

REGULAR SESSIONS

The General Assembly meets annually, beginning on the second Wednesday in January, for 60 days in even-numbered years and for 30 days in odd-numbered years, with an option to extend annual sessions for a maximum of 30 days.

SPECIAL SESSIONS

The Governor may call a special session when it is deemed necessary or advisable, and must do so when petitioned by two-thirds of the members of both houses.

Bills enacted at a Special Session are effective the first day of the fourth month following the adjournment of the Special Session, unless another date is specified.

RECONVENED SESSIONS

A reconvened session is held on the sixth Wednesday after adjournment of each regular or special session for the purpose of considering Governor's recommendations and vetoed legislation.

BICAMERAL LEGISLATURE

Citizen legislators represent the interests of over eight million Virginians.

The Senate of Virginia has forty members who are elected to four-year terms. A Senator represents approximately 200,000 citizens. The Lieutenant Governor is the President and presiding officer of the Senate. The Senate elects a senior member as President pro tempore and the Clerk, who serves at the pleasure of the Senate.

The House of Delegates has one hundred members, who are elected every two years. Each member represents approximately 80,000 citizens. The Speaker of the House is elected from and by the membership, and the Clerk is elected by the membership, each for a two-year term.



An Introductory Guide

For more information, please contact:

Senate Clerk's Office
State Capitol
P.O. Box 396
Richmond, Virginia 23218

(804) 698-7410
information@senate.virginia.gov

<http://viriniageneralassembly.gov>

How a Bill Becomes a Law in the Virginia General Assembly

Produced by the Senate Clerk's Office
Susan Clarke Schaar, Clerk of the Senate

4. First Reading

The bill title is printed in the Calendar or is read by the Clerk, and the bill advances to second reading.

5. Second Reading

The next day the bill title is placed in the printed Calendar. The Clerk reads the title of the bill a second time. A bill on second reading is amendable. A bill that has passed second reading with or without an amendment is engrossed. If an amendment is adopted, the bill is reprinted in its final form for passage.

6. Third Reading

The next day, the engrossed bill title is placed in the Calendar. The title is read a third time by the Clerk. By recorded vote, the bill passes or is defeated.

7. Communication

When passed, the bill is sent to the other body for its consideration.

8. In the Other Body

The bill goes through essentially the same procedure as it did in the house of origin. The bill title is printed in the Calendar or is read by the Clerk. The bill is referred to a standing committee, considered, and reported by the committee. The title is read a second and a third time before passage.

9. Committee of Conference

If the House amends a Senate bill, or the Senate amends a House bill, and the house of origin disagrees with the amendment, a Committee of Conference, usually three members from each legislative body, may be formed to resolve differences.

10. Enrollment

After being passed by both houses of the General Assembly, the bill is printed as an enrolled bill, examined, and signed by the presiding officer of each chamber.

11. Governor

The bill is then sent to the Governor for approval. After being signed by the Governor, the bill is sent to the Clerk of the House (Keeper of the Rolls of the Commonwealth) and is assigned a chapter number. All chapters of a session are compiled and bound as the Acts of Assembly.

12. Effective Date

Bills that become law at a Regular Session (or the Reconvened Session that follows) are effective the first day of July following adjournment of the regular session unless otherwise specified.

The General Appropriations Act, also known as the budget, is usually effective July 1st and Emergency Acts become effective when signed by the Governor.

The following steps depict the procedure whereby a non-controversial bill becomes a law. Bills may originate in either house of the Virginia General Assembly.

1. Bill Idea or Request

A Senator or Delegate has an idea for legislation or receives requests for legislation from constituents, state agencies, organizations or the business community.

2. Drafting and Introduction

A Senator or Delegate presents the idea to the Division of Legislative Services and requests that it be drafted into a bill. The bill is signed by the patron, introduced, and printed.

3. Committee Referral

The bill is referred to an appropriate committee. The members of the committee consider the bill and decide what action to take. The public is given an opportunity to address the committee regarding the bill.