

Arizona Legislature 101

The State of Arizona has 30 legislative districts. There are 2 state representatives and 1 state senator from each district. Each district has approximately 170,000 constituents. State senators and representatives are elected every two years. The legislative session begins the second Monday in January each year and is supposed to last 100 days (usually more)

Where do bills come from?

General public, local governments, state agencies, businesses, interest groups, special reports, audits & Ideas from previous legislative sessions

Transformation of idea to bill

Meet with legislator to discuss idea for legislation

Agree to sponsor (only a Representative or Senator can sponsor legislation)

Legislative ("Leg") Council – legislative agency that drafts bills

The Intro Set – Packet containing bill and cover sheet for sponsors to sign – once this is delivered, can start process of formal bill introduction

Bill Introduction

Bill can be introduced in either House or Senate

First person to sponsor determines whether the bill starts in the House or Senate

Bill goes into the "hopper" at the Senate Secretary's Office or the House Chief Clerk's Office and is given a number (Senate = 1xxx and House = 2xxx)

First/Second Reading & Committee Introduction

Slightly different rules for House and Senate

House: First reading and committee referral on same day

Senate: First reading, wait one day and then Second reading and committee referral

Senate President & House Speaker have the discretion to create whatever committees they choose

Role of Committees

Bills can be assigned to numerous committees:

Sometimes it affects several different areas (i.e., Cities & Transportation)

Sometimes it is done to stall a bill, and prevent its passage

Each committee has an analyst that is knowledgeable in that subject area and is responsible for summarizing the bill

Role of Committee Chair

Committee chair is responsible for scheduling each bill for a hearing

Because the committee chair does not have to schedule the bill at all, the committee chair is a powerful role

Many bills are never heard in committee and are essentially “dead” for the rest of the session

Before the Committee Hearing

A significant amount of work is done prior to the committee hearing

Lobbyists will try to meet with legislators prior to the hearing to influence their opinion on legislation

If amendments are going to be added to the bill, there are specific deadlines for distribution of amendments

Committee staff must summarize each bill that is scheduled for a committee hearing

Committee Hearing

Opportunity for legislators to hear public comment

Amendments must be formally moved to be added on the bill

Strike-everythings – these amendments known also as “Strikers” are amendments that erase the contents of the bill and propose an entirely new bill

Committee must formally have a roll call vote on legislation

Committee on Rules & Caucus

Every bill is assigned to the Committee on Rules – this committee works with the Rules attorney to ensure that the bill is Constitutional and in proper form

Caucus – forum for members of same party to discuss legislation and strategy for floor debate

Committee of the Whole (COW)

COW is when the entire Senate or House convenes as a committee

Opportunity for debate – begins with bill sponsor briefly explaining bill and other members have the opportunity to comment/ask questions

Committee amendments and COW (floor) amendments are formally added to the bill

Engrossing & Third Reading

Engrossing – Amendments to bill that passed during COW are formally added into the text of the legislation- this step occurs before Third Reading can begin

Third Reading is the “final” roll call vote on a bill – votes are shown on electronic displays in front

Passage of Bills

To pass during Third Reading, bill must receive either 16 votes in the Senate or 31 votes in the House, with some exceptions

A two-thirds vote (20 in the Senate and 40 in the House) is needed:

If the bill brings additional revenue to the state (i.e., raises fees or taxes); this is called a Prop. 108 clause

If the bill contains an emergency clause, which makes it effective immediately upon the Governor's signature

After bill passes House/Senate

Bills have to be heard in both chambers – after bill passes House or Senate, it must go to opposite chamber

There are certain dates by which all House bills must pass the House and all Senate bills must pass the Senate

If the bill does not meet these deadlines, it is essentially “dead”

Process of bill in opposite chamber

Same as in the other chamber: Bill is First & Second Read and assigned to committee(s)

Bill must pass committee(s), Rules Committee, Caucus, COW and Third Read

Bill can be further amended in Senate, or completely changed by a strike-everything amendment

What happens after the bill passes both chambers?

After the bill passes the second chamber, it is sent back to where it originated

At this point, the bill may be:

1. Exactly the same
2. Amended from original form
3. Completely different because of a strike-everything

If the bill is exactly the same, it is sent to the Governor.

Both chambers MUST vote on the EXACT same bill – so if the bill comes back in the same form, it doesn't need any further action from the originating chamber

However, if bill is different (doesn't matter if it is a slight change or a completely different subject!), the originating chamber must vote on the amended version of the bill

If the bill is amended the sponsor of the bill will have the opportunity to accept or reject the changes to the bill.

If the sponsor concurs, the bill will go to Final vote to give the rest of the chamber the opportunity to vote on the amended version.

If the changes are rejected, the bill will go to Conference Committee.

Conference Committee

A Conference Committee is made up of Representatives appointed by the Speaker and Senators appointed by the President (in most cases, the bill sponsor is on the Conference Committee)

Usually it is 3-5 members from each chamber, however in some instances; it is an entire Committee (i.e., Committee on Transportation)

What happens in Conference Committees?

In a Conference Committee, the members must come to a compromise on the bill

They can amend the bill by adding or deleting language, or just simply agree to use the House or Senate version. If they cannot come to agreement, the bill is dead.

If they do agree, a formal Conference Committee meeting must be scheduled where the compromise version is formally adopted.

After a Conference Committee

If the Senate and House reach a compromise and the bill passes Conference Committee, it must go back to each chamber for a final vote (so that each member gets a chance to vote on the final version)

Reaching the Governor's Desk

As described, the bill can reach the Governor's desk in the following ways:

1. After passing each chamber in identical form and going straight to the Governor
2. After being amended in the second chamber, having the bill sponsor in the first chamber concur with the changes and passing a final vote in that chamber
3. After being amended in the second chamber, having the changes rejected, going to Conference Committee, and passing Conference Committee and a final vote in each chamber

Governor's actions

After a bill reaches the Governor's desk, the Governor can do the following:

1. Sign the bill
2. Veto the bill and return it to the House or Senate with a statement of why it was vetoed (Legislature can override with a two-thirds vote of each chamber)
3. Allow the bill to become law without her signature – this means that no action is taken on the bill and after 5 days (10 if the Legislature has adjourned), it becomes law

Effective dates of bills

After a bill becomes law, either by being signed by the Governor, becoming law without her signature, or if the Legislature overrides the Veto, the bill will take effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns.

If the bill has an Emergency Clause (needs a two-thirds vote of the Legislature to pass), it becomes effective immediately.