due to the implementation of security measures as part of the French Vigipirate plan, visits organised for individuals on Saturdays have been suspended until further notice.

Facebook facebook.com/senat.fr
Linkedin linkedin.com/company/senat
Snapchat senatfr
Twitter

Real-time news from the Senate and Senators:
twitter.com/Senat
The great parliamentary moments in real time:
twitter.com/Senat_Direct
Dailymotion dailymotion.com/Senate
YouTube youtube.com/user/senatfr
Website www.senat.fr
Online agenda www.senat.fr/agenda.html

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