

## Lecture 6

### The Law-making Process

In the United States, about 25,000 bills are introduced in each term of Congress, but only ten percent become law. For a bill to become a law, it shall go through different stages, from its introduction to one of the houses, to its signature by the President. These are the steps in the law-making process.

A bill may begin in either the House or the Senate except for money bills, which must be introduced in the House.

A bill starts as an idea, a concern, an issue raised by concerned citizens, interests groups, party members, congressmen, or members of the Executive branch (even the President).

In US politics the lawmaking process goes through different stages:

**1. The bill is drafted:** Members of Congress, the Executive Branch, and even outside groups can draft (write or draw up) bills.

**2. The bill is introduced in House or Senate or both simultaneously:** A Representative and/or a Senator introduce the bill in the House. **Only congressmen can introduce bills.** We say that they **sponsor** it.

**3. The bill is sent to a committee:** The Speaker of the House sends the bill to a **standing committee** in relation with the issue involved.

**4. Committee Action: Most bills die at this stage.** The committee may pigeonhole, table, amend, or vote on the bill. The committee also holds **hearings (congressional hearings)** in which experts; concerned citizens (interest groups) give their expertise, arguments for/against the bill. If the bill passes, it goes to the Rules Committee.

**5, Rules Committee:** It decides the rules for debate, and when the bill will come up for debate.

**6. Floor Action:** House debates the bill, and may add amendments. If a majority of the House votes in favor of the bill, it goes to the Senate (or vice-versa).

**7. Introduced in Senate:** A Senator introduces the bill, which is sent to a committee.

**8. Committee Action:** Same procedure as in the House. If the committee majority votes for the bill, it goes to the whole Senate.

**9. Bill Called Up:** Majority floor leader decides when the whole Senate will consider the bill.

**10. Floor Action:** The Bill is debated, and amendments may be added. If a majority votes in favor of the bill, it is returned to the House.

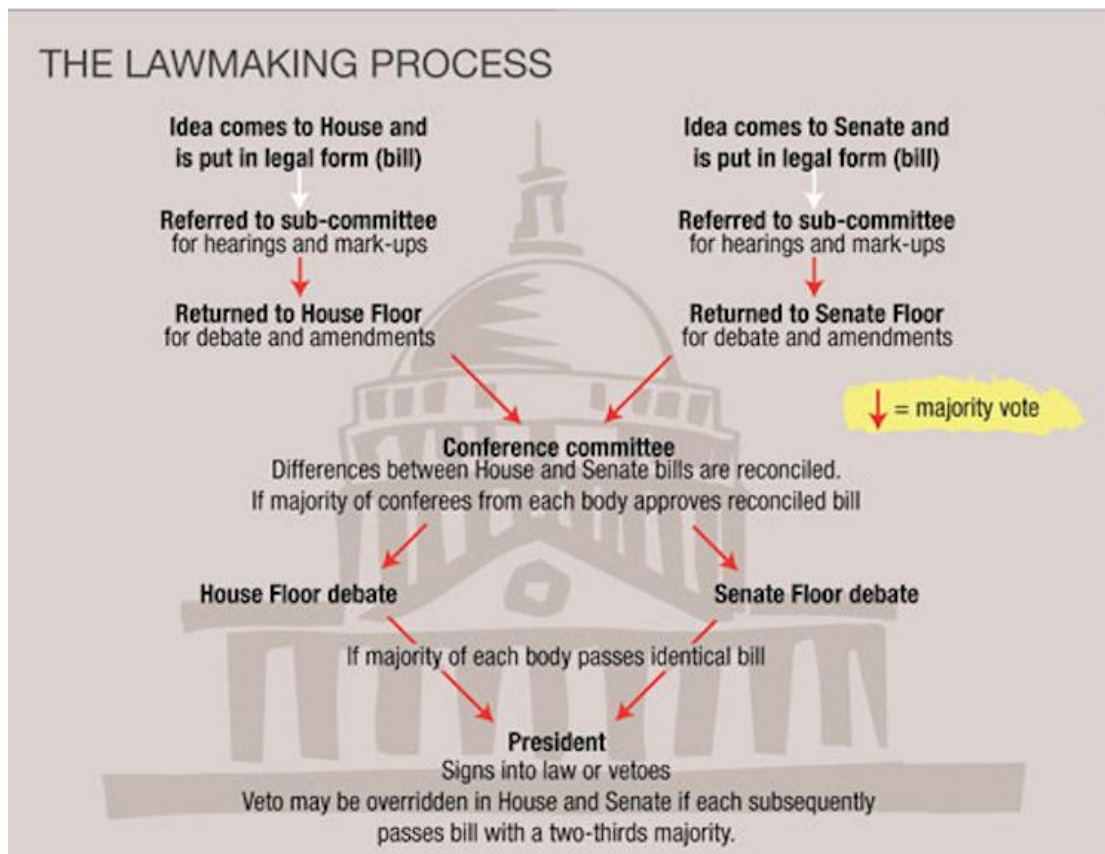
**11. Conference Committee:** If the House rejects any of the changes, the bill goes to a conference committee of members from both houses. It works out a compromise.

**12. Vote on Compromise:** Both houses must approve changes made by the conference committee. If approved, the bill goes to the president.

**13. Presidential Action:** The president may sign (approve) the bill or veto (reject) it. If approved, it becomes law.

**14. Vote to Override:** If the president vetoes the bill, it can still become law if two thirds of both houses vote to override the veto.

### The Lawmaking Process: an Overview



## References

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