How A Bill Becomes A Law

1. Introduction / First Reading

- Bills are introduced, given a number, and referred to a committee.
- Referral is based on the bill's subject matter (e.g., sales tax bills go to Senate Finance).

2. Committee Stage

- Within committees, bills are often sent to subcommittees.
- The subcommittee holds a hearing and makes recommendations.
- The bill moves to the full committee, which issues a report with recommendations for the body.

3. Second Reading

- Members can debate or amend the bill.
- A vote must take place to move the bill forward.

Common Legislative Terms

Special Order: moves the bill to the front of the line.
Tabled: bill or amendment did not pass.
Amended: bill was changed.
Adopted: bill passed.

4. Third Reading

- Members can still debate or amend, though this usually requires unanimous consent.
- Another vote is taken to move the bill forward.
- The bill then goes to the second chamber (House or Senate).

5. In the Second Chamber

- The bill must receive three readings in both chambers. Once it passes out of one, it must start over in the other.
- If amended, it returns to the originating chamber for approval.
  - The originating chamber can concur (agree), recede (withdraw its version), or insist (refuse to change).
  - If both sides cannot agree, a conference committee is formed — three members from each chamber.
  - The committee can only address disagreements between the chambers.
  - If both bodies agree on the report, it's adopted.
  - If they disagree, a free conference can be requested (requires 2/3 vote in each chamber).
  - A free conference committee can rewrite the bill.

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6. Ratification

After both chambers pass the same version, the bill is ratified and sent to the Governor.

7. Governor's Action

- The Governor may:
  - Sign the bill, making it an Act.
  - Take no action: if not signed within five days (excluding Sundays), it becomes law automatically.
  - Veto the bill: which can be overridden by a 2/3 vote in both chambers.
  - If the veto override fails, the bill dies.