

Legislative Process



Georgia: Chamber Overview

236 Legislators in the Georgia General Assembly

**56 Senators
180 Representatives**

**Districts drawn by population:
Senator Represents: 175,000 Residents
Representatives Represent: 55,000 Residents**



State Leadership



Governor, Nathan Deal



Senate

**Lt. Governor
Casey Cagle**

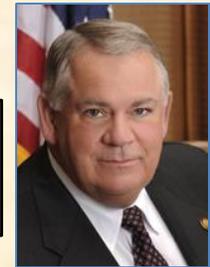
President Pro Tempore

**Majority
Leadership**

**Minority
Leadership**

**Senate Committee
Chairmen**

House



**Speaker of the House
David Ralston**

Speaker Pro Tempore

**Majority
Leadership**

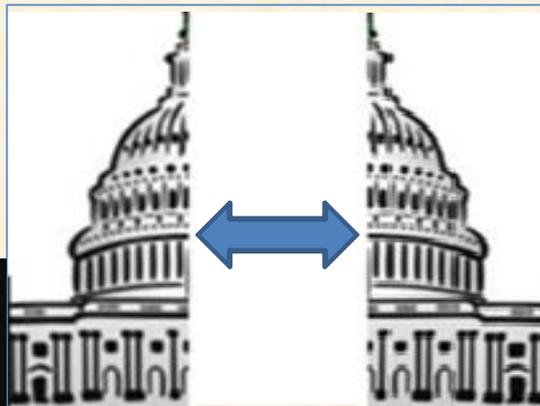
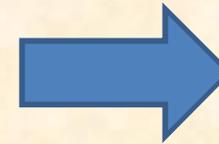
**Minority
Leadership**

**House Committee
Chairmen**



How does a bill become a law?

START →



**SENATE
VOTE**

**HOUSE
VOTE**



Governor →





How a Bill Becomes a Law...

Who's Idea?

A Legislator, an industry or citizen sees need for a new law or changes to an existing law and decides to introduce a bill.

Drafting

Legislator goes to Office of Legislative Counsel. There, an attorney advises the legislator on legal issues and drafts bill.

Introduction & First Reading

Legislator files bill with the Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate. On the legislative day after filing, the bill is formally introduced. In chamber, the bill's title is read during period of first readings. Immediately after first reading, the presiding officer (Lt. Governor in the Senate / Speaker in the House) assigns the bill to a standing committee.



Second Reading

In the House only, on next legislative day, Clerk reads the bill's title (second reading) in the chamber, although the actual bill is now in committee. In Senate, second reading comes after bill is passed out of the committee.

Committee Action

The bill is considered by committee in a committee hearing. The author, other legislators and interest groups may testify on behalf or against the bill.

After all testimony is given, the full committee may have the opportunity to vote on the bill at the Chairman's discretion. Committee options are:

- Recommend Bill or Resolution Do Pass**- The bill moves forward
- Recommend Do NOT Pass**- Bill fails in committee and does not move forward
- Recommend Do Pass with changes (amendments or substitutes)**- Changes made during the testimony or before the committee meeting is held
- Hold Bill**- The Bill will sit in committee for further consideration

The Bill is off to the Rules Committee. The Rules committee decides which bills to bring to a full Chamber vote.



Third Reading

Once the floor session begins, the presiding officer (Lt. Gov. / Speaker) calls the bill up from the Rules Calendar, Clerk or Secretary reads bill's title (third reading). Bill is now ready for floor debate, amendments, and voting. After debate, main question is called and members vote.

Transmittal to the Other Chamber

If bill is approved by majority of total membership of that house, it is sent to the other house and the process begins all over again.

Bill is passed if:

"If second chamber passes bill, it is returned to chamber where bill was introduced.

"If amendments or changes were made while in the second chamber and first chamber rejects changes, the first chamber can "insist", meaning, they refuse to change the original bill that was sent over. If the Chambers continue to "insist" on their position, a conference committee may be appointed. Conference committee is made up of usually three members from each house. Negotiations ensue and a committee report of negotiations is presented to both the Senate and the House Chamber. If the report is accepted by both chambers- the bill passes.

"Bill is enrolled and sent to the Governor (if requested). Otherwise, all enrolled bills sent to Governor following adjournment sine die.



Governors Signature or Veto

Governor may sign bill or do nothing, and bill becomes law. Governor may veto bill, which requires two-thirds of members of each house to override.



Act

Act and other laws enacted at the session are printed in the Georgia Laws series. Also, act is incorporated into the Official Code of Georgia Annotated. Act becomes effective the following July 1, unless a different effective date is provided in act.



Political Lingo- What is this?

First Readers

First readers is a summary that is printed every day of ALL introduced legislation during session. First readers will have a synopsis of the proposed bill and which committee the bill is referred to. Legislators and interest groups will read first readers and then determine if the bill has anything to do with the district / industry they represent.

First Reader Example

Bill Author

2013-2014 Regular Session - **HB 19**

Dropout Deterrent Act; enact

HB= House Bill / SB = Senate Bill

Sponsored By

(1) [Waites, Keisha 60th](#)(2) [Floyd, Hugh 99th](#)(3) [Abrams, Stacey 89th](#)

Bill Cosponsor

Committees

HC: [Education](#)

House / Senate Committee Referred

First Reader Summary

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Subpart 2 of Part 1 of Article 16 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to compulsory attendance in elementary and secondary education, so as to enact the "Dropout Deterrent Act"; to provide for a short title; to revise the age of mandatory education; to provide for related matters; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.



Political Terminology

Session- Refers to when the General Assembly is meeting. There are 40 days in a session. The days are not always consecutive.

Bill Dropped- This means that the bill was put in the “hopper” for first readers.

Hopper- Refers to the Clerk / Secretary of the Senate where the bills are summarized and printed for first readers.

Bill Dies- A bill “dying” simply means that the bill does not move forward in the current session. However, since GA is on a two year session, a bills movement carries over to the next year.

Bill Moves- This means that the bill is actively “moving” through the legislative process.

Two Year Session- GA is on a two year election cycle and session schedule. If the session is the 2015-2016 session, that means any bills presented in 2015, will carry forward to the 2016 session. Therefore, any movement that was made the first year carries over. If the bill does not pass during the second term of the session, you have to start from scratch and reintroduce the bill- going through the entire process again.

Committee- Each Chamber splits members of the General Assembly into different committees. Each committee has a certain number of members assigned and is given a Committee Chairman that is in charge of setting committee meetings. The chairman is also allowed to “bring up” on bills at their discretion. Therefore, if the committee chairman does not like a bill, they don’t have to “hear it” during their set committee meetings. The chairman also gets to decide if a vote will be taken on the legislation. Simply because the bill is “heard” in committee, does not mean that it will receive a vote to move forward.



Political Terminology

Testify- Testimony for *or* against the bill is given during the committee meeting process.

Amendment- During committee testimony, committee members may offer amendments *or* changes to the presented legislation. The committee then votes for or against the offered changes. Amendments can also be offered on the Chamber floor before a final vote is taken.

Do Pass / Reported Favorably- This means that the bill “passed” the vote to move forward to the Rules Committee.

Rules Committee- Once bills pass favorably out of a committee, the bill is sent to Rules. The Rules committee sets the General Calendar for the bills that will receive a full floor vote in the respective chambers.

Agree / Disagree- If amendments or changes are made during the bills cycle through both houses, the bill has to go back to the original chamber for an “agree”. This means the chamber that originated the bill is ok with the changes made in the other chamber. If the original chamber “disagrees”, then the bill is sent back again. There can be a total of THREE disagrees before a conference committee is assigned for negotiations to take place.



Political Terminology

Conference Committee- If the chambers cannot agree on amendments or bill changes from the other chamber, a conference committee is appointed. The conference committee is usually made up of 3 members from each chamber that will try and negotiate terms of the bill. The committee then presents both chambers with a Conference Committee Report.

Bill Stripped- If interest groups / legislators get desperate; they may take a bill that has already passed one Chamber and is considered “dead” in the other and “strip” the bill of its current language, inserting their own language.

Stripped Language Example- In 2013 HB 138 dealing with EBT cards was not moving out of the committee it was referred in. The author then took Senate Bill 161 that had already passed the Senate and was not “moving” in the house, stripped the language and put in the HB 138 language. This measure then allowed the bill to be heard in a new house committee, where it passed and was sent to House Rules. If the bill had passed “Rules” and been sent to the floor, the House could have voted on it passing the legislation.

Tack On / Christmas Tree Bill- If there is bill that is considered “Germane”, meaning the same code section / subject matter, then amendments will be given on the floor to “tack” or put on to the bill that is receiving a floor vote. This allows people the opportunity to get legislation passed that never received a hearing or was not passed in the other chamber. Christmas tree bills are bills where many interest groups tack on language. In other words, it’s like decorating a Christmas tree with many different ornaments.

Germane- Germane means that the bill is considered to be in the same subject matter / code section of a moving bill.



Political Terminology

Chamber- This is the room in which all of the official votes of the General Assembly take place. There is a Senate Chamber and a House Chamber.

On the Ropes- The term “on the ropes” literally means that an elected official or lobbyist is standing beside the roped off area outside of the Chamber. The rope line is where citizens and lobbyists summon elected officials to come out of the Chamber to talk to them.

On the Floor- This term denotes that an elected official or government staffer is literally standing on the Chamber floor.

In the Well- This term is used when an elected official is speaking from the front of the Chamber to other members of the General Assembly.

Crossover Day- Crossover day is day 30 of 40 during the legislative session. Day 30 is called “crossover day” because this is the last day that legislation can “cross” or move to the other chamber and have time to pass.

Sine Die- Adjournment **sine die** (from the Latin "without day") means "without assigning a day for a further meeting or hearing". To adjourn an assembly **sine die** is to adjourn it for an indefinite period. A legislative body adjourns **sine die** when it adjourns without appointing a day on which to appear or assemble again. Sine die is Day 40 of Georgia’s session.



The Players

