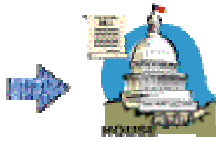


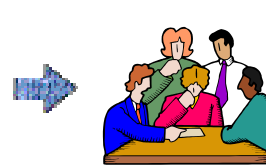
HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW IN THE U.S.



Anyone may draft a bill, but only members of Congress can introduce or sponsor a bill.



When a senator or representative introduces a bill, he or **she sends it to the Clerk of the Senate or House**, who gives it a number and a title. This is the *first reading* and the bill is referred to the appropriate committee.



Committees specialize in different areas, such as foreign relations, appropriations or agriculture, and are made up of small groups of senators or representatives. The committee may decide that the bill is **unwise or unnecessary** and “table” it, meaning it is never discussed again. Or it may decide that the bill is **worthwhile** and hold hearings to listen to facts and opinions presented by experts and other interested people, which can be presented in person or in writing



The bill then goes to the other house of Congress, where it may be defeated, or passed with or without amendments. If the bill is defeated, it dies. If it is passed with amendments, a **joint congressional committee must be appointed** to iron out the differences.



The *third reading* is by title only, and the bill is put to a vote, which may be by voice or roll call, depending on the circumstances and parliamentary rules. Members who must be absent at the time but who wish to record their vote may be paired if each negative vote has a balancing affirmative one.



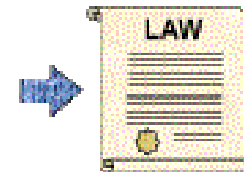
The clerk reads the bill sentence to the house and this is known as the *second reading*. Members may then debate the bill and offer amendments. In the House of Representatives, the time for debate is limited by a *cloture rule*, but there is no restriction in the senate for cloture, where 60 votes are required. This makes possible a *filibuster*, in which one or more opponents hold the floor to debate the bill.



After its final passage by both houses, **the bill is sent to the President.**



The bill becomes law if the President signs it, if the President does not sign or vetoes the bill within three days, or if the vetoed bill is **overridden** by a two-thirds majority vote by each chamber.



Should the President desire neither to sign nor to veto the bill, he may retain it for ten days, Sundays excepted, after which it automatically becomes a law without his signature. However, if Congress has adjourned within those ten days, the bill is automatically killed, that process known as indirect rejection being known as a *pocket veto*.