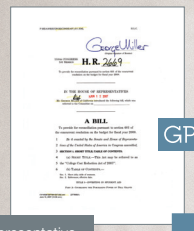
HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

Displayed is an outline of the many steps in our Federal lawmaking process from the introduction of a bill by any Member through passage by the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate and approval by the President of the United States. Since the large majority of laws originate in the House, the example shown below starts with that body.

The U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE (GPO) was established to provide essential printing and binding for the Congress and there is a close relationship between Congress and GPO. This relationship is demonstrated here by the many instances when GPO's electronic dissemination and printing services are required in the lawmaking process (as denoted by the GPO logo).



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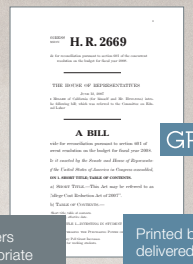
Representative prepares bill on standard forms for printing, places in "hopper" at Clerk's desk

Bill assigned number; number and other key information recorded in *House Journal*.



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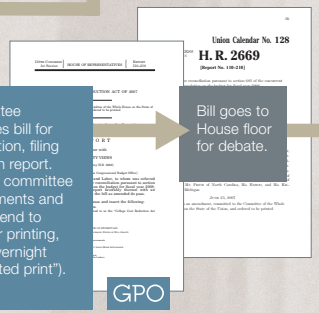
Speaker refers bill to appropriate House committee; all key information printed overnight in the *Congressional Record*

Printed bills delivered to sponsor, committee, others ("Introduced print").

Committee chair refers bill to appropriate subcommittee.

Subcommittee holds public hearing(s) on the bill.

Subcommittee approves bill, sends to committee.



Committee approves bill for floor action, filing a written report. Bill, any committee amendments and report send to GPO for printing, often overnight ("Reported print").

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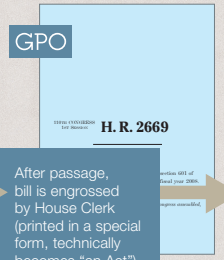
Bill goes to House floor for debate.



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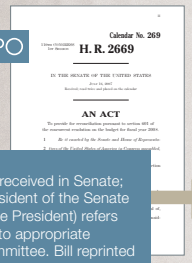
After passage, bill is engrossed by House Clerk (printed in a special form, technically becomes "an Act") ("Engrossed print").

Clerk sends bill and House report to the Senate for consideration.



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Bill received in Senate; President of the Senate (Vice President) refers bill to appropriate committee. Bill reprinted "Senate referred print".

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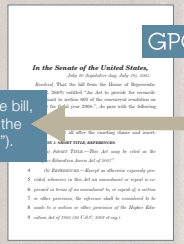
Committee approves bill for Senate floor action. Bill, written report and any amendment(s) sent to GPO for printing, often overnight ("Senate reported print").

Senate debates and pass House bill with amendment(s).



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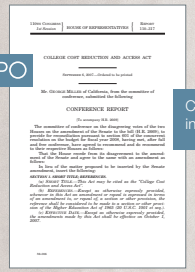
Senate returns engrossed House bill, along with its amendment(s), to the House ("Senate engrossed print").

House receives Senate amendments, agrees to conference to resolve differences in the bills.



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Conferees agree to final text of bill, file report in the House ("Conference report print").

Conference report debated in House; if passed, report sent on to Senate.

If conference report passed in Senate, engrossed bill and amendments returned to House Clerk for enrollment (printed onto parchment).

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Enrolled bill signed by Speaker of the House and President of the Senate, attesting to passage.

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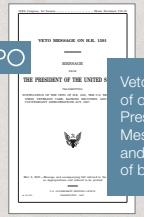
Enrolled bill sent to White House and presented to the President of the United States, who has ten days (not counting Sundays) in which to approve (sign) or disapprove (veto) it.



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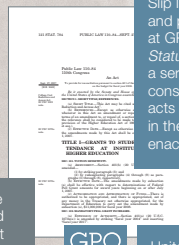
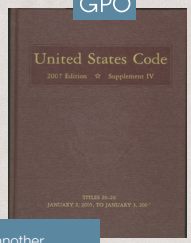
Vetoed bills returned to chamber of origin with message explaining President's objections ("Veto Message"); for reconsideration and possible override by 2/3 vote of both chambers.

Signed bill sent to the Archivist of the United States, who assigns it a public-law number, leading to its printing at GPO as a "Slip Law."



GPO

Slip laws compiled and printed at GPO in the *Statues at Large*, a serial publication consisting of all acts of Congress in their order of enactment.



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United States Code, another serial publication, is revised as necessary and reprinted at GPO from time to time.

Revised 2/10/2016