

Legislature 101

How a bill becomes a law in Maine

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Legislature in Maine

- 2 chambers: House of Representatives - 151 members
- Senate – 35 members
- Elected for a two year term
- Limited to four consecutive terms
- May run again after sitting out one session
- Districts based on population – redistricting occurs every ten years, based on most recent census.
- Leadership House – Speaker, majority leader and assistant , minority leader and assistant
- Leadership Senate – President, majority leader and assistant, minority leader and assistant
- These ten people serve as the Legislative Council.

Legislative session

- Regular sessions : first year, 100 legislative days; second year, 50 legislative days; special sessions
- Introduction of bills: First year, unlimited, second year, carry-overs and by approval of the Council
- Every bill must be sponsored by a Legislator

Administrative Organization

- Legislative Council serves as “Board of Directors”
- Executive Director is “CEO”
- Each office has a director and staff
- Nonpartisan staff

Operational Organization

- Parliamentary procedure and session rules:
Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate
- Joint standing committees (3 Senators and 10 Representatives) Senate chair and House chair
- Bills referred by both chambers to the committee of jurisdiction over the bill's subject matter
- Committees report back to both chambers with recommendation(s) for action

Committee Operations

- Public hearing: opportunity for citizens to have input. Hearing can't begin until the committee has a quorum present (quorum is a majority plus at least one member of each chamber
- Prime sponsor presents the bill; any cosponsor wishing to speak may do so
- Members of the public can testify For, Against, or Neither For Nor Against
- Oral and/or written testimony
- Hearings broadcast on the internet; written testimony posted after the hearing
- Hearing continues until everyone wishing to speak has done so.

Committee Operations (continued)

- After the public hearing, the committee holds a work session(s). Although the public can attend, they cannot speak unless invited by the Chair. The work session is for the committee members to decide the fate of the bill.
- **A bill dies if A] The sponsor withdraws (LTW), or B] The committee unanimously votes Ought Not To Pass (ONTP)**

Committee Operations (continued)

- Unless the bill is killed as described above, the committee has several options:
- Unanimously approve as written
- Make changes (amend)
- Rewrite the entire bill
- Divided report(s)
- When the committee takes its vote, they return the bill to both chambers for disposition

Once back to the chambers

- Starts in the chamber of the prime sponsor
- Goes back and forth between the chambers three times
- Can be amended by either or both chambers
- Any amendments must be approved by both chambers
- Final votes are taken.
- To pass, 50% plus one member of both chambers must approve
- Approved bills then go to the Governor who can:
 - 1. Sign the bill
 - 2. Let the bill become law without a signature
 - 3. Veto the bill
- If a bill is vetoed, 2/3 plus one member of both chambers must vote to over ride the veto

When Money is involved

- Maine's Constitution requires a balanced budget. Any bill that has a cost that could put the budget out of balance must also be approved by the Appropriations Committee. Before presented to the Governor, all money bills which have been approved by the committee of jurisdiction and both chambers go on the appropriations table. At the end of each session after the budget has been approved, if there is any money available, the committee "runs the table"