

How a Bill Become a Law in New York State

Start Here: 1. The Idea **P**

The idea for a bill can come from several sources: legislators and their staff, the Governor and his staff or departments (program bills), individuals, lobbyists and interest groups, or it can be a bill from a previous session that did not become a law.

8. Rules Committees

The Majority Leader of the Senate is the chair of the Senate Rules Committee and the Assembly Speaker chairs the Assembly Rules Committee. Therefore, these committees play a significant role in the flow of legislation. They are especially influential near the end of a legislative session when all committees report bills to the Rules Committees.

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9. Floor Vote

A bill that is reported out of its assigned committee may be put to a floor vote before the entire house after it has "aged" on the printed calendar for at least three legislative days. If a bill passes the floor vote in the other house where it has also been scrutinized in committee(s), then it will be sent to the Governor. Failure to pass a floor vote in either house means the bill will not go to the Governor. Prior to a floor vote a bill may be debated before the entire house. The public can observe floor debates from the gallery overlooking each chamber. Floor calendars and voting records can be accessed on LRS.

2. Sponsorship **P**

A bill must have a sponsor in order to be introduced. Bills can be introduced by Legislators or standing committees, with the exception of the Executive Budget, which is introduced by the Governor. When the idea for a bill originates outside of these parties, then a sponsor must be found. For example, a lobbyist with an idea for a bill must circulate it among legislators in order to find a sponsor.

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7. Assembly Ways & Means and Senate Finance

Any bill that requires an expenditure of State funds must go to the Assembly Ways and Means Committee or the Senate Finance Committee.

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P 10. The Governor **P**

When a bill passes both houses, it is delivered to the Governor. The Governor may approve of a bill and sign it, or he may disapprove and veto the bill. The Governor's approval and veto messages can be accessed on LRS.

3. Bill Drafting **P**

The Legislative sponsor submits the concept for a bill to the Legislative Bill Drafting Commission (LBDC). The Legal Services department drafts the bill, making sure that it is in the proper form and that the content reflects the sponsors' intentions. LBDC assigns a number for internal tracking purposes and returns the bill draft to the sponsor. The sponsor checks the language of the draft and returns it to LBDC for changes, if necessary. The prime sponsor may circulate the bill draft among colleagues in order to find additional sponsors.

6. Revision **Ü**

As a bill makes its way through one or more committees, committees or sponsors may want changes. When a bill changes, it is called an amendment. Each time a bill is amended, it usually returns briefly to LBDC where it is proofread and the appropriate form and content maintained. There is no limit on the number of times a bill can be amended. Amendments are indicated by a letter after the bill number S180-A, for example, indicates the first amendment to Senate Bill 180; A180-D would be the fourth amendment and the fifth version of the Assembly bill. If a bill makes it through all of the appropriate committees, then it is "reported out" to the floor of the house and is placed on the Daily Calendar along with other bills which have come through the committee process. If a committee does not report out a bill to the floor, then it is said to have "died" in committee.

11. Veto **P**

If the Governor vetoes a bill, he stops it from becoming a law. A Governor's veto can be overridden by a two-thirds majority vote in each house. Often, a bill that was vetoed or otherwise failed to become a law will be reintroduced in a subsequent session.

4. Introduction

The bill draft is then introduced, assigned a bill number and printed. Once a bill has been introduced, LBDC makes information about the bill – bill text, summary, sponsors' memoranda, etc – available on the Legislative Retrieval System (LRS). The Journal Clerk of each house makes hard copies of bills available to anyone who wants them at their respective document rooms on the third floor of the Capital.

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5. Committee Actions

Once a bill is introduced, house leadership refers it to the appropriate committees for review, discussion, revision and ultimately, approval or disapproval. The Legislators who are members of the standing committees in each house evaluate the ramifications of a bill and decide whether it should be approved, with or without revisions. Committee agendas which list the bills which will be considered and voted on in the meeting of the committee can be accessed in LRS.

12. A Bill Becomes a Law

A bill becomes a law when the Governor signs it. As bills become laws, they are assigned chapter numbers for the particular session in which they were passed (such as, Chapter 17 of the Laws of 1995), known as "session chapters." "Session chapters" should not be confused with "chapters" as that term applies to Consolidated Law. Most New York State Laws are organized, or consolidated, into subject areas called chapters such as Labor and Insurance. Currently, there are approximately 90 chapters of Consolidated Law in New York State. Laws that do not fit within any of the Consolidated Law chapters, such as the Local Emergency Housing Rent Control Act, Chapter 21 of 1962, are called Unconsolidated Laws.