

# How a Bill Becomes a Law

*Abridged version*

# A quick overview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyeJ55o3E10>

# Types of Bills

Private Bills- Deal with individual people or places. These usually involve people's claims against the government or immigration problems.

Public Bills- Deal with general matters. These apply to the entire nation, are often controversial. They can involve things like abortion, healthcare,

# Types of Resolutions

A resolution deals with unusual or temporary matters

Simple resolutions: covers matters that only affect one house of congress. It is only passed by the house it concerns. It doesn't have force of law and is not sent to the President.

Joint resolutions: Passed by both houses, they can correct an error in an earlier law or appropriate money for a special reason. The president's signature give them force of law.

Concurrent resolutions: Covers matters requiring both houses, but which don't need a law. These don't have force of law.

# Why do so few bills become laws?

So few bills become laws because the lawmaking process is very long and complicated. A bill can be killed, delayed, or changed at any point in the process.

Riders- A rider is an addition to a bill that doesn't concern the actual subject of the bill. Some bills are vetoed just because they had a rider the President didn't like.

# Step 1: Proposal and introducing

Ideas for bills can come from nearly anywhere, but only a member of Congress can introduce it to either house of Congress.

In the house, a representative must drop a bill into the hopper near the clerk's desk.

In the Senate, the presiding officer must first recognize the senator who then formally presents the bill

## Step 2: Committee action

In both sides of Congress, new bills are sent to the committees who deal with their subject matter. Committee chairpersons can then send it to a subcommittee.

The committee can recommend that the bill be adopted as it was introduced, make changes, or completely rewrite the bill before sending it back to the house or Senate for further action

Pidgeonholing: when a committee ignores a bill and lets it die.

A committee can also kill a bil vby majority vote.

## Step 3: Committee Hearings

Once a committee decides to act on a bill, the committee will hold a hearing. A hearing is a session in which a committee listens to testimony from people interested in the bill. Hearings can last from a few hours to several months. They serve as an opportunity for Congress to learn more about the bill.

Once the hearing is done the committee meets up again to decide on what changes need to be made to the bill. A majority vote by the committee is needed to make any changes.



## STEP 4: Reporting

Reporting is when the committee sends the bill to the house of reps and Senate for action. Along with the revised bill, the committee sends them a report of all the committee did to the bill, and what the bill is about.

## Step 5: Floor action

The next step is to send the bill to the floor of the house and senate to debate. The pros and cons of the bill are argued and amendments are added as needed. Once the debate is over, Congress members vote on it.

## Step 6: voting

After the floor debate, the bill and any changes that were made are presented to the house. In order to vote, a majority, or "quorum", must be present.

Voice votes: When everyone calls out either "aye" or "no" at the same time. The speaker determines which side had the most votes.

Standing/division votes: When those in favor stand up and are counted, then those opposed do the same.

Recorded vote: members' votes are given electronically

Roll-Call vote: names are called and senators respond "aye" or "no". ONLY IN SENATE

# Step 7: presidential action

Once both houses vote on the bill, it goes to the President. The President can either sign the bill or allow it to become a law without their signature.

**Vetos:** A President can also reject a bill via a veto. This will send the bill back to congress.

**Pocket Veto:** When the President refuses to act on the bill passed on the last few days of a Congressional session, it is called this.

A veto can be overrode by a 2/3rds vote from both houses of Congress.