

How a Bill Becomes a Law

A bill is a proposal for the enactment, amendment or repeal of an existing law, or for the appropriation of public money. A bill may originate in either the House or Senate, with the exception of revenue measures, which originate in the House of Representatives. It must be passed by a majority vote of each house of the Legislature and be signed into law by the Governor. If the Governor vetoes a bill, it can become law if passed again by a two-thirds majority of those present in each house. A bill can also become law without the Governor's signature if it is not vetoed within five days (Sundays excepted) after presentation to the Governor. After the Legislature adjourns "sine die," the Governor has ten days to veto or sign a bill.

Before the final vote on a bill, it must be read on three separate days in each house. Two-thirds of the members of the house where the bill is pending may vote to dispense with this provision.

Introduction

A bill may be introduced by a member, a group of members or a standing committee. After the 20th day of the session in the House and the 12th day in the Senate, bills may be introduced only by committee. After the 35th day bills may be introduced only by certain committees. In the House: State Affairs, Appropriations, Education, Revenue and Taxation, and Ways and Means Committee. In the Senate: State Affairs, Finance, and Judiciary and Rules.

The original bill and fifteen copies are presented to the Chief Clerk who assigns the bill a number. The bill is then introduced by being read on the Order of Business "Introduction and First Reading of Bills." Bills that have been passed by the other house are received and placed on the same Order of Business and treated in the same manner as new bills.

First Reading

The bill is read the first time and is then referred by the Speaker of the House to the Judiciary, Rules and Administration Committee for printing. After the bill is printed, it is reported back and referred to a standing committee by the Speaker.

Reports of Standing Committees

Each committee to which a bill is referred conducts a study of all information that may help the committee determine the scope and effect of the proposed law. Studies may include research, hearings, expert testimony, and statements of interested parties. A bill may be reported out of committee with one of the following recommendations:

1. Do pass.
2. Without recommendation.
3. To be placed on General Orders for Amendment.
4. Do not pass. (Bills are seldom released from committee with this recommendation.)
5. Withdrawn with the privilege of introducing another bill.
6. Referred to another standing committee.

If a committee reports a bill out and does not recommend that the bill be amended or other action to keep it from going to the floor, the bill is then placed on second reading.

Many bills are not reported out by committees and "die in committee." Special rules of the House apply when the committee does not desire to report out a bill for consideration by the entire House.

Second Reading

When a bill is reported out of committee, it is placed on the second reading calendar and is read again. The following legislative day, the bill is automatically on third reading unless other action has been taken.

Third Reading

The Clerk is required to read the entire bill section by section when it is on the Order of Business, "Third Reading of Bills." It is normal procedure, however, for the members to dispense with this reading at length.

It is at third reading that the bill is ready for debate and the final vote on passage of the bill is taken. Each bill is sponsored by a member who is known as the "floor sponsor" and who opens and closes debate in favor of passage of the bill. After debate has closed, House members vote on the electronic voting machine. Each member present can cast either an "aye" or "nay" vote. A bill is passed by a majority of those present.

If a bill fails to pass, it is filed by the Chief Clerk. If the bill is passed, it is transmitted to the Senate where it goes through a similar process.

Senate Action on House Bills

After the final action by the Senate on a House bill, it is returned to the House with a message explaining the Senate's action. The message is read to the House. If the bill passed the Senate without amendment, it is enrolled by the House Judiciary, Rules and Administration Committee, signed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate and transmitted to the Governor for his action.

Committee of the Whole

When a printed bill is to be amended, it is referred to the Committee of the Whole for amendment. At the proper Order of Business, the House resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole House and the entire membership sits as one committee to consider changes to both House and Senate bills.

When a House bill has been amended by the Committee of the Whole, and the amendment(s) accepted by the House, it is referred to the engrossing committee. Amendments are inserted into the bill and the engrossed bill is then placed back on the calendar to be considered as a new bill.

Governor's Action

After receiving a bill passed by both the House and Senate, the Governor may:

1. Approve the bill by signing it within five days after its receipt (except Sundays), or within ten days after the Legislature adjourns at the end of the session ("sine die").
2. Allow the bill to become law without his approval by not signing it within the five days allowed.
3. Disapprove (veto) the bill within five days and return it to the house of origin giving his reason for disapproval, or within ten days after the Legislature adjourns "sine die."

A bill may become law over the Governor's veto if both houses vote to override the veto by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present in each house.

When a bill is approved by the Governor or becomes law without his approval or over his veto, it is transmitted to the Secretary of State for assignment of a chapter number in the Idaho Session Laws. Most bills become law on July 1, except in the case of a bill containing an emergency clause or other specific date of enactment. The final step is the addition of new laws to the Idaho Code, which contains all Idaho law.

Information Provided By The Idaho Legislative Webpage