

Steps to a Bill Becoming a Law

SS.7.C.3.9 Illustrate the law making process at the local, state, and federal levels.

First Name	Last Name	Period
------------	-----------	--------

From Bill to Law

Every bill starts with an idea. Ideas for bills come from citizens, the president, and special-interest groups. A **special interest group** is a group of people who work together for a common cause.

Only a member of Congress can introduce a bill. When a bill is first read, it is given a title and a number. These show which house proposed the bill and when it was introduced. The first bill in the Senate is labeled S.1. The first bill in the house is labeled H.R.1.

Next, the bill is sent to the correct standing committee. The committee decides if the bill should be passed on to the full House or Senate for a vote.

The Process:	Complete the Process:
From where do ideas for bills come?	
Who introduces a bill?	
Where is a bill sent after it is introduced and labeled?	

The Committee System

In each session, Congress looks at the thousands of bills. It is a huge job. To make it easier, the work is shared between many small groups called committees. Committees do most of the work in Congress.

The committee can take five actions on the bill:

- Pass the bill
- Make changes in the bill and suggest that it be passed
- Replace it with a new bill on the same subject
- Ignore the bill and let it die, also called "pigeonholing"
- Kill the bill by a majority vote

Why is it important for Congress to have committees?	
This is a huge task! In order to accomplish this, what does Congress do?	

From Bill to Law, Continued

If a bill makes it through committee, it will be debated by the full House or Senate. In the full House or Senate, members will argue its pros and cons and amendments will be considered. The House allows amendments only if they are directly related to the subject of the bill. The Senate allows its members to attach **riders**, or completely unrelated amendments, to a bill.

In the House, there is a time limit set for how long a representative can talk about a bill. This limit is necessary because the House has so many members. Senators, however, can speak for as long as they wish. Senators sometimes use this freedom to **filibuster** a bill. Filibuster means to talk a bill to death. Senators can stop a filibuster with cloture. **Cloture** is when three-fifths of the members vote to limit debate to one hour for each speaker.

After debate, it is time to vote. A majority of members must vote in favor of the bill for it to pass.

If a bill passes in one house, it is sent to the other. If a bill is defeated in either house, it dies. If both houses pass a different form of the same bill, a conference committee is formed. In this committee, members of both houses come up with one bill that everyone can agree on.

Most bills “die” in the committee. If the bill makes it through committee, what happens next?	
Senate Only: During the debate, a Senator can filibuster a bill. What does this mean?	
After debate, it is time to vote. How does a bill pass a house?	
If the bill passes one house, where does it go?	
If both houses pass a different form of the same bill, a conference committee is formed. What do they do?	

From Bill to Law, Continued

The approved bill is then sent to the president. The president can do one of three things:

1. Sign the bill into law
2. Veto, or refuse to sign, the bill
3. Ignore the bill

An ignored bill becomes law after ten days if Congress is in session. If Congress has adjourned, the bill dies. This is called a **pocket veto**.

Congress can pass a bill over a president’s veto. To do so, two-thirds of each house must vote to override the veto. This does not happen very often.

Where is the approved bill sent?	
What happens if the president signs the bill?	
What happens if the president doesn’t sign the bill?	
How can a vetoed bill become a law?	