

THE PATH OF A BILL

All legislation begins as an idea, which can come from anyone. The process starts when either an individual or a group persuades a Senator or Assemblymember to author a proposed new law, commonly called a "bill."



The Author

- A legislator sends the idea and the language for the bill to the office of Legislative Counsel where it is drafted into the actual bill.
- The drafted bill is returned to the legislator for introduction.
- If the author is a Senator, the bill is introduced at the Senate desk and is called a Senate Bill; if the bill is introduced by an Assemblymember, it is introduced at the Assembly Desk and is called an Assembly Bill.
- The house in which the bill is introduced is known as the "house of origin."



First Reading Introduction

- A bill's first reading is when the clerk reads the bill number, the name of the author, and the descriptive title of the bill before the members of the house.
- The bill is then sent to the Office of State Printing. No bill may be acted upon until it has been in print for 30 days.



Committee Hearings

- The bill then goes to the Senate or Assembly Rules Committee where it is assigned to the appropriate committee for its first hearing. Bills are assigned according to the nature of the issue they address.
- After passing all policy committees, bills that have an effect on the State Budget ("fiscal bills") must also be heard by a fiscal committee.
- Senate bills are heard in the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee and Assembly bills are heard in the Appropriations Committee.
- You can speak "for" or "against" a bill at all committee hearings. Your letters of support or opposition are important and should be mailed to committee members as well as the committee office before the scheduled hearing.
- It takes a majority vote of the full committee membership for a bill to be approved and "passed out" of the committee.

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Second and Third Reading

- Bills passed by committees are read a second time in the house of origin and then placed on file for third reading.
- When a bill is read the third time, it is explained to the full house by its author, discussed by the members during floor debate, and voted on by a roll call vote.
- Bills that require an expenditure of state funds or are urgency bills (take effect immediately) require 27 votes in the Senate and 54 votes in the Assembly for passage. All other bills need 21 votes in the Senate and 41 votes in the Assembly to be passed.
- If a bill is defeated, the member may seek reconsideration with another vote.



Repeat Process In Other House

- Once the bill has been approved by the house of origin, it proceeds through the second house where the same hearing and review procedure occurs.
- Citizen participation is repeated as the bill moves through the second house.
- If the bill is passed without amendments, it proceeds directly to the Governor for approval.



Resolution of Differences

- If a bill is amended in the second house, it is returned to the house of origin in order for that house to approve the amendments (concurrence).
- If the house of origin concurs with (approves of) the second house's amendments, the bill goes to the Governor.
- If the house of origin does not concur with the second house's amendments, the bill might not proceed any further, or it may go back to the second house for further amendments and review.



The Governor

- The Governor has three choices when a bill reaches his/her desk.
 - Sign it into law
 - Allow it to become law without his/her signature
 - Veto it
- Urgency measures take effect immediately after they are signed.
- Other bills usually become effective the following January 1st.