

Legislative Sessions with Limited Scope

There are two types of annual sessions—general and limited scope. The 39 legislatures that meet annually hold general sessions each year; they consider all types of legislation during both years of a biennium. Only seven legislatures that meet annually limit one year of a biennium to consideration of specific types of legislation. They are Arkansas, Connecticut, Louisiana, Maine, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Wyoming.

Shown below are the year of the biennium in which the session scope is limited and a description of each state’s subject limit.

State	Year in which the Scope Limit Occurs	Subject Limit
Arkansas	Even year/ 2 nd year of biennium	Appropriation bills; other bills only upon approval by two-thirds (2/3) of the members of each house
Connecticut	Even year/ 2 nd year of biennium	Individual legislators may only introduce bills of a fiscal nature, emergency legislation, bills raised by committee
Louisiana	Odd year/ 2 nd year of biennium	Fiscal issues, local bills, and individual legislators may introduce a maximum of five bills by prefile date
Maine	Even year/ 2 nd year of biennium	Budgetary matters, legislation in the governor’s call, emergency legislation, legislation referred to committees for study
New Mexico	Even year/ 2 nd year of biennium	Budgets, appropriation and revenue bills, bills drawn pursuant to governor’s message, vetoed bills
North Carolina	Even year/ 2 nd year of biennium	Budget adjustments and other topics as set out in the adjournment resolution ending the odd-year
Wyoming	Even year/ 2 nd year of biennium	Budget bills; other bills only by approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the members of either house

There are mixed reviews on the effectiveness of limited scope sessions. The subject limits are so broad (or vague) in Connecticut, Maine, New Mexico, and North Carolina that they have little impact.

In Louisiana, a limited scope session was set by constitutional amendment in 1994. Since the enactment of the "fiscal issues" limit, the legislature has been called into special session each even-year to deal with general issues. Only the governor has the ability to call special sessions; as a result, there has been a shift in power from the legislature to the governor.

(Note: A 2002 amendment to the Louisiana Constitution changed the timing of the “fiscal session” from the even-numbered year to the odd-numbered year, effective January 2004)

A 2008 constitutional amendment established Arkansas's fiscal session, the first of which occurred in 2010.

(Source: NCSL website, 12/2/2013.

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/legislative-sessions-with-limited-scope.aspx>)