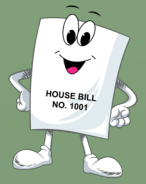
HOW A BILL
BECOMES LAW

1. Overview
North Dakota's biennial Legislative Assembly, composed of the House of Representatives and the Senate, is responsible for enacting laws and appropriating money necessary to operate the state government. Under the Constitution of North Dakota, the Legislative Assembly convenes the 1st Tuesday after the 3rd day in January during odd-numbered years and may meet for up to 80 legislative days during the biennium.

2. Bill Preparation
The Legislative Council--a nonpartisan staff of legal, fiscal, research, and administrative staff--researches and drafts bills for the Legislative Assembly.

3. Bill Introduction
Only members of the Legislative Assembly or state agencies, boards, and commissions can introduce a bill. After the preliminary business of opening a session, the presiding officer (the Lieutenant Governor in the Senate or the Speaker in the House) calls for an introduction of bills in each chamber.

4. Bill Number Assignment
After submission, the bill clerk assigns each bill a number. The Constitution of North Dakota requires every bill to be read on 2 separate days.



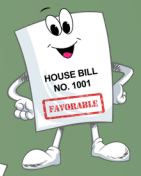
5. Committee Assignment & Introduction

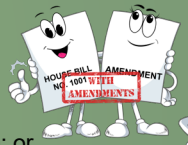
After a bill has been assigned a bill number and the first reading has occurred, the bill is assigned to the corresponding House or Senate committee based on the subject matter of the bill.

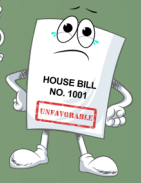
6. Public Hearings
Upon arriving in committee the bill receives a public hearing, which typically includes an explanation of the bill, input from the public, and committee discussion.

7. Committee Recommendation & Report
After receiving public input the committee makes a recommendation on the bill and reports the bill back to the House or Senate. The committee may report the bill:

- Favorably;
- Unfavorably;
- With or without amendments;
- Without any recommendation; or
- Request the bill be rereferred to another committee, with or without amendments.





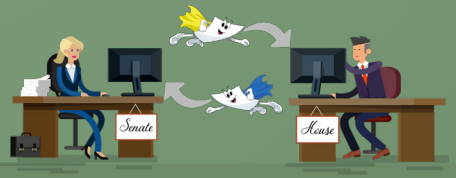


8. Calendar Placement & Consideration of Amendment
All bills, regardless of type of committee report, will be placed on the calendar for final passage.

9. Floor Debate
After a bill has been referred out of committee, and any amendments recommended by the committee either have been adopted or rejected by the house in which the bill was introduced, the members of the house in which the bill was introduced debate the merits of the bill and advocate for the defeat or passage of the bill.

10. Chamber Consideration
- After the floor debate has concluded, members of the house of introduction will vote to either pass or defeat the bill.
- If a bill is defeated it does not proceed any further through the legislative process.
- If the bill passes, the bill is delivered (messaged) to the second house.

11. Second House Consideration
- The second house takes the same steps taken by the house of introduction to refer the bill to the proper committee for discussion, public input, and committee recommendations.
- If the second house passes the bill in the same form in which it was passed by the house of introduction, the bill is enrolled, signed by the presiding officers, and sent to the Governor.



- If the second house adopts amendments to the bill, and passes the bill as amended, the bill is sent back to the house of introduction for concurrence.
- If the house of introduction concurs with the changes made by the second house, and passes the bill as amended, the bill is enrolled, signed by the presiding officers, and sent to the Governor.
- If the house of introduction does not concur with second house changes, conference committees will be appointed.

12. Conference Committee
- A conference committee consists of three members appointed from each house. The members of the conference committee discuss the bill and attempt to come to an agreement on the final language of the bill.
- A conference committee report containing the committee's recommendations is forwarded to each house when at least two of the three conference committee members from each house come to an agreement.

13. Enrollment
After the bill is approved by the House and the Senate, the bill is enrolled, signed by the presiding officers, and sent to the Governor. If signed, or sent to the Secretary of State without being signed, the bill becomes law on August 1, or July 1 for appropriations bills or revenue measures.

14. Veto Override
If the Governor vetoes a bill, the Legislative Assembly can override the veto with a 2/3 majority vote in each house.

15. Voters' Referral
Article III of the Constitution of North Dakota allows any group of 25 North Dakota voters to put a bill passed by the Legislative Assembly on the ballot to ask voters to reject the bill. This is called referring a measure. If a majority of votes on the referred measure are affirmative, the bill is rejected and is not law.

16. Initiated Measure
The Constitution of North Dakota preserves ordinary citizens' rights to make and reject laws. Any group of 25 North Dakota voters may collect signatures to put a new statute or constitutional provision on the ballot. This is called initiating a measure. If a majority of votes on the measure are affirmative, the measure becomes law.

Facts About the North Dakota Legislative Branch

- To serve in the North Dakota Legislative Assembly a person must be:
  - At least 18 years of age as of the election date.
  - A qualified elector of the legislative district.
  - A resident of North Dakota for 1 year before the election.
- The first female legislators (Minnie Craig and Nellie Dougherty) were elected in 1922.
- Brynhild Haugland was the longest-serving legislator in North Dakota. She served for 52 years.
- There are 47 districts each represented by 2 representatives and 1 senator.

Facts About North Dakota

- North Dakota is named after the Dakota Sioux Tribe. Dakota is the Sioux word for "friends".
- North Dakota was admitted into the Union on November 2, 1889.
- There are approximately 88,429 miles of roadway.
- There are approximately 54,470 miles of rivers.
- Record low temperature is -60° F (-51.1° C) (Recorded in Parshall February 15, 1936).
- Record high temperature is 121° F (49° C) (Recorded in Steele July 6, 1936).
- North Dakota is the 19th largest state by area in the United States (70,762 square miles).

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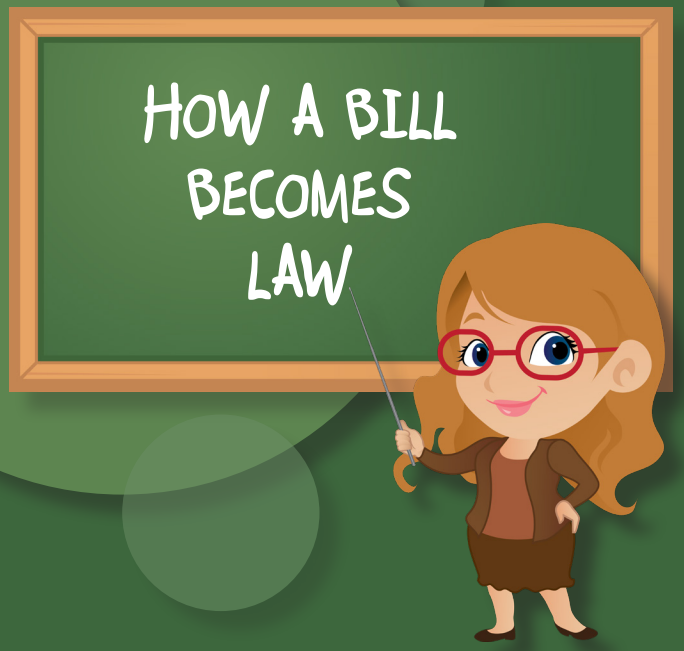

A GUIDE TO LAWMAKING IN NORTH DAKOTA

Provided by the
North Dakota Legislative Council