

# HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

## Congress



### Bill Introduction

**House**

A bill is introduced in the House or the Senate, given a number (e.g., S.12, HR 3737), and referred to the appropriate committee(s) which have jurisdiction over the issue. For example, a bill regarding children's health may be referred to the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee of the Senate.

**Senate**

**House Sub-  
committee Action**

Often, the bill will be referred to a subcommittee. For example, a children's health bill pertaining to Medicaid may be referred to the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health. Revisions are made to the bill. The subcommittee holds hearings and a "mark-up" at which the bill is considered. During a mark-up, the subcommittee or committees goes through the bill and makes changes. If the subcommittee approves the bill, the bill moves to the full committee.

**Senate Sub-  
committee Action**

**House Committee  
Action**

The full committee can hold hearings and make further revisions at a "mark-up." If the full committee approves the bill, it is "reported" to the full House. "Reporting" a bill lets the respective chamber know that the bill is ready for action on the House or Senate floor. If the committee takes no action on the bill, the bill "dies."

**Senate Committee  
Action**

**House Rules  
Committee Action**

House bills must be considered by the Rules Committee, which is responsible for scheduling action and debates on the pending bill as well as determining the parameters of the debate. In the Senate, the rules governing debate are less restrictive.

**Senate Leaders  
usually schedule  
Senate floor action of  
the pending bill**

**House Floor  
Action**

The bill is debated on the House/Senate floor and can be amended from its original form. The full House/Senate votes on the bill, and, if it passes, it proceeds to the other Chamber to be considered. If the bill has already passed the other chamber, both versions of the bill go to a Conference Committee to be "reconciled."

**Senate Floor  
Action**

**Conference  
Committee Action**

The Senate and the House versions of the legislation are discussed and debated and a compromise is worked out. The compromise version then goes back to the House and Senate where each chamber must approve the compromise. The compromise version of the bill cannot be amended on either the House or Senate floor. Once the bill has been approved by both chambers in identical form, the bill goes to the President for consideration.

## President



**Bill Signed into  
Public Law**

**OR**

**Bill Vetoed**

The President may sign the bill into a law. Conversely, the President may veto the bill. If the President vetoes the bill, Congress can override the veto with a two-thirds majority vote in both the House and the Senate.