

HOW AN IDEA BECOMES A LAW

1. A legislator (or group of legislators) decides to sponsor a bill. Ideas come from many sources: constituents, interest groups, and government agencies. A bill is a proposal for the enactment, amendment, or repeal of an existing law.
2. The bill is drafted and then sent to the Senate or the House where it is assigned a number.
3. The President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House then refers the bill to a standing committee. A subcommittee, assigned by the standing committee, then studies the bill and reports its conclusions to the full committee. The public can attend subcommittee meetings.
4. There are also committee bills, which means the committee itself writes the bill, and decides the process. This means the committee chair does what the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House would ordinarily do. Committee bills can show other legislators that the issue has broad support.
5. The committee may pass the bill or pass an amended version of the bill.
6. The bill is placed on the calendar, a listing of all bills officially eligible for debate. Now legislators may file amendments to the bill.
7. If the bill makes it this far, the bill and any amendments filed are debated by the whole chamber. Amendments must be approved by a simple majority of those legislators voting.
8. A constitutional majority, at least 26 senators or 51 representatives regardless of the number of legislators voting, must vote "yes" for the bill to proceed to the second chamber.
9. The bill goes through the same process in the second chamber. If the second chamber amends the bill it must be sent back to the chamber of origin for approval of those amendments. If the chambers cannot come to an agreement on the bill, a conference committee is appointed to rectify the differences.
10. Once the bill passes both chambers in identical form, it is sent to the Governor. The Governor may sign the bill, veto the bill, or take no action on the bill.
11. The bill becomes law upon the Governor's signature or after three days during the session if the Governor takes no action. Bills received by the Governor during the last three days of the session must be signed or vetoed within 30 days. If the Governor takes no action on the bill after the 30-day time period, the bill is considered vetoed.

PRO TIP: Most bills that are introduced do not make it through the entire process. In Iowa, there is a process called 'funnel deadlines' - if a bill does not advance far enough before a funnel deadline, it is considered dead for that session (while this is true for most bills, a few types of bills are not subject to these deadlines). While most individual bills don't progress - the ideas behind them very frequently come back as part of different or larger bills. So, even after the 'funnel,' you can always help ensure that good laws are enacted—right up until the very end of the legislative session.

CONTACT US!

HAVE A QUESTION?

Email us at outreach@aclu-ia.org.

ACLU
Iowa

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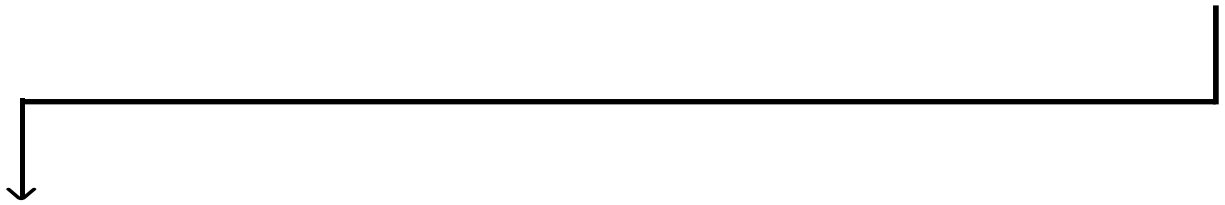
Idea



Bill drafted



Bill filed



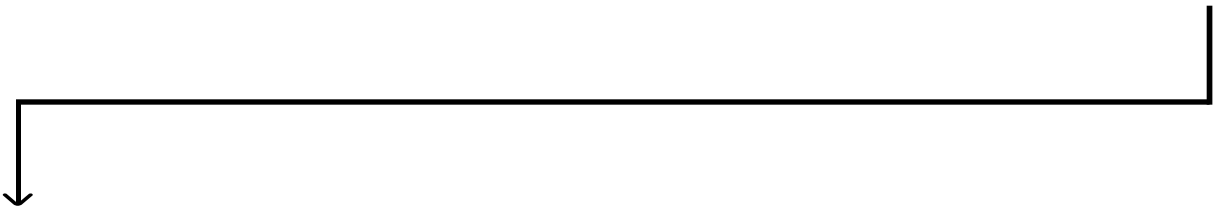
Committee assignment



Subcommittee assignment



Committee action



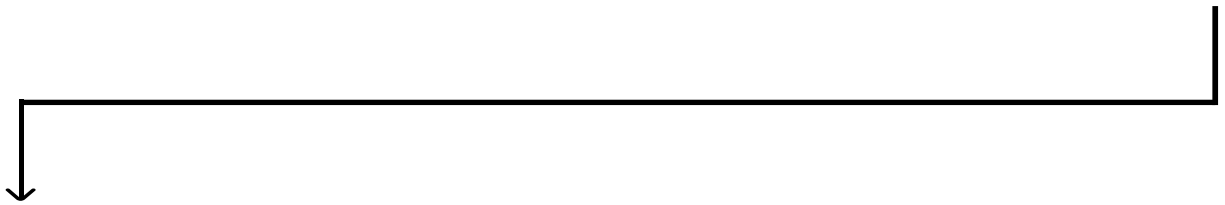
Floor debate



Amendment



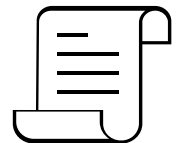
Vote



Second Chamber



Governor



Law