

Understanding Budget Riders

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There comes a time in every session when advancing the state budget becomes the primary focus of attention. Since this pivotal season is upon us, we thought it would be an excellent time to broach the subject of budget riders.

What is a budget rider?

Riders are enumerated policy directives or contingent appropriations that follow traditional line item appropriations in the General Appropriations Act. The term also applies to general provisions in Article IX and special provisions at the end of each article. [\[i\]](#)

Riders convey specific instructions on how agency funds can be collected or spent. Riders may also express legislative intent and be used to provide funds for administrative functions.

Where do riders come from?

In most cases, riders carry over from one biennium to the next. Riders passed in the previous session are routinely included in introduced versions of House and Senate appropriations bills.

The opportunity to alter rider language first occurs in the Senate Finance and House Appropriations committees. In addition to making decisions about line item appropriations, House and Senate budget committees consider rider additions and revisions. The work of the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) is essential to this process. [Decision documents](#) prepared for the committees are available on the LBB's website. Initial and adopted versions of the documents include items discussed during the decision-making process. Adopted rider documents, which provide the text of new and amended riders as passed by the committees, are particularly helpful to researchers.

Riders can also be added, amended, and deleted on the floor and again in conference committee. Relevant documents are available through the [Texas Legislature Online](#) and [LBB](#) websites.

Where can I find the text of a rider?

Locating the text of a rider within a General Appropriations Act is simple when you know the article number, agency name, rider number, and year of passage. The task is more complex when available information is inaccurate or incomplete. In any case, the

LRL is happy to help with the search.

In addition to copies of [General Appropriations Acts](#) going back to the 40th Legislature, introductions to the budget process from the Senate Research Center and House Research Organization are available on the Library's [website](#). Recent GAAs and supporting documents are available through the [Legislative Budget Board](#).

[i] Senate Research Center. [Budget 101: A Guide to the Budget Process in Texas](#), 2017, p. 72.