

How a Bill Becomes a Law

For more information, see [Legislative Process Overview](#), [Reed's Parliamentary Rules](#), and [Civic Education Page](#).

1. A bill may be introduced in either the Senate or House of Representatives by a member.

This is after a bill has been sent to the Code Reviser for review/edits. The Code Reviser creates the “pink sheet” in the Senate – where members can ask other members to sign on as co-sponsors. Members can also sign on electronically after the bill has been “placed in the hopper” and has a bill number. There is a limited time to sign on to legislation.

2. It is referred to a committee for a hearing.

The referral is made by the Floor Leader in the Senate and the Majority in the House. This is after consultation with counsel from both parties. The referral to the committee is based on the subject of the bill and the jurisdictions of the different committees. The bills are then referred officially during session – whether pro-forma or full session. A Chair can ask that a bill be re-referred out of his/her committee or to his/her committee. If that occurs, the bill again has to be read in on the floor and the re-referral noted.

3. The committee studies the bill and may hold public hearings on it. It can then pass, reject, or take no action on the bill.

As the Legislature has 60 and 105 day sessions, Chairs usually have agendas pretty well set for the first 2 or 3 weeks before session starts. The longer it takes to get a bill introduced the tougher it is to get time on the agenda, unless the Chair has been alerted the bill is coming. Once the bill is heard and public testimony is taken, it is the Chair’s prerogative to decide whether to bring the bill up for a vote in Executive Session. Amendments may be taken up at that time. Chairs frequently break for caucus time prior to votes on a series of bills to ensure they have adequate support.

Testifying: Do not be insulted if a 1, 2 or 3 minute rule for testimony is imposed. It is the Chair’s way of managing the number of bills which will be heard vs. the number of people testifying for the bills. If you have a number of people going down to testify – divide up the testimony, if possible. You can always say, “I concur with what the 2 previous speakers stated and want to add . . .” This is considered effective testimony.

When you e-mail, try to make a personal statement as to why you support a bill. Legislators get hundreds of robo e-mails a day and the ones that stand out have personal notes/stories. Do not be offended if you do not receive a response – staff cannot keep up with all the correspondence, even if they work 24/7. It is more important that the Legislator here that there is a lot of support for a bill or a lack of support from that staff member.

If you call the Legislator’s office courtesy counts.

4. The committee report on the passed bill is read in open session of the House or Senate, and the bill is then referred to the Rules Committee.
5. The Rules Committee can either place the bill on the second reading calendar for debate before the entire body, or take no action.

Rules members are allowed to pull bills either directly to the floor or for second reading – the Majority Leader decides what the pulls will be for any given meeting.

Going into a Rules meeting, my goal was to make sure we were pulling top priority bills for our Chairs and to make sure every member was getting a bill to the floor.

Rules meetings can be formal – in the Rules room – or when bills are needed for the floor calendar and a cutoff is looming, they can be informal and at the “rostrum”.

6. At the second reading, a bill is subject to debate and amendment before being placed on the third reading calendar for final passage.

The Minority can block having a bill moved from second to third reading by motion if they wish to delay a bill or bills. This delays a bill by a full day and when you are up against cutoffs can effectively slow the bill down.

Leadership determines when there will be floor session and which bills will be on the calendar for discussion/debate. We laid out at least 2 weeks work of floor action at a time, recognizing additional bills would be added along the way. This allows Leadership to keep priority bills moving and to look at length of floor debate for contentious bills – to manage floor time.

Just ahead of cutoff it is standard that the Minority will slow floor debate – that is why managing priority bills to get them passed before cutoff is critical.

7. After passing one house, the bill goes through the same procedure in the other house.

There are very few bills that pass early from one house to another that are immediately take up. Usually the Senate will get all of its bills passed prior to cut off from the House of Origin and the House of Representatives will do the same – before taking up bills from the other body. Leadership in both Chambers are in constant communication about what is coming over and levels of importance of bills to try to ensure priority bills move as early as possible and to ensure members have bills moving (both Democrat and Republican bills).

8. If amendments are made in the other house, the first house must approve the changes.

This is what is called a concurrence/non-concurrence process. The Chair and Ranking of the committee state whether the body should concur/not concur, as does the bill sponsor.

If they do not concur the bill bounces back to the other body and sometimes this “ping pong” can kill a bill.

9. When the bill is accepted in both houses, it is signed by the respective leaders and sent to the governor.
10. The governor signs the bill into law or may veto all or part of it. If the governor fails to act on the bill, it may become law without a signature.

There are deadlines for bill action – those passed early and those passed later in session, including the budget.

The budgets are almost always passed last or almost last – transportation, operating and then capital. As the Republican's showed two years ago, the minority can hold up the entire capital budget by refusing to provide votes for the bond bill which takes a 2/3 majority.