

HOW DOES A BILL BECOME A LAW?

INTRODUCTION & SPONSORSHIP

- When a legislator has a bill idea, they ask the Revisor's Office to draft that idea into legal language. This occurs before “cloture,” the bill deadline, each session.
- Once the bill is written, the legislator (the “primary sponsor”) asks other legislators to co-sponsor it in support.
- The bill then gets a Legislative Document (LD) number and committee assignment.

COMMITTEE PROCESS

- The committee with jurisdiction over that particular issue holds a Public Hearing where anyone can testify: in person, via Zoom, or by submitting written testimony online.
- The committee then holds Work Session(s) to debate and propose amendments.
- Finally, the committee votes on a recommendation: Ought to Pass, Ought to Pass as Amended, Ought Not to Pass, or produces "divided reports" with their different proposals.

FIRST CHAMBER ACTION

- The primary sponsor's chamber (House or Senate) debates and votes on the committee's report... that report usually has a lot of influence!
- Once the first chamber votes on the bill, it will move to the other chamber for a vote.

SECOND CHAMBER ACTION

- Now, the OTHER chamber (House or Senate) debates and votes.
- When they make changes, both chambers must agree on identical language, so each bill can move back and forth between the chambers for a vote several times.
- If they can't agree, then in the end, the bill dies.

NEXT, THE GOVERNOR'S DESK

- Once the House and Senate pass a bill, the governor has 10 days (excluding Sundays) to either sign the bill into law, veto it, OR let it become law without their signature.
- The Legislature can override a Governor's Veto by a two-thirds vote in both chambers.

WHAT IS A “PEOPLE'S VETO?”

- Citizens can block a new law through referendum, though it is rarely done.
- Collect at least 68,000 or so verified signatures from Maine voters within 90 days of enactment. The required number is 10% of the voter total in the last gubernatorial election.
- If the signature effort is successful, the law is paused and put the new law to a vote at the next statewide election.