

# THE PATH OF LEGISLATION IN NEW JERSEY

## Idea Developed

A legislator from either the Senate or General Assembly may sponsor a bill individually or at the suggestion of a constituent, interest group, public official or the Governor. The legislator may ask other legislators in the same House to join as co-sponsors.

## Bill Drafted

At the legislator's direction, the Office of Legislative Services, a non-partisan agency of the Legislature, provides research and drafting assistance, and prepares the bill in proper technical form.

## Bill Introduced

The prime sponsor delivers the bill to the House. Copies of the "proposed" bill are printed. The bill title is read aloud at the next session by the Senate Secretary or General Assembly Clerk. This is the first reading. The bill is made available in electronic form.

## Committee Reference

The President of the Senate or Speaker of the General Assembly usually refers the bill to a committee for review, but may send the bill directly to second reading to speed its consideration.

## Committee Action

When scheduled by the chair, the committee considers the bill at an open public meeting. The committee may report the bill to the House as is, with amendments, or by a substitute bill. If not considered or reported, the bill remains in committee.

## Second Reading

When the bill is reported to the floor (or referred directly without committee review), its title is read aloud for the second reading. The bill can also be amended on the floor at this point.

## Third Reading

When scheduled by the President or Speaker, the bill is given a third reading. As it is posted for a vote, members may debate the bill. To ensure thorough consideration, rules prohibit a second and third reading on the same day, except by an emergency vote of three-quarters of the members.

## House Vote

A bill passes each House when approved by a majority of the authorized members (21 votes in the Senate, 41 votes in the Assembly).

## Second House

When a bill is delivered to the second House, it will go through the same process from first reading and committee referral through final vote. If the second House amends the bill, it is returned to the first House for a vote on the changes. A bill receives final legislative approval only when it passes both Houses in identical form.

## Governor's Action

After legislative passage, the bill is sent to the Governor. The Governor may sign it, conditionally veto it (returning it for changes), or veto it absolutely. The Governor may also veto single line items of appropriation bills.

## Law

A bill becomes law upon the Governor's signature or after 45 days if no action is taken. If the House of origin is not in session on the 45th day, the time is extended until it reconvenes. (Different rules apply to bills passed during the last 45 days of a two-year session). If vetoed, a bill can become law if the Legislature overrides the veto by a 2/3 vote. A law takes effect on the day specified in its text or, if unspecified, the next July 4th.