

# How a bill becomes Colorado law\*

## It starts with a PROPOSAL

Individuals, public interest groups, state agencies or business organizations desiring that "there ought to be a law" transform their idea into a specific legislative proposal with the help of a legislator.

## BILL DRAFTING

The legislator has the proposal written in an appropriate form with the aid of an attorney from the legislative drafting office.

## FIRST READING

The legislator may decide to become the chief author of the bill, or he may choose to give it to another member. The chief author introduces the bill to the Senate, and it is given its "first reading." With the reading, the bill is ascribed a file number and is assigned to a committee.

## COMMITTEE HEARING

When the bill reaches the committee, the sponsor requests a hearing. During the hearing, proponents and opponents present their arguments to members of the committee. (Public attendance and participation is welcomed.)

## COMMITTEE ACTION

Following thorough examination and discussion, the committee may vote to pass the bill in its original form, or it may decide to make changes to the bill. These changes are called amendments, and they are adopted by a majority vote.

- The committee may then vote to:
- recommend that the bill be passed and sent directly to the Senate floor;
  - recommend the bill to pass and be sent to another committee;
  - defeat the bill or keep it in committee indefinitely.

## SECOND READING

When the bill is passed out of the final committee, it is given its second reading before the full Senate and then placed on the "General Orders Calendar" for discussion by the "Committee of the Whole." This provides every member the opportunity to actively debate the merits of the bill and to propose amendments to it.

## LAY-OVER

If the bill receives preliminary approval, it is placed on the senators' desks for twenty four hours so they can consider it before it comes up for a final vote. (In cases of pressing legislation, this layover may be waived to allow for more immediate attention. Legislation is placed on the "Special Orders Calendar" for this procedure.)

## THIRD READING

After the bill has been on the senators' desks for twenty-four hours, it is placed on the "Calendar." The bill is then read for the third time and a roll-call vote is taken. 18 votes are needed to pass the bill.

## HOUSE PASSAGE

The House takes a final vote on the bill. If the House version differs from the Senate, or the Senate version differs from the House, then the Senate or the House could concur with the other body's amendments to the bill. If either body will not concur, the bill is sent to a conference committee.

## BILL TO HOUSE

The bill is sent to the House. The bill is given its first reading in the House, assigned to a committee and continues through the same process as it did in the Senate.

## GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE

The governor may sign the bill into law, veto it or allow the bill to become law without his signature.

## BILL BECOMES A LAW

The Secretary of State assigns the new law a chapter number.

## CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

A conference committee is composed of three senators and an equal number of representatives. Once the compromise, it is sent to both houses for their approval. If both houses agree, it is sent to the governor for his signature.

## VETO OVERRIDE

If the bill is vetoed, a two-thirds vote of each body will override it.

\* This chart is for a bill originating in the Senate. A bill may originate in the House, in which case it passes the House first and then the Senate.