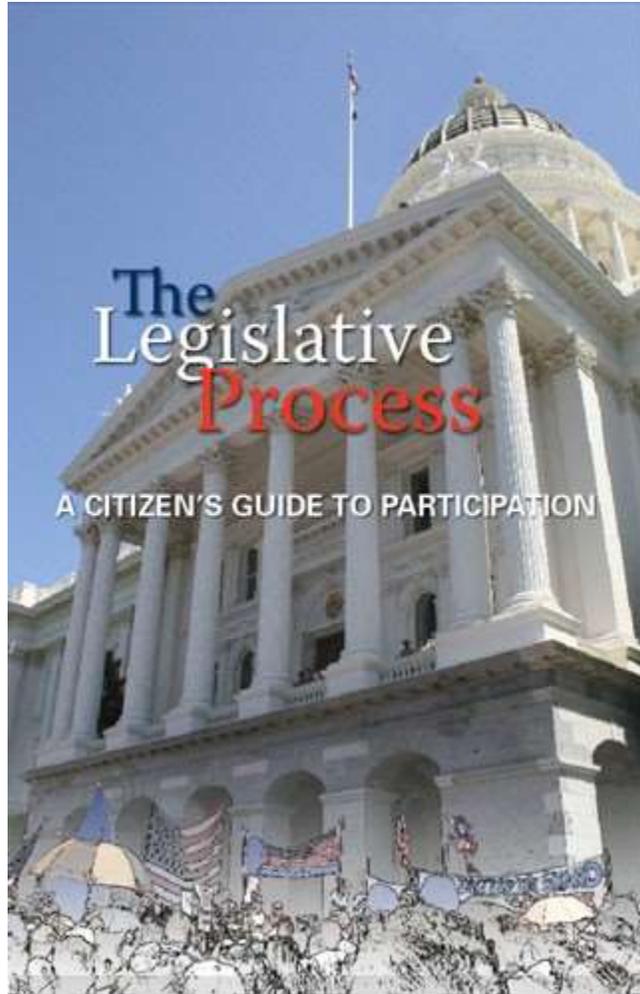


Legislative Process



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Step 1: How Your Idea Becomes A Bill

All legislation starts off as an idea. These ideas can come from anybody and the process begins when either an individual or group persuades a Member of the Legislature to author a bill. The Member then sends the idea and the language for the bill to the Legislative Counsel's Office, where it is drafted into the actual bill. The drafted bill is returned to the legislator for his or her review. Persons or groups that originated the idea for the bill may also review it to ensure that the provisions they desire are in the bill in the correct form. If the author is a Senator, the bill is introduced at the Senate Desk; if an Assemblymember, at the Assembly Desk, where it is assigned a number and read for the first time.

Step 2: What To Do When Your Bill Goes To Policy Committee

The bill then goes to the Senate or Assembly Rules Committee, where it is assigned to a policy committee. You can find out where your bill is assigned by calling the author. Since bills are not heard in policy committee until 30 days after they have been introduced and printed, there is plenty of time to investigate a bill or contact your legislator to communicate your position on the bill.



Each bill must appear in the [Daily File](#) for four days prior to being heard in a committee. The Daily File is the agenda of the day's business, together with public notice of bills set for committee hearings. By checking the File, you can keep track of bills that are being scheduled for committee. If you live out of town and plan to testify at the hearing, it is a good idea to call

the author or your legislator to make sure that the bill is going to be heard on that date. Sometimes bills are taken off the agenda at the last moment.

At this point, the role of the District Office should be emphasized. District Office staff are there to serve the needs of constituents. They can be extremely helpful in making contacts and getting information from Sacramento.

It is a good idea to schedule a meeting with your legislator while he or she is in the district. Communicate your concerns regarding legislation. Indicate that you want to work with the Member's office on a particular issue.

Most bills generate support and opposition from a variety of groups. Find out who these groups or individuals are by calling the author's office where lists of the letters and phone calls received on each bill are kept. A good strategy is to align yourself with the groups that hold your position and work together to talk to the members of the committee BEFORE the bill is heard. Keep your letters and discussions with the legislators short and to the point.



When testifying before the committee, first state your name and the organization that you represent or indicate that you are a concerned citizen and state where you live. The Members of the committee will be interested to hear what you have to say and usually do not grill individual citizens who testify in the same way that they do lobbyists. Keep your testimony short and to the point.

Step 3: What If Your Bill Goes To A Fiscal Committee?

If the bill has a fiscal impact or a state cost, it will be heard in either the Senate or Assembly Appropriations Committee. At this point, you should inform the Members of the committee why you support or oppose the bill based on a fiscal argument. The finance committees are concerned about fiscal impact and not policy considerations.

Try to see the staff analysis that has been done on the bill by the policy committee, the Department of Finance, and/or the Legislative Analyst. Members of the fiscal committees read these analyses before they vote. These analyses are available on the Internet.

If you believe that the numbers or the fiscal impact of the bill are not correct as reported in these analyses, you should prepare your written comments before the committee meets. Your written

material should be available to pass out to the committee Members at the hearing where you present your testimony.

After the bill passes the fiscal committee, it is read for the second time on the Floor.

Step 4: After Your Bill Passes The House Of Origin And Goes To The Second



House

Third Reading is the last stage that a bill goes through in the house of origin before it passes to the second house to go through the committee process all over again. On Third Reading, the author presents the bill for passage by the entire house. Most bills require a majority vote (it must pass by 21 votes in the Senate and 41 votes in the Assembly), while urgency measures and appropriation bills require a two-thirds vote (27 in the Senate, 54 in the Assembly).

At any time during the legislative process the bill may be amended, either in committee or on the Floor. After the amendments have been submitted to the author, the bill goes to another printing to reflect the changes that have been made. The Senate or Assembly History records the dates when a bill has been amended. Amendments can be substantial or technical and may affect your position on the bill.

Amendments should be followed very carefully. Contact with the District Office can be helpful in keeping track of current versions of a bill. If you subscribe to the bill, these amendments will automatically be sent to you. If you change your position on a bill due to a favorable or unfavorable amendment, you should inform the author and your legislator.

If a Senate bill is amended by the Assembly, or vice versa, and the house of origin refuses to concur in those amendments, the bill will go to a conference committee. If the house of origin does concur, the bill goes to the Governor.

Members of the conference committee are appointed by the Rules Committees; three members from the Senate and three from the Assembly meet to negotiate out the differences. If they agree on a single version, it goes back to both Floors for approval.

Communicate to your legislator or the author which amendments you prefer and why. The conference committee meetings, particularly at the end of the two-year legislative session, are scheduled quickly and can be easily missed. You must stay in close contact with the author's staff to stay on top of fast-breaking developments. It is also important to know who will be serving on the conference committee so you can inform them of your position.

Step 5: You Can Still Act After Your Bill Goes To The Governor



The Governor has 12 days to sign, approve without signing, or veto a bill. A letter or phone call to the Governor's Office is appropriate to state your position on the bill.

If the bill is signed or approved without a signature, it goes to the Secretary of State to be chaptered. If the Governor vetoes the bill, a two-thirds vote in each house is needed to override the veto. The Governor's Office releases veto messages which explain the veto; these messages are available from the Governor's Office and on the Internet.

A wealth of legislative information is now available on the Internet. You can get bills, amendments, staff analyses, committee agendas, and other legislative information, plus a simple way to track legislation.

Information to Help You Follow the Process

The Lawmaking Process:

To be enacted into law, a measure must be approved by the appropriate policy and fiscal committees in both the 40-member Senate and 80-member Assembly, and receive enough votes from the entire membership of both houses to pass. Then it is sent to the Governor who may veto the bill or sign it into law.

A bill might take a year or more to move through this process. During that time, there is ample opportunity for citizens to express their opinions and concerns and to influence legislation.

The following information, available via the Internet, will help you follow the process:

[Senate Daily File](#): Tells you what bills are scheduled to be heard in Senate committee or on the Senate Floor on that day.

[Legislative Calendar](#): Gives you the key dates and legislative deadlines for the current two year legislative session; the last day to introduce bills, when bills must move out of committee, the last day for the Governor to sign or veto bills, etc.

[Description of the Legislative Process](#): An overview of the processes involved in a bill becoming law and the various documents that result from that process.

[Glossary of legislative terms](#)

[Senate Rules](#): The procedural rules that govern the Senate

[Assembly Rules](#): The procedural rules that govern the Assembly

[Joint Rules](#): The procedural rules that govern the legislative process.

[Real Audio](#): You can now listen to live Senate hearings, Floor Sessions, and Press Conferences over the Internet.

[Television Schedule](#): Since the Senate televises all the Senate Floor Sessions and most committee hearings, you may be able to watch Senate proceedings on your local cable station. Information about which cable operators carry the legislative programming, which events are scheduled to be televised, where tapes are archived, and how to order dubs is accessible via the Internet.

Legislation: A tremendous amount of information about legislation is now accessible to the public via Internet. You can find the following [information about each bill](#).

Bill Text: Complete text of bills with annotations to identify material added/removed due to amendments

Bill History: Chronological listing of legislative activity for each bill (where the bill was heard, if amended, approved, etc.)

Bill Status: Current location of a bill and pending action

Bill Analyses: Staff reports describing the history and impact of the legislation and arguments of the groups supporting and opposing the bill

Votes: Record of votes in committee and on the floor

Veto: Text of Governor's veto message

[Bill Tracking:](#) You can "subscribe" to a bill.

[Bill Searching:](#) If you don't know the bill number of the legislation you are interested in, you can search by key word or code section number. The computer will return a list of all bills that contain the key word you specify. For example, if you specified "gun", you would get a list of all current bills that contain "gun" in the text.

[Chaptered Bills \(Statutes\):](#) After legislation has been signed into law and chaptered, it is referred to as a statute. You can get the text of a chaptered bill via Internet.

[California Codes:](#) You can get the text of the California Codes (The laws of California are organized by subject matter into 29 codes; i.e. the Civil Code, the Insurance Code, etc.) over the Internet.

[California Constitution:](#) You can also get the text of the California Constitution.

[Issue Briefs and Reports:](#) The Senate Office of Research (SOR) produces bipartisan reports, analyses, and issue briefs on issues of concern to Californians and the Legislature. You can also subscribe to SOR reports by sending an email message.

Senators

Information about each of the forty State Senators is available to the public over the Internet.

[Who is your Senator?](#) Not sure who represents you in the Senate? You can easily find out by entering your address.

[Senator Profiles](#) If you already know the name of your Senator, you can find a profile of pertinent information about him/her: occupation, party affiliation, district number, committee memberships, Capitol and District Office addresses and phone numbers, legislation he/she is authoring, etc.

[Senator Publications](#): Some Senators also post press releases, policy positions, legislative updates, etc. on the Internet. You can view these documents on-line or you can subscribe to a Senator's information by topic. Every time that Senator posts a press release, for example, it will automatically be sent to you as email.

[Senator Email Addresses](#): Some Senators have established e-mail addresses. All Senator email addresses follow the same format as shown in this example: senator.lastname@sen.ca.gov

Committees

Policy committee hearings are the forums for public input, the best place for citizens to make their feelings known about legislation. Legislation is heard in Standing Committees which meet on a regular basis throughout the year. Many standing committees have Subcommittees that work on particular issues. Select Committees and Special Committees study issues and problems in order to develop longer range solutions. Joint Committees have membership from both houses and consider issues of joint concern.

[List of Committees](#): Via the Internet, you can get a list of all Senate and Assembly committees, plus for each committee you can get the membership, the chair and vice chair, the committee's policy jurisdiction, meeting schedule, the committee staff, and the committee office phone number and address.

[Committee Publications](#): Some committees may also make committee agendas, reports, or transcripts available on the Internet. You can view these documents on-line or you can subscribe to them.

Glossary Of Terms

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

Amendment:

Formal proposal to change the language of a bill after it has been introduced.

Appropriation:

The amount of money set aside for a specific purpose and designated from a specific source, such as the General Fund, Environmental License Plate Fund, etc.

Approved by the Governor:

Signature of the Governor on a bill passed by the Legislature.

Assembly:

The lower house of the California Legislature, consisting of 80 Members, elected from districts apportioned on the basis of population, who serve two-year terms.

Bill:

A proposed law introduced in the Assembly or Senate and identified with a number.

Bill Analysis:

A document that must be prepared by committee staff prior to hearing the bill in committee. It explains how a bill would change current law and sometimes mentions support and opposition from major interest groups.

Chamber:

The Assembly or Senate chamber where Floor Sessions are held.

Chapter:

After a bill has been signed by the Governor, the Secretary of State assigns the bill a Chapter number, such as Chapter 1235, Statutes of 1993, which is subsequently used to refer to the measure rather than the bill number.

Coauthor:

Any Member of either house, with the agreement of the author of a bill, may add his or her name on that Member's bill as coauthor, usually indicating support for the proposal.

Codes:

Bound volumes of law organized by subject matter. The code to be changed by a bill is referred to at the top of the bill.

Concurrence:

One house approving a bill as amended in the other house. If the author is unwilling to move the bill as amended by the other house, the author requests nonconcurrence in the bill and asks for the information of a conference committee.

Concurrent Resolution:

A measure introduced in one house which, if approved, must be sent to the other house for approval. The Governor's signature is not required. These measures usually involve the business of the Legislature.

Conference Committee:

Usually composed of three legislators (two from the majority party; one from the minority party) from each house who meet in public session to forge one version of similar Senate and Assembly bills. The final conference committee version must be approved by both the Assembly and Senate. Assembly conferences are chosen by the Speaker; Senate conferences are chosen by the Senate Rules Committee.

Consent Calendar:

A group of noncontroversial bills passed by a committee or the full Assembly or Senate on one vote.

Constituent:

Citizen residing within the district of a legislator.

Constitutional Amendment:

A resolution affecting the Constitution, adopted by the Legislature or presented by initiative, requiring an affirmative vote of the electorate to become effective.

Daily File:

Publication produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively for each day those houses are in session. The publication provides information about bills to be considered at upcoming committee hearings and bills eligible for consideration during the next scheduled Floor Session. Pursuant to Jt. Rule 62(a), any bill to be heard in committee must be noticed in the Daily File for four days, including weekend days. The Daily File also contains useful information about committee assignments and the legislative calendar.

Daily History:

Produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively the day after each house has met. The History lists specific actions taken on legislation. Any measure acted upon in that house the previous day is listed in numerical order.

Daily Journal:

Produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively the day after a Floor Session. Contains roll call votes on bills heard in policy committees and bills considered on the Floor and other official action taken by the body. Any official messages from the Governor are also included. A Member may seek approval to publish a letter in the Journal on a specific legislative matter.

Do Pass:

The affirmative recommendation made by a committee in sending a bill to the Floor for final vote; do pass as amended - passage recommended, providing certain changes are made.

Enacting Clause:

By statutory provision, each proposed law must be preceded by the phrase, "The People of the State of California do enact as follows".

Enrolled Bill:

Whenever a bill passes both houses of the Legislature, it is ordered enrolled. In enrollment, the bill is again proofread for accuracy and then delivered to the Governor. The enrolled bill contains the complete text of the bill, with the dates of passage, certified by the Secretary of State and the Chief Clerk of the Assembly.

Extraordinary Session:

A special legislative session called by the Governor to address only those issues specified in the proclamation. Measures introduced in these sessions are numbered chronologically with a lower case "x" after the number (i.e., 28x); they take effect immediately upon being signed by the Governor.

First Reading:

Each bill introduced must be read three times before the final passage. The first reading of a bill occurs when the measure is introduced.

Fiscal Committee:

The Appropriations Committees in both houses to which all fiscal bills are referred if they are approved by policy committees. If the fiscal committee approves a bill, it then moves to the Floor.

Floor:

The Assembly or Senate chambers.

Hearing:

A committee meeting convened for the purpose of gathering information on a specific subject or considering specific legislative measures.

Inactive File:

The portion of the Daily File containing legislation that is ready for Floor consideration, but, for a variety of reasons, is dead or dormant. An author may move a bill to the inactive file and subsequently move it off the inactive file at a later date. During the final weeks of the legislative session, measures may be moved there by the leadership as a method of encouraging authors to take up their bills promptly.

Initiative:

A method of legislating that requires a vote of the people instead of a vote of the Legislature for a measure to become law.

To qualify for a statewide ballot, statutory initiatives must receive 384,974 signatures and constitutional amendment initiatives must receive 615,958 signatures.

Interim:

The period of time between the end of the legislative year and the beginning of the next legislative year. The legislative year ends on August 31 in even-numbered years and September 15 in odd-numbered years.

Item Veto:

The Governor's refusal to approve a portion or item of a bill; however, the remainder of the bill is approved.

Joint Resolution:

Expresses an opinion about an issue pertaining to the federal government; forwarded to Congress for its information. Requires the approval of both the Assembly and Senate but does not require the signature of the Governor to take effect.

Law:

Rule of conduct determined by the people through their elected representatives, or by direct vote.

Legislative Counsel's Digest:

The digest is a brief summary of the changes the proposed bill would make to current law. The digest is found on the front of each printed bill.

On File:

A bill on the Second or Third Reading file of the Assembly or Senate Daily File.

Policy Committee:

Each house of the Legislature has a number of committees referred to as "policy" committees. As bills are introduced in each house, the Rules Committee assigns each to a policy committee. The policy committee sets up public hearings on the bills, conducts hearings and following such testimony, votes on whether or not to recommend passage of the bill to the Floor of the respective house. Other actions a policy committee may take include amending a bill and re-referring it to the same or another committee for additional hearings.

President of the Senate:

The State Constitution designates the Lieutenant Governor as President of the Senate, allowing him to preside over the Senate and cast a vote only in the event of a 20-20 tie. The Lt. Governor's role is largely ceremonial because he has not cast a tie-breaking vote since 1975 and, in practice, does not preside over the Senate.

Reading:

Presentation of a bill before either house by the reading of the title thereof; a stage in the enactment of a measure. A bill, until passed, is either in process of First, Second or Third reading, no matter how many times it has actually been read.

Resolution:

An opinion expressed by one or both houses which does not have the force of law. Concurrent resolutions are voted on by both houses but do not require the Governor's signature; joint resolutions are voted on by both houses.

Roll Call:

A vote of a committee or the full Assembly or Senate. Committee roll calls are conducted by the committee secretary who calls each Member's name in alphabetical order, with the Chair's name last. Assembly roll calls are conducted electronically with each Member pushing a button from his/her assigned seat. Senate roll calls are conducted by the Reading Clerk who reads each Senator's name in alphabetical order.

Second Reading:

Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. Second Reading occurs after a bill has been reported from committee.

Section:

Portion of the codes, cited in each bill, which proposes to amend, create, or replace same.

Senate:

The upper house of the California Legislature, consisting of 40 Members elected from districts apportioned on the basis of population, one-half of whom are elected or re-elected every two years for four-year terms.

Session:

Period during which the Legislature meets: Regular - the biennial session at which all classes of legislation may be considered; Extraordinary - special session called by and limited to matters specified by the Governor; Daily - each day's meeting; Joint - meeting of the two houses together.

Speaker:

Highest ranking Member of the Assembly; elected by all Assemblymembers at the beginning of each two-year legislative session.

Statutes:

Compilation of all enacted bills, chaptered by the Secretary of State in the order in which they became law, and prepared in book form by the State Printer.

Third Reading:

Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. Third Reading occurs when the measure is about to be taken up on the Floor of either house for final passage.

Third Reading Analysis:

A summary of a measure ready for floor consideration. Contains most recent amendments and information regarding how Members voted on the measure when it was heard in committees. Senate floor analyses also list support or opposition information from interest groups and government agencies.

Title:

A brief italicized paragraph, identifying the subject matter and preceding the contents of a measure.

Unfinished Business:

That portion of the Daily File that contains measures awaiting Senate or Assembly concurrence in amendments taken in the other house. Also contains measures vetoed by the Governor for a 60-day period after the veto. The house where the vetoed bill originated has 60 days to attempt to override.

Urgency Clause:

A bill which contains an urgency clause takes effect upon the Governor's signature. A vote on the urgency clause must precede a vote on the bill and requires a 2/3 vote for passage.

Veto:

The Governor's refusal to approve a measure sent to him by the Legislature.

Vote:

There are two categories of votes: majority and two-thirds.

- **Majority Vote:** A vote of more than half of the legislative body considering a measure. The full Assembly requires a majority vote of 41 and the full Senate requires 21, based on their memberships of 80 and 40 respectively.
- **Two-Thirds (2/3):** A vote of at least 2/3 of the legislative body considering a measure. The full Assembly requires a 2/3 vote of 54 and the full Senate requires 27, based on their memberships of 80 and 40 respectively.