

MECHANICS OF PASSING A LAW

1. Under present legislative rules--which are always subject to change--the introduction of bills by individual senators and committees is restricted to the first 10 legislative days each year. However, bills may be introduced at the request of the governor at any time. After the 10th day, committees may introduce additional bills provided 30 of the 49 senators agree. Presently, there is no limit on the number of bills that may be introduced or co-introduced by individual senators. However, each committee is restricted to introducing eight bills, with approval of 40 of the 49 senators required to exceed that limit. There is no limit on the number of gubernatorial bills.

2. To be introduced, a bill must be prepared in correct form by the legislative bill drafter, signed by the legislator introducing it, and handed to the Clerk of the Legislature.

3. A bill is read aloud, by title only, when introduced. The Reference Committee (the nine-member Executive Board of the Legislative Council) then refers the bill to a standing committee for public hearing or places it directly on General File.

4. The standing committee to which the bill is referred sets a date for a public hearing on the bill. The date is published at least seven legislative days ahead, in the daily Legislative Journal of proceedings. At the hearing, proponents and opponents are given a chance to be heard.

5. Following the public hearing, the committee votes in executive session either to "indefinitely postpone" (kill) the bill, or advance it to General File (the floor of the Legislature).

6. The bill is next considered by the full Legislature on General File, where it is debated, possibly amended, and then sent to the Committee on Enrollment and Review (E and R) to be checked for spelling, punctuation, correction of errors, etc.

7. The E and R Committee then reports the bill to Select File.

8. On Select File, the bill is again debated and referred back to the E and R Committee for engrossment in form for final passage. The E and R Committee then reports the bill as "correctly engrossed" and it is placed on "Final Reading."

9. The next step is the third or "Final Reading" on the floor of the Legislature. If the required majority votes "Aye" on the electric voting machine, the presiding officer declares the bill passed. There is no debate on Final Reading.

10. After this, the E and R Committee again checks the bill to see that it is correct and it is then reported to the Legislature as "correctly enrolled."

11. Following this, while the Legislature is in session, the presiding officer (the lieutenant governor, or in his/her absence, the speaker), signs the bill and it is sent to the governor for approval or veto.