

# How the Sausage is Made

Not every bill that's introduced is destined to become law. This overview pulls back the curtain on how the legislative process actually works.

## Step 1



### Research & Development

Bill ideas come from various sources – a state agency, elected official, students working on a class project, news stories, constituents, or from the legislators' own priorities. They are researched and drafted into bills before and during the legislative session.

### Into the Hopper

Once drafted, legislators ask others to sign on to support the bills as co-sponsors. Then they are "dropped" into a box called the "hopper" and processed by legislative staff. They are given a bill number, added to the legislative website and made available for everyone to review.



## Step 2

## Step 3



### Committee Hearings

Each bill is assigned to a committee that is responsible for that policy area. It is up to the chair of the committee (always a member of the majority party) to decide which bills are heard and which ones are passed out of committee. Those bills head to the Rules Committee and wait to be selected for a floor vote.

### Floor Action

If a bill is "pulled" from the Rules Committee, it will be eligible to come to the floor for debate and a vote. The majority only allows bills that they know will pass to come to the floor. Legislators debate the bill, attempt to amend the bill, and vote on it. Once it passes, it heads to the opposite chamber and back to step three.



## Step 4

## Step 5



### Rinse & Repeat

All the bills passed in one chamber must also be passed by the other chamber if they are to progress. For example, the ones passed by the Senate go over to the House of Representatives, get assigned to a committee, and repeat steps three and four.

### Governor's Signature

If a bill has passed in both chambers in the exact same form, it heads to the governor's desk for a signature. The governor could decide to veto the whole bill or, in some cases, specific parts of it. If legislators want to override a veto, they will need to take that up in the next legislative session, and it will take a two-thirds majority to pass the override.



## Why might a bill not receive a hearing?

Bill ideas come from various sources – a state agency, elected official, students working on a class project, news stories, constituents, or from the legislators' own priorities. They are researched and drafted into bills before and during the legislative session.

## How do you testify or submit an opinion on a bill being heard in committee?

People can register their position on a bill, sign up to testify in committee, or submit written testimony online through the legislative website. They can testify in person or remotely via Zoom. This system allows people all over the state to engage in the legislative process, even if they have mobility issues.

## Why don't some bills that are passed out of committee come to the floor for a vote?

Bills that pass out of a policy committee go to the Rules Committee. Legislators on "Rules" meet often during floor action. Each has the opportunity to select or "pull" a bill off the list for a vote on the floor. The majority schedules these bills for debate during a day of floor action.

## What happens if a bill passes out of one chamber, but not the other?

When a bill passes out of the Senate, it goes to the House of Representatives for consideration (and vice versa). If the other chamber doesn't pass it, the bill is considered "dead." If this happens during the first year of the biennium, the bill could start the process again the following year. Legislators also often reintroduce bills for several years trying to get them to the governor's desk.

## What happens if a bill passes both chambers, but in different forms?

If a bill that passes out of one chamber is amended in the next, it must return to the original chamber where legislators will decide if they concur with the changes. If they do not concur, the bill will be negotiated in a small group – referred to as "going to conference." The version agreed upon by the conference committee will need to be approved by the original chamber in order to go to the governor's desk.

## When do bills signed by the governor become law?

Typically, a bill becomes law 90 days after the last day of the legislative session, whether the governor signs it or not. Some bills contain a specific effective date, and others contain an "emergency clause" that make them effective as soon as the governor signs them. An emergency clause also prevents the people from being able to overturn the policy through referendum.



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