How A Bill Becomes Law: The Idaho Legislative Process

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The Basics

- A bill is a proposal for the enactment, amendment or repeal of existing law or the appropriation of public money.
- A bill can start in either the House or Senate except for bills that raise revenue which must originate in the House.
- A bill must pass both the House and Senate.
- A bill must be signed by the Governor (or not vetoed) in order to become law.
More Basics

- A joint memorial is a legislative petition addressed to the President, Congress, or a federal agency.
- A joint resolution is a measure requiring two-thirds vote of House and Senate to amend the Idaho Constitution or ratify an amendment to the US Constitution.
- A concurrent resolution is an action to regulate the affairs of the legislature.
- Joint memorials or resolutions must pass both the House and Senate.
- Memorials and resolutions are not subject to approval of the Governor.
The Role of Committees

- The House and Senate are made up of several germane committees.
- Each committee consists of a chair, vice chair, and committee members.
- Committee chairs and vice chairs are of the majority party.
- The majority party also comprises a majority of each germane committee.
The Committee Chair

- In Idaho, committee chairs have great power.
- A committee chair can choose to not give a bill a hearing.
- If you hear that a chair has “put a bill in a drawer” it means the chair has filed the bill away and is not planning on hearing the bill.
So how does a bill become law?
Step 1: Draft Legislation

- Legislative Services Office staff draft and edit legislation.
- A “purple slip” is required before legislation can be drafted.
- The proposals sponsor prepares a statement of purpose with fiscal note.
Step 2: The Bill is Introduced

- The committee germane to the bill (i.e.: Revenue and Taxation) holds an introductory or “print” hearing to determine if a bill should be formally introduced.
- Only the proposal’s sponsor may present information to the committee.
- The committee can move to introduce the proposal or return it to the sponsor.
Step 3: The Bill Goes to Committee

- After introduction, a bill can be fully heard in committee.
- At a full hearing, anyone can provide testimony.
- Committee members examine the testimony and may ask questions of presenters.
- After testimony is given, the committee debates the bill.
- The committee may move to support the bill, amend the bill, or hold the bill.
- A motion to hold “kills” the bill.
Step 4: Voting by Full Chamber

- Upon clearing the committee, a bill is brought to the floor of the body for a vote.
- Only the members of the body are allowed to examine and debate the bill.
- If a bill is recommended by committee for amendment, amendments are considered by the full body, not the committee.
- If the bill is approved, it is transmitted to the other chamber.
Step 5: Bill Goes to Committee

- After transmittal, a bill can be fully heard in committee by the other chamber.
- At a full hearing, anyone can provide testimony.
- Committee members examine the testimony and may ask questions of presenters.
- After testimony is given, the committee debates the bill.
- The committee may move to support the bill, amend the bill, or hold the bill.
- A motion to hold “kills” the bill.
Step 6: Voting by Full Membership

- Upon clearing the committee, a bill is brought to the floor of the body for a vote.
- Only the members of the body are allowed to examine and debate the bill.
- If a bill is recommended by committee for amendment, amendments are considered by the full body, not the committee.
- If the bill is approved, it is transmitted to the Governor.
Step 7: The Bill Goes to the Governor

- After a bill passes both the House and the Senate, it is transmitted to the Governor.
- The Governor has ten days to sign or veto a bill while the legislature is in session and five days if the legislature has adjourned.
- A bill becomes law if it is neither signed or vetoed by the Governor.
Step 8: Enactment

- If a bill is passed by both the House and Senate and approved by the Governor, it will become law.
- An approved bill becomes law on its enactment date.
- Most bills become law on July 1.
- A bill may be enacted on another date as specified in the legislation.
- Bills can also be enacted retroactively if so stated in the legislation.
How to Get Involved
Build Relationships

- Get to know your legislators
- Ask for cell phone numbers (texting is more effective than email)
- Meet with them when they are home over the weekend
- Schedule regular calls in session between your county and your legislators
- Be honest
- Provide factual information
- Let them know how legislation impacts your county
Watch Committee Hearings

- Idaho in Session
Testify Before a Committee

- In person
- Virtually
- Check in with IAC staff if you need assistance.

https://legislature.idaho.gov/

Any questions?