

How A Bill Becomes A Law

The job of the Senate is to work with the Assembly and the Governor to enact, amend or repeal statutes which make up the body of laws by which we are governed. This involves drafting, discussing and approving bills and resolutions. The text shows the process in a simplified progression from "Idea" to "Law." At any step in the process, citizens can make their views known to NY State Senators through [this platform](#).

Step 1: Someone has a new policy idea

The legislative process begins with a new policy idea. Senators often come up with those ideas, however they come from many other places such as a senator's constituents, an organization calling for a new law, or a State official. Regardless of the source, this idea serves as the starting point for any new bill or law.

Step 2: Idea is drafted into a Bill

Once an idea for a new law has been selected, it must be drafted as a bill before it can be considered by the Senate. A bill is a set of instructions for changing the language of the laws of New York. Bill drafting requires a specialized legal training, and it is usually carried out by the staff of New York State's Legislative Bill Drafting Commission. Sometimes, an interest group may have its own attorneys draft a bill, and lawyers working in state agencies and the executive branch often submit their ideas for legislation in bill form.

Step 3: Bill undergoes committee process

Introduction

The first step in the committee process is to introduce a bill into a committee. Bills are generally only introduced only by legislators or by standing committees of the Senate and Assembly. The only exception is the Executive Budget, which is submitted directly by the Governor.

On introduction in the Senate, a bill goes to the Introduction and Revision Office, given a number, and sent to the appropriate standing committee.

Committee Action

Members of Standing Committees evaluate bills and decide whether to "report" them (send them) to the Senate floor for a final decision by the full membership. A committee agenda is issued each week listing the bills and issues each Senate committee will handle the following week.

Committees often hold public hearings on bills to gather the widest possible range of opinion. Citizens can share their opinion on a proposed bill with their Senate representative for relay to the committee members. The committee system acts as a funnel through which the large number of bills introduced each session must pass before they can be considered. The system also acts as a sieve to sift out undesirable or unworkable ideas.

After consideration, the committee may report the bill to the full Senate for consideration, it may amend the bill, or it may reject it.

Step 4: Senate and Assembly Pass Bill

After explanation, discussion or debate, a vote is taken. If a majority of the Senators approves, the bill is sent to the Assembly where it is referred to a committee for discussion. If approved in committee, it goes to the full membership for a vote.

If the bill is approved in the Assembly without amendment, it is delivered to the Governor. However, if it is changed, it is returned to the Senate and updated to a new version eligible for action. The reverse procedure is followed if the Assembly first passes a bill identical to a Senate measure or if the Senate amends an Assembly bill.

Step 5: Bill is signed by Governor

While the Legislature is in session, the Governor has 10 days (not counting Sundays) to sign or veto bills passed by both houses. Signed bills become law; vetoed bills do not. However, the Governor's failure to sign or veto a bill within the 10-day period means that it becomes law automatically. Vetoed bills are returned to the house that first passed them, together with a statement of the reason for their disapproval. A vetoed bill can become law if two-thirds of the members of each house vote to override the Governor's veto.

If a bill is sent to the Governor when the Legislature is out of session, the rules are a bit different. At such times, the Governor has 30 days in which to make a decision, and failure to act ("pocket veto") has the same effect as a veto.