How An Idea Becomes a Law

Idea

A legislator decides to sponsor a bill. Ideas come from many sources: constituents, interest groups, and government agencies.

Bill Drafted

The legislator requests the idea be drafted into a bill by the Legislative Services Agency.

Bill Filed

The bill draft is sent to the Senate or the House where it is assigned a number and is then sent to the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House.

Committee Assignment

The President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House refers the bill to a standing committee. A subcommittee, assigned by the standing committee, then studies the bill and reports its conclusions to the full committee.

Committee Action

The committee may pass the bill or pass an amended version of the bill. The committee may also send the bill to the floor without recommendation.

Floor Debate

The bill is placed on the calendar, a listing of all bills officially eligible for debate. At this time legislators may file amendments to the bill.

Amendment

The bill and any amendments filed are debated by the whole chamber. Amendments must be approved by a simple majority of those legislators voting.

Vote

A constitutional majority, at least 26 senators or 51 representatives, must vote "yes" in order for the bill to proceed to the second chamber.

Second Chamber

The bill goes through the same process in the second chamber. If the bill passes the second chamber without amendment, it is sent to the Governor. If the second chamber amends the bill it must be sent back to the chamber of origin for approval of those amendments. If the chambers cannot come to an agreement on the version of the bill, a conference committee is appointed.

Governor

After the bill passes both chambers in identical form, it is sent to the Governor. The Governor may sign the bill, veto the bill, or take no action on the bill.

Law

The bill becomes law upon the Governor's signature or after three days during the session if the Governor takes no action. Bills received by the Governor during the last three days of the session have to be signed or vetoed within 30 days. If the Governor takes no action on the bill after the 30-day time period after session, a pocket veto occurs.