

How a Bill Becomes Law in California

Initial Steps by Author



Anyone can come up with an idea for a new bill; you don't have to be an elected official. An individual, a group like Farm Bureau or government agencies can sponsor a bill.

Drafting

That idea must be drafted into a formal bill with an accompanying summary in simple terms explaining its purpose.

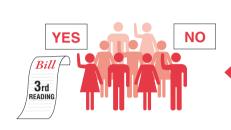
Bill \frown

Intoduction

The bill must formally be introduced by a senator or Assembly member. At this point it receives a number proceeded by either an "SB" or an "AB" to indicate which house it was introduced in, either Senate or Assembly. The bill is then assigned to a committee.

Bill

Action in the First House



Floor Debate and Vote

Legislators debate the bill. Votes are recorded for each legislator. Most bills need a simple majority to pass, but some, such as the budget, require a two-thirds vote to pass.



Second Reading

After passing through committee, the bill is considered by all members of that house and scheduled for floor debate.



Committee

Committee hearings allow different stakeholders to provide testimony in support or opposition of the bill. The bill can pass as drafted, the committee can amend the bill or it can fail in, committee. One bill may move through multiple committees depending on jurisdiction, which is decided by the rules committee.

Action in the Second House



Reading

The bill is read and assigned to a committee.



Committee

Stakeholders have another opportunity to provide comment on the bill. The committee may pass the bill as is, amend it or forward it to another committee.



Second Reading

Once through the committee process, the bill is sent to the floor of the second house for consideration. The bill is scheduled for floor debate.



Floor Debate and Vote

If the bill, as it passes in the second house, is the same version that passed the first house, it gets sent directly to the governor for his action. If the bill was amended in the second house, it gets sent back to the house of origin so it can consider the passage of the amended bill.

Governor





Sign or Veto?

The governor has 12 days to sign a bill, veto it or allow it to become law without his signature. At the end of the legislative session, the governor gets a flurry of bills and has 30 days to take action. A veto can be overridden if two-thirds of the Legislature votes in favor of the bill.





Resolution of Two-House Differences



Concurrence

Rather than going to conference, the house of origin can decide to accept and vote on the second house's amended bill.

Conference

Differences in the bill can be resolved through a conference committee made up of legislators from both houses. The recommended compromise then has to be voted on and passed by both houses.