Bill Introduction
Bill is introduced by a legislator.
Bill is assigned a bill number.
  • A House bill has “HB” in front of the four-digit number. House bills also always start with the number “2”. Example: HB2687
  • A Senate bill has “SB” in front of the four-digit number. Senate bills also always start with the number “1”. Example: SB1074
Speaker of the House assigns all House bills to their respective committee(s). Likewise, the President of the Senate assigns all Senate bills to their respective committee(s). If a bill is assigned to more than two committees, this generally means the Leadership does not like the bill’s intent and wants it to fail in a committee.

Committee Hearing
At the beginning of the legislative session, House committees only hear House bills and Senate committees only hear Senate bills. It is the prerogative of the committee chairperson to decide what bills to put on the committee agenda. If the committee chairperson does not support the bill, it is unlikely they will put it on a committee agenda once the bill has been assigned to their committee.

A committee can pass the bill, amend the bill, or fail the bill in committee. DP = do pass; DPA = do pass amended
Example: 7-2dpa …means that 7 legislators supported the bill, 2 opposed the bill, and that the bill was amended in the committee.
A bill must be heard in all assigned committees before it goes to the Rules Committee. All bills must go before the Rules Committee to determine they are constitutional and in proper form before being heard in Caucus.
If a chairperson holds a bill in committee, the bill is dead.
In the House, the bill goes before committees in the order assigned. For example, if an education bill is assigned to the education committee and appropriations committee, it must go to education before it goes to appropriations.
The Senate works differently. If a bill is assigned to two or more committees (besides the rules committee), it can go to any committee in any order. For example, if an education bill is assigned to the education committee first and appropriations committee second, it can be heard in appropriations before it gets heard in education.
The Speaker of the House and President of the Senate have the right to reallocate bills to additional committees or remove bills from committees.

Caucus
There are two caucuses in the House and two in the Senate (one Democratic Caucus and one Republican Caucus). All bills are heard in Caucus as a means for those caucus members not in the committee in which the bill was heard and voted on to be able to understand the bill before it goes to the floor for debate. The staff members for the respective caucuses in the House give a summary of the bill to the caucus members and stand for questions. In the Senate, non-partisan staff present the bill summary to each caucus. Republican Caucus tends to move quicker than Democratic Caucus because nearly all the bills are Republican-sponsored bills (since Republicans are the majority in the House and Senate).

Committee of the Whole (COW)
Committee of the Whole (COW) is where amendments are formally adopted on a bill. Even if a committee amends a bill, the amendment is not really attached to the bill until adopted in COW. COW is where all amendments are offered.
If an amendment fails in COW, a legislator can request a roll call vote to add the amendment to the bill.
No strike-everything amendments can be offered in COW.
Once all amendments are adopted to a bill, it goes to Third Read.

Third Read
Third Read is where all 60 Representatives or 30 Senators vote on the bill. Green light = yes vote; Red light = no vote.
To pass the House, a bill must receive 31 yes votes. To pass the Senate, a bill must receive 16 yes votes. If a bill fails on Third Read, it can be reconsidered one time. This allows the bill sponsor the time to convince some no votes to be yes votes.

Once the bill passes the House or Senate on Third Read, it goes to the opposite body. For example, if a House bill passes 31-29 (31-yes votes, 29- no votes) then it gets transferred to the Senate where the entire process above is repeated.
Conference Committee

If a House bill is amended in the Senate, and the bill’s sponsor does not agree with the amendment or sees the need to further amend the bill, then the sponsor refuses to concur with the changes, and the bill is sent to a conference committee. The same thing occurs if a Senate bill sponsor does not approve of amendments made in the House.

A conference committee consists of both representatives and senators. The purpose of a conference committee is to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

Once a bill is amended in conference committee, the conference committee “reports” to the House and Senate at large. Both bodies then proceed to vote on the bill during final read.

Final Read/Final Pass

If a bill is amended in the opposite body of the bill’s sponsor, and the sponsor agrees to the amendment, the bill only needs to be final read in the original body. For example, if a House bill is amended in the Senate, and the House sponsor approves the amendment, then the bill only needs to be final read in the House before going to the Governor.

When a bill goes to conference committee, it must be final read in both bodies before going to the Governor.

Just like on Third Read, a Final Read vote requires 31 yes votes in the House and 16 yes votes in the Senate in order to be sent to the Governor.

Governor

Within five days of receiving a bill passed by both bodies, the Governor may sign the bill into law, veto it or let it go into law with his/her signature. If the Governor does not sign or veto a bill within five days (ten days after the last day of the session), then the bill becomes law without the Governor’s signature.

If a bill is vetoed, the Legislature can override the Governor’s veto by a two-thirds vote of both houses.

Bill’s Effective Date

The general effective date is 90 days after adjournment of the Legislature.

If a bill contains an emergency clause and passes by the required two-thirds vote of both bodies, it becomes effective immediately after the Governor signs the bill or allows it to become law without signature.

TERMS TO KNOW

Strike-everything (S/E) amendment: may completely change the topic of a bill. For example, the bill may deal with charter school reform, but the strike-everything (S/E) amendment offered could change the entire bill to something unrelated like teacher performance-based pay.

Because S/E amendments can completely change the topic and can be quite long, they must be filed earlier than other amendments (by 4PM two days before the committee meeting). The introduction provision to a S/E amendment must read: “Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert:”.

Emergency Clause: Requires 2/3 vote to pass. If 2/3 approve, the bill goes into effect immediately upon the signature of the Governor. If the bill only gets 31 House votes or 16 Senate votes, it still continues, but the emergency clause part is stricken off. This means the bill goes into effect like normal (i.e. 90 days after the Governor signs it). The introduction provision to an emergency clause must read: “Emergency. This act is an emergency measure that is necessary to preserve the public peace, health or safety and is operative immediately as provided by law.”

Proposition 105: For law that was amended or added by an initiative of the people, it is necessary that any amending legislation get 3/4 approval in both bodies and further the purpose of the voter-approved initiative.

The introduction provision to a Proposition 105 must read: “Requirement for enactment; three-fourths vote. Pursuant to article IX, part 1, section (6), Constitution of Arizona, section XX-XXX, Arizona Revised Statutes, is effective only on the affirmative vote of at least three-fourths of the members of each house in the legislature.”

Example: Changes to the education sales tax (Proposition 301 from the 2000 election) would invoke a Proposition 105. So, legislators could not decide to withhold the Proposition 301 mandated inflation funding without showing this somehow furthers the voters’ intent and also getting 3/4 vote in each body.

Proposition 108: For use in creating a tax or fee increase. Need 2/3s vote in both bodies to pass. Goes into effect immediately upon the signature of the Governor. If the bill does not get 2/3s vote, the entire bill dies.

The introduction provision to a Proposition 108 must read: “Requirements for enactment; two-thirds vote. Pursuant to article IX, section 22, Constitution of Arizona, this act is effective only on the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the members of each house of the legislature and is effective immediately on the signature of the governor or, if the governor vetoes this act, on the subsequent affirmative vote of at least three-fourths of the members of each house of the Legislature.”