

Citizen's Guide

The Citizen's Guide to the Executive Budget

The Executive Budget process and key budget document formats are governed by the State Constitution, with additional details and actions prescribed by state laws and practices established over time.

The State's budget process is governed primarily by Article VII of the New York State Constitution. Article VII requires the Governor to submit a budget detailing a plan of expenditures and an estimate of revenues for the upcoming fiscal year, bills containing all proposed appropriations and reappropriations, and other legislation needed to implement the Executive Budget.

To fulfill these requirements, this budget includes five books and several bills. The central volume, *Executive Budget Briefing Book*, contains the Budget Director's Message, which presents the Governor's fiscal blueprint for 2011-12 and explains the State's Financial Plan. It also includes highlights of major initiatives, and a list of the legislative proposals needed to implement the proposed budget.

The *Five-Year Financial Plan* summarizes the Governor's Executive Budget and describes the "complete plan" of spending and revenues required by the Constitution.

The *Economic and Revenue Outlook* volume explains the specific sources of State revenues and presents the economic outlook for the nation and the State.

The fourth book presents the *Five-Year Capital Program and Financing Plan*, which highlights major capital initiatives and objectives, and describes the approach to financing the capital program.

Finally, the *Agency Presentations* volume describes the functions of each state agency and presents tables that summarize the agency's spending by program and category. A "User's Guide" provides background information on State government and the budget process, and explains how to interpret the agency "story" tables. This book also includes the budget requests of the Legislature and Judiciary, which are submitted without revision as required by the Constitution.

These documents collectively provide the supporting justification for the budget bills, and are accessible to the general public through the Division of the Budget's official web site (www.budget.state.ny.us).

Two types of legislation are required for budget enactment. Appropriation bills provide the legal authorization for all spending from the funds managed by the State. These bills encompass the recommended funding for State Operations, Aid to Localities, Capital Projects, Debt Service and the Legislature and Judiciary. Other bills amend state law governing programs and revenues. These "Article VII bills," and all Executive Budget appropriation bills, are available from the Senate and Assembly document rooms located in the Capitol and the Legislative Office Building.

The Constitution authorizes the Governor to amend the Executive Budget within 30 days of submission, allowing for technical corrections and revisions based on the latest information. However, to help achieve timely budgets, the 2007 Budget Reform Act requires that the Executive, to the extent practicable, submit any necessary amendments within 21 days. Any amendments are made available on the Budget Division's website when submitted to the Legislature.

The legislative review process includes public hearings on the Governor's budget. These hearings are scheduled by the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees, which are responsible for coordinating each house's action on the budget.

The Budget Reform Act mandated the use of conference committees as part of the legislative budget process. These committees, which have been used in various forms in the past, must now be formed early in the process to facilitate agreement on a budget between the two houses. The two houses ultimately develop joint recommendations, amend the Governor's proposed bills to reflect their decisions, and pass the amended bills. These final bills are available from the legislative document rooms.

Except for appropriations for the Legislature and the Judiciary, appropriations proposed by the Governor become law immediately when passed by the Legislature. However, all items that have been added by the Legislature, and all appropriations for the Legislature and the Judiciary must be sent to the Governor for his approval or veto. The Constitution grants the Governor "line item veto" power, permitting the Governor to veto such items selectively, while approving the remainder of the bill.

Chapter numbers are assigned to bills that become law. For any bill or item of appropriation that is vetoed, the Governor provides a "veto message" to the Legislature stating his reasons for the veto. Vetoes may be overridden by a two-thirds vote of each house of the Legislature, in which case the vetoed item or bill becomes law despite the Governor's objections.

After enactment of the budget, the Legislature is required to summarize its changes to the Executive Budget. This summary is presented in the "Green Book," which is available from the Senate and Assembly document rooms. The Governor is required to revise the Financial Plan to reflect the Enacted Budget. Like the original Executive Budget and any amendments, this revised plan and subsequent updates are also made available on the Budget Division's website.

Note: Readers are encouraged to visit the New York State Budget Division's website (www.budget.state.ny.us) to access the latest information and documents related to the Executive Budget proposal and the Enacted Budget. Virtually all materials are made available on the website, either on the day of release or within 24 hours.