

# Advocacy Toolkit

## The Legislative Process



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### Making Laws - Federal

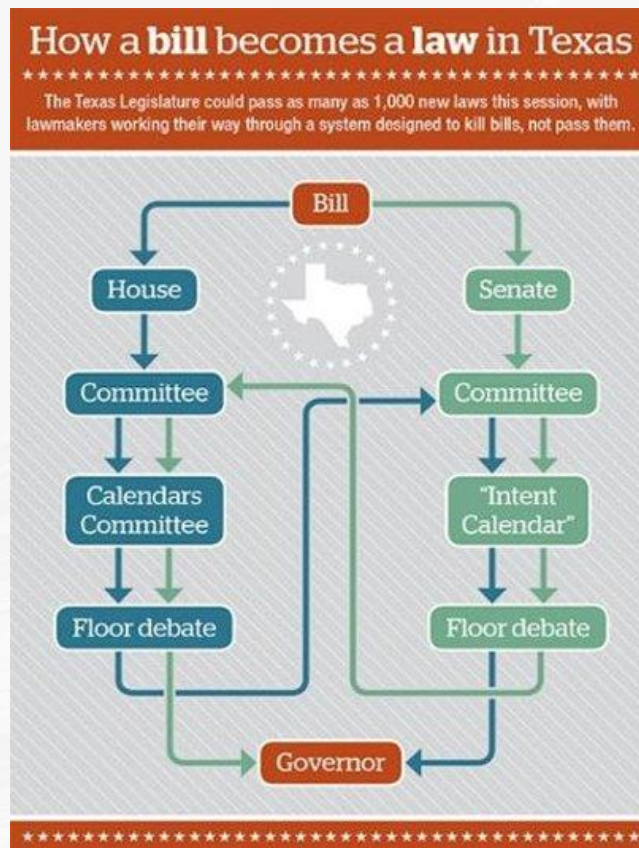
Ever wondered how bills become law? For federal laws, it all begins in Congress. When a U.S. Senator or a U.S. Representative determines the need for a particular law, they create a bill. This need is determined by listening to the people they represent. A bill is basically the rough draft of the law. Once the bill is created, both chambers must vote on it. Bills that start in the U.S. House of Representatives must win a majority vote in the House of Representatives to advance to the U.S. Senate. Then, the bill must win a majority vote in the Senate to be passed to the U.S. President. The President can decide to sign the bill, making it law. If the President decides to not sign the bill, then the bill goes back to Congress. Congress can override the Presidential veto by a two-third vote in both chambers. If this happens, then the bill becomes law.

### Making Laws - State

In the State Legislature, the process is similar. In Texas, a State Senator or Representative writes a bill they deem necessary based on the information they learn from the people they represent. These bills are introduced during the first sixty days of the legislative session and are sent to committees for discussion. A bill can be sent to multiple committees. For both chambers, Committee Chairs select which bills will get a hearing. If a bill does not get sent to a committee or if a Committee Chair decides it will not get a hearing, then the bill will die. It is crucial for a member of Congress to continuously push the bill so that it gets sent to a committee and receives a hearing.

Once a bill is evaluated by the committee through hearing testimony, the committee decides if they should let the bill die or if they should issue a report. When the Committee's Report is sent to the Texas Legislature, the bill is brought to the chamber's floor. The Calendar committee is responsible for selecting which bills are of the highest importance and should be brought to the floor. It is not unusual for a bill to get stuck in Calendars since the committee may push for other bills.

Once on the floor, the chamber listens to debates for and against the bill. Then, there is a vote. A bill must obtain a majority vote in the House and the Senate. If a majority of the House votes for a bill, the Speaker of the House signs off on it and it is sent to the Senate where more debates take place if the bill is brought to the Senate floor. If a majority of the Senate votes for a bill, it is sent to the Governor. The Governor can sign it into law or ignore it and it will become law. The governor also has the power to veto the bill which will be sent back to Congress. If the bill is vetoed, it requires a two-thirds vote in both chambers to become law.



### [How to Track a Bill](#)

There are numerous websites that can be used to track the status of bills in Texas. Using MyTLO on the Texas government website can allow you to lookup bills and track their status as they undergo the legislative process. To learn how to use MyTLO to follow a bill, visit: <https://capitol.texas.gov/Resources/FollowABill.aspx>. To start looking for bills to follow, visit: <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/BillNumber.aspx>.