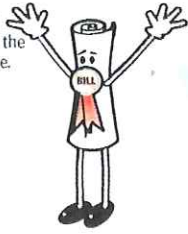


How bills become law in Kentucky

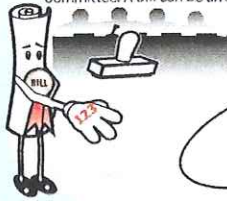
1 A bill is introduced

Bills are filed in the House or Senate.



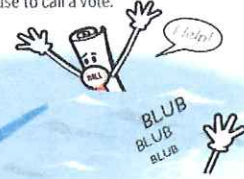
2 To committee

Once filed, a bill gets a number and is referred to a committee that handles similar topics. An anti-pollution bill, for example, would go to the House Natural Resources and Environment Committee. A bill can be amended in committee.



Troubled waters

A bill can be assigned to a committee whose chairman opposes it. The chairman can refuse to schedule the bill for a hearing — known as “stalling” it — or allow a hearing but refuse to call a vote.



Rescuing a bill

If a majority opposes holding a bill in committee, they can vote to “discharge” it from the committee and send it to the floor. But this rarely happens.



8 A bill becomes law if the governor ...

- ▶ Signs it.
- ▶ Allows it to become law without signing it.
- ▶ Vetoes the bill but the veto is overridden by a vote by a constitutional majority in each chamber — 51 in the House, 20 in the Senate.



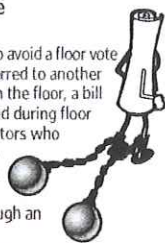
3 Floor vote

When a committee passes a bill, it goes back to the House or Senate for a floor debate and vote, where a majority of voting members, in most cases, is enough to pass it — 51 if all 100 House members vote, or 20 of 38 senators.



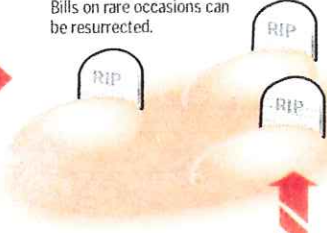
Adding baggage or gutting a bill

Opponents can try to avoid a floor vote by getting a bill referred to another committee. Once on the floor, a bill can also be amended during floor debates, and legislators who oppose it can try to minimize its impact — known as “gutting” it — through an amendment. Other amendments can improve a bill.



Bill graveyard

Bills on rare occasions can be resurrected.



5 Compromise

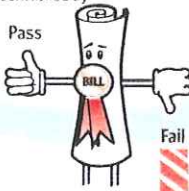
If the House and Senate pass different versions of a bill, each chamber appoints members to a conference committee to work out a compromise. The agreed-upon version then goes back to each chamber for a final vote.

If the conference committee fails to reach a compromise, the bill dies.



4 On to the other chamber

When the Senate passes a bill that was introduced there, it then goes to the House and is referred to a House committee, and vice versa. The bill goes through the same committee and floor vote procedures. In addition to the usual committee and floor debate risks, bills that pass one chamber can run into greater opposition once they go to the other side, especially when the House and Senate are controlled by different political parties.



Bills can be held “hostage” — set aside until the Senate or House acts on bills considered a priority by the other chamber.



Two versions of the same bill

6 Final vote

If the House and Senate accept the compromise, the bill passes and goes to the governor. If either chamber doesn't like the compromise, lawmakers can reject it.



7 Governor

The governor has 10 days to act on a bill after receiving it.

A bill will not become law if ...
▶ The governor vetoes the bill and the House or Senate fails to override the veto.

source: Courier-Journal research

By Steve Reed, The Courier-Journal