



## 1. It begins with an IDEA

New ideas for policy begins the legislative process. In meetings with constituents and local organizations, Senators work with many individuals in developing ideas that oftentimes call for a new law. These ideas work their way into legislative proposals that are introduced as bills that may later become law.

## 2. Policy proposal is drafted into a bill

Senators present the new policy proposal to the General Assembly's Legislative Services Agency where a legal specialist in the designated policy area conducts research on any current laws that may be affected by the new policy. A new law or an amendment to current law may be pursued by the Senator. Attorneys working for the executive branch, state agencies or special interest groups must also consult with Senators regarding potential legislation.



## 3. Bill assigned to a committee

Once the idea has been drafted into a bill, it must successfully pass through many stages to become law. The first stage requires the bill to be filed with the Senate, receive a bill number and be assigned to a Senate Standing Committee. At this point, the bill becomes public information. Each bill presented by a Senator is read by title when it is cited for First Reading on the Senate floor.

Bills are introduced only by legislators with the exception of the Biennial State Budget bill, which is submitted directly by the Governor.



## 4. Committee action

A committee's responsibility is to consider the merits of a bill and determine whether it can be improved by amending the language or by making additions or deletions. The Committee Chair determines which bills receive hearings and the date of each bill hearing. Weekly committee agendas list bills to be heard. Upon hearing a bill, committee members may offer amendments. Once a committee votes favorably to "do pass" or "do pass amend" a bill, it is eligible to advance to the full Senate for further consideration. Bills that do not receive a majority vote by the committee, do not advance. Not all assigned bills receive final committee action, thus sifting out unworkable or objectionable ideas. If this occurs, the proposal is considered dead for the session.

Committee hearings are open to the public. Citizens are encouraged to attend committee hearings at the Statehouse and share their opinions on a proposed bill by signing up to testify on a particular bill before a committee hearing begins. On rare occasions, some committees will hold public hearings around the state in efforts to gather a wider range of public opinion.



## 5. Second and third reading

Upon committee approval, a bill advances to the full Senate for Second Reading when all members have an opportunity to amend a bill. Amendments can be voted on by a voice vote, a standing vote, or a roll call vote. If approved by a majority vote, an amendment is incorporated into a bill and the proposal moves to Third Reading. At this point in the process, a bill's author explains the bill and opens it up for debate on the merits of the bill, and a roll call vote is taken. If the bill receives a majority of Senate votes, it advances to the House of Representatives for its consideration and the entire process repeats itself.



## 6. Conference committees

If a bill advances through the second house with no amendments, or the first house agrees with amendments made to the bill by the second house, it proceeds to the Governor for final consideration and possible signature into law. When a bill has been amended by the second house and the bill's author refuses to consent to changes made to the bill, the bill is assigned to a joint House-Senate conference committee. Comprised of four members, two from each chamber and two from each political party, these committees work to negotiate compromise language. All four members must sign the final conference committee report, and the report must be favorably voted on in both houses before the bill can advance to the Governor for final consideration.



## 7. Governor's action

Once received, the governor has seven days to sign a bill into law, let the bill become law without signature or to veto the legislation. In Indiana, a vetoed bill may return to the General Assembly where it requires a constitutional majority of both houses to sustain or override the Governor's veto.



## BE A PART OF THE PROCESS

Openness is the strength of our democracy. You can help your legislators be more effective for your community by contacting them about the issues that are important to you and your family. Your feedback ensures these issues receive the attention they deserve at the Statehouse.

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The Indiana General Assembly is composed of 150 men and women representing a variety of occupations. Indiana has a part-time citizen legislature, so legislators spend part of their time in Indianapolis and the other part at home in their communities as professionals in jobs such as teachers, police officers, attorneys and farmers. They are elected to represent the needs and concerns of Hoosiers across Indiana.

The Indiana General Assembly meets every year. During odd-numbered years, when the state budget is crafted, state law requires lawmakers adjourn by April 29. During even-numbered years, the state legislature must conclude the people's business by March 14.

Members of the Senate are elected for four year terms, but not all at the same time; 25 of the 50 senators are elected every two years. All 100 members of the House are elected every two years.



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+1 800.382.9467



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INDIANA STATE HOUSE  
200 W. WASHINGTON STREET  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46204