

How a bill becomes a law

A bill may be introduced in either the House of Representatives or Senate, but the procedure by which a bill becomes a law is much the same, wherever the bill originates. In this example, we'll use the Senate.



There has been an average of around **1,630 bills*** introduced and **1,200 floor amendments*** each year over the past ten years.

1 A bill is introduced in the Senate by a member, or members, of that body. After the bill is filed with the Secretary of the Senate, it is given a number and, unless a majority demands it be read in full, it is read the first time by title only in open session of the Senate. It is then referred to a standing committee of the Senate.

2 The committee studies the bill and often holds public hearings on it. The committee will then meet to consider the information it has gathered. It may approve the bill with or without amendments, draft a substitute bill on the same subject incorporating the desired changes, or take no action.



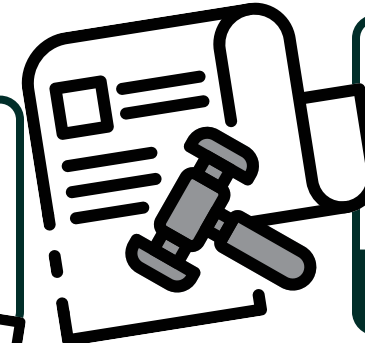
3 The committee is now ready to report back to the Senate. If the majority is in favor of the bill as introduced or with certain amendments, the committee recommends the bill for passage. The committee report is read in open session of the Senate, and the bill is then referred to the Rules Committee. If the bill has a significant fiscal impact, it may be referred to the Ways & Means or Transportation Committee for budget impact. If the bill is referred to a fiscal committee, it repeats steps 2 and 3.

** Includes special sessions.*

This process has to be completed before the fiscal committee's House of Origin **Cut-Off Date**. From here, same process in the opposite chamber.

6 After passing in the Senate, the bill will go through an almost identical procedure in the House. If the bill is passed by the House, but is amended by that body, the Senate must concur in the amendments or ask the House to remove them. If the Senate does not accept the change in the bill and the House insists on the change, a conference committee may be requested to work out the differences.

5 When the bill appears on the calendar for second reading, it is subject to amendment. The bill may be amended or left as is and moved to third reading and final passage. Debate may occur on amendments and final passage of the bill. Depending upon the degree of controversy, debate may last a few minutes to several hours — or even several days.



4 Once the bill reaches the Rules Committee, it can be placed on the second reading calendar for debate before the entire Senate, or take no action.

An average of around **320 bills*** passed each year in the last decade, which is about **20%**.

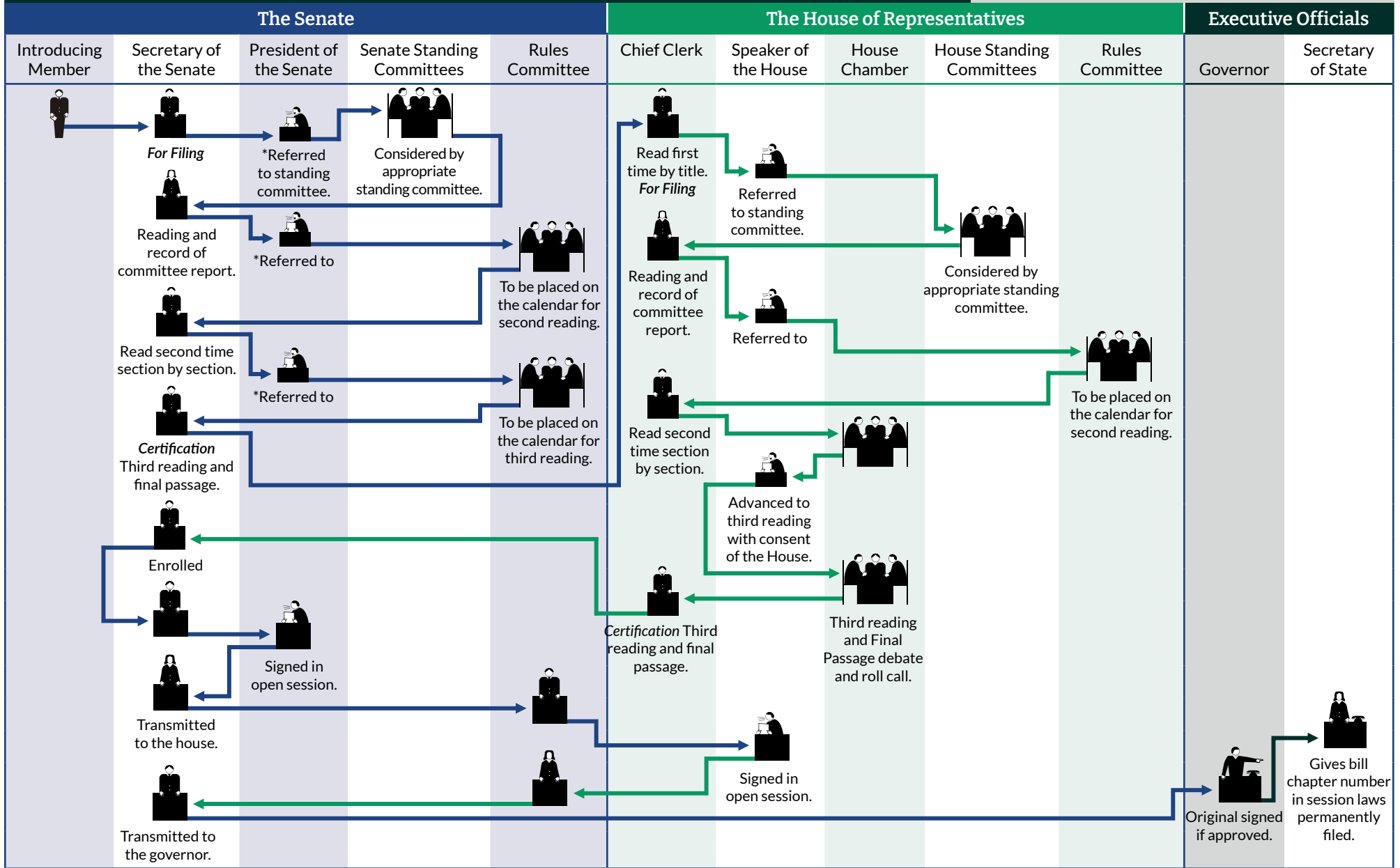
7 If appointed, a conference committee has the power to work from the proposed amendments or to recommend new amendments or a striking amendment, consistent with the subject matter of the original measure. When the conferees reach agreement, they report to their respective chambers. Their report is either adopted or rejected without any changes.

8 If the report is adopted and the bill passed by both chambers, the bill is signed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House in open sessions, and then is sent for the Governor's signature.

9 Within five days, if the Legislature is still in session, or twenty days after its adjournment, the Governor may sign the bill or veto all or any section of it. The Legislature can override the veto by a two-thirds vote of both chambers. If the Governor fails to act on the bill, it becomes law without a signature.



The course of a bill



The above procedure for a non-fiscal bill introduced in the Senate is the simplest possible; neither veto nor amendment has occurred. If such a bill is introduced in the House, the Chief Clerk would perform essentially the same functions as the Secretary of the Senate as indicated above, and the action of the Senate thereon would occur after passage thereof by the House.

* By a vote of the Senate