

**Step-by-step explanation of the
NJ state budget process
and how advocates and the public can get involved.**

- In February, the governor unveils a budget proposal. This document is drafted over a 15-month period during which existing programs are reviewed and revenues identified.
- The state issues the 800-page budget, along with a Budget in Brief narrative that highlights key programs and initiatives of the governor's spending plan. Both are available online and in published form.
- The Senate and Assembly Budget Committees hold public hearings, usually one each in the northern and southern parts of the state. Citizens can sign up to testify at these hearings by calling the non-partisan Office of Legislative Services (OLS). Contact information can be found at www.njleg.state.nj.us.
- The budget committees also hold Statehouse hearings at which the state treasurer and OLS, as well as state department heads, testify. These are open public hearings, but citizens typically do not testify at these sessions. People can, however, submit questions or concerns to the budget committee chairs, who are also listed on the OLS website.
- OLS independently analyzes the budget and produces reports on each department's expenditures. These reports are available at the public hearings and on OLS' website.
- In June, under tight deadlines, OLS drafts the appropriations bill under the direction of the Legislative budget committee chairs. Since OLS work products are confidential, the appropriations bill is not public until its sponsor introduces it in committee when most major negotiations have already been settled between the governor's office and state Legislature.
- The Assembly and Senate vote on the appropriations bill.
- No later than June 30, the governor signs the spending plan into law.