The Essentials
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.

Introduction
What is the role of the Senate?

Senators
How are they elected?
Who are they?
What are their means of action?
The role of the President of the Senate

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A plenary sitting in the Chamber
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Scrutinizing the Government

History & terminology
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What is the role of the Senate?

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

Senators also scrutinize the action of the Government and ensure that enacted laws are implemented accordingly. Senators also can create temporary ad hoc information and consultation bodies (a fact-finding mission, a commission of inquiry…) to study a particular issue and to propose reforms.

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 6 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 mainland 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. 178 seats in series 2 were partially renewed in elections of September 2020. 172 out of 178 Senators were concerned. The seats of the 6 Senators representing French citizens living abroad were elected during by-elections held on September 29th, 2021. The 170 seats in series 1 should be renewed in September 2023.

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 1 or 2 Senators) or by proportional representation lists (constituencies designating no fewer than 3 Senators or more).

24 The minimum age 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.
Who are the Senators?

PROPORTION OF SENATORS BY:
(AS OF OCTOBER 28, 2021)

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

Women 35%

Men 65%

Employees 28.4%

Civil servants (excl. teachers) 13.5%

Teachers 13.2%

Agricultural occupations 5.7%

No occupation declared 9.8%

Other sectors 2.6%

Trade and industry 6.9%

Medical professions 4.6%

Legal and liberal professions 15.2%

Mainland France (315)
French citizens living abroad (12)
New Caledonia (2)
Overseas departments (13)
Overseas authorities (6)

Average age of Senators at the beginning of their term: 60

9.8%
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 1,200 civil servants and contracted employees assist the Senators to carry out their office. Senators may hire up to 5 staff whose combined gross monthly salaries cannot exceed €8,402 (as of November 1st, 2018).

Whether elected in mainland France, overseas or representing French citizens living abroad, Senators using public transportation have their travel expenses covered for trips between Paris and their department. They indeed have a constituency office in their electoral district.

Financial holdback

Since October 1st, 2015, a financial deduction has been adopted towards Senators who fall below the attendance time thresholds introduced by the Standing Orders of the Senate (article 23 bis).

Allowances

As of 1st January 2020, a Senator receives a net monthly Parliamentary allowance of €5,623.23 and a residential allowance of €168.70. He also receives a service allowance of €1,447.98.

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.

- Under the amended finance law for 1992, the basic parliamentary allowance and the residential allowance are subject to personal income tax.
- Under the Law n°2017-1339 of September 15th, 2017, Senators must justify their mandate fees.
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
Plenary sessions

In plenary sessions of the Chamber, Senators debate and vote legislation; they also control the Government.

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 - October 2021)

* See glossary page 28
The President of the session: the Speaker of the Senate, or one of the 8 Deputy Speakers, leads the debates.

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

The Senators: are placed in the Chamber by political group.

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

The Committee: a Rapporteur, appointed among its members, is tasked with defending the Committee’s position to his or her colleagues.
Each Senator is member of one of the 7 Standing Committees.

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

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

1st reading

Senate
Committee + plenary session

2nd reading

National Assembly
Committee + plenary session

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

Accelerated procedure

Disagreement

National Assembly
Committee + plenary session

CMP

Promulgation of the law
by the President of the Republic

Agreement
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 two months.

**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**
6 delegations oversights the activity of a specific area: regional authorities; women’s rights; companies; overseas; prospective; intelligence.

The bicameral Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Options (OPECST), provides expertise and information.

### Averages over a Parliamentary year (1st Oct. 2020 - 30 Sept. 2021)

- **106** information reports
- **192** hours dedicated to supervision
- **6,699** written questions tabled
- **36** Government Question Time (QAG) sessions
The Senate through History

1795 / 1799
The Council of Ancients of the Constitution of 1795

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

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

1836 / 1841
Construction of the current Chamber

1848
The Second Republic is unicameral

1852 / 1870
The Senate of the Second Empire

1859
A fire in the Chamber

1875
The Senate returns to Paris

1879
The Senate returns to Paris

1875
The Senate in Versailles

1879
The Senate returns to Paris

1944 / 1945
The Provisional Consultative Assembly

1946 / 1958
The Senate is adjourned to Vichy

1946
The Senate is adjourned to Vichy

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

1949
The failure of a referendum intending to reform the Senate

1959
The first elections of the Senate of the Fifth Republic

1969
The failure of a referendum intending to reform the Senate

2003
Senators’ term of office is reduced to 6 years
Political groups
Senators are divided by political affinities into groups which must include at least 10 members. A Senator may be a member of a group, be related to it, or simply be attached to it administratively.

Parliamentary immunity
To protect their independence, Senators have parliamentary immunity allowing them to express themselves with complete freedom in the course of the performance of their official duties and shall not be subjected to arrest or any other privative or restrictive measures without the prior approval of the Bureau of the Senate.

Parliamentary shuttle
This is the process through which each government or parliamentary bill is examined successively by the National Assembly and the Senate in order to reach an agreement on each article (article 45-1 of the Constitution).

Questeur
The 3 Questeurs manage the functioning

**Senate-related terminology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amendment</th>
<th>Modification of a bill.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bicameralism</td>
<td>Organization of Parliament in two separate chambers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of the Senate (Board)</td>
<td>It heads 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairpersons’ Conference</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics Committee</td>
<td>Advisory body placed under the aegis of the Bureau of the Senate (executive committee) and the President of the Senate, the Ethics Committee is qualified to provide advice on ethical issues regarding the conditions governing the exercise of the parliamentary mandate of the Senators and the functioning of the Senate. The Ethics Committee may be sent the declarations of activities and interests as well as the interest arising from the acceptance of gifts, donations, services, advantages and other favours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Ballot</td>
<td>When voting on a bill, the Conference of Presidents may decide to organize a solemn public ballot in the Conference Room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Rapporteur</td>
<td>The General Rapporteurs of the Finance Committee and of the Social Affairs Committees have extensive powers to control the Government and public administrations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Committee (CMP)</td>
<td>Composed of 7 Senators and 7 Members of the National Assembly (députés), its mission is to reach agreement of both assemblies on a bill.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
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

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
483 718 followers
@Senat_Direct
104 000 followers
@JardinLuco
11 400 followers

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

www.facebook.com/senat.fr

85 420 fans

LinkedIn
Legislative information for all professionals

www.linkedin.com/company/senat

36 403 followers

Instagram
Discover and share the finest photos of the Senate

www.instagram.com/senat.fr

50 910 followers

YouTube
«Chats» and main videos covering senatorial news

www.youtube.com/user/senatfr

senat_fr
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.

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

Groups (maximum of 40 people)

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

Visits are provided free of charge by staff from the Reception and Security Department. In the health care context of the pandemic (COVID-19), the possibilities of attending Senate sessions are likely to be restricted, or even delayed. We invite you to consult the Senate website for the effective conditions: http://www.senat.fr/visite/visiter.html

Facebook facebook.com/senat.fr
Linkedin linkedin.com/company/senat
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/Senat
YouTube youtube.com/user/senatfr
Website www.senat.fr
Online agenda www.senat.fr/agenda.html

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Date of publication: November 2021