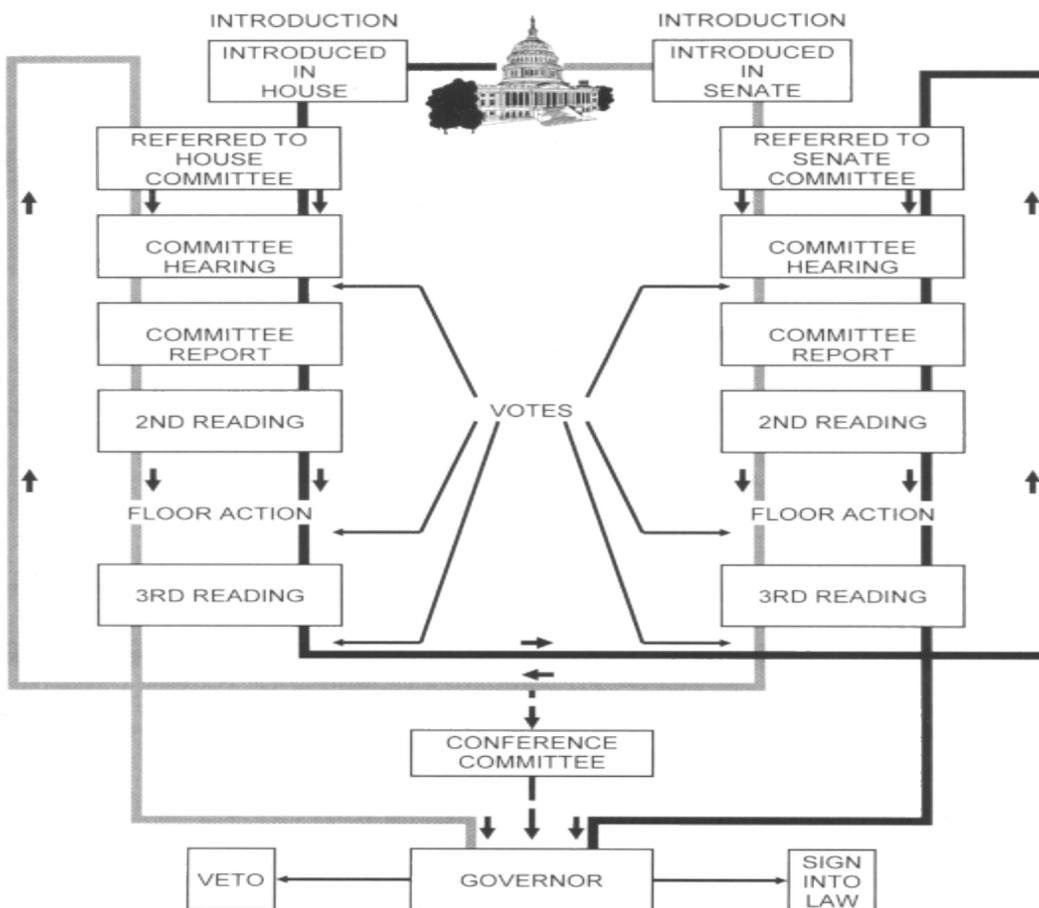


## How a bill becomes a law: The Montana legislative process.

There are many opportunities during the process of a bill becoming law that we as MSCA members have the opportunity to get involved and advocate for our interests. The process a bill takes through the Montana Legislature to pass into law is long and confusing. The Legislative Services Division has a great visual aid that we have included below. Even if you are familiar with the process, please take the time to brush up on the process below.

## From Bill to Law: A Step-by-Step Narrative



**1. Introduction.** Bill is filed for introduction with Secretary of Senate or Chief Clerk of House.

**2. First reading.** Bill's title is posted, and bill is ordered printed on white paper.

**3. Committee reference.** Bill is referred to proper committee by Senate President or House Speaker. Referral is posted.

**4. Committee consideration.** Committee holds public hearing on bill, then discusses it. May vote to amend bill.

**5. Committee report.** Committee reports its recommendation that bill "do pass," "do pass as amended," or "do not pass."

**6. Second-reading calendar.** Simple "do pass" and "do not pass" reports are printed as such in journal. Text of amendments reported by committee is printed in full. Bills receiving favorable reports are printed on yellow paper in first house (tan paper in second house), incorporating any reported amendments, and are placed on calendar for second reading. Bills with "do not pass" reports are not placed on second-reading calendar unless a motion is made to that effect and passed. If "do not pass" report is adopted, bill drops out of further consideration.

**7. Second reading.** Entire body debates bill as "Committee of the Whole." Amendments may be offered and voted on. Bill defeated here drops out of further consideration.

**8. Third-reading calendar.** Bill approved by Committee of the Whole is ordered printed on blue paper in first house (salmon paper in second house), incorporating all amendments made up to that point. (This is known as an "engrossed" bill.)

**9. Third reading.** Bill subjected to simple "yes" or "no" vote by entire body, in which (by constitutional requirement) each member's vote must be recorded and printed in journal. No amendments may be considered. Bill defeated here drops out of further consideration.

**10. Transmittal** to other house. Same as Step 1 introduction, except other house works with blue copy.

**11. First reading.** Summary of title and history is posted.

**12. Committee reference.** See Step 3.

**13. Committee consideration.** See Step 4.

**14. Committee report.** Second-house committee phrases a favorable report as "be concurred in" or "be concurred in, as amended." Unfavorable report is "be not concurred in."

**15. Second-reading calendar.** Same as Step 6, except that instead of a yellow-paper copy, bill is prepared for second reading with committee amendments to blue copy included in bill and printed on tan paper. Bill with unfavorable report is not placed on calendar unless committee recommendation is reversed by full body.

**16. Second reading.** Same as Step 7.

**17. Third-reading calendar.** Same as Step 8, except reference bill is reprinted on salmon-colored paper and includes all amendments made in second house.

**18. Third reading.** Same as Step 9.

**19. Bill passed by both houses in identical form.** Enrolled and sent to Governor.

**20. Bill passed by both houses in different forms:**

Second house returns bill to house of origin approved with amendments, sent with message requesting concurrence in amendments.

Question is voted in Committee of the Whole, e.g., "Shall the (Senate) amendments to (House) Bill No. X be concurred in?" If vote in house of origin is in favor of concurrence, bill is enrolled.

If a motion is made and adopted that amendments not be concurred in, originating house will usually request a conference committee (or it may send a message to second house asking it to recede from its amendments). If a conference is sought, a motion is made to authorize Senate President or House Speaker to appoint a conference committee (regular or free) to meet with a like committee from other house to resolve differences. (Regular conference committees may consider only disputed amendments; free conference committees may revise any part of bill.) This action, if approved, is communicated to second house in a message, and second house then appoints a conference committee in same manner.

**21. Conference committee reports.** If conferees settle differences, each contingent reports to its parent body that bill be further amended in some fashion or that one house recede from amendments and that bill then be approved. Amendments adopted by conference committees are printed on green (House) or pink (Senate) paper. Adoption of conference committee report means house approves bill as conferees recommend.

If conferees cannot settle differences, they report their disagreement and either body may ask that a new conference committee be appointed.

**22. Enrollment.** Bill is checked for accuracy and printed. Correctly enrolled bill is delivered to presiding officer of house in which bill originated. After being signed and recorded in journal, bill is transmitted to other house where same procedure is followed.

**23. Governor's desk.** Governor either signs or vetoes bill or allows it to become law without his or her signature. Legislature may vote to override a veto if it has not adjourned.