



Office of  
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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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## **Representative Kane pushes for rules reforms to make the House and Senate more transparent and accountable**

**BOSTON** – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) continues to push for reforms to the internal rules governing the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate, saying legislators need to be more transparent in how they conduct business and accountable to their constituents.

On February 25, Representative Kane supported multiple Republican-sponsored reform measures filed as amendments to a comprehensive House rules package as well as a separate rules package that will govern the operations of the joint legislative committees of the two branches for the 2025-2026 session.

Representative Kane noted that the initial rules proposals released prior to floor debate contained several positive reforms, including many provisions the House Republican Caucus has long been advocating for, such as a requirement that individual legislators' committee votes be posted online for easy public access. However, she said the reforms do not go far enough, after the House rejected nearly all the caucus' amendments, with the exception of a proposal to require the House journal to specify if a member participated in a vote remotely. The House and joint rules proposals were ultimately both approved on votes of 128-23, with Representative Kane opposed.

The rules packages includes a requirement that House committees post bill summaries online prior to being taken up for a vote, and provide a minimum notice of 72 hours for committee hearings. Legislators will also now be required to be physically present to participate in a committee hearing, although members of the public can continue to participate remotely.

While supporting these changes, Representative Kane also joined with her House Republican colleagues to advocate for a series of additional reforms designed to shine more light on the legislative process and give constituents a better understanding of how it works. Among the House rules amendments supported by Representative Kane were proposals to:

- mandate that the annual internal audit of the House be conducted by the state auditor, pursuant to the new law that was overwhelmingly approved by the state's voters last fall;
- require that the House comply with all such audits undertaken pursuant to the voter-approved law;
- prohibit House committee polls from being open for less than two hours;
- require a 12-hour notice for members prior to a House poll being released;
- give members more time to review bills and file amendments before bills come to the floor for debate;
- provide members one hour to review consolidated amendments, which are often lengthy and detailed;
- require a two-thirds vote to extend sessions beyond 9 p.m.; and
- give House Ways and Means 60 days to approve or disapprove all bills referred to the committee (with the exception of the General Appropriations Act) and allow the bill's original sponsor to petition for the bill's release if the committee fails to act within the specified time frame.

Representative Kane also supported several Republican-sponsored amendments to the joint rules, including proposals to:

- require roll call votes on conference committee reports, supplemental appropriations bills, and other substantive matters taken up in formal sessions conducted after July 31 in the second year of a legislative session;
- require a two-week notice of all matters to be taken up at a formal session conducted after July 31 in the second year of a legislative session;
- create a new joint rule requiring copies of audits of the General Court conducted by the state auditor to be published on the General Court website within 72 hours of receipt;
- require either branch of the General Court to request an opinion of the Supreme Judicial Court whenever they have a conflicting opinion with a constitutional officer relative to the constitutionality of legislation;
- prohibit joint committee polls from being open for less than two hours; and
- require a 12-hour notice for members prior to a joint committee poll being released.

Representative Kane noted the new House rules are now finalized and in place, but the joint rules must still be agreed to by the Senate, and any differences will likely have to be worked out in conference committee.

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