

High School, for the majority of us, is merely a blurry memory of occasional study, football games and having fun with our friends. With that in mind, your Legislative Affairs team thought it would be a good idea to provide you with a refresher civics class. There are many different ways of getting things done in Washington D.C. but the following is the 100 level class gouge on how a good idea goes from just an idea to becoming a law.

Introduction of Legislation

There are two basic types of legislation: bills and resolutions. A bill, what we are going to focus on, is the means to create public policy. An idea for a bill can come from anyone, but only a Member of Congress can introduce legislation. A bill that would appropriate money must start in the House because only the People's Representatives have the power of the purse.

When the bill is introduced, the Member sends it to the clerk of his house (the House or Senate) who gives it an identifying number and a corresponding H.R. for the House or S. for the Senate.

Committee/Subcommittee Action

Once the bill is introduced, it is referred to the committee that has jurisdiction. The committee may decide that the bill is not meritorious and table it, thus killing it. It may also decide that the bill is worthy of further study and refer it to the appropriate subcommittee.

A large portion of what your Legislative Affairs team deals with goes through the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Aviation Subcommittee. The Chairman of the T&I Committee has an enormous amount of power to decide which bills receive attention. Some committee chairman have gone so far as to call members of their committee and their party to either request support for or against a bill. This is why ALPA PAC is so important. PAC contributions, completely separate from your ALPA dues, allow us to attend fundraisers where we continue to foster relationships with the Members of Congress and their Chiefs of Staff. These ongoing relationships enable us to discuss the issues of the day with the decision makers directly and circumvent their gatekeepers. [Click here to go to the ALPA PAC webpage](#)

After the subcommittee receives the bill, three main steps occur:

Hearings – If hearings are held, witnesses are called to testify before the subcommittee and are questioned by the Members. Witnesses are generally prepared to support or voice opposition to the bill in advance.

Mark Up – At this stage, Members can offer their own views and amendments, which are not required to have anything to do with the original bill.

Reporting Out – When mark up is complete, a final version of the bill is voted on. If the bill garners majority support, it is “reported out” to the full committee to go through the full process again. If the bill does not garner majority support, it dies.

The Floor

Once the committee staff completes the report on the bill, it is placed on the House or Senate calendar for debate on the floor by the full chamber. The Clerk reads the bill sentence by sentence to the house. This is known as the second reading. Members may now debate the bill and offer amendments. At this point, all amendments must be germane, or related to the main subject of the bill. In the House, debate is limited by a cloture rule but the Senate places far fewer restrictions on debate. This allows any Senator to filibuster for as long as he wishes which can only be ended by a 60 Senator vote to end debate. This has most recently changed in the Senate by Majority Leader Read. The requirement is now a majority (50+1). This was most infamously known as the nuclear option.

When debate is complete, the bill is put up for a vote where it is either approved or defeated.

Conference Committee

The bill must now go across Capitol Hill to the other house of Congress, where it may be defeated or passed with or without amendments. If it is passed with amendments, the House and Senate must form a conference committee to iron out the differences between their bills. This process is called reconciliation. Once the bill has been reconciled, both chambers must vote again to approve the legislation.

The President

After its final passage by both chambers, the bill is sent to the President. He has four choices:

1. He may sign the bill into law
2. If he disapproves of the bill, he may veto it.
3. He may take no action, and if Congress remains in session, the bill will become law in ten days.
4. He may take no action, and if Congress has adjourned, the bill will die. This is commonly referred to as a “pocket veto”.

Overriding the President

If the President vetoes a bill, the Congress has one last chance. A two-thirds majority of both chambers is required to override the veto and make the bill a law.

With less than 5% of bills ever making it into law, it is a daunting task to pass legislation. Your Legislative Affairs team is continually on the look out for bad legislation that could have a negative impact on FedEx pilot’s lives and conversely

looking for opportunities where legislation is the answer to a roadblock ahead. We consider it an honor to represent the FedEx pilot group in Washington D.C and strive to cultivate that next relationship that could make the difference in future battles.