

# How A Bill Becomes a Law

## MAINE'S PATH OF LEGISLATION



### IDEA DEVELOPED

A legislator decides to sponsor a bill, sometimes at the suggestion of a constituent, interest group, public official or the Governor. The legislator may ask other legislators in either house to join as co-sponsors.



### BILL DRAFTED

At the legislator's direction, the Revisor's Office, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis, and Office of Fiscal and Program Review staff provides research and drafting assistance and prepares the bill in proper technical form.



### BILL INTRODUCED

The legislator gives the bill to the Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate. The bill is numbered, a suggested committee recommendation is made and the bill is printed. The bill is placed on the respective body's calendar.



### COMMITTEE REFERENCE

The bill is referred to one of our Joint Standing or Joint Select committees in the originating branch and then sent to the other body for concurrence.



### COMMITTEE ACTION

When scheduled by the chairs, the committee conducts a public hearing where it accepts testimony supporting and opposing the proposed legislation from any interested party. Notices of public hearings are printed in newspapers with statewide distribution.



### GENERAL ORDER

When the bill is reported to the floor it receives its first reading and any committee amendments are adopted at this time. The committee reports the bill to the originating body as is, with amendment, with a divided report or with a unanimous recommendation of Ought Not to Pass.



### SECOND READING

The next legislative day the bill is given its second reading and floor amendments may be offered. When one House has passed the bill to be engrossed, it is sent to the other body for its consideration. The House has a consent calendar for unanimous Ought to Pass or Ought to Pass as amended bills which takes the place of First and Second readings.



### SECOND HOUSE

The bill goes through a similar process. If the second house amends the bill, it is returned to the first house for a vote on the changes. It may then be sent to a conference committee to work out a compromise agreeable to both houses. A bill receives final legislative approval when it passes both houses in identical form.



### GOVERNOR

After final passage (enactment) the bill is sent to the Governor. The Governor has ten days in which to sign or veto the bill. If the Governor does not sign the bill and the Legislature is still in session, the bill after ten days becomes law as if the Governor signed it. If the Legislature has adjourned for the year the bill does not become law. This is called a "pocket veto." If the Legislature comes back into special session, the Governor on the 4th day must deliver a veto message to the House of origin or the bill becomes law.



### LAW

A bill becomes law 90 days after the end of the legislative session in which it was passed. A bill can become law immediately if the Legislature, by a 2/3 vote of each house, declares that an emergency exists. An emergency law takes effect on the date the Governor signs it unless otherwise specified in its text. If a bill is vetoed, it will become law if the Legislature overrides the veto by a 2/3 vote of those members present and voting of both houses.