

Profile of the Saitama prefectural Assembly

Japan's Local Government System

Local autonomy is guaranteed by Chapter VIII of the Constitution of Japan. The Constitution stipulates that:

- Each local government establishes a representative assembly that acts as a legislative body
- The head of each local government and the members of their assemblies are elected directly by local citizens
- Local governments are able to enact their own ordinances
- The organization and operation of each local government is regulated by a separate law

In accordance with these provisions, the Local Autonomy Law stipulates that local autonomy is to be exercised while dividing responsibilities between the basic municipal (city, town, and village) and broader prefectural levels.

The Saitama Prefectural Government Campus



The Prefectural Assembly and the Executive Body

The Prefectural Assembly is a legislative body that, through deliberating legislative proposals, makes decisions about the Prefecture's fundamental policies that best represent the interests of the citizens.

The executive body headed by the governor acts in accordance with the measures passed by the Assembly. Both bodies exercise their respective authority as representatives of the prefectural citizens, managing the prefectural government on an equal standing while maintaining balance. As a result, they are also known as "the two wheels of the prefectural government".

The Prefectural Assembly also conducts surveys and investigations into whether the work of the executive body is benefiting the citizens.

Powers of the Prefectural Assembly

The Prefectural Assembly has two functions: enacting ordinances and overseeing the prefectural government's executive body. The Assembly's powers are as follows:

1. The Power to Vote

The Assembly can pass or reject bills introduced by assembly members or the governor.

The Assembly votes on matters such as:

- (1) the enactment, revision, or repeal of ordinances
- (2) the setting and revision of budgets
- (3) the approval of financial statements
- (4) contracts for construction work (etc.) costing 500 million yen or more
- (5) the acquisition or disposal of assets worth 70 million yen or more

2. The Power to Approve

When the governor nominates or appoints officials, such as the vice governor, superintendent of education, education board members, inspection committee members, or public safety commission members, the Assembly must approve of the nomination or appointment.

3. The Power to Elect

The Assembly is able to elect positions such as the speaker and the deputy speaker of the Prefectural Assembly, and members of the Prefecture's electoral administration committee.

4. The Power to Monitor and Audit

The Assembly can examine documents related to administrative and legislative affairs.

5. The Power to Investigate

The Assembly can make inquiries to the executive body and request documents, as well as the appearance, testimony and records of related persons.

6. Other Powers

Regarding relations between the executive body and the Prefectural Assembly, both the governor and the Prefectural Assembly have the right to introduce a bill. However, only the governor has the right to introduce budgets. The Prefectural Assembly has the power to hold a vote of no confidence in the governor, while the governor has the power to dissolve the Prefectural Assembly.

Operation and Management of the Prefectural Assembly

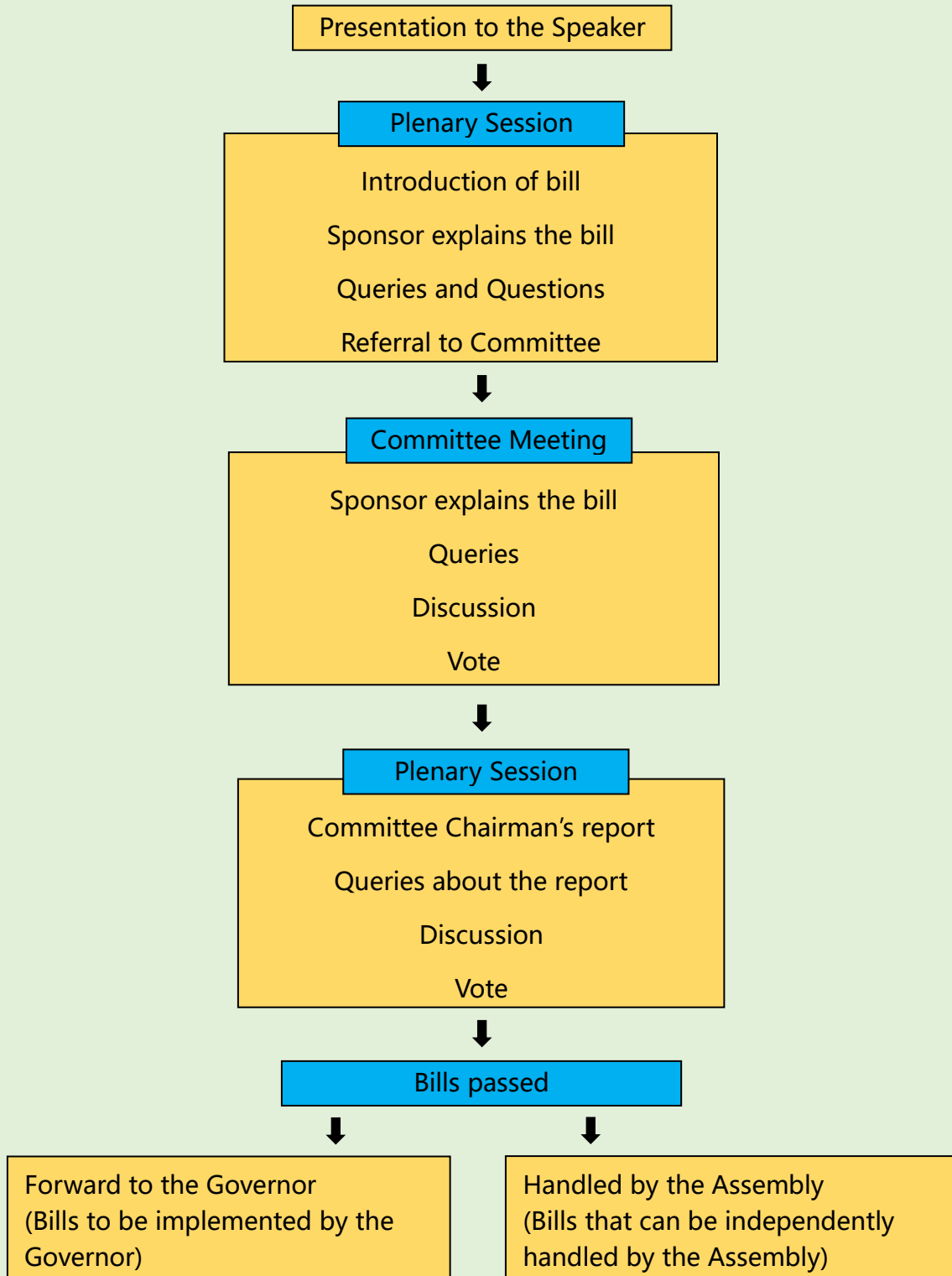
Under local ordinances, the Saitama Prefectural Assembly convenes four times a year (February, June, September, and December) for regular sessions, with extraordinary sessions held for specific cases as necessary. Regular sessions run for approximately 20 days with the exception of the February session, which runs for approximately 35 days due to deliberations regarding the budget for the new fiscal year.

The Saitama Prefectural Assembly's Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring that the Assembly operates smoothly. Comprised of members nominated in proportion to the size of each party, the Steering Committee confers on and makes adjustments to the duration of the sessions, the agenda, and the handling of bills, and also examines legislative proposals and petitions.

The Plenary Session Hall



The Handling of a Bill



Committees

Standing Committees

Under local ordinances, the Saitama Prefectural Assembly has the following eight standing committees to examine legislative proposals and petitions, as well as investigate prefectural administrative issues under their respective jurisdictions.

1. Standing Committee on Planning and Finance
2. Standing Committee on General Affairs and Public Services
3. Standing Committee on Environment, Agriculture and Forestry
4. Standing Committee on Welfare, Public Health and Medical Services
5. Standing Committee on Industry, Labor and Commerce
6. Standing Committee on Land and City Development
7. Standing Committee on Education
8. Standing Committee on Police, Crisis Management, and Disaster Prevention

Special Committees

There are special committees within the Saitama Prefectural Assembly that are established by vote when necessary. Special committees review specific matters, such as prefectural administration issues.

Speaker, Members of the Assembly, and Parliamentary Groups

The Speaker

The speaker and the deputy speaker are elected from among the members of the Assembly through a vote.

The role of the speaker is to keep the plenary session running smoothly, maintain order in the assembly hall, and appoint, direct, and supervise the staff of the Secretariat of the Prefectural Assembly.

As the representative of the Prefectural Assembly, the speaker is responsible for voicing the intentions of the Assembly to the public, liaising and negotiating with the governor, and submitting written opinions passed by the Assembly to government agencies.

The deputy speaker takes the place of the speaker when the speaker is absent from the plenary session.

Members of the Assembly

Members of the Assembly are elected directly by prefectural citizens, with a term of four years. The Saitama Prefectural Assembly is composed of 93 members from 51 electoral districts.

Japanese nationals who are 18 years of age or over, and have lived in Saitama Prefecture for three months or longer, are eligible to vote. Persons 25 years of age or over who can vote are eligible to run for a position in the Prefectural Assembly.

Parliamentary Groups

A parliamentary group is comprised of assembly members who share similar political ideologies, with the activities of the Assembly centered around these groups. The current groups are as follows (as of November 2023):

Saitama Liberal Democratic Party
Saitama Democratic Forum
Saitama Komeito Party
Independent Citizens Council
Saitama Japanese Communist Party
Independent Reform Party
Japan Innovation Party

The Assembly Hall and Secretariat

The Assembly Hall

The current Assembly Hall was completed in May 1983, and is the fifth building since the original was built in 1885. Constructed using reinforced concrete, it has five stories above ground and two stories below ground. It has a total floor area of approximately 18,000 m² and cost approximately 7.7 billion yen to build.



The Committee Conference Room

The main facilities include the plenary session hall with a visitor's gallery, committee conference room, the speaker's office, and waiting rooms for the various parliamentary groups. In addition, there is also a library to assist assembly members with their research.



The Speaker's Office

The Secretariat

The Secretariat supports the operations of the Saitama Prefectural Assembly and has 66 personnel. It is made up of the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director, as well as the Secretariat Division, the General Affairs Division, the Proceedings Division, the Legislature and Research Division, and the Library.

Saitama Prefecture

Saitama Prefecture is a landlocked prefecture situated in the middle of the Kanto Plain. It is bordered by Ibaraki Prefecture and Chiba Prefecture to the east, Nagano Prefecture and Yamanashi Prefecture to the west, the Tokyo Metropolis to the south, and Gunma Prefecture and Tochigi Prefecture to the north. As of November 2023, there are a total of 63 municipalities in Saitama Prefecture: 40 cities, 22 towns, and 1 village. Saitama Prefecture has the largest number of cities in Japan. The Prefectural Government Office is located in Saitama City.

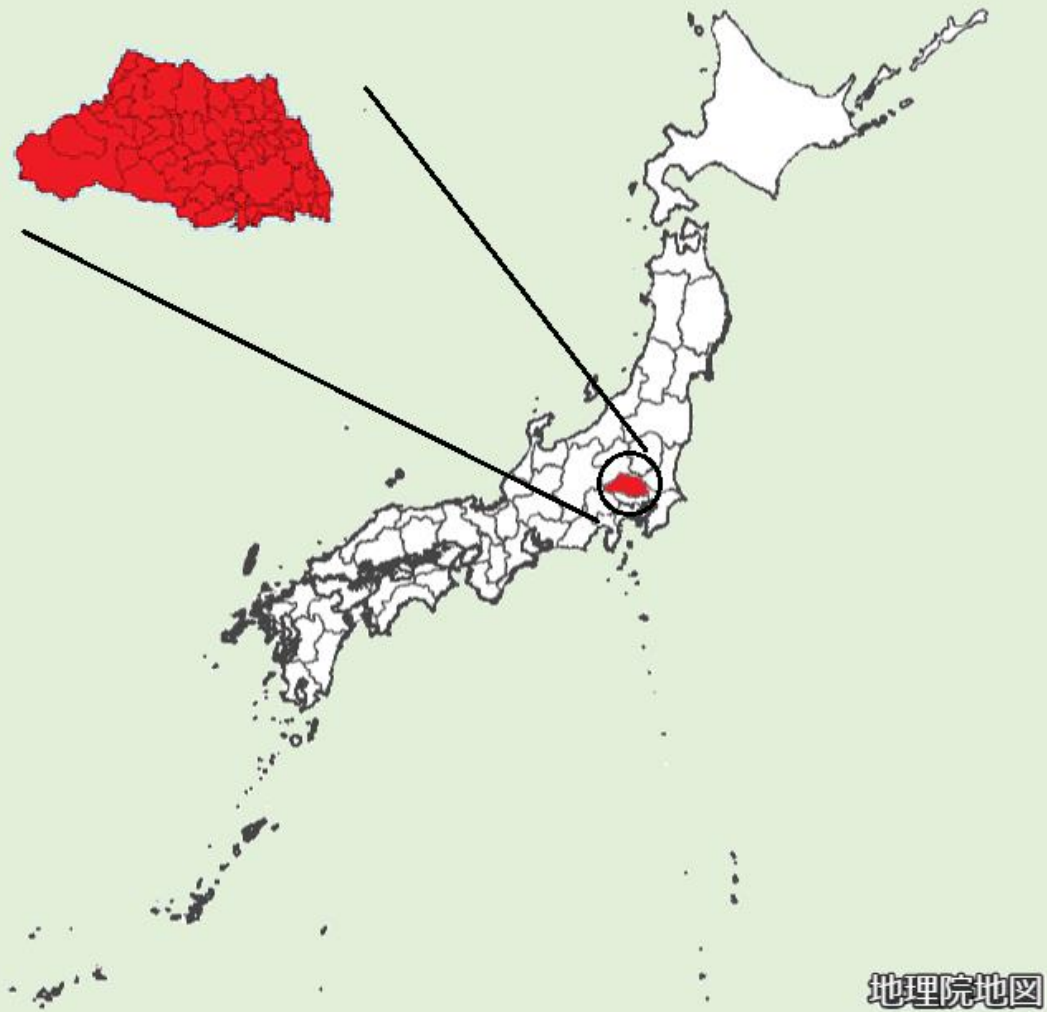
Saitama's total area is approximately 3,800 km², which accounts for 1 percent of the country's total land area. One-third of Saitama's land is mountainous while the other two-thirds are plains.

Saitama Prefecture has humid summers and cold winters with dry winds. Its comparatively low amount of storm and flood damage and high number of sunny days make Saitama a comfortable place to live in.

As of November 2023, Saitama Prefecture has a population of approximately 7.33 million people, and has one of the youngest populations in Japan. However, with the once steadily increasing population now declining, Saitama is said to be progressing into an aged society at one of the fastest rates in the nation due to an increase in the number of residents over 75.

From here on, Saitama will need to maintain its vitality amongst the number of challenges it faces, including a decreasing population, an aging society with a declining birthrate, the recovery and sustainable development of the local economy, and its response to severe and frequent natural disasters.

Map Showing Saitama Prefecture



地理院地図