

Government Primer 101 – The Legislative Process and the Importance of Advocacy

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Q - How many members of the Ohio General Assembly are there?

- A – 132 total
- 99 House Members and 33 Senate Members.



Q – What are their terms of office?

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- A – 2-year term for House Members and 4-year term for Senate Members. Both have a maximum of 8 years, meaning 4 Elections for House members and 2 Elections for Senate Members.



Q – What types of legislation are there?

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- A – Bills and Resolutions. A bill is a document by which members of the General Assembly propose to enact new law or amend or repeal existing law. Resolutions are a formal expression of the opinions and wishes of the General Assembly, do not have the force of law, and do not require the approval of the Governor.



How a Bill Becomes a Law

- All legislation begins as an idea. This idea may originate with a member of the General Assembly, an administrative agency, the Governor, a special interest group, or a private citizen.
- A legislator requests the Legislative Services Commission, the non-partisan bill drafting agency of the General Assembly, to draft a proposed bill.
- LSC drafts proposed bill for introduction in either house.



The Legislative Process



- A bill is filed with the House or Senate Clerk and assigned a number.
- First Consideration – bill read by title on the Chamber floor and referred to the House or Senate Rules & Reference Committee.
- Second Consideration – Rules & Reference Committee reviews bill and recommends assignment to a standing committee. This referral to a standing committee is the bill's second consideration.

Committee Action – Each standing committee is responsible for deliberating bills assigned to the committee.



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- Every bill, per House Rules, will receive at least one hearing, Sponsor Testimony, before the committee.
 - If the committee chooses to have further deliberations, the opportunity for public testimony will occur.
 - Traditionally a second hearing will be Proponent Testimony, and a third hearing will be opponent.
 - Some committee chairs will offer additional opportunities for Interested Party or All Testimony.


- At any point in the committee process, amendments can be offered to the bill. Each amendment is considered and voted on by the committee.
- A substitute bill can also be offered if there are substantive changes to the original bill.
- Some bills, like budget bills, are referred to a subcommittee of the standing committee. The subcommittee will conduct hearings and make a referral back to the standing committee.
- The standing committee will vote to “Favorably report a Bill back to the Committee on Rules & reference”.



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- Third Consideration – The Rules & Reference Committee will schedule a bill for floor debate and a vote. Not all bills are referred for a floor vote.
 - Action in the Second House – The above process is repeated in the other Chamber.



- Resolving House – Senate Differences – If the second House makes changes to a bill, the originating Chamber can concur in the amendments during floor session, or if the refuse to concur, the bill can be assigned to a Committee of Conference.
- A Committee of Conference is made up of 3 members from each Chamber (2 majority party, 1 minority party) and they will meet to try and resolve the differences between the two bills. If the Committee of Conference Issues a Report, each Chamber will vote Yay or Nay on the Report.

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- Action by the Governor – The Governor has 10-days to sign, veto, or allow the bill to become law without their signature.
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- All bills become effective 90-days after the Governor's signature, except bills that contain and Emergency Clause that become effective immediately upon the Governor's signature.

A photograph of two women sitting at a round white table in a bright room with a large window overlooking a city. The woman on the left has long dark hair and is wearing a light-colored blouse, gesturing with her hands as she speaks. The woman on the right has short dark hair and is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved top, listening attentively with her hands clasped. The scene is lit with natural light from the window, creating a warm and professional atmosphere.

The Importance of Advocacy,
Especially Grassroots Advocacy