



Navigating the State Legislative Process and Being an Effective Advocate

Office of Senator Jason Lewis · February, 2019

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Structure of State Government

Legislative Branch

- House of Representatives (2 year term)
- State Senate (2 year term)

Enact laws, including the annual state budget

Executive Branch

- Governor (4 year term)
- Cabinet Secretaries and Agencies

Implement laws, including the drafting of regulations; and deliver state services

Judicial Branch

- Supreme Judicial Court (appointed)
- Trial Court
 - Probate and Family
 - Housing
 - Juvenile
 - District and others
- Appeals Court

Adjudicate the law

How a Bill Becomes Law – Part 1 of 2



- Lead sponsor proposes the bill
- Co-Sponsors support the bill

- Public can testify in person or provide written comments
- Each bill gets a favorable report, or is studied (tabled). Favorably reported bills may be amended by the committee.

- Further evaluates the bill and can make additional changes
- Decides whether bill moves to the floor – with input from Senate or House leadership

How a Bill Becomes Law – Part 2 of 2

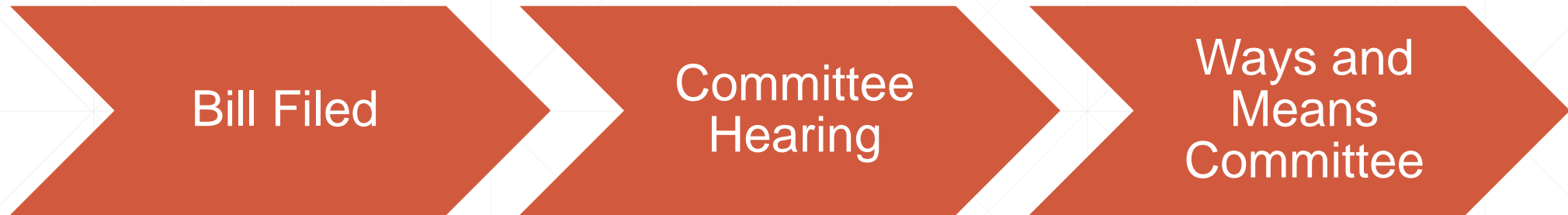


- Bill debated and voted upon
- Must pass both House and Senate to move forward

- Sometimes required if House and Senate versions of the bill are different
- 3 Senators and 3 Representatives

- Governor can sign bill into law; veto it; or send it back with amendment
- Has 10 days to act

How to Support (or Oppose) a Bill Through the Process – Part 1 of 2

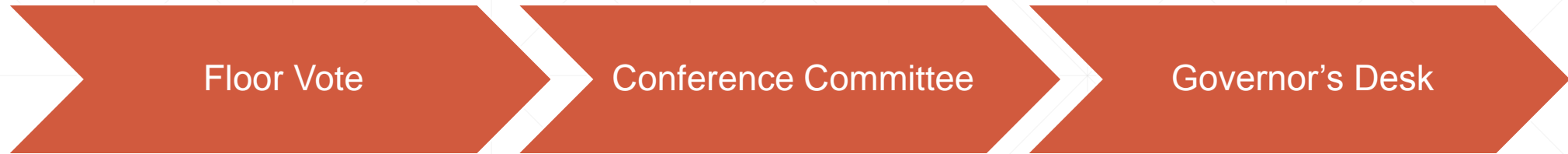


- Contact your legislator(s) with an idea for a new bill
- Ask your legislator(s) to co-sponsor a bill

- Attend the public hearing
- Testify in person or provide written testimony
- Contact the committee chairs

- Contact the committee chair
- Ask your legislator(s) to weigh in with the committee

How to Support (or Oppose) a Bill Through the Process– Part 2 of 2



- View proposed amendments to the bill online
- Ask your legislator(s) to vote in favor (or opposition) to the bill and specific amendments
- Watch the debate from the House or Senate gallery, or online

- Contact the members of the conference committee
- Ask your legislator(s) to weigh in with the committee

- Contact the Governor's office to ask them to sign (or veto, or amend) the bill
- Ask your legislator(s) to weigh in with the Governor

Tips for Effective Advocacy

- Do your homework on the issue(s)
- Communicate your input as simply and clearly as you can (personal stories or experience are effective)
- Find an organization or coalition that supports (or opposes) the bill you like (or dislike) and let them know you want to help
- Communicate with your legislator(s)
 - Meet them in person at their office hours; an event in the district; or at the State House
 - Call their State House office or send an e-mail to express your opinion
- Encourage others to get involved

Questions?

- Call us at (617) 722-1206
- E-mail us at Jason.Lewis@masenate.gov
- Check out these resources:
 - For information on bills; access the General and Special Laws; find out who your legislators are; watch legislative hearings; and more, please visit <https://malegislature.gov>
 - To learn more about how a bill becomes a law, <https://malegislature.gov/CreateYourOwnBill>