

“How a Bill becomes a Law”
A Guide for Citizens
City of Seattle
Legislative Department

The Mayor or a city department proposes legislation and transmits the proposal to the City Budget Office (CBO) for review. This proposed legislation becomes a Council Bill.

CBO reviews the Bill and if it is approved, sends it to the Law Department.

The Law Department reviews the proposal, and drafts appropriate ordinance language. The Bill is then forwarded to City Council.

Councilmembers can also initiate legislation.

The Council President distributes the Bills to the Councilmember who chairs the committee to which the legislation would most likely be referred.

The Councilmember reviews the proposal and if s/he agrees to sponsor the item, forwards it to the City Clerk.

The City Clerk collects the Bills at noon on Wednesday. The City Clerk’s Office reviews each one for conformance to form, sponsorship and content; assigns numbers; makes preliminary committee assignments; and prepares the weekly Referral Calendar.

At its regularly scheduled 2:00 pm Monday meeting, the Council reviews the recommendations for committee referral and either adopts or amends the Calendar. The Bills are then delivered to the appropriate committee.

Council committees review the legislation, may hold public hearings, direct staff to conduct research, hold the item for further consideration, or amend it. After review and discussion, the committee makes a recommendation to the Council as to the action it should take on the Bill.

At the Council’s next regular Monday afternoon meeting, each committee that met the prior week reports to the Council its recommendations. At that time, the Council may adopt the committee report, debate, discuss, amend, re-refer, hold, pass or not pass the Bills.

A roll call vote is taken on final action of Bills. The Council President then signs the legislation and returns it to the City Clerk.

The City Clerk reviews the legislation once more, then sends it to the Mayor, via CBO.

The Mayor may sign the legislation, allow it to go into law without his/her signature or may veto it. Regardless of the action the Mayor takes, s/he sends the legislation back to the City Clerk within 10 calendar days.

The City Clerk assigns ordinance numbers, orders publication, and files the new ordinances.

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