

How a Bill Becomes a Law

THE IDEA STAGE

To enact a new law, a Representative must first come up with the basic idea and content of the bill. Various individuals and groups offer advice to legislators about proposed bills. If you have a suggestion for a bill, please contact me.

FIRST READING

Upon a bill's introduction in the House of Representatives, the Speaker of the House assigns it to a committee. Examples of committees include Education, Labor & Employment and Public Health.

COMMITTEE HEARING

If the chairman of a committee decides to consider a bill, the committee meets to debate the merits of the bill and discuss any changes that should be made. Citizens are welcome and encouraged to attend these committee hearings and offer their opinions about a bill. After discussion about the bill, committee members vote. If the committee members approve the bill, it then moves to the second reading stage.

SECOND READING

When the bill is considered by the entire House, legislators may propose changes to the bill. The entire House votes on whether to add these amendments to the legislation. When all of the legislators have had a chance to propose changes, the bill moves to its third reading.

THIRD READING

The entire House debates the merits of the bill. Each legislator is allowed an opportunity to speak on the bill. Following this debate, legislators then vote to pass or defeat the bill. At least 51 votes are needed for the bill to be passed by the House of Representatives.

THE OTHER CHAMBER

If a bill is passed by the House, it is sent to the Senate where the process is repeated: first reading, committee hearing, second and third reading. When making a decision about the bill, the Senate has three choices:

- (1) the bill can be approved without any changes,
- (2) the bill can be amended by the Senate, or
- (3) the Senate can "kill" the bill by failing to act upon the bill, defeating the bill with a committee vote or defeating the bill through a vote of the entire Senate.

If the Senate amends the bill, it is returned to the House for further action.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

If the House disagrees with the changes, the bill is then sent to a conference committee that consists of two Representatives and two Senators. If they agree on a final version of the bill, the conference committee report is voted on by the House and Senate. If the entire chamber approves the amended bill, it is then sent to the Governor.

THE GOVERNOR

The Governor can sign the bill into law, veto the bill or simply not take action. A bill signed by the Governor becomes law. If the Governor does not act within seven days, the bill becomes law even without the Governor's signature. The Governor can veto, or reject, the bill if he disagrees with its content or believes it needs changes.

VETO OVERRIDE

If the Governor vetoes the bill, it can still become law if 51 Representatives and 26 Senators vote to override the Governor's veto.

INDIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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