

### LAW MAKING PROCESS

Law making in Texas is, in many ways, similar to law making at the federal level. The two houses of the Texas Legislature are patterned after the federal Congress and many duties and responsibilities are the same. (See page 16 for a comparison.)

Briefly speaking, a bill becomes a law after passing both houses of the Legislature and getting the Governor's approval. Bills only need a majority vote for passage. If the Governor vetoes a bill that has been sent to him, the Legislature may pass the bill by a 2/3's vote in each house. If this is done, it will be a law without the Governor's approval.

A bill may start in either house of the Legislature. As in the federal Congress, committees play a very important role in the day-to-day business of the Legislature. In becoming a law in Texas the usual path of a bill is as follows:

1. Introduction, read by title, given a number.
2. Referred to appropriate committee by Speaker or President of Senate.
3. Bill placed on calendar and read for a second time when calendar date comes up.
4. Amendments added, the bill comes up for a third reading, debated and passed or rejected.
5. If passed, it goes on to the other house for a similar route.
6. Both houses have to agree on an identical bill and amendments.
7. The bill goes back to the house of origin, is signed and sent to the Governor.

The death rate for bills is very high. In each session of the Legislature, less than one-third of bills introduced become laws.

The process of passing laws often seems inefficient, slow and cumbersome to the average citizen. The process, however, has developed over many generations and much of what happens in the Legislature is based on rules made up by Thomas Jefferson for the Congress of the United States. Law making is a slow process but it promotes careful consideration and deliberation which prevents hasty, thoughtless legislation. The whole process, slow as it may be, does work and protects our rights as citizens.

It is an interesting and worthwhile experience to visit Austin and observe our lawmakers at work. Although you can't see the whole legislative process at once, a visit to the Legislature can help you understand law making better.

In Austin during every session of the Legislature, one can also find groups known as lobbies. These organized groups seek to influence lawmakers. Most of these lobbies operate legally under the laws controlling them, and some of them do a service of informing our lawmakers. However, there are some instances where these lobbies exert too much influence and the views of other citizens are overlooked.

Selection of officers in the federal government gets more publicity and voter participation than does the selection of state officers. This is unfortunate since many important state matters are close to our homes and jobs. These matters require as much or more talent as federal offices and the citizen of any state would do well to increase their interest in the state and local governments.

### QUESTIONS

1. What are lobbies? \_\_\_\_\_

---



---



---



---



---

### True or False?

1. No bill can pass the Senate or House except by a 2/3's vote. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Bills may start at either house. \_\_\_\_\_
3. A bill must follow somewhat the same route in either house. \_\_\_\_\_
4. If the Governor's veto results in the bill being passed by a 2/3's vote in each house, the bill will be law. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Thomas Jefferson designed the Texas Legislature. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Most bill introduced into the Legislature are passed. \_\_\_\_\_
7. A bill must be read three times in each house. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Lobbies are illegal in Texas. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Bills must be introduced in the House. \_\_\_\_\_
10. The Governor can change a bill and then pass it. \_\_\_\_\_



## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Students should not let the fact that there is a federal government as well as a state government confuse them. If one remembers that these two bodies of government meet separate needs for our people, and that together they solve the problems of a nation (federal) and of a local area (state government), you will see that we have a logical form of government.

### Legislative Branch

The legislative branch makes the laws. The State Legislature meets biennially (every other year) in odd-numbered years, starting the second Tuesday in January and lasting for a maximum of 140 days. Extra sessions, after the Legislature has been adjourned, may be called by the Governor.

The State Legislature is bicameral. That is, it has two houses. These two houses are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Although the duties of each body are similar to those of the federal Congress, they should not be confused.

All members of the State Legislature are elected by the people. To be eligible for the legislature, a person must be a U.S. citizen, a qualified voter of Texas and for the House, a state resident for 2 years and be at least 21 years old. For the Senate, a person must have been a state resident for 5 years and be 26 years old. In addition, all members must live in the district they represent. Both houses receive a salary of \$7200 plus expenses.

A quorum is a majority of the members. Each house determines its own rules of proceedings and is the judge of the election returns and qualifications of its own members. Each house may punish individuals for contempt or disorderly behavior. Both houses are organized into committees to help conduct business efficiently. The chairpersons of these committees have great power in deciding which bills will receive approval.

### Districts

In Texas, each of the members of the State Legislature are elected from legislative districts. There are 31 Senate districts, one Senator elected from each of the districts. There are 101 House districts, and some districts with larger populations elect more than one Representative. There are 150 members in the House. Every 10 years the federal government conducts a census to determine population changes. In Texas, after these changes are published, the districts are changed in line with the census results. Changing a district's size and shape is known as reapportionment.

### Terms of Office

Members of the House are elected for 2 year terms. All members are up for election at each general election. Senators are elected for 4 year terms. About half of them are up for re-election every 2 years.

### Officers

The presiding officer of the Senate is the Lieutenant Governor. He may vote only in case of a tie. The Senate also elects a President Pro Tempore. The presiding officer in the House is the Speaker, elected by the members. The officers in the Legislature have great power in influencing the legislation that is passed and thus, the positions of leadership are very important.

### Special Duties of Each House

Each house of the Legislature has certain special duties besides its law-making powers. For example, the Senate has the special power of approving many of the appointments the Governor makes. Other special duties have to do with impeachment. The House has the sole power to start impeachment and the Senate tries cases of impeachment.

## QUESTIONS

The State Senate of the House of Representatives? The following duties are the responsibility of the Senate or House and, in some cases, may be the responsibility of both or neither. Answer Senate, House, Neither, or Both.

1. Elected by the people. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Have 150 members. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Have 31 members. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are parts of the Legislature. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Receive a salary of \$7200. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have Speaker as officer. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Have Governor as officer. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Term is 2 years. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Term is 4 years. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Start impeachment. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Must be resident of Texas. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Must live in district. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Approves appointments. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Elected for 6 years. \_\_\_\_\_
15. Has president pro tempore. \_\_\_\_\_
16. Half elected every two years. \_\_\_\_\_
17. May be reelected. \_\_\_\_\_
18. Also members of federal Congress. \_\_\_\_\_
19. Meets for 140 days. \_\_\_\_\_
20. Have 101 districts. \_\_\_\_\_
21. Serve without pay. \_\_\_\_\_
22. Determine own rules of proceeding. \_\_\_\_\_