



How a bill becomes a law in Kansas

The Kansas legislature consists of two chambers — the House of Representatives (125 members) and the Senate (40 members). Each Kansan is represented by one member in each chamber. Legislators from both houses are referred to as members of Congress. Outlined below are the most basic route and timeline a bill would follow to become a law.

JAN – Introducing a Bill. Any member of Congress may introduce legislation. The bill is given a number according to the order and chamber it was introduced and then referred to a committee within the chamber of origin. For example, the tenth bill introduced by a state Senator on an issue related to school transportation would be assigned the number SB10 and would most likely be referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Education.

JAN – Committee Action. Committee chairpersons are assigned by the political party in power. Each committee has a chair, vice chair and ranking minority party members. The chairperson decides whether a bill will dead-end or be given a hearing or a “mark-up” for further action. The chairperson then decides whether to hold a vote to move the bill out of committee.

FEB – Floor Debate and Votes. Once a bill is voted out of committee, the next opportunity for action is an introduction to all members of its chamber of origin. In the House of Representatives, the speaker of the house determines if and when a bill will come before the full body for a vote. In the Senate, this is the function of the majority leader. Each chamber of the legislative branch has a different process for voting on and amending bills after they are introduced.

MARCH – Referral to the Other Chamber. After a bill has been passed by one chamber of Congress, it is then referred to the other chamber. Upon receiving a referred bill, the second chamber may consider the bill as it was received, reject it, or amend it.

APRIL – Conference on a Bill. If the House and Senate versions of a bill vary after passing both chambers, a conference committee is created to reconcile the two different versions of the bill. If no agreement can be reached, the bill will die. If the conference committee can come to a consensus, both the House and Senate must pass the new version of the bill. If either chamber does not pass this version, the bill dies. Often, the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction will negotiate provision of non-controversial bills to avoid conference.

APRIL – Action by the Governor. After the final version of the bill is passed in both chambers of the legislature, it is sent to the Governor to be signed into law. The Governor can either pass the bill with a signature or veto the bill. Taking no action is referred to as a “pocket-veto”. The state legislature can override a veto with two-thirds of the roll call vote and change the bill into a law.

Last week of APRIL – Veto Session. Both chambers of the Kansas legislature have the option to reconvene after the regular session to vote on any bills the Governor may have vetoed. Recently, this time has been used by the legislature to resolve major budget bills that should have been completed during the regular session.