

How a bill becomes a law

Legislation, called a bill, is filed in the Senate or House Clerk's office, usually by legislators. Citizens in this state can file legislation too; this is called "right of free petition."

- A public hearing is held. Private citizens may testify.
- A bill is assigned to one of 21 committees for study.
- The committee issues an "ought to pass" or "ought not to pass" report. If the report is favorable, an automatic first reading of the bill is published in the House or Senate journal. If the report is not favorable, the bill gets a second chance if a member asks to have the bill substituted for the report, and the bill then follows the same procedure as a favorably reported bill.
- The bill goes to the Senate Ways and Means Committee or the House Ways and Means Committee, which issues a report. The bill is put on the next day's calendar for a second reading, when the bill is open to debate on motions and amendments.
- Then the House or Senate takes a vote, and if it is favorable, the bill goes to the House Committee on Third Readings, or the Senate Committee on Third Readings, which checks to see if it is legal. This committee gives its report in 45 days.
- The bill is read for the third time by the House or Senate and legislators can further debate and amend it. The House or Senate votes on passing the bill for engrossment, that is, printing on special parchment.
- The bill then goes to the other legislative body for three readings, with the same procedure.
- If amendments are added to substantially change the bill, then it returns to the original branch for a vote agreeing to accept the added amendments, called concurrence. If concurrence is rejected, a three-member conference committee works out a compromise and the bill is sent to the two branches for approval.
- The bill is printed on special parchment. The last step is a vote to "enact" by both branches.
- The bill goes to the governor. The governor may sign the bill into law. It is usually effective in 90 days. Laws considered emergencies take effect right away. The governor may hold the bill for 10 days allowing it to become a law without signature. The governor may veto it and return it to the legislature with recommended changes. A two-thirds vote of the legislature overturns a governor's veto. If the legislature has concluded its yearly session and the governor does not sign the bill in 10 days, it dies.
- Bills not passed at the end of the first year of a two-year session carry over into the second year and need not be re-filed.