

How a Bill Becomes a Law

From “Guide to the Nevada State Legislature”

Initial Steps by the Author

Idea

Ideas for legislation come from elected officials, businesses, lobbyists, and citizens

Drafting

Legislators, legislative committees, the Governor, state agencies, and local governments may request bill drafts. Staff attorneys in the Legislative Counsel Bureau prepare the formal drafts of bills.

Action in the House of Origin

Introduction and First Reading

A bill is submitted by a Senator or Assembly member, numbered and read for the first time, assigned to a committee, and printed. A bill or resolution may be introduced in either the Senate or the Assembly and cosponsors in the other house may be listed on the front of the measure.

Committee

A committee holds a hearing to take testimony and gather information about the bill. A committee may recommend that the house pass a bill as it is written, pass it with amendments, or not pass it. If a committee thinks that a bill requires further committee consideration, it may recommend that the house amend the bill and refer it again to the same committee or to another committee. Finally, a committee may vote to indefinitely postpone consideration of a bill, effectively killing it, or it may take no action at all.

Second Reading Before the Full House

A bill given a “Do Pass” recommendation is read a second time and placed on the general file for debate and vote. A bill which is given an “Amend and Do Pass” recommendations is read a second time, amended and reprinted before being placed on the general file for action.

Floor Debate and Vote by the Full House

A bill is read for a third time and debated. A roll-call vote follows. Passage of most bills and joint resolutions requires 11 votes in the Senate and 22 in the Assembly. The passage of a bill that imposes or increases a tax or fee requires 14 votes in the Senate and 28 votes in the Assembly.

A measure which does not receive at least this number of votes is defeated. Any member voting on the prevailing side may serve notice of reconsideration to request a second vote. If passed, or passed with amendments, the measure is sent to the second house.

Action in the Second House

The method of processing a bill in the second house is identical to that in the first house. If the second house to consider a bill or joint resolution passes it without amendment, it is sent to the Governor. Other types of resolutions are sent to the Secretary of State. If the second house amends a measure, it is returned to the house of origin for consideration of the amendments.

Resolution of Differences (if Necessary)

Consideration of Amendments

The house of origin decides whether to accept the second house's amendments. If it accepts the amendments, the bill goes to the Governor. If the amendments are rejected, the bill is returned to the second house for a decision whether or not to withdraw the proposed changes.

Conference Committee

If the second house does not recede, the bill is referred to a conference committee that includes members of both houses. The conference committee attempts to reconcile the differences and presents its recommendations in the form of a conference report. If both houses accept the report, the bill goes to the Governor. If either house rejects the report, a second (and final) conference committee is appointed. The bill dies if the members of the second conference committee fail to agree.

The Role of the Governor

The Governor must act on a bill within 5 days after he receives it if the Legislature is still in session, or 10 days if the session has ended. He may sign the bill into law, allow it to become law without his signature, or veto it. A vetoed bill returns to the house of origin for a possible vote on overriding the veto. An override requires a two-thirds majority of both houses. If the Governor vetoes a bill after the session ends, it is returned to the next legislative session.