

How a Bill Becomes a Law in Connecticut

Introduction Have you ever wondered how a simple idea can become a law in Connecticut? It's a fascinating process! Let's explore it step by step.

From the League of Women Voters of Connecticut website: "This carpet is located in the Senate chamber. There are two explanations for the three grapevines in the center of the shield in the state seal. One theory is that they represent the first three towns [founded by English settlers] in Connecticut: Hartford, Wethersfield, and Windsor. Another interpretation is that the vines stand for the three colonies or settlements [settled by English colonists]: New Haven, Saybrook, and Connecticut (i.e., Hartford), which by 1665 had merged to form the Connecticut of that time. The state motto written in Latin, 'Qui Transtulit Sustinet,' translates to 'He who transplanted still sustains.'"

Step 1: Idea Everything begins with an **idea**. Someone—Anyone! Even a kid!—thinks of a new rule or law they believe would help people in Connecticut.

Step 2: Bill The idea is written down as a **bill**. A bill is like a suggestion for a new law. It's just a piece of paper with words on it!

Step 3: First House The bill goes to a special group called the legislature. The Connecticut legislature, called the **General Assembly**, works in the State Capitol. It has two parts: the Senate and the House of Representatives. A bill can begin in either house.

House of Representatives

From the League of Women Voters of Connecticut website: "Located on the second floor, the hall of the House of Representatives is the largest room in the State Capitol. The chamber has been restored to its original grandeur. Carved walnut paneling, ornate stenciling, and stained-glass windows decorate the hall, and state seals adorn the carpet. The 151 representatives sit according to political party, Democrats to the right and Republicans to the left. State representatives are elected for a two-year term of office with no term limits."

Senate

From the League of Women Voters of Connecticut website: "Originally, the State Senate met in a chamber on the second floor of the Capitol. The current Senate occupies a room on the third floor that once housed the state library. The room was converted into the Senate by 1913. Mahogany paneling, a red carpet with a large state seal, ornate stenciling, star-shaped stained-glass windows, and the famous 'Charter Oak Chair' decorate the room. The 36 senators sit at desks arranged in a circle according to their districts. The lieutenant governor presides over the Chamber. State senators are elected for a two-year term with no term limits."

Step 4: Committee The bill is sent to a **committee** in the house where it was first suggested. Let's imagine that our bill is starting in the House of Representatives. This House committee carefully looks at the bill and discusses it. They may even make changes to improve it.

Step 5: Debate If the committee likes the bill, it goes to the whole legislature for a big **debate**. Lawmakers discuss the bill, share their thoughts, and ask questions.

Pictured is Themis Klarides, who served in the Connecticut House of Representatives from 1999 until her retirement in 2021. She was the first woman to serve the House Republicans as Minority Leader.

Step 6: Vote After the debate, all the lawmakers **vote**. If most of them say "yes" to the bill, it moves to the next step. If most of them say "no," the bill doesn't become a law.

Step 7: Second House of the General Assembly After passing the first house, the bill goes to the other house for debate and voting. Let's imagine that our bill passed the House of Representatives. Now, the process repeats in the Senate. If most of the lawmakers in the second house say "yes" to the bill, it moves to the next step. If most say "no," the bill doesn't become a law.

Step 8: Governor The bill, if approved by both parts of the General Assembly, goes to the **governor**. The governor is elected by the people to be the leader of the state of Connecticut. The governor can sign the bill to make it a law or say "no."

Pictured is Governor Ella Grasso, a significant figure in American politics as the first woman in U.S. history to be elected as a state's governor in her own right (not as a successor to her husband). As Connecticut's governor from 1975 to 1980, Grasso made notable contributions to her state and the nation by championing various social and environmental initiatives.

Step 9: Law If the Governor signs the bill, it becomes a **law**! It's now a rule that everyone in Connecticut must follow.

And that's how a simple idea can become a law in our great state!