

How A Bill Becomes Law

State of Wisconsin

SUPPORT | ENGAGE | ALIGN



Wisconsin Legislative Structure

- Senate and Assembly are similar to Senate and House at federal level
- Senate
 - 33 senators
 - Four year terms
 - Senate districts each encompass three assembly districts
- Assembly
 - 99 representatives
 - Two year terms
 - Elected in even numbered years
 - US constitution requires that districts be about equal in population, redrawn every 10 years
 - Average of 57,000 constituents per assembly district at last census

SUPPORT | ENGAGE | ALIGN



Legislative Process

- Legislative sessions run for two years beginning in January of odd numbered years
- Legislature sets its own schedule through joint resolution
- Floor periods alternate with committee work periods
- Governor or legislature may call special sessions
- Floor periods are for open debate of proposals
- 1500-2000 proposals per two-year session, about 25% become law
- Bills are drafted into formal legal language by the Legislative Reference Bureau



How a bill gets started: “The Law Needs to Change”

- Example: Epinephrine auto-injectors (2015 Act 35)
 - Bills can be introduced in either house
 - A bill must be passed in both houses in the exact same form to become law
 - Changes to bills can be made through amendments
 - Once a bill is passed by both houses it is considered “enrolled”
 - Governor may then sign or veto



Legislator as Bill Sponsor

- A legislator works with his/her constituent or a state agency to develop the language of the legislation.
- The legislator relies on the Legislative Drafter to develop the language so that it meets the proper requirements for language, avoids contradictory language, and identifies all the other statutes that will need to be changed if the legislation is adopted.
- The lead legislator will serve as the bill sponsor.
- The sponsor forwards the legislative draft to all members of the legislature asking them to join as a supporter or “co-sponsor”.



First Reading

- Introduction of proposed legislation
- Bill is printed in Assembly Journal
- Referred to a committee



Public Hearing

- The chair of the designated committee determines if the legislative bill will have a public hearing.
- If the committee chair is interested in holding a public hearing the public is informed of the date, time and location.
- On the day of the public hearing:
 - The chair will invite the sponsor of the bill to present the intent of legislation.
 - Public members are then invited to testify.
- Any member of the Committee can ask questions.
- The public hearing ends when there is no one else interested in testifying.



Committee

- The chair of the committee will convene a meeting with interested parties and committee members to determine if the language of the bill needs to be amended.
- The committee chair can determine if the legislation should continue to move through the legislative process.
- If the bill is passed by the majority of the committee it will move forward for a vote of the entire house.



Second Reading

- The committee chair will schedule the bill for a vote by the committee members. If any amendments to the bill are offered they are evaluated and then, they are adopted or rejected. .
- Some bills may not get past this stage, may be:
 - Indefinitely postponed
 - Referred to committee for study and never return



Third Reading and Passage

- Bill is discussed
- It is not further amended at this point
- Vote occurs
 - Assembly
 - Voice vote – “aye” or “no”
 - Roll call – legislator presses red or green button on their desk and votes are tabulated by an electronic voting machine and displayed on a board on the floor
 - Senate
 - Roll call - Chief Clerk calls name of each senator and record vote



Bill Advances to Other House

- Versions passed in assembly and senate may be the same or may be quite different
- Conference committee works with the two different bills and works out a consensus
 - Three members of each house are appointed
 - After conference committee the bill will not be amended
- Since bills must be passed in both houses in the exact same form to become law, the bill may go back to the other house in revised form
- A bill that has passed in both houses is “enrolled”



Governor's Desk

- Decision point:
 - Approves
 - Vetoes
 - Vetoes in part
- Must notify legislature of veto within six days
- If notification of veto is not made in time, the bill becomes law (rare)
- Legislature may override veto by passing the bill by 2/3 majority in both houses
- If not overridden, the veto is sustained
- The date signed is the date of enactment
- Takes effect the day following unless otherwise stated

SUPPORT | ENGAGE | ALIGN



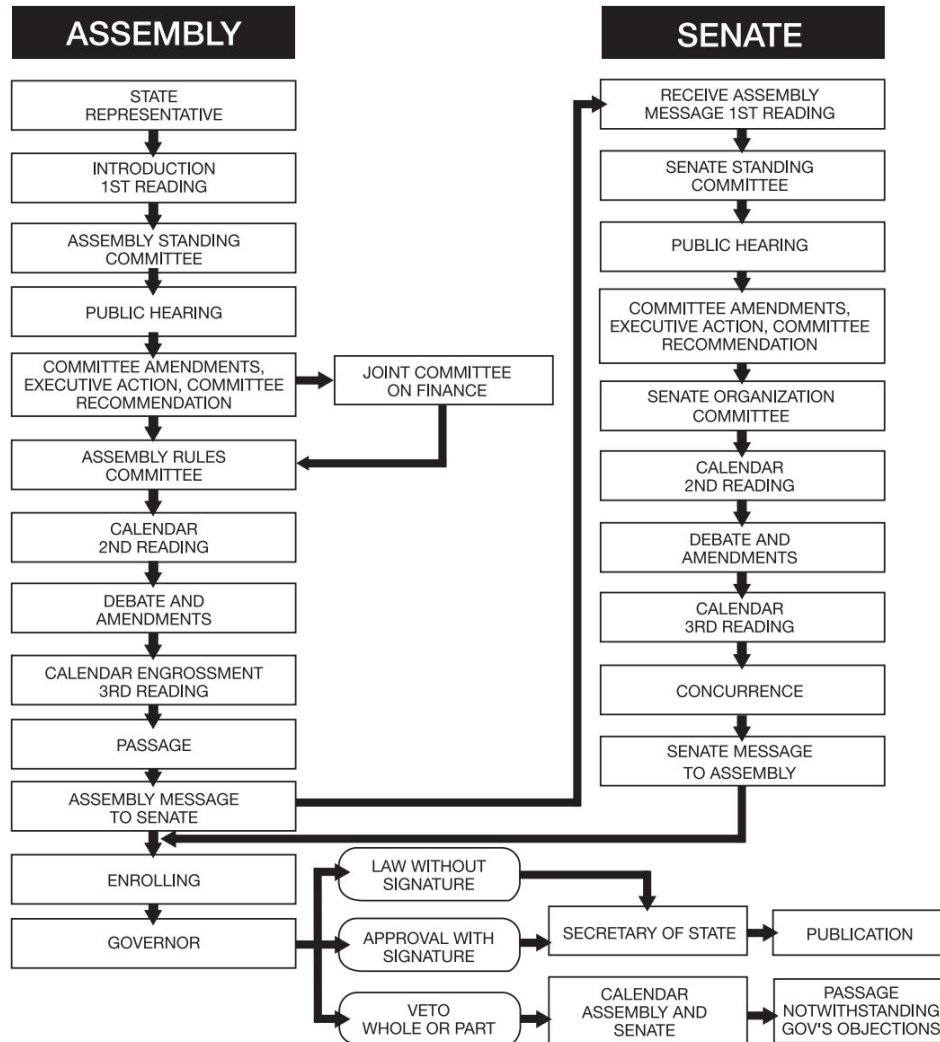
Bill Becomes Law

- An enacted bill is called an act or law
- It is published in the state newspaper the day following enactment



Process overview

How A BILL BECOMES LAW



RT | ENGAGE | ALIGN



References

- Wisconsin State Legislature. (May, 2016.) *How a bill becomes law*. [Pamphlet] Madison, WI: Wisconsin State Assembly Office of the Chief Clerk.
- Larson, B. (August 18, 2018.) *2015 Wisconsin Act 35 Legislative Council Act Memo*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Legislative Council.
- 2015 Wisconsin Act 35, Wis. Senate B. 203 (2015), §§ Chapters 255 and 450.
- 2015 Wisconsin Senate B. 203 (2015). History. Retrieved from <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2015/proposals/sb203> July 13, 2017.

