

How a Bill

becomes a

Law



All U.S. laws start out as bills in Congress. For a bill to become a law can be a lengthy process, and many bills don't make it through. Of the approximately 5,000 bills that are introduced each year, only about 150 actually become laws.

1

Anyone can come up with an idea for a bill.

For example:

- A member of Congress
- Constituents (the voting public)
- The president or the Executive Branch



You may have heard the word **"filibuster"** in connection with a proposed bill. A filibuster is a tactic used by senators to delay or entirely prevent a vote from being taken on a bill by delivering lengthy speeches.

2

But only a member of Congress can introduce a bill.

A bill can be introduced in either the Senate or the House of Representatives. This bill begins in the Senate.



Some of the changes might include requests for government funds to be spent on improvements in a politician's local district, making him or her popular with the voters there. Such funding is called **"pork barrel spending."**

3

The bill is reviewed by a small committee in the Senate, which discusses the pros and cons.

4

Then the entire Senate debates the bill.



As many as **100** amendments may be added at this stage.

5

A vote is taken, and the bill is then passed to the House of Representatives, where it is also debated and amended.



CHECKS AND BALANCES

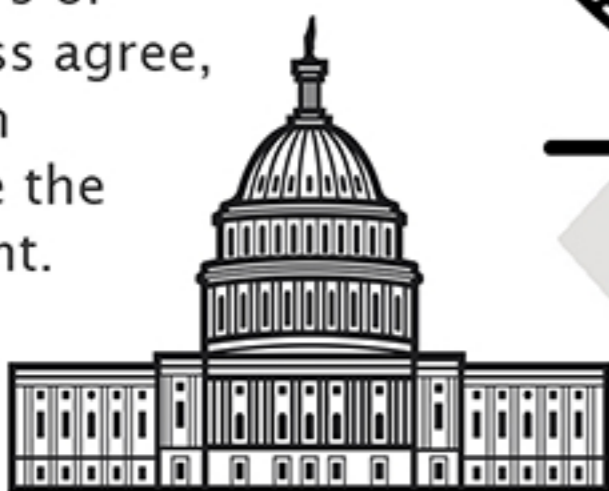
If the president does not approve of the bill, he can veto it by refusing to sign it.



THE PRESIDENT

However, the bill can still become a law.

If two-thirds of the members of Congress agree, they can override the president.



PLEASE SIGN ME!



During this phase, there may be only ten members of Congress present. The others will be following the bill's progress on TV in their offices, so that they can make themselves available when a vote is called for.



the SENATE

the HOUSE

The bill becomes law when the president signs it.

7

If the House of Representatives approves the bill, it goes back to the Senate for even more debate, until both the Senate and the House agree on the exact wording.

6