



THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Laws are rules that ensure the rights and safety of Michigan residents and help to maintain order. Laws are made in the Capitol by the Senate and the House of Representatives. They each have their own room, called a Chamber.

AN IDEA FOR A LAW!

Ideas for laws can come from anyone – including you! Legislators write ideas for laws into official documents called bills with the help of the bill drafting office/agency. A bill is a draft of a new idea or a change to an existing law. The bill sponsor introduces the bill in the Chamber. It is given its first reading, receives a number, and is assigned to a committee.

THE BILL GOES TO A COMMITTEE

Once a bill is introduced in the House or Senate Chamber, it goes to a small group of Legislators called a committee. Each committee works on bills about different topics such as education, transportation and natural resources. Committees debate bills and can propose changes before voting on whether to send it back to its Chamber. The committee can: 1) Pass the bill and send it to the floor [with or without amendments], 2) Pass it and send it to another committee, 3) Send it to the floor or committee with no recommendation or 4) Kill it by voting it down, tabling it, ignoring it, or returning it to its author. When passed out of committee, the bill is given its second reading and scheduled to be discussed and debated by the whole Chamber.

THE BILL GOES TO THE HOUSE OR SENATE

The bill goes to the Chamber where it started. The whole Chamber debates and votes on the bill. If more than half of the members of this Chamber votes yes, the bill passes. If the bill passes, it goes to the other Chamber and goes through the same process of committee and floor votes. If the bill doesn't pass, it can be changed or abandoned. If after going through both Chambers a bill differs, one Chamber can concur with the other's amendments of the bill, and it gets referred to a conference committee. The conference committee of Senators and Representatives debate until they reach a compromise on the bill's language, and then the agreed upon bill is sent again to each Chamber for approval where it receives another reading and a final vote. The new bill is then sent to the Governor.

THE BILL GOES TO THE GOVERNOR

The Governor is the head of the Executive Branch and signs bills into law. If identical bills pass in both the House and Senate Chambers, they are sent to the Governor. The Governor can do one of 4 things: 1) sign the whole bill, 2) sign with line-item vetoes, 3) veto the bill or 4) pocket veto the bill. If the bill is vetoed, the Legislature can abandon the bill, change the bill and start the process over, or vote to sign the bill again. A two-thirds vote of both the House and Senate is required to overturn a veto.

If the Governor signs the bill, or if both Chambers override the Governor's veto, **THE BILL BECOMES A LAW!**