

MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

All bills are filed by the first Wednesday in December before the start of the first annual session in January (bills can be filed at any time during the legislative calendar, but those filed after this date are called 'late files').

Bills are sent to one of the 26 joint standing committees. Public hearings are convened for each bill between February and May. This is called the bill's "first reading."

finance related bill

nonfinance related bill

House Ways and Means Committee

House floor for debate. This is called the bill's "second reading". If one-fifth of the House members present request a 'roll call', the vote is recorded; if not, a 'voice vote' is taken.

House Committee on Bills in Third Reading. This step allows for a review of the bill for its technical correctness and constitutionality.

House floor for debate. This is called the bill's "third reading". A voice vote or roll call follows the debate. If the majority votes in favor, the bill is passed by the House, which is called "engrossment".

finance related bill

nonfinance related bill

Senate Ways and Means Committee

Senate floor. This is the bill's second reading. A voice vote or roll call will be taken.

Senate Committee on Bills in Third Reading, for another technical review.

Senate floor. This is the bill's "third reading." The process here is the same as on the House floor. Once engrossed by the Senate, the bill goes through one more procedural step (a final vote on enactment by both the House and Senate). However, if the Senate amends the House-engrossed bill and makes changes that House members object to, then a House-Senate Conference Committee will be established to resolve differences between the two branches. The Conference Committee report cannot be further amended. Once enacted by the House and Senate, the bill is sent to the Governor.

Governor's signature. The Governor has ten days to sign the bill into law. If he/she does not, the bill dies, unless both branches of the legislature override his/her veto by a two-thirds vote.

The bill may begin in either the House or Senate

The legislature is on a two year session. Bills that are not passed by the end of the first year "carry over," meaning that they are at the same step at the same



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