



The Legislative Process in Wisconsin

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Senate and Assembly

- Wisconsin Legislature is made up of two elected bodies:
 - State Senate
 - State Assembly
- 99 State Representatives / 2-year terms
- 33 state Senators / 4-year terms
- Assembly elections even-numbered years
- Senate staggered elections

The Legislature is “In Session”

- Two-year sessions (really 18 mos.)
- Session divided into **floorperiods and committee work periods**
- Standing committees and Joint Committees
- Committee work periods = preparation
- Floorperiod = action

How a Bill Becomes a Law

- Before a law can be enacted, it **must be considered by both houses of the legislature and the governor**
- Bill is “Introduced” into a House
- Bills are “read” three times before passage
- First reading
 - Bill is referred to committee for debate
- Second reading
 - Bill is back from Committee
 - Time to consider amendments
 - Debate limited to the amendments only
- Third reading
 - Time to debate bill as a whole



Example: Assembly Bill

- Introduction in Assembly
- Referred to Assembly Committee
- Public Hearing (Committee)
- Assembly Floor Debate
- Move to Senate
- Process repeats in the Senate
- Bill is Enrolled
- Governor



Resolving Differences: The Conference Committee

- 2 houses pass different versions of a bill and cannot reach agreement
- Conference Committee may be requested by either house = 3 members from each house
- Bipartisan representation not required
- Conference committee report requires both houses' approval – straight up or down – no amendments allowed

Final Consideration: The Governor

- Governor has the power to:
 - Approve
 - Veto or
 - Veto in Part (appropriation bills *only*)



Veto Power in Wisconsin

- **Trivia Question:**
How was Governor Doyle's veto power changed by the April 2008 Constitutional Amendment?



Veto Power in Wisconsin

- **Answer:**

The Governor's veto power was reduced in April 2008, when Wisconsin voters approved a state Constitutional amendment to eliminate his so-called "Frankenstein veto authority," which had allowed him to strike individual words from two or more sentences to make new sentences in appropriation bills.

The Governor can still strike individual sentences and parts of sentences; can still eliminate individual numbers; and can string numbers together in one sentence as a part of his current veto power.

Law is in Effect

- ***When does a new law really take effect?***

- A law is "enacted" on the day that the governor either signs a bill which has passed both houses of the legislature, or when the governor allows a bill to become law without his or her signature. Next, the law is officially "published" within 10 working days after the date of enactment. The law officially takes effect on *the day after the publication date*, unless, of course, a different effective date is provided in the text of the law!

The Budget Bill

- Same rules and procedures as other bills, except:
 - It is VERY LARGE
 - It is introduced by the Governor – only piece of legislation that the Governor gets to write
- Joint Committee on Finance
 - First review after Governor
 - Prepares a giant substitute amendment
- Reviewed by party caucuses = super amendment
- Scheduled for floor debate (same process)
- Conference Committee is typical
- Governor has a **line item veto**



Remember:

Administrative Rules are Laws Too

- Legislative Branch = Power to Make Laws
- Executive Branch = Enforce and Effectuate Laws = Power to *Promulgate* Administrative Rules
- Administrative Rules are Laws
- Legislature *May* Review Administrative Rules

Questions?



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