

How a Bill Becomes A Law in New Jersey

1. A legislator decides to sponsor a bill, sometimes at the suggestion of a constituent, interest group, public official, or the Governor. The legislator may ask other legislators in the same House to join as co-sponsors.
2. At the legislator's direction, the Office of Legislative Services, a non-partisan agency of the Legislature, provides research and drafting assistance, and prepares the bill in proper technical form.
3. During a session, the legislator gives the bill to the Senate Secretary or Assembly Clerk, who reads the bill's title aloud. This is known as the first reading. The bill is printed and released to the public.
4. The Senate President or Assembly Speaker usually refers the bill to a committee for review, but may send the bill directly to the second reading in order to speed its consideration
5. When scheduled by the chair, the committee considers the bill at a meeting open to the public. The committee may report the bill to the House as is, with amendments, or by a substitute bill. If not considered or reported, the bill remains in committee
6. When the bill is reported to the floor (or referred directly without committee review), its title is read aloud for the second reading. The bill is eligible for amendment on the floor. After the bill is given a third reading, the House must vote to return it to the second reading for any further amendments.
7. When scheduled by the President or Speaker, the bill is given a third reading and considered on the floor. The bill may not go through the second and third reading on the same day, except by an emergency vote of 3/4 of the members (30 votes in the Senate, 60 in the Assembly)
8. The bill passes when approved by a majority of the authorized members (21 votes in the Senate, 41 in the Assembly) and is sent to the other House. If a final vote is not taken, the bill may be considered at another time or may be returned to a committee by a vote of the House.
9. The bill is delivered to the second House where it goes through the same process. If the second House amends the bill, it is returned to the first House for a vote on the changes. A bill receives final legislative approval when it passes both Houses in identical form.
10. After final passage, the bill is sent to the Governor. The Governor may sign it, conditionally veto it (returning it for changes) or veto it absolutely. The Governor may veto single line items of appropriation bills. Bill passed in the last 10 days of a 2-year session may be "pocket vetoed."
11. A bill becomes law upon the Governor's signature or after 45 days if no action is taken. If vetoed, a bill may become law if the Legislature overrides the veto by a 2/3 vote (27 in the Senate, 54 in the Assembly). A law takes effect on the day specified in its text or, if unspecified, the July 4th following its passage.