Act Of Congress Essay, Research Paper

An Act of Congress

How does a bill become a law?

There are two houses in Congress. The House of Representatives and the

Senate. Both of which may introduce a new piece of legislation. But each has different guidelines that they must follow to do this. The guideline in the house is a new

Piece of legislation is handed to the clerk of the House who then places it in a hopper, which is a box on the Clerk’s desk. In the Senate, the member gains the recognition of the presiding officer and is then given a time slot in that day when he or she may present the new bill.

Once this is done, it then becomes known as a bill and is assigned a number. Something like HR 3 (for House of Representatives) or S2 (for Senate). They put the person’s name on it and he becomes known as the sponsor, as he is the person originating the bill. Bills may be jointly sponsored or members may co-sponsor the piece of legislation. Co-sponsors are nothing more than additional members that join in or support that bill.

Referral to Committee

The new bill is now referred to a committee or a subcommittee, which are just groups of Congressmen who have jurisdiction over the area affected by this measure. A very important phase of the legislative process is the action taken by committees. It is during committee action that the most intense consideration is given to the proposed measures. This is also the time when people are given the opportunity to be heard.

Usually the first step once assigned to a committee is a public hearing. Here committee members hear witnesses representing various viewpoints on the measure. Each committee makes public the date, place and subject of any hearing it conducts.

A transcript of all the testimony is made available of these proceedings. After the hearing is completed, the bill is considered in a session known as a “mark-up” session. Here they study the viewpoints presented in detail. Revisions and additions (also known as amendments) may be offered to the bill, and the committee members vote to accept or reject these changes. These actions can take place at either the subcommittee level or the full committee level, or both. At the conclusion of deliberation, a vote of committee or subcommittee Members is taken to determine what action to take on the measure. It can be reported, with or without amendments. Or it can be tabled, which means no further action on it will occur. If the committee has approved extensive amendments, they may decide to report a new bill incorporating all the amendments. This is known as a “clean bill”, which will have a new number. If the committee votes to report a bill, the Committee Report is written. This report describes the purpose and scope of the measure and the reasons for recommended approval.

House Floor Consideration

Consideration of a measure by the full house can be a simple or very complex operation. In general a measure is ready for consideration by the full House after a committee has reported it. Under certain circumstances, it maybe brought to the Floor directly. The consideration of a measure may be governed by what is called a “rule”. A rule is itself a simple piece of legislation, which must be passed by the House. This is just a formality. The House sets out the particulars of debate – like, how much time will be allowed for the debate, whether amendments can be offered and other matters.

Debate time is usually divided between pros and cons. Each side yields time to those Members who wish to speak on the bill. When amendments are offered, these are also debated and voted upon. After all debate is concluded and amendments decided upon,

the House is ready to vote on final passage. In some cases, a vote to “recommit” the bill to committee is requested. This is usually an effort by opponents to change some portion or table the measure. If the attempt to recommit fails, a vote on final passage is ordered.

Final Step

Votes on final passage, as well as all other votes in the House, may be taken by the electronic voting system, which registers each individual Member’s response. These votes are referred to as Yea/Nay votes or recorded votes. Votes in the House may also be by voice vote and no record of individual responses is available. After both the House and the Senate have passed in a measure identical from, it is considered “enrolled”. It is sent to the President for review. The President has 10 days to take some kind of action. If Congress adjourns before the 10 days and the President has not signed the bill, then it does not become law. This is a pocket veto. If the President vetoes the bill, it is sent back to Congress with a note listing the reasons. The chamber that originated the legislation can attempt to override the veto by a vote of 2/3 of those present. If the veto of the bill is overridden in both chambers, then it becomes law. At that time when the President either signs the bill or both houses override his veto.

Why is it Harder to pass a law then to defeat a bill?

Sometimes resolving differences like anything else takes time. As you can see there is a long process of passing a law. During this process some key issues come into play. After a measure passes in the House, it goes to the Senate for consideration. A bill must pass both the House and the Senate in the same form before it can be presented to the President for signature into law. If the Senate changes the language of the measure, it must return to the House for approval of those changes. This back-and-forth negotiation may occur on the House floor, with the House accepting or rejecting the Senate amendments or the complete Senate text. This is a long and tedious process that sometimes leads to filibusters.

What was originally proposed in the bill?

The 1970 Clean Air Act HR 6161 was the deadline required for automakers to meet the auto emissions standards. Rogers wanted a strict emissions standards imposed with in one year, then Dingell Wanted to save job and have standards imposed over a five year period.

A compromise was met at the conference committee. Both sides got parts of what they wanted, but the deadline was made to be three years. On Aug 7, 1977, HR 6161 becomes a law.

John Dingell wanted to modify and extend the emissions standards. He was fighting to keep plants open to save thousands of jobs. John represented three big auto suppliers, united autoworkers, and labor unions.

Paul Rogers was interested in protecting his bill from clean air. He was fighting in the name of healthcare for Americans. He represented multiple health care groups, the elderly, and children.

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