

Democracy For Juniors Badge

How a Bill Becomes a Law

The House of Representatives' most important job is creating laws. A bill becomes a law through these steps. Do you see any examples of checks and balances (where the powers of one branch can be challenged by another branch) in this process?



1. Someone has an idea. This idea can start with anyone, even kids like you! If an elected official likes the idea and wants to make a law, they write a bill.



2. The bill is introduced. Bills are officially introduced in the House of Representatives when they are placed in a special box called “the hopper.”



3. The bill goes to committee. A group of committee members (senators and representatives) meets to work on the bill and revise it, if necessary. Then they take a vote to reject or accept the bill. Depending on the outcome, the bill goes to a subcommittee for additional work or to the House or Senate floor for debate



4. Congress debates and votes. During the debate, members of the House or Senate can suggest changes to the bill. Then they take a vote. If it passes, the bill is sent to the other house of Congress to go through this process again. If both houses receive a majority vote on the same version of the bill, it goes to the president.



5. The president takes action. Now it's the president's turn. They can:

- Approve and pass. The bill is law!
- Veto. The president rejects the bill and sends it back to Congress. Congress can then take a vote. If the bill receives a two-thirds majority vote from the House and Senate, they can override the veto. The bill becomes law.
- Choose no action. The president does nothing. After ten days with no action, if Congress is in session, the bill becomes law.
- Pocket veto. If Congress adjourns—or goes out of session—within ten days after the president receives the bill, the president can choose not to sign it. The bill does not become law.