



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Bill Passing 101

A bill needs to be introduced by a Member of the Maryland Senate or House of Delegates (the Sponsor) and may be co-sponsored by other members of the chamber.

After the Bill is filed by the Sponsor, it is scheduled to be introduced on its **First Reading** on the floor of the Sponsor's chamber (House or Senate), at which time it is *Referred to a Standing Committee* that handles bills on specific subjects.. (If it is introduced after a certain deadline, it goes to the chamber's Rules Committee and needs an additional vote of that committee in order to be re-referred to a standing committee.)

The Standing Committee holds a public hearing but does not vote on it immediately. At some point, the Committee Chair schedules a Voting Session, where committee members can move to approve the bill and offer any amendments before adoption. If the committee gives the bill a "Favorable Report," it goes back to the chamber, along with any amendments they have adopted.

Second Reading - Once a committee has voted on a bill, it then appears on a Committee Schedule for its "Second Reading" for the full Chamber's consideration. On the chamber's floor, a committee member acts as the "Floor Leader" to explain the bill and any committee amendments. The Floor Leader moves that the chamber adopt the amendments and the committee's Favorable Report, and the chamber votes. At this point the chamber may consider and vote on any amendments offered from the floor (Floor Amendments). If the bill passes the chamber on "Second Reading," the bill is ordered reprinted to incorporate any approved amendments for its Third Reading and final passage in the chamber.

Third Reading (and final passage) - The final vote on a bill in its chamber of origin cannot be amended further; it just received an up or down vote. A bill that reaches a final vote later in the opposite chamber can be amended on Third Reading.

After the bill is passed in the Chamber where it was introduced, it must go through the

same process in the other Chamber. Many bills are introduced in both chambers, but passing the same bill in each chamber of origin is not enough. At least ONE of the companion bills must pass BOTH chambers with identical language for the bill to be sent to the Governor for signature (enactment).

All bills have to pass through one chamber by the 69th day of the session, known as the Crossover Date. Bills received in the opposite chamber after the Crossover Date are referred to the chamber's Rules Committee and need an additional vote by this committee in order to go further.

NOTE!!! A bill has to pass through BOTH chambers before it can be sent to the Governor for signing. If a bill passes through both chambers, it will still go to the Governor—even if the cross-filed bill is still stuck in committee! However, if one of the chambers adds an amendment, the other chamber will still have to vote to approve it before the bill goes to the Governor. BOTH chambers have to pass the SAME bill before it can become law.

The Progress of a Bill

