

# HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW IN MINNESOTA

## 1 THE IDEA

A bill is an idea for a new law or an idea to change an old law. Anyone can suggest an idea for a bill – an individual, consumer group, professional association, government agency or the governor.

## 2 THE WRITING

The Office of the Revisor of Statutes and staff from other legislative offices work with legislators in putting the idea for a new law into proper legal form. The revisor's office is responsible for assuring that the proposal's form complies with the rules of both bodies before the bill is introduced into the House of Representatives and the Senate.

## 3 THE AUTHORS

Each bill must have a legislator to author and introduce it in the Legislature. That legislator's name appears on the bill along with the bill's file number to identify it as it moves through the legislative process. There may be up to 34 co-authors from the House & 4 from the Senate.

## 4 THE INTRODUCTION

The chief House author of the bill introduces it in the House; the chief Senate author introduces it in the Senate. Identical bills introduced in each body are called companion bills. The bill introduction is called the first reading. The presiding officer in each then refers it to an appropriate committee.

## 5 THE COMMITTEES

The bill is discussed in one or more committees depending upon the subject matter. After discussion, committee members recommend action – approval or disapproval – to the full House and full Senate. They each send a report about its action on the bill.

## **6** THE FLOOR

After the full House or Senate accepts the committee report, the bill has its second reading and is placed on the House agenda called the General Register or the Senate agenda called General Orders. After this point, House and Senate procedures differ slightly.

## **THE REGISTER & CALENDAR**

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The General Register serves as a parking lot where bills await action by the full body. Bills chosen to appear on the Calendar for the Day or the Fiscal Calendar are drawn from the General Register. The process varies slightly between house & senate but ultimately, if placed on the calendar, this is where they debate and amend the bills and then vote. If the house and senate pass the same version, it goes straight to the governor.

## **8** THE CONFERENCE

If the House and Senate versions of the bill are different, they go to a conference committee. In the House, the speaker appoints three or five representatives, and in the Senate, the Subcommittee on Committees of the Rules and Administration Committee selects the same number of senators to form the committee. The committee meets to work out differences in the two bills and to reach a compromise.

## **BACK TO THE FLOOR**

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The compromise bill then goes back to the House and the Senate for another vote. If both bodies pass the bill in this form, it is sent to the governor for approval or disapproval. (If one or both bodies reject the report, it goes back to the conference committee for further consideration.) A conference committee report cannot be amended on the House or Senate floor.



## **THE GOVERNOR**

Once the governor has the bill, he or she may: sign it, and the bill becomes law; veto it within three days; or allow it to become law by not signing it. During session, the House and Senate can override a governor's veto. This requires a two-thirds vote in the House (90 votes) and Senate (45 votes). The governor also may line-item veto parts of a money bill, or pocket veto a bill passed during the last three days of the session by not signing it within 14 days after final adjournment.