
THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS IN CALIFORNIA



COALITION FOR
COMPASSIONATE CARE
OF CALIFORNIA



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- Bill to law process steps
- Tracking a bill
- Terms & definitions



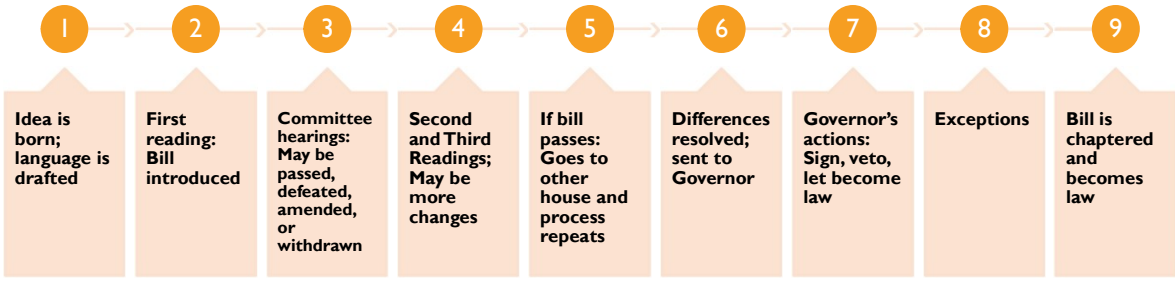
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HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW IN CALIFORNIA



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BILL TO LAW PROCESS STEPS



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STEP 1: AN IDEA IS BORN & BILL DRAFTED



- Someone, often referred to as bill's "sponsor," sees a need or problem to solve
- Legislator takes idea and agrees to be the bill's "author"
- Author sends draft to Legislative Counsel Office; written into bill format
- Author reviews draft; delivers to Assembly Chief Clerk or Secretary of the Senate; bill number assigned
- In Assembly: AB-XXX; In Senate: SB-XXX

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STEP 2: FIRST READING; BILL INTRODUCED



- Bill introduced on floor of house of origin (Assembly or Senate)
- The First Reading occurs on floor: includes bill number, name of author, bill's title
- Bill sent to Office of State Printer and printed (published on <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>)
- Bills (excluding the Budget bills) cannot be acted upon until 30 days after they are introduced
- Last day for bill introduction is late February: in 2025, Feb. 21

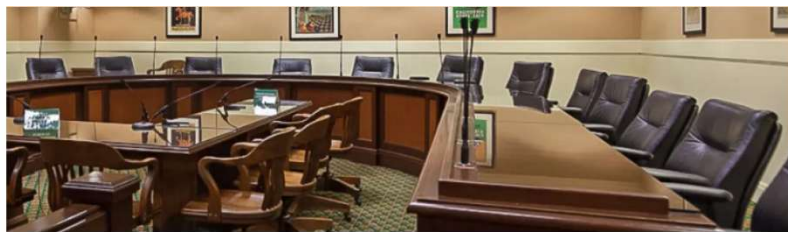
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STEP 3: COMMITTEE HEARINGS



- House of origin's Rules Committee assigns bill to policy committee for its first hearing
- Bills assigned by subject matter; may go to more than one committee
- During committee hearing:
 - Author presents the bill
 - People testify in support or opposition
 - Committee acts on the bill
- Bills can be amended in committee (also on floor of house hearing the bill)
- If passed by committee, and entails >\$150,000 in funding, bill goes to Appropriations

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STEP 3: COMMITTEE HEARINGS (CONT'D)

- Action by the public:
 - Letters supporting/opposing bill sent to author & committee before bill heard in committee
- Bill Analysis:
 - Bill analysis prepared by committee prior to bill's hearing. Includes list of organizations for/against bill
 - Accessible on bill's page on <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>

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SUBMITTING LETTERS TO THE COMMITTEE



- To committee responsible for reviewing/analyzing existing bill
- Send prior to a bill hearing
- Letters to committee are reflected in bill analysis and are part of the committee's bill record
- Observe legislative deadlines. Deadlines are listed on California State Assembly and California State Senate websites.; select relevant committee for instructions
- Committee rules and deadlines vary: Consult committee's webpage or call committee directly

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THREE WAYS BILLS CAN BE HALTED BY COMMITTEE

- **Held in committee:** Bill did not get a majority of "aye" votes to pass out of policy or fiscal committee.
- **Held under submission:** After bill heard in committee, more work on bill needed. No motion made to move bill out of committee (because it would likely fail). Bill may be set for another hearing or may be withdrawn by author.
- **Held without recommendation:** After bill heard in committee, there's no desire to work more on it. No motion made to move bill out of committee (because it would likely fail). Bill may be set for another hearing or withdrawn by author.



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SUSPENSE FILE

- After passing out of a policy committee, bills with a price tag of >\$150,000 are sent to their respective Appropriations committee (Assembly or Senate), which is responsible for deciding which bills to fund.
- Hundreds of bills pile up – suspended in the legislative process – until the suspense file hearing, when the Appropriations committees decide (all at one time) which bills get to move on for debate.
- At the suspense hearing, the Appropriations chair reads through the list of legislation, auctioneer-style, and announces which bills will live to see another day or die.




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STEP 4: SECOND AND THIRD READINGS OF BILL

- Bills that pass committee read a second time on floor of house of origin
- “Floor analysis” of bill prepared prior to third reading
- During third reading, author explains bill, members debate bill, roll call vote by entire house
- Most bills require majority vote (21 in Senate; 41 in Assembly)

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SPECIAL CASES AND PROCESSES

- Two-thirds vote (27 in Senate; 54 in Assembly) required for:
 - Bills with immediate effect
 - Budget bills and others requiring appropriation
 - Constitutional amendments
 - Tax levies
 - Veto overrides
- Noncontroversial bills placed on Consent Calendar: all voted on at once

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STEP 5

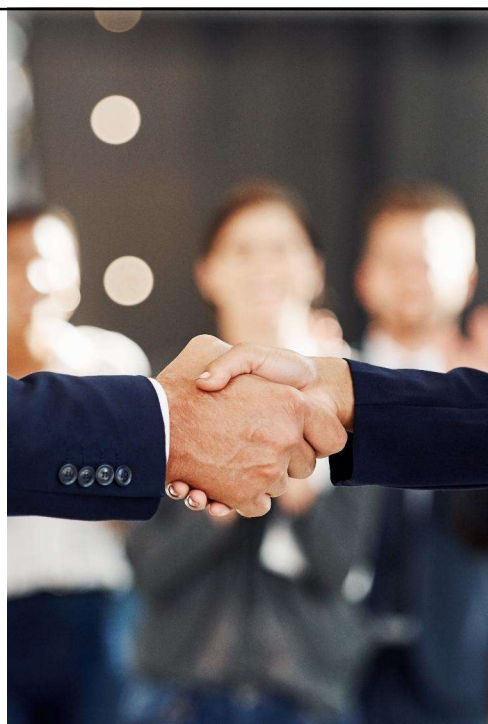
NEXT HOUSE REPEATS PROCESS

1. Bills approved in house of origin proceed to the other house
2. Moves through same process (hearings, readings, vote)
3. If bill amended in 2nd house, goes back to house of origin for concurrence

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STEP 6: RESOLUTION OF DIFFERENCES

- No agreement during concurrence: two-house conference committee resolves differences
- Conference committee comprises 3 Assembly and 3 Senate members working on compromise
- Amended bill voted on by both houses



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STEP 7: GOVERNOR TAKES ACTION



- Bill sent to Governor after both houses approve bill
- Within 12 days, Governor must take one of three actions:
 - Sign bill into law
 - Allow bill to become law without signature
 - Veto bill
- At the end of a session, Governor has until September 30 to sign all bills passed before September 1
- Governor's veto can be overturned by 2/3 vote of both the Assembly and the Senate

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SOME EXCEPTIONS

When Governor signs a bill, it becomes law except ...

- **Urgency measures:** Take effect immediately after Governor signs bill or allows bill to become law without a signature. Urgency bills need a two-thirds vote and affect public health, safety, or peace.
- **Vetoed bills:** Can become law if 2/3 of both houses vote to override the veto.
- **No action by Governor within 12 days:** Bill becomes law without signature
- **Simple resolutions:** Do not require the Governor's signature and only require vote in house in origin
- **Constitutional amendments:** Do not require Governor's signature but must pass by favorable vote at next statewide election to become effective.

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STEP 9: BILL IS CHAPTERED (RECORDED AS LAW)

- Bills passed by Legislature and signed by Governor are chaptered into law by the Secretary of State
- Chaptered bills become part of the California Codes
- California Codes are a comprehensive collection of laws grouped by subject matter

Assembly Bill now recorded as Chapter in California Codes

→

Assembly Bill No. 2207

CHAPTER 332

An act to amend Section 1568.17 of the Health and Safety Code, to amend Section 14012 of the Unemployment Insurance Code, and to amend Section 5771 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public health.

[Approved by Governor September 21, 2024. Filed with Secretary of State September 21, 2024.]

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TRACKING A BILL THROUGH THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS




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TRACKING A BILL

<https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>

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Bill Number:
 Session Year:
 Keyword(s):

House:
 Author:
 For a phrase: "Surround it with Quotes"

Statute Year:
 Code:

Chapter Number:
 Code Section:

Bills Returned: 0

Enter bill # in search or search on keywords

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TRACKING A BILL

<https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>

Bill # and title → AB-92 Patient visitation. (2025-2026)

Select options from menu → Text | Votes | History | Bill Analysis | Today's Law As Amended | Compare Versions | Status | Comments To Author

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TRACKING A BILL

AB-92 Patient visitation. (2025-2026)

Text	Votes	History	Bill Analysis	Today's Law As Amended	Compare Versions	Status	Comments To Author
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Full text of bill; amendments shown with tracked changes

Table of dates and actions taken

How this bill will affect/ change existing law, with all text in context of current statutes

Where the bill is in the process; includes dates for upcoming actions such as hearings

Mechanism for sending comments about the bill to the author; requires registration

Detail of votes cast by Member, in committee or on Floor

Helpful analysis of bill prepared after hearings and prior to Floor vote; lists sponsors, any organizations or persons who have registered support or opposition; fiscal impact

Starting with "As introduced," provides comparisons of versions of bill as amended through the process

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TRACKING A BILL

Click here to display, download, or print bill PDF

Click here to add bill to automatic tracking (see next screen)

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TRACKING A BILL

Select All Notification Points	Description
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Across the Desk	A notification of when the committee recommendation crosses the desk. Includes committee recommendations that re-refer the measure to another committee.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> To Committee	A notification of when each measure is originally referred to either a Senate or Assembly committee as well as any subsequent re-referrals from the floor. A notification will be sent if the action is later rescinded or reconsidered.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amended	A notification of when a measure is amended on second or third reading as well as measures amended by author's amendments. A notification will be sent if the action is later rescinded or reconsidered.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Floor Results	A notification of how a measure performs on the Senate or Assembly floor: pass; fail; moved to the inactive file or special consent calendar; or if the measure is returned to the other house. A notification will be sent if the action is later rescinded or reconsidered.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enrolled and Governor's Response	A notification of when a measure is enrolled with the Governor; if it's approved or vetoed, or if the bill was returned by the Governor at the request of either house.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final Results	A notification indicating the final action of a measure: its chapter number; if it failed or died in committee; or died pursuant to the Constitution.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measure Set For Hearing	Measure Set For Hearing

Select all or some of these actions to track

Click here; you will receive email notices of updates

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TERMS AND DEFINITIONS



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TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- Across the desk: Official act of introducing a bill or resolution
- Act: A bill passed by Legislature and approved by Governor
- Amendment: Alterations made to text of bill during legislative process
- Appropriation: Amount of money set aside for specific purpose and designated from specific source
- Assembly: The House of the California Legislature: 80 Members, elected for 2-year terms, from districts apportioned on the basis of population.
- Author: Member of the legislature who introduces a bill or resolution
- Bill: Draft of proposed law introduced by a Member of the legislature
- Bill analysis: Summary of the purpose, content, and effect of a proposed measure or amendment, prepared for committee or floor proceedings
- Chapter: After a bill has been signed by Governor, Sec. of State assigns the bill a Chapter number
- Companion bill: An identical bill introduced in the other house
- Concurrence: Approval by house of origin to changes made to bill in other house
- Conference committee: Committee with Members from both houses meeting to reconcile differences between Assembly and Senate versions of bill
- Consent calendar: A group of noncontroversial bills passed by a committee to another committee or the full Assembly or Senate
- Digest: Summary of effect of proposed bill on current law
- Do Pass: Recommendation by committee; moves bill to next committee or to the Floor for vote
- Dropped: When an author has decided not to pursue passage of a bill

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TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- **Effective date:** Date when bill takes effect (often but not always January 1 of year following passage)
- **Enactment or Enacted into Law:** Act of passing legislation in both houses, which is signed or allowed to become law by Governor
- **Engrossed bill:** Proofread bill with all amendments
- **Enrolled bill:** Bill that has passed both houses but not yet acted on by Governor
- **Extraordinary session:** Session of legislature called by Governor for specific purpose
- **First Reading:** Introduction of bill to house of origin; assigned a number, printed, and sent to Rules committee for assignment to policy committee
- **Fiscal bill:** Any measure that requires appropriation or expenditure of funds
- **Floor:** Portion of the Assembly or Senate reserved to the Members; or, term used to describe the location of a bill during the session (“on the Floor”)
- **Gallery:** Balconies of the chambers from which visitors may observe the Floor proceedings
- **Gut and Amend:** When amendments to a bill remove the current contents in their entirety and replace them with different provisions
- **Hearing:** A committee meeting convened to consider and act on or gather information on a specific topic or group of bills
- **Held in committee:** When bill fails to get sufficient votes to pass out of a committee (effectively ends bill’s progress toward becoming law)

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TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- **Held under submission:** An action taken by a committee when a bill needs more work or further discussion but there is no motion for the bill to progress out of committee; bill may be scheduled for a later hearing.
- **Held without recommendation:** An action taken by a committee when there is no indication that the committee wants the bill to progress out of committee or motion to vote to move the bill out of committee; bill may be scheduled for a later hearing.
- **Hijack:** An action to delete the contents of a bill and insert entirely new provisions. May occur with or without the author’s permission.
- **History:** A weekly publication (or tab on legislature.ca.gov website) that gives a comprehensive list of all actions taken on every bill
- **House:** Refers to either Assembly or Senate
- **House of origin:** House in which bill is introduced
- **Inactive file:** The portion of the Daily File containing legislation that is ready for Floor consideration, but, for a variety of reasons, is dormant
- **Initiative:** Method of lawmaking that puts a proposal on the ballot for popular vote
- **Interim:** Period of time between adjournment of first year of 2-year session (biennium)
- **Lay on the table:** A motion to set aside a matter (e.g., amendments) before the house which may not be taken up again during Floor session. The motion is not debatable.
- **Legislative analyst:** A person engaged to present views of a group or organization to legislators: a.k.a. lobbyist.

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TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- **Legislative Counsel:**The attorney for the legislature, elected jointly by both houses; among other responsibilities, prepares bill language
- **Lower house:**The Assembly
- **May revision (or revise):** Estimate of revenues and expenditures, submitted by the Governor no later than May 14, revised from estimates submitted in January
- **Measure:**Any bill, resolution, or Constitutional amendment acted on by legislature
- **Policy committees:**As distinct from Rules or Appropriations committees, standing committees of legislature which hear and cast preliminary votes on bills
- **Reading:** Presentation of bill to the house by reading its title; 3 Readings are required in each house
- **Referral:** Bill referrals are made by the Assembly and Senate Rules committees to policy committees of their respective houses.
- **Resolution:**An opinion expressed by one or both houses which does not have the force of law; concurrent and joint resolutions are voted on by both houses but do not require Governor's signature
- **Second Reading:**The House approves or denies committee recommendations at Second Reading, usually without debate or vote
- **Senate:**The upper house of the California legislature consisting of 40 Members elected from districts apportioned on the basis of population, one-half of whom are elected or re-elected every 2 years for 4-year terms.

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TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- **Session:**The period during which the legislature meets; California's legislative session is biennial, that is, it occurs over a 2-year period
- **Sponsor:**The individual or entity that develops legislation and advocates for its passage
- **Spot bill:**A bill that amends existing law in a nonsubstantive way; may be placeholder for later, fuller text introduced as amendments
- **Sunset date:**The date at which the law expires unless extended by the legislature
- **Suspense file:**A bill or set of bills, with a fiscal impact, set aside in Appropriations committee by a majority of Members present and voting; may be heard at a later hearing
- **Third house:** Refers to lobbyists
- **Third Reading:** Stage at which bills are eligible for Floor debate and final vote
- **Trailer bill:** Legislation that implements specific changes to the law in order to enact the State budget. Generally, a separate "trailer bill" is needed for each major area of budget appropriation, such as transportation, human services, education, revenue, etc. These bills are generally negotiated as part of the entire budget package each fiscal year.
- **Upper house:**The Senate.
- **Urgency clause:** Language in a bill which states the bill will take effect immediately upon enactment. A Floor vote on the urgency clause must precede a vote on the bill. A two-thirds vote is required for adoption of the clause and for passage of the bill.
- **Veto:**The formal action of the Governor disapproving a measure by returning it to its House of origin. The Governor's veto may be overridden by a two-thirds vote of each House.

Adapted from: <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/publicationsTemplate.xhtml>

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THANK YOU



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