



“How a Bill Becomes a Law”

Legislation is Introduced - Any member of Congress can introduce a piece of legislation

- ✍ The bill is assigned a number. (e.g. HR1 or S1)
- ✍ The bill is labeled with the sponsor's name.
- ✍ The bill is sent to the Government Printing Office and copies are made.
- ✍ Senate bills can be jointly **sponsored**.
- ✍ Members can **co-sponsor** the piece of Legislation.

Committee Action - The bill is referred to the appropriate committee by the Speaker of the House or the presiding officer in the Senate.

- ✍ Bills are placed on the calendar of the committee to which they have been assigned. Failure to act on a bill is equivalent to killing it.
- ✍ Comments about the bill's merit are requested by government agencies.
- ✍ Bill can be assigned to subcommittee by Chairman.
- ✍ Hearings may be held.
- ✍ Subcommittees report their findings to the full committee.
- ✍ Finally there is a vote by the full committee - the bill is "ordered to be reported."
- ✍ A committee will hold a "mark-up" session during which it will make revisions and additions. If substantial amendments are made, the committee can order the introduction of a "clean bill" which will include the proposed amendments. This new bill will have a new number and will be sent to the floor while the old bill is discarded. The chamber must approve, change or reject all committee amendments before conducting a final passage vote.
- ✍ After the bill is reported, the committee staff prepares a written report explaining why they favor the bill and why they wish to see their amendments, if any, adopted. Committee members who oppose a bill sometimes write a dissenting opinion in the report. The report is sent back to the whole chamber and is placed on the calendar.

Floor Action -

- ✍ Legislation is placed on the Calendar
- ✍ Debate
- ✍ Vote - the bill is voted on. If passed, it is then sent to the other chamber unless that chamber already has a similar measure under consideration. If either chamber does not pass the bill then it dies. If the House and Senate pass the same bill then it is sent to the President. If the House and Senate pass different bills they are sent to Conference Committee. Most major legislation goes to a Conference Committee.

Conference Committee - Members from each house form a conference committee and meet to work out the differences.

- ✎ The committee is usually made up of senior members who are appointed by the presiding officers of the committee that originally dealt with the bill. The representatives from each house work to maintain their version of the bill.
- ✎ If the Conference Committee reaches a compromise, it prepares a written conference report, which is submitted to each chamber.
- ✎ The conference report must be approved by both the House and the Senate.

The President - the bill is sent to the President for review

- ✎ A bill becomes law if signed by the President or if not signed within 10 days and Congress is in session.
- ✎ If Congress adjourns before the 10 days and the President has not signed the bill then it does not become law ("Pocket Veto.")

If the President vetoes the bill it is sent back to Congress. The chamber in the legislation originated can attempt to override the veto by a vote of two-thirds of those present. If the veto of the bill is overridden in both chambers then it becomes law.

The Bill Becomes A Law - once a bill is signed by the President or his veto is overridden by both houses it becomes a law and is assigned an official number.