

# How a Bill Becomes Law

**Step 1:** A bill is introduced in either the house or Senate. Sometimes identical bills are introduced simultaneously. The bill receives a FIRST READING in the House and a FIRST and SECOND READING in the Senate (at which time the title is read). Then either the Speaker of the House or the Majority Leader of the Senate refers the bill to an appropriate standing committee (Senior Citizens & Veterans Affairs, Families and Human Services, Education, Transportation, etc.). If the bill is a budget bill or has fiscal implications, it will also be referred directly to the Appropriations Committee or to an appropriate standing committee and then to the Appropriations Committee.

**Step 2:** In committee, the bill is discussed and debated. Public hearings may be held. Not every bill referred to a committee will be considered. The committee may take several different actions:

- Report the bill with favorable recommendations
- Add amendments and report the bill with favorable recommendation.
- Replace the original bill with a substitute.
- Report the bill with adverse recommendation.
- Report the bill without recommendation.
- Report the bill with amendments but without recommendation.
- Report the bill with the recommendation that the bill be referred to another committee.
- Take no action on the bill.
- Refuse to report the bill out of committee.

**Step 3:** If a bill is reported out favorably or a substitute is offered, the bill is returned to the House or Senate where it receives a GENERAL ORDERS status in the Senate and a SECOND READING status in the House. The Senate resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole and the House assumes the order of SECOND READING. At this time, committee recommendations are considered and amendments may be offered and adopted. The bill then advances to THIRD READING.

**Step 4:** Upon THIRD READING in the Senate, an entire bill is read unless unanimous consent is given to consider the bill read. In the House, the bill is read in its entirety on THIRD READING unless four-fifths of the members consent to consider the bill read. On THIRD READING the bill is again subject to debate and amendments. At the conclusion of THIRD READING, the bill is either passed or defeated by a roll call vote of the majority of the members elected and serving OR one of the following options may be used to delay final action:

- Refer the bill back to committee for further consideration.
- Postpone bill indefinitely.
- Make the bill a special order of business on THIRD READING for a specific date.
- Table the bill.

Following either passage or defeat of the bill, a legislator may move to have the bill reconsidered. In the Senate the motion must be made within the next two session days; in the House within the next succeeding day.

**Step 5:** If the bill passes, it goes to the other house where the same procedure is followed. If the bill is passed in the same form by both houses, it is ordered “enrolled” in the house in which it originated. It then goes to the governor for his/her signature.

**Step 6:** If the bill is passed in a different form by the second house, the bill is returned to its house of origin. If this house accepts the changes, the bill is enrolled and sent to the governor. If the changes are rejected, the bill is sent to a conference committee which tries to resolve the differences. If they are unsuccessful, a second conference committee may be appointed.

**Step 7:** The governor has 14 days after receiving a bill to consider it. He/she may:

- Sign the bill. The bill becomes law either 90 days after the Legislature adjourns at the end of the year (sine die) or at a later date specified in the bill. If the bill has been given immediate effect by a two-thirds vote of the members elected and serving, it becomes law upon the Governor’s signature and takes effect when filed with the Secretary of State or as specified in the bill.
- Veto the bill (which would then require a two-thirds vote to override). See Step 8.
- Neither sign nor veto, in which case the bill becomes law 14 days after reaching the governor’s desk unless the Legislature adjourns sine die within the 14 days. In that case the bill does not become law.

**Step 8:** If the governor vetoes a bill while the Legislature is in session or recess, one of the following actions may occur:

- Legislature may override the veto by a two-thirds vote of the members elected and serving in both houses.
- Bill may not receive the necessary two-thirds vote and thus the attempt to override the veto will fail.
- Bill may be tabled pending an attempt to override veto.
- Bill may be referred to a committee.