

How a Bill Becomes a Law in Indiana

The process of creating a new law is not quite as complicated as it may seem. Many laws currently in effect in Indiana came about because an individual or group thought that a change was needed. If you have an idea that you think should be a law, or if you want to amend or repeal an existing law, there are some simple steps to make your law a reality.

- Write out in your own words what changes you want to see happen. If it relates to an existing law, refer to law and if possible include the language from the current Indiana Code.
- Find a legislator, a member of either the House of Representatives or Senate, who agrees with you and will be willing to introduce a bill to accomplish what you want done. The legislator will become the sponsor of that bill and introduce the bill in either the House or Senate. He or she will take the idea to the Legislative Services Agency staff to draft a bill in the proper legal language.
- When you meet with the legislator make sure that you have all the facts, to show why this bill should be passed. This will be necessary as you work to make your bill become reality.
- After the bill is introduced, you need to contact, either personally or by mail, as many legislators as you can to explain to them why your bill should be passed. In fact, you become a lobbyist for your bill and you try to get other people to help you lobby for your bill.

The actual process of how a bill becomes a law is a little more complex. The steps that your bill will go through on its way to becoming a law are listed below.

1. **First Reading:** "First reading" merely means that a bill is introduced in the house of origin (House of Representatives or Senate) and the title read aloud by the clerk, who hands it to the presiding officer for assignment to one of the standing committees in the house that it is introduced in.
2. **In Committee:** Committees have great power, especially the Committee Chair who decides which of the bills that have been assigned to the Committee will be considered. If possible, talk to the Committee Chair and explain your bill and why it is important for the Committee to hear your bill. Committee meetings are open to the public, if possible you should attend a Committee meeting prior to the hearing on your bill to become familiar with the process. On the day that your bill is considered, you should attend and ask to speak in support of your bill. If the Committee decides that your bill is a good one, they will recommend "Do Pass" and send it on for Second Reading.
3. **Second Reading:** After a bill is reported "due pass" by the Committee, it is reprinted. A copy must lie on every legislator's desk 24 hours to be eligible for Second Reading. While up for Second Reading a bill can be amended by a majority vote in favor of the amendment. If the bill survives Second Reading, it is ready after another 24 hours for Third Reading.
4. **Third Reading:** The bill now has arrived at a critical spot for a show of strength, it cannot be amended by less than a two-thirds vote. With no amendments, the bill is voted on as it stands and is either passed or rejected by a majority vote.
5. **Other Chamber:** If the bill survives all of these steps in the house of origin, it is sent to the second house where it must go through the same procedures of three readings and a committee hearing. The second house may then pass the bill, amend it or kill it.
6. **Amendments:** Should the second house amend the bill, it must go back to its house of origin for a vote. The house of origin may concur with the amendments made or it can reject those

changes. If there are no amendments, the bill is signed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate and sent to the Governor.

7. **Conference Committee:** If the house of origin won't accept the new amendments, the bill goes to a two-house committee that draws up a single compromise bill. The compromise bill then goes back to both the House and Senate for another vote. If both houses pass the amended version, it is signed by the Speaker of the House and by the President of the Senate. It then goes to the Governor.
8. **To the Governor:** If the Governor signs the bill, it becomes a law. If the Governor vetoes the bill, it can only become a law if both the House and Senate override the veto by a majority vote in each house. The Governor can let the bill become a law by taking no action at all for seven days at which point it becomes law.
9. **The End:** If a bill survives all these steps, IT'S A LAW.

The Constitution of Indiana established the House of Representatives and the Senate. It also provides the basic process that a bill must go through to become a law and it places certain limits on the power of the House and Senate. No law is valid if it violates either the Indiana Constitution or the Constitution of the United States. These documents guarantee citizens rights which cannot be taken away by any law.

Sometimes a law is passed which someone may think violates the Constitution of Indiana. These people may challenge such a law in court and the court will decide whether or not the law should be allowed to stand.

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