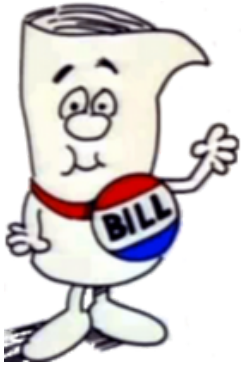


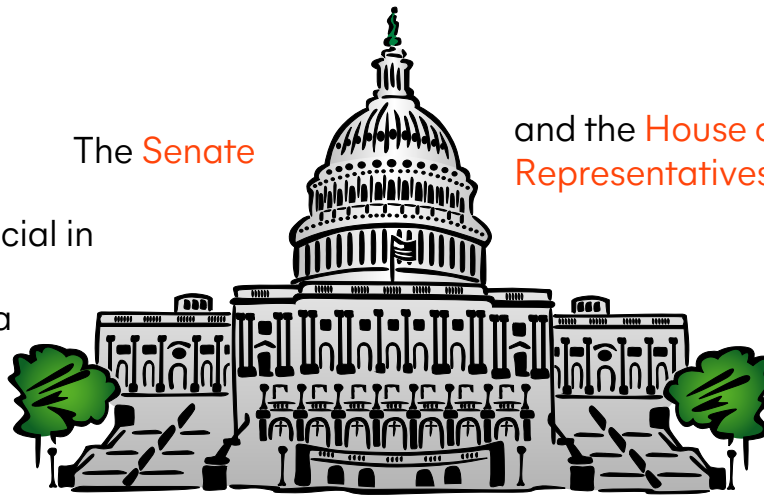
# HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW



If you grew up in the U.S. education system, you've probably heard that corny Schoolhouse Rock song "I'm Just a Bill" at one point or another. However, understanding **the way a bill actually becomes a law — and knowing the points in the process you can make a difference** — can be pretty confusing. Here's our roadmap to navigate through the process.

The United States Congress is made up of two chambers:

An elected official in the Senate is referred to as a **senator**.



The **Senate** and the **House of Representatives**.

An elected official in the House is referred to as a **representative** or **congressperson**.

2

People who live in a U.S. state have **two** senators and **one** representative.

1

Those who live in other areas officially considered to be part of the U.S., like the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories, have lesser and varying levels of representation, such as non-voting members of the House.

The House and Senate do policy work in **committees, where they consider bills and oversee agencies, programs, and activities within their jurisdictions**. Different committees focus on different issues — health care, voting, climate, education, etc. — and members are appointed to committees by the leaders in their parties. Each committee also has subcommittees to share specific tasks within the jurisdiction of the full committee. Subcommittee are responsible to, and work within the guidelines established by, their parent committees. **Bills originate in committee and must be "voted out" by a full committee before being considered by the full House or Senate.**

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## THE PROCESS

### HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE (BEFORE THE PROCESS EVEN STARTS):

Before a legislator introduces a bill, they need to know that the issue is something their constituents are paying attention to! Make a habit of contacting your members of Congress about the issues you care about, especially if there is an active campaign for an issue. As a community member and person of faith, your perspective is extremely valuable!

1

A legislator (a representative or senator) introduces a bill

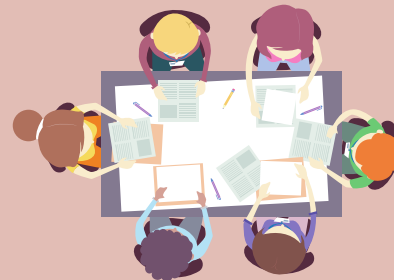


### HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

There are many ways that congressional leaders can attempt to kill a bill from the very beginning, such as refusing to refer a bill to a subcommittee or full committee, preventing a vote, or threatening a filibuster in the Senate. Offices weigh feedback from constituents more heavily than from others. Occasionally, a campaign may ask you to reach out to a member that is not yours. Letting involved members of Congress know that you support a bill or that you disapprove of their tactics to prevent a bill from moving forward, especially if you are a constituent, can lend a great deal of support to the bill.

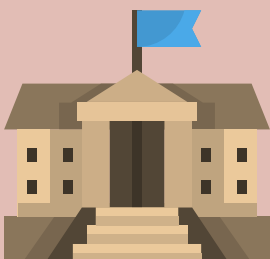
2

The bill is referred to the committee that oversees the issue it addresses. For example, a bill on climate will go to the committee responsible for energy and the environment. The committee will debate, amend, and rewrite the bill in legal language — otherwise known as a “mark-up.” The mark-up will then be voted on by the full committee.



3

If the bill passes the committee, it will then move onto the full chamber — either House or Senate — which will decide on the rules of the debate, such as how long the debate can go on and whether there can be amendments. If amendments are allowed, members of Congress may propose them, and then the bill will be put up for a vote.



### HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

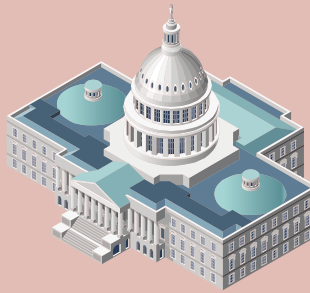
Those in opposition of the bill may attempt to amend it to the point that those originally in support will no longer support it. Now is the time to let involved members of Congress know that you support or disapprove of amendments being proposed in a bill.

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4

If the bill passes, it will move on to the other body of Congress and undergo a similar process. If it is successfully passed, the bill will move onto the president.



## HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

In most cases, Congress can vote to override a presidential veto and the bill can still become a law. Contacting involved members of Congress to let them know that you care about a bill that has been vetoed at this stage of the process will help the case for the passage of the bill.

5

The president will approve or veto the bill. If the president approves the bill, it will become law.



The policymaking process can seem daunting, but at the end of the day, it's important to remember that your congressperson and senators are meant to represent you! It is the job of their offices to pay attention to what their constituents care about, so don't hesitate to give them a call, send them an email or letter, or even schedule a meeting with someone from their office.



Not sure how to get started? Looking for a community of faith that cares deeply about justice and want to build towards a better world together? Join the Faith-Rooted Advocates Network! Learn more at [sojo.net/FRAN](https://sojo.net/FRAN).