

Michigan Government & You!

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Party Control

Each political party will attempt to elect a majority of 56 or more representatives in the house. Just as in the senate, the majority party controls nearly everything. In 1993-94, House was evenly divided, 55-55. Co-Speakers presided in a successful shared power arrangement.

Leadership

The organization of the house is almost identical to the senate. The house has its caucus chairpersons, whips, floor leaders, and others needed to move legislation along according to the priorities of each party. The one difference is the position known as the *speaker of the house*. *The speaker is the presiding officer in the House of Representatives. Because of the vast powers of this position the speaker can control the passage of any bills introduced by either party. Under normal conditions this person is chosen from the majority party in the house.* There is no majority leader in the house. The Speaker of the House is the counterpart of the Senate Majority Leader.

Speaker of the House

The speaker is the most powerful person in the house, and is selected by the house members. The speaker is usually a member of the majority party. The party wants one of their own to run things. The decision is initially made in the caucus. The final vote for the speaker's position is taken among the entire membership, not just among the majority party.

The power of the speaker is hard to imagine by simply reading a list of his or her powers and responsibilities. In practice, the senate majority leader and the house speaker control the passage of any bills introduced during their terms. Following is a list of some of the speaker's powers:

1. Calls the house to order and maintains proper conduct
2. Decides the order of business
3. Appoints all committee members
4. Refers bills to committees
5. Recognizes who speaks
6. Controls the order in which bills appear
7. Answers questions about procedures
8. Appoints most employees of the house
9. Appoints a committee on newspaper correspondents
10. Calls for all votes
11. Votes on all issues before the house (unlike the president of the senate) except appeals of the speaker's decisions
12. Determines when sufficient time to vote has been given
13. Determines the house budget

As with the majority leader of the senate, the speaker usually has someone else preside over the house sessions, while he or she is occupied elsewhere with guiding and molding legislation.

