



# 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. →

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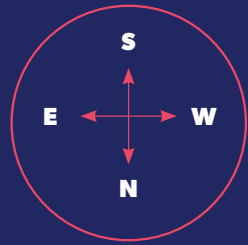
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# Palais du Luxembourg



Chamber



Library



Conference Hall



« Golden Book » Room



Great Staircase



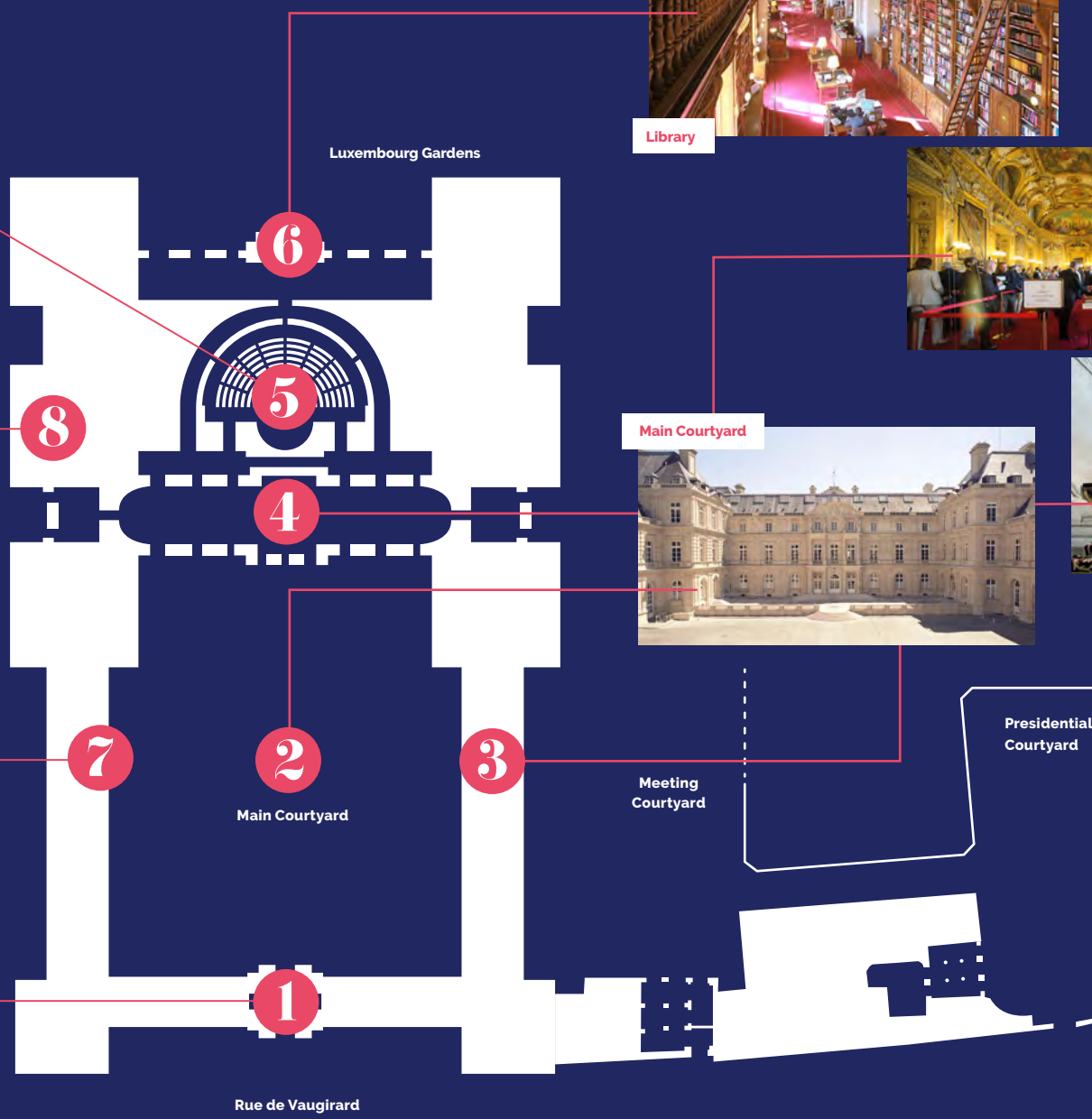
Main Courtyard



Library Annex



Main Entrance



Luxembourg Gardens

Main Courtyard

Meeting Courtyard

Rue de Vaugirard

Presidential Courtyard

President's Office



## 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.

# 348

Senators sit  
in the Senate

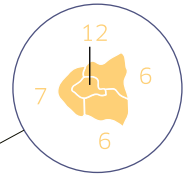
**Under Article 24 paragraph 6 of the Constitution, the Senate « shall ensure the representation of the territorial communities of the Republic. »**



# How are the Senators elected? \_\_\_\_\_



12 (6+6)



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

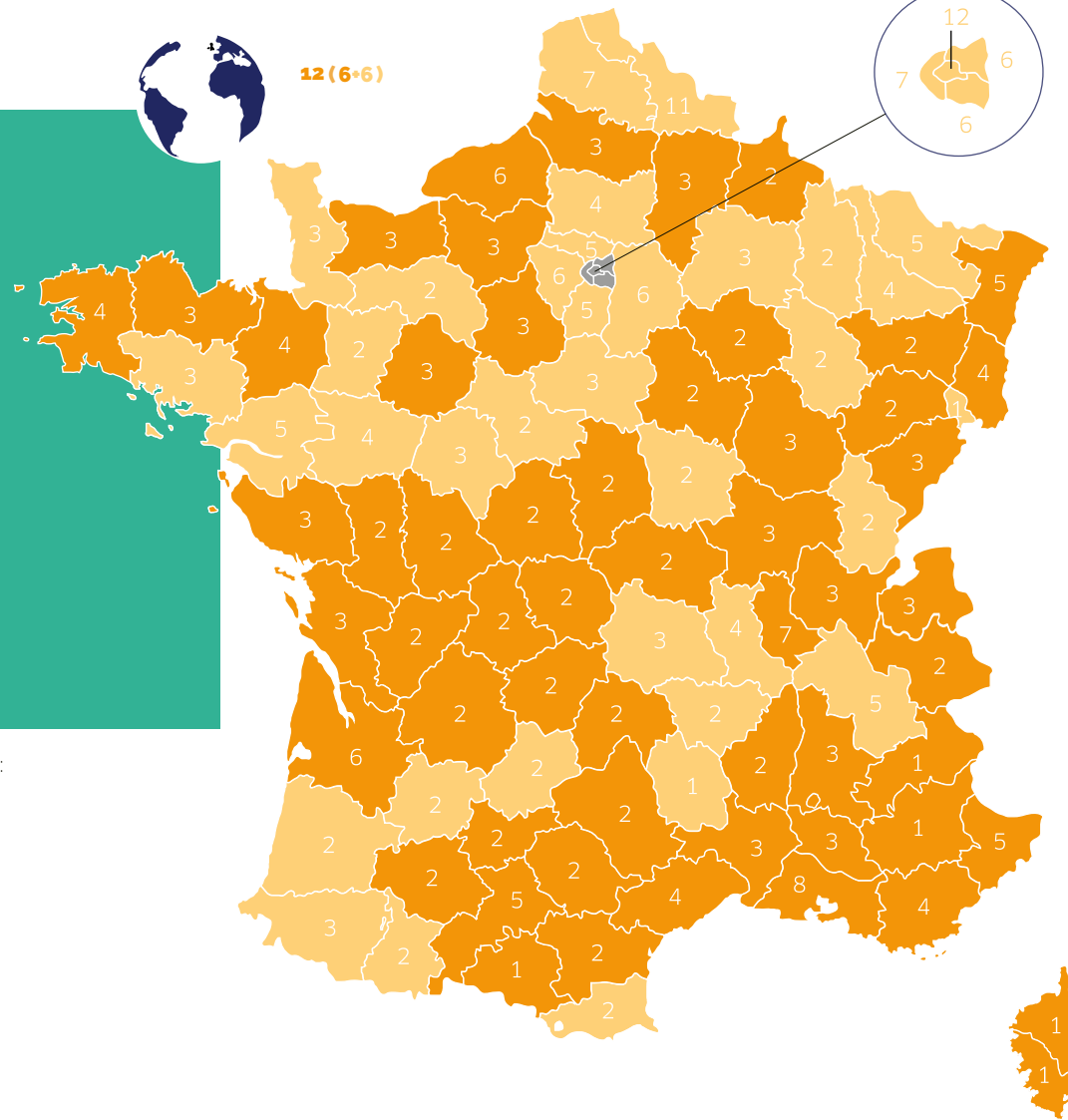
The 348 Senators are elected through indirect and universal suffrage by 162,000 officials, among which municipal, departmental and regional delegates. A Senator is elected for a term of 6 years.

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).



Constituency map

Authorities, overseas *départements* and New Caledonia



- Serie 1 - 170 seats
- Serie 2 - 178 seats

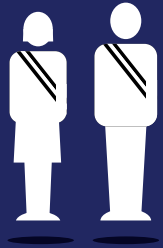
Number of Senators per constituency

French citizens living abroad

**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 %**

**60**

Average age of Senators  
at the beginning of their term

Civil servants (excl. teachers)  
**13.5 %**

Teachers  
**13.2 %**

Agricultural occupations  
**5.7 %**

Other sectors  
**2.6 %**

No occupation declared  
**9.8 %**

Trade and industry  
**6.9 %**

Medical professions  
**4.6 %**

Mainland France  
(315)

French citizens living  
abroad (12)

New Caledonia (2)

Overseas authorities (6)

Overseas departments (13)

Legal and liberal  
professions  
**15.2 %**



## 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.

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

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



### 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

**The President of the Senate, or its Speaker, represents the Upper Assembly and conducts the proceedings.**

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



**Senator of Yvelines, Gérard Larcher has been re-elected President of the Senate after the senatorial elections of September 2020.**



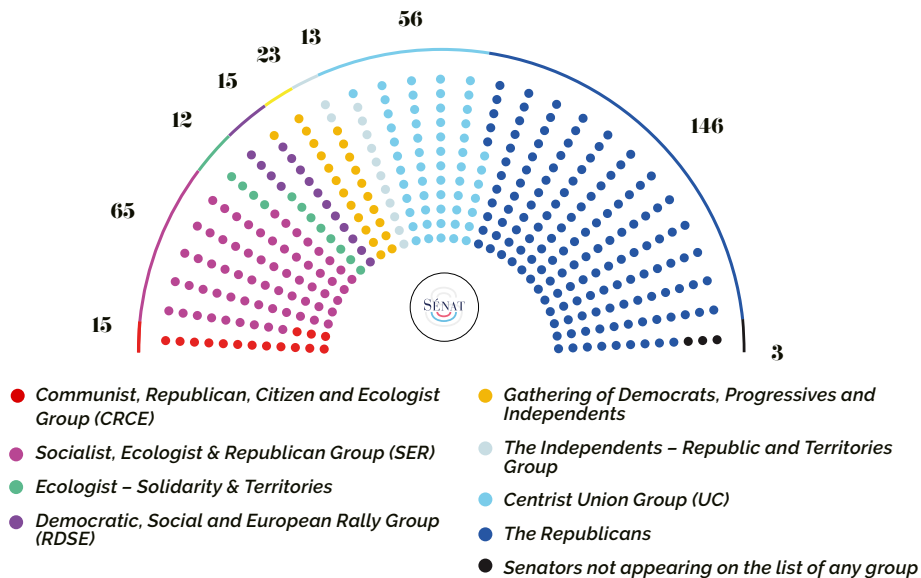
## Plenary sessions \_\_\_\_\_

**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



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

**54**

Bills passed  
(not including international  
conventions)

**76 %**

of bills passed upon agreement  
through both chambers

**20 062**

amendments tabled

**5 928**

amendments adopted



# A plenary sitting in the Chamber

## The President of the session

the Speaker of the Senate, or one of the 8 Deputy Speakers, leads the debates

## 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.

## The Government

is represented by the Minister in charge for the matter





## Committee work



**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 meeting of the Finance Committee

## The 8 Committees (including 7 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

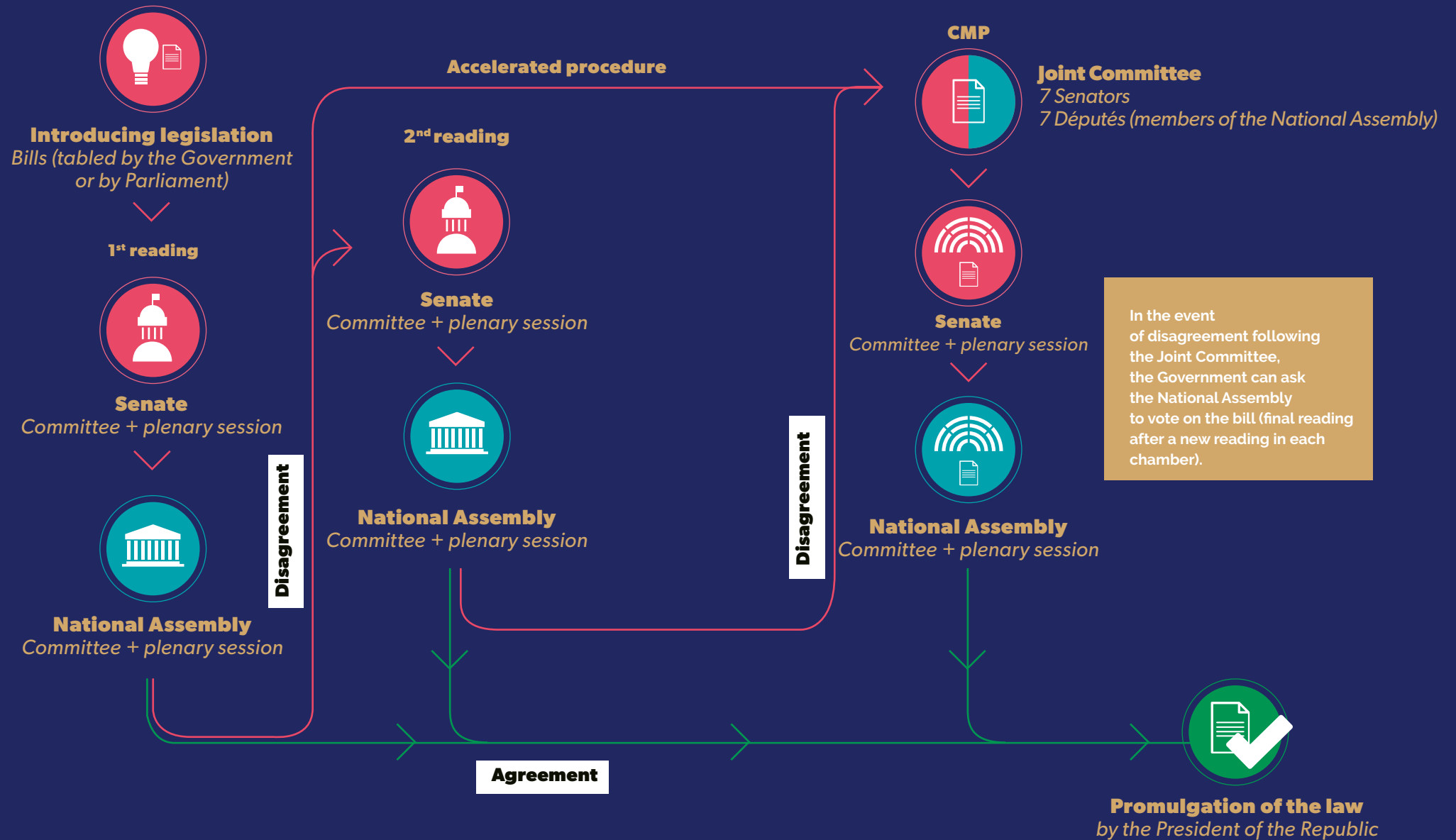


European Affairs



# An overview of the legislative process \_\_\_\_\_

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





**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 oversees 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

The costume of a peer of France



**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 /1870**

The Senate of the Second Empire

**1875 /1940**

The Senate of the Third Republic

**1946 /1958**

The Council of the Republic

**Since 1958**

The Senate of the Fifth Republic

**2003**

Senators' term of office is reduced to 6 years

**1879**

The Senate returns to Paris

**1875**

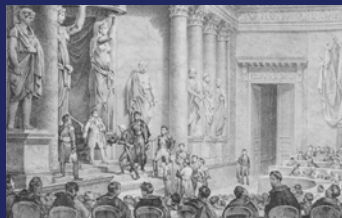
The Senate in Versailles

**1944 /1945**

The Provisional Consultative Assembly

**1795**

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



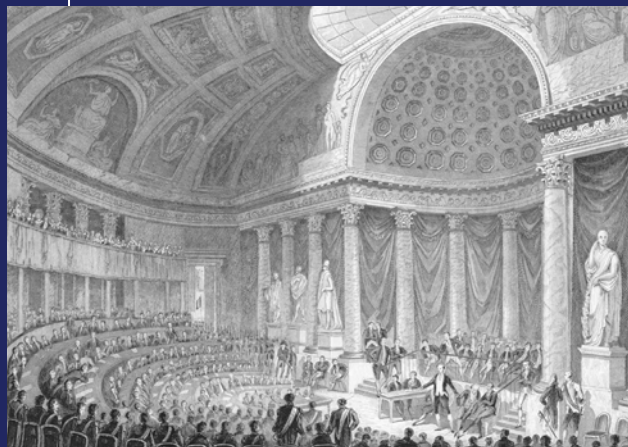
A session at the Imperial Senate

**1836 /1841**

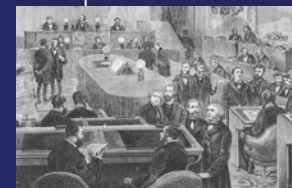
Construction of the current Chamber

**1848**

The Second Republic is unicameral



The Chamber of Peers meeting in the Upper House



Paris City Council sits at the Luxembourg Palace

**1940**

The Senate is adjourned to Vichy

**1959**

The first elections of the Senate of the Fifth Republic

**1946**

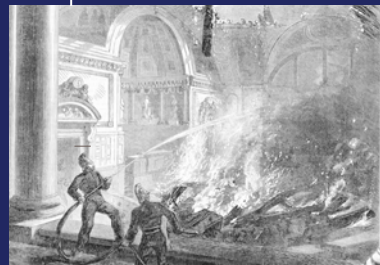
The failure of the referendum on the draft Constitution of 19 April 1946 proposing a unicameral regime

**1969**

The failure of a referendum intending to reform the Senate

**1948**

The councillors of the Republic take back the title of "Senators"



**1859**

A fire in the Chamber



## Senate-related terminology

### Amendment

Modification of a bill.

### Bicameralism

Organization of Parliament in two separate chambers.

### Bureau of the Senate (Board)

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.

### 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.

### Ethics Committee

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.

### Formal Ballot

When voting on a bill, the Conference of Presidents may decide to organize a solemn public ballot in the Conference Room.

### 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.

### 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



# 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](http://www.senat.fr/espace_presse) - [www.senat.fr/agenda.html](http://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](https://twitter.com/Senat) - [@Senat\\_Direct](https://twitter.com/Senat_Direct)

[@Senat](https://twitter.com/Senat)  
**483 718 followers**

[@Senat\\_Direct](https://twitter.com/Senat_Direct)  
**104 000 followers**

[@JardinLuco](https://twitter.com/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](http://www.facebook.com/senat_fr)

**85 420 fans**

## Instagram

Discover and share the finest photos of the Senate

[senat\\_fr](https://www.instagram.com/senat_fr)

**50 910 followers**

## LinkedIn

Legislative information for all professionals

[www.linkedin.com/company/senat](http://www.linkedin.com/company/senat)

**36 403 followers**

## YouTube

«Chats» and main videos covering senatorial news

[www.youtube.com/user/senatfr](http://www.youtube.com/user/senatfr)





# 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](http://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

### Groupes (maximum of 40 people)

Groups must obtain sponsorship from a Senator in order to visit ([www.senat.fr/elus.html](http://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>

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Twitter

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The great parliamentary moments in real time :  
[twitter.com/Senat\\_Direct](https://twitter.com/Senat_Direct)

Dailymotion [dailymotion.com/Senat](https://dailymotion.com/Senat)

YouTube [youtube.com/user/senatfr](https://youtube.com/user/senatfr)

Website [www.senat.fr](http://www.senat.fr)

Online agenda [www.senat.fr/agenda.html](http://www.senat.fr/agenda.html)

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Date of publication: November 2021