

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

1. An idea, suggested by citizens, special interest groups, state agencies, the Governor, or directly by a Senator, is researched and reviewed. As a result, a Senator may introduce a bill to create a new law or repeal/alter an existing one.
2. A Senator brings the idea to the bill drafter's office, which works with the Senator and staff to transform the idea into the proper legal form. Bills introduced in Nebraska may contain only one subject.
3. The idea which is now drafted into bill form is introduced during the first 10 days of the new legislative session. An individual Senator can introduce the bill, or several Senators or a Standing Committee. Appropriations bills and bills introduced at the request of the Governor can be introduced at anytime during the session. A Standing Committee can introduce 8 bills; Senators, an unlimited number.

To introduce a bill, a Senator files it with the Clerk of the Legislature, who reads the bill into the record, assigns it a number, and prints copies of it for public and legislative use.

4. The Legislative Fiscal Office prepares budget statements, known as fiscal notes, for each bill introduced. The fiscal note contains estimates of the financial impact each bill would have, should it become law.
5. The bill is referred to the Reference Committee where it is assigned to a Standing Committee, a Select Committee or a Special Committee, or it may be referred directly to General File

Most bills, excluding some technical bills, receive a public hearing by a legislative committee.

6. The committee, after the public hearing, will vote to kill, hold or advance the bill to General File with or without amendments. The committee must issue a report within 8 calendar days of its action regarding the bill.

If a bill is killed in committee, it can be advanced to General File by 3/5's of the legislature if done no more than 3 days after the committee report has been issued; if done more than 3 days after the committee report has been issued, 2/3's of the legislature must approve its advancement.

7. General File is the first time the full legislature has the opportunity to debate and vote on bills. Bills are listed and considered on General File in the order they are reported from committees; except when modified by the Speaker.

The Clerk of the Legislature reads the number and the title of the bill and name of the principal introducer. Each section of the bill can be amended. Standing Committee amendments are considered first; the introducer's amendments considered second, and then other amendments. The bill needs 25 votes to be amended and to move from General File to the next stage of consideration: Enrollment & Review.

The Legislative Process — continued:

8. In the Enrollment and Review Office (known as E&R), any amendments adopted are incorporated into the bill and the entire bill is checked for technical and grammatical accuracy.
9. After E&R Reviews the bill, it moves to Select File, the second debating and voting stage; another opportunity for amendment, compromise, reflection. Bills on Select File can be indefinitely postponed or advanced to the next stage.

After Select File, bills are sent to E&R for Final Engrossment: all amendments and technical changes are made and the bill is reprinted for final reading.

10. The Nebraska Constitution requires that, before final passage, all bills must be read aloud in their entirety by the Clerk of the Legislature. Senators are required to be in their seats in the legislative chamber during final reading.

Bills may not be voted on for final passage until at least 5 legislative days after the bill is introduced, and 1 legislative day after it is placed on Final Reading.

Printed copies of the bill in its final form must have been available to the Senators at least 2 legislative days before final reading.

During the Final Reading stage of consideration the bill may be sent back to Select File for a specific amendment, back to E&R to correct an error, passed (with 25 votes) or passed with an emergency clause (with 33 votes). The bill is sent to the Governor if passed.

11. The Governor has five days, excluding Sundays, to decide what to do with the bill:
 - sign the bill; it is then filed with the Secretary of State
 - return the bill to the Legislature with no signature; it becomes law
 - veto the bill; return it to the Legislature with objections within 5 days — 3/5's (30 votes) can override the Governor's veto
 - line-item veto on state budget bills; usually reducing appropriations; 30 members can vote to override line item vetoes.
12. Most bills approved by the Governor become law 3 calendar months after the Legislature adjourns. Bills which have been approved with an emergency clause will take effect before 3 months have passed.

NOTES:

Priority Bills: Each Senator can designate one bill as a priority (Speaker gets 25). Priority bills can be scheduled for consideration ahead of other legislation.

Consent Calendar: Bills voted out of committee to general file with 2 or less dissenting votes can be placed on consent calendar; and receive quicker attention in the process.