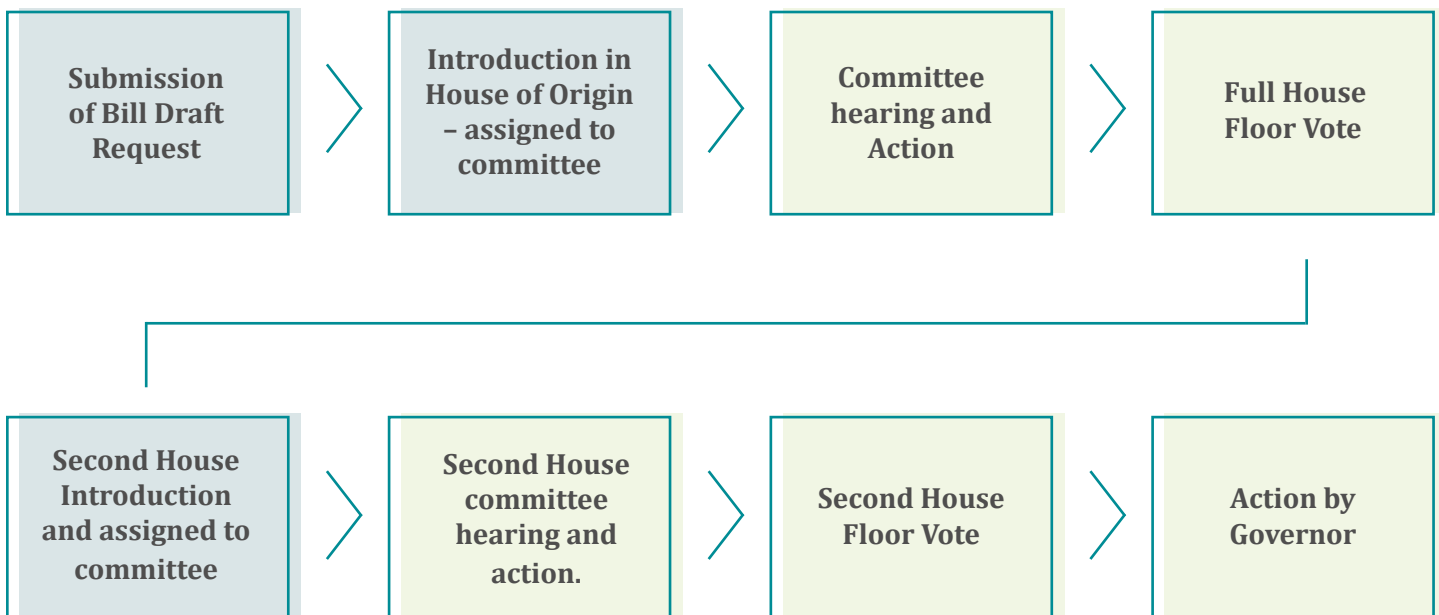


## HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

Laws in Nevada are introduced and created by the Nevada State Legislature. The Nevada State Legislature has two legislative houses – the Assembly and the Senate. There are 42 State Assembly Members and 21 State Senators. The Nevada Legislature meets for 120 days every other year, beginning the first week of February in odd numbered years. Policy actions and bills changing existing law in Nevada can only be passed during this time. So how does a bill become a law in Nevada?



## KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- A bill requires five separate approvals in order to become law.
- Bills must pass through both houses and the Governor.

# STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE ON HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

## Leading Up to a Legislative Year

Anyone can have an idea for a possible bill – agencies/organizations, businesses, constituents, and even non-profits! However, only state agencies, local governments, State Assembly Members, State Senators, or the Governor can submit a request for a bill.

Once a policymaker likes an idea and agrees to bring a bill forward, they are then considered the bill sponsor. The bill sponsor will submit a bill draft request (BDR) to the Legislative Council Bureau (LCB) in the preceding months leading up to a legislative year. BDRs are public record, but the information provided offers just a brief one sentence overview of what the intended legislation will accomplish.

## Turning a BDR into a Bill in the House of Origin

The bill sponsor will work with LCB to draft bill language. Once the Legislative Session has convened, a BDR will be introduced as a bill in its respective house of origin. For example, if the bill sponsor is an Assembly member, the BDR will be introduced on the floor of the Assembly.

Upon its introduction and first reading, the BDR will be assigned a bill number and referred to the appropriate committee for a hearing and possible action.

## First House Committee

Committees are made up of legislators and focus on specific topic areas. In committee, bills are presented, testimony is

provided, and if amendments need to be made, this is typically where that happens.

Once a bill is referred to a committee, the Committee Chair will introduce the bill for consideration. If the committee accepts the consideration, a hearing will be scheduled. Hearings allow the bill sponsor and any partners on the bill, to present the bill in full and take questions from committee members. A hearing also offers the opportunity for lobbyists, constituents, and organizations to provide testimony in support, opposition, or neutral of the proposed bill language.

Following a hearing, the bill sponsor and interested parties will work on perfecting the bill language and reach negotiations if needed. Once the bill is ready for a vote, the committee chair will schedule a work session.

During a work session, amendments will be considered, and then the committee will vote to pass the bill out of the committee.

### Committees may:

- Pass the bill as it is written
- Pass the bill with amendments
- Not pass the bill at all
- Recommend that the legislative house amend the bill and re-refer it to the same committee or a different committee.
- May vote to indefinitely postpone consideration of a bill, essentially “killing the bill”
- May take no action at all

If a bill is passed out of committee, it will then go back to the first house for a full floor vote. If a bill receives no hearing, is not voted on, or is postponed indefinitely, the bill is dead and no further action can be taken on that bill during the legislative session.

\*Note: A committee passing a bill is just the first step and the bill still requires a full floor vote from the originating house. Additionally, a committee member voting to pass the bill out of committee to keep the bill alive, does not necessarily mean they will vote to pass the bill during a floor vote.

## Back to the Full House

Once a bill passes committee, it goes before the full house. It will be read a second time before the full house and then placed on General File for debate and final vote.

When a bill is up for vote, it will be read a third and final time before the full house. The bill sponsor may offer remarks on the bill and other members are allowed to offer comments or open the floor for debate. Once debate is concluded, a roll-call vote follows. Most bills just need a simple majority in order to be passed, this is 11 votes in the Senate and 22 in the Assembly. The passage of a measure that imposes or increases a tax or fee requires a two-thirds majority or 14 votes in the Senate or 28 votes in the Assembly. All bills that are passed by the first legislative house are then forwarded to the second legislative house where the process begins again.

## Onto the Second Legislative House

Bills from the first house are referred to and introduced in the second house following the same rules. It will go to a first reading and introduction and be referred to the appropriate committee.

The committee hearing and consideration process are the same as the first house. A bill will need to be introduced, held for a hearing, and then voted on to pass out of committee. Those that pass out of committee are read a second time to the full house and placed on general file for debate and final vote.

If the second legislative house considers and passes a bill without an amendment, it is then sent to the Governor for final action. If the second legislative house amends a measure, it is returned to the house of origin for consideration of the amendment and may enter into a resolution of differences if necessary.

## Resolution of Differences as Necessary

First, the house of origin has a Consideration of Amendments Hearing. This is when the house of origin decides whether to accept the second legislative house's amendments.

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### Possibilities include:

- The house of origin accepts the amendments, the bill goes to the Governor.
- The amendment is rejected, the bill is returned to the second legislative house for a decision whether to withdraw the proposed changes.
- The second legislative house does not recede the amendment, the bill is then referred to a two-house conference committee.

The conference committee attempts to reconcile the differences and presents its recommendation in the form of a conference report and both legislative houses vote on the report.

### Possibilities include:

- Both legislative houses accept the report, the bill goes to the Governor.
- Either legislative house rejects the report, a second and final conference committee may be appointed.
- The bill dies if the members of the second conference committee fail to agree.

## Role of the Governor

Generally, the Governor must act on a bill within five days of receiving it if the Legislature is still in session, not including Sundays. However, if there are fewer than five days remaining in session, or if the bill is delivered after the adjournment or sine die (end of session), the Governor has 10 days to act following sine die.

### The Governor has three options:

1. may sign the bill into law;
2. allow it to become law without signature; or,
3. veto it.

A vetoed bill returns to the house of origin for a possible vote of overriding the veto. An override requires a two-thirds majority vote of both legislative houses. If the Governor vetoes a bill following sine die, it returns to the next legislative session. Bills passed become effective on October 1 following the end of the legislative session, unless otherwise specified in the bill.