

Summary of Bill to Establish Offices of Legislative Research and Fiscal Analysis

This bill recreates, in an altered form, the legislative research bureau that was established in 1954 and abolished in 2011. It also creates a new office of fiscal analysis. The bill amends Chapter 3 of the General Laws by repealing section 55A and adding sections 56-60. The aim of this bill is to create highly professional offices staffed by experts whose work will be insulated from partisan political influence that will serve all members of the General Court.

- The findings in Section 1 are patterned closely on those in the original 1954 bill that created a Legislative Research Council and Bureau. Acts, 1954, § 607.
- The **office of legislative research** will be responsible for conducting policy analysis, comparative legal analysis, statistical research, fact-finding, bill-drafting upon request, and review of bills and amendments in third reading. It will prepare a section-by-section summary and maintain the legislative history of each bill that reaches third reading. It will also assume the duties currently assigned to the unstaffed position of “recodification counsel” (M.G.L. c. 3, sec. 55A). The position of recodification counsel, currently vacant, will be abolished.
- The **office of fiscal analysis** will be responsible for preparing tax revenue and expenditure forecasts and reviews, analyzing the fiscal impact of proposed legislation, preparing fiscal notes for bills that reach third reading, and performing other analyses requested by the committees on ways and means.
- The offices will be directed by leaders who shall be appointed to a renewable five-year term and who are qualified to manage a staff of experts. The directors shall be appointed without regard to political affiliation by a majority vote of the speaker, senate president, and the leader of the minority party in each chamber. No former or current member of the legislature may be appointed director of either office. Directors’ salaries shall be set by the rules committees of both chambers acting jointly.
- This bill places discretion for staffing and for allocation of resources in the hands of the directors in order to ensure that all members have access to assistance and that research into complex, far-reaching policies does not inevitably yield to urgent, but less important, demands. Directors are protected by a for-cause termination provision. The directors are tasked with developing budgets and establishing operations. Staffing and funding levels are not specified because it is anticipated that the size of the offices will evolve over time.
- The directors shall have the authority to secure information from all departments of the commonwealth, including units, officers and agencies of the executive branch and the administrative offices of the courts. Findings and reports will be made public, but requests and materials provided to legislators shall remain confidential. The directors are required to report annually on operations and on reports issued and bills prepared during the preceding fiscal year.