

How a bill becomes a law

Law



Whenever the topic of legislation is discussed on the news or any public affairs program, two words that are often mentioned are bill and law. So how does a bill become a law? A bill is a “ legislative proposal that if passed by both the House and the Senate and approved by the President becomes law (“ Government 101,” 2006, p. 1). ” A bill has an assigned number and is labeled with a sponsor’s name (“ Government 101,” 2006, p. 1). How does a bill become a law? The process starts when a bill is “ referred to the appropriate committee by the Speaker of the House or the presiding officer in the Senate (“ Government 101,” 2006, p. 1). ”

The bill can be assigned to multiple committees, thus dividing the bill into several parts. A time limit will be set on the committees and the bill will be put on the calendar of the assigned committee (“ Government 101,” 2006, p. 1). From there, government agencies will ask about the bill’s merit. The chairman of the committee will then assign the bill to a subcommittee. “ Hearings will be held (“ Government 101,” 2006, p. 1),” so that the said subcommittee will have findings about the bill that they will report to the full committee.

The full committee will then vote on the bill, giving the bill a status of “ ordered to be reported. ” A “ mark-up” session will occur, wherein the committee can add or revise the said bill. “ After the bill is reported, the committee staff prepares a written report explaining why they favor the bill and why they wish to see their amendments, if any, adopted (“ Government 101,” 2006, p. 1). ” “ In the House, most bills go to the Rules committee before reaching the floor. The committee adopts rules that will govern the procedures under which the bill will be considered by the House.

A “closed rule” sets strict time limits on debate and forbids the introduction of amendments. These rules can have a major impact on whether the bill passes (“Government 101,” 2006, p. 1). ” The bill then proceeds to legislation. In the House, the bill will be placed on one of the four calendars of the house, and it is the Speaker of the House and Majority Leader who will decide which bills will reach the floor and when. In the Senate, the bill will be placed in the legislative calendar. The Majority Leader will schedule the legislation, and Senate majority will decide when the bill will be brought to the floor.

Debate then occurs in both the House and the Senate. The House debate is limited by the rules of the Rules Committee. The entire House can debate and amend the bill but cannot pass it (“Government 101,” 2006, p. 1). ” Even the time is limited; the Sponsoring Committee will facilitate the debate and equal allotment of time is distributed among participants. After the debate, the bill will be reported back to the House and will be voted on. A quorum call is required to make sure there are enough members present. In the Senate, however, the debate is unlimited, unless a special case arises.

The bill is then voted on and, if both the House and Senate decide to pass it, it will be sent to the President. If the President signs the bill, it becomes a law. There are obstacles that can prevent a bill from being enacted into law. For instance, during the “mark up session,” the committee can make enough amendments that could require a new bill to be passed; that would mean the disposal of the original bill (“Government 101,” 2006, p. 1). Also, when a bill is placed in the House calendar, The Speaker of the House and Majority Leader can decide that a bill may not reach the floor at all.

After the debate, if neither chamber passes the bill, it is discarded. Lastly, if the President does not sign the bill within ten days that the Congress is in session, the bill will not become a law. The process of turning a bill into a law is a thorough but tedious one. An awareness of how laws are made should make any citizen value legislation more. The lawmakers have a tough job of sorting and processing which of the bills should be laws. Every citizen must be reminded that these laws are very important, and it is equally crucial that we respect and obey them.