

There are basic rules that guide the movement of legislation through the Rhode Island General Assembly. Although these rules vary somewhat from session to session, and although certain exceptions are permitted, generally speaking, bills follow a prescribed course through both chambers of the legislature (the House of Representatives and the Senate) to be enacted into law.

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### 1) The bill is introduced and numbered.

Any Representative (a legislator from the House of Representatives) or Senator (a legislator from the Senate) may introduce a bill in their respective chamber. The first draft of any bill is crafted and reviewed by an office called legislative council. Each bill receives its own unique identifying number and is referred to by that number throughout its lifecycle.

### 2) The bill is referred to a committee.

The Speaker of the House or the President of the Senate refers the bill to the appropriate committee.

### 3) The committee meets and considers the bill

Committee meeting agendas are posted in advance, and can be found on the [RI General Assembly website](http://www.rilegislature.gov) ([www.rilegislature.gov](http://www.rilegislature.gov)). The meetings are open to the public, and all members of the public are welcome to give written and/or verbal testimony on the bill once it is introduced. For more information on how to testify, [read our "10 Tips For Testifying Before a Legislative Committee" one-pager](#) ([www.riaclu.org/advocacy101](http://www.riaclu.org/advocacy101)).

### 4) At the hearing, the committee may:

- Recommend the bill be passed as introduced
- Recommend it be passed with amendments
- Recommend a substitute bill be passed (referred to as "Sub A," "Sub A/2," or "Sub B")
- Recommend the bill be considered by another committee
- Recommend the bill be postponed indefinitely, or "held for further study," which means that the bill can be brought up again at a future date, or left in the committee with no action.

\*Most bills are held for further study at the first hearing and then considered again at a later date.

- Report the bill to the house floor with no recommendation

### 5) The bill is debated on the floor.

Following the committee hearing, and if the committee recommends passage of the bill, it is placed on the chamber's calendar for consideration, debate, and possible amendment on the floor.

### 6) They vote.

After the bill has been debated, each member votes. Separate votes are taken on each amendment or change to the bill. If a majority of the legislators present vote in favor of the bill, it passes. Otherwise, the bill fails and does not move forward.

### 7) Repeat steps 1-6 in the other chamber.

Both chambers must pass identical versions of the same bill in order for it to go to the Governor's desk to become law. If the second chamber amends a bill passed by the first chamber (either in committee, or on the chamber floor, known as a "floor amendment"), the bill returns to the first chamber for consideration and a vote on the amendments. When both chambers pass the same bill, it is called "passage in concurrence." Upon passage in concurrence by the second chamber, the bill is forwarded to the Governor. If the second chamber does not approve it in committee or it is not considered by the full house, then the bill does not move forward

### 8) The Governor considers the bill and:

- Signs the bill into law.
- Transmits the bill without a signature, in which case, the bill becomes law, OR
- Vetoes the bill and return it to the legislature (If three-fifths (3/5) of the voting members present approve the bill in both houses, it becomes law despite the Governor's veto.)

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