

How does a bill become a law?

The making of a law is a very long, step-by-step process. This is a *good* thing because the government needs to make sure the law is necessary and fair. Before a law is made, an idea must be proposed and drafted into a bill. Bills can start in either the House of Representatives or the Senate. In the following example, the bill will start in the House of Representatives.



(Side note: As mentioned above, establishing a new law is timely and complicated. The following outline provided below is simply a condensed version of the entire law-making process.)

For State Governments:

Step 1: First, ideas over an area of concern may be proposed by interest groups, elected officials, or proactive citizens. Then, an elected official forms this idea into a written **bill**, while other legislators may “co-sponsor” the bill. The first draft of the bill is officially introduced during a legislative session and is given its own title and number.

Step 2: The bill is picked up by a committee that specializes on the topic of that bill. The committee studies and analyzes the bill. They may hear from other elected officials, experts, interest groups, or concerned citizens who may offer their insight and recommendations. The committee can then choose to make amendments (changes) to the bill as they feel necessary.

Step 3: If the committee approves the bill, it is referred to the overall house. This step is called the Floor. The representatives debate over the bill and then take a final vote. If the bill passes the House of Representatives, it is taken to the Senate, where a similar process is enacted.

Step 4: If any amendments were made on the bill by the Senate, it is referred back to the House of Representatives for their approval. If the House rejects the amendments, a conference committee comprised of members of both the House and the Senate come together to reconcile their difference. If the conference committee finds compromise, the final version of the bill is taken through the House of Representatives and then the Senate for a final vote.

Step 5: If the final version of the bill is passed by both of the House and the Senate, it becomes an “**act**” and is taken to the Governor.

Step 6: The Governor has the power to either sign the Act into Law, or veto the Act. If the Governor chooses to veto the Act, it is sent back to the house of origin and a three-fifths vote of the House and Senate is required to override the veto. If the Governor signs the Act, it officially becomes a **law**.

(The **federal** law-making process, although not completely identical, is very similar. Instead of State Senators and Representatives making laws, **Federal U.S. Senators and Representatives** are involved. Another major difference is that instead of the Governor, the **President** has the power to sign or veto the act. However, it is much harder and more complicated for a bill to become a law on the federal level.)