

How a Bill Becomes a Law

There are eight basic steps through which a bill normally passes before it becomes a law in Kansas.

1. Drafting and bill introduction. Only individual legislators, interim or special committees, and standing committees can introduce a bill. The governor cannot introduce a bill and neither can you. It is important to invest time in understanding this process. Each committee chair follows different procedures on what is required to request a bill introduction, all of which involve working with the revisor of statutes.

2. Reading and reference of bills. The introduction of a bill constitutes its formal presentation in its chamber of origin – either the House of Representatives (“House”) or Senate. At this time the title of the bill is read and the bill is printed for general distribution. On the day of introduction or on the next legislative day, the bill is referred to a committee.

3. Consideration by standing committee. The committee meets, holds hearings, discusses the bill, formulates recommendations, and then prepares a committee report for submission to the full House or Senate (Committee of the Whole, see step #4).

4. Consideration by Committee of the Whole. If reported favorably, the bill goes next to the Committee of the Whole under the calendar heading of General Orders. Eventually, the bill is debated and may be recommended for passage with or without amendments. The majority leader in both the House and the Senate determine which bills are scheduled to be considered by the Committee of the Whole. You cannot assume that passage of a bill by a standing committee will assure it receives consideration by the Committee of the Whole. Any member of the body may offer amendments and speak for or against the bill. *(Steps #3 and #4 are sometimes omitted in order to expedite consideration of a measure.)*

5. Final action. If recommended for passage by the Committee of the Whole, the bill is placed on the calendar under the heading of Final Action. A roll call vote is taken to determine if the chamber will pass the bill.

6. Action by the second chamber. Having passed the first chamber (chamber of origin), the bill is sent to the second chamber where the same procedure as before is followed. If the second chamber passes the bill without amendment, it is “enrolled” (i.e., printed in its final form for consideration by the governor). If the second chamber amends the bill and the first chamber concurs (agrees to accept the amendments), the bill also is considered finally passed. If the first chamber disagrees with the amendments, a conference committee usually is appointed to work out an agreement. When both chambers have approved the report of the conference committee by a majority of all members on a roll call vote, the bill is considered finally passed.

7. Action by the governor. Within ten days after passage, the bill must be signed by the presiding officers of each chamber, the chief clerk of the House, the secretary of the Senate, and then presented to the governor. The governor has ten days after receipt of the bill to act on it. If

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the governor does not act on it during the ten-day period, the bill automatically becomes law. The governor approves most bills passed by the legislature. However, the governor may veto a bill by refusing to sign it and returning it the chamber in which it originated, together with a statement of reasons for the veto. In appropriation (funding) bills only, the governor may veto some of the items and approve the others by signing the bill. This is referred to as a line-item veto. The legislature may override a veto by a two-thirds vote of both chambers.

8. Publication of laws. An act of the legislature is not in force until the enacting bill has been published so that the public has proper notice that it is law. Publication notice occurs in the session laws (on or before July 1) unless the legislature desires the law to take effect sooner. In this event, it is printed in the Kansas Register. The secretary of state publishes the Kansas Register weekly. It contains a variety of information regarding activities of state government required by law to be noticed or incorporated therein.

Source:

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