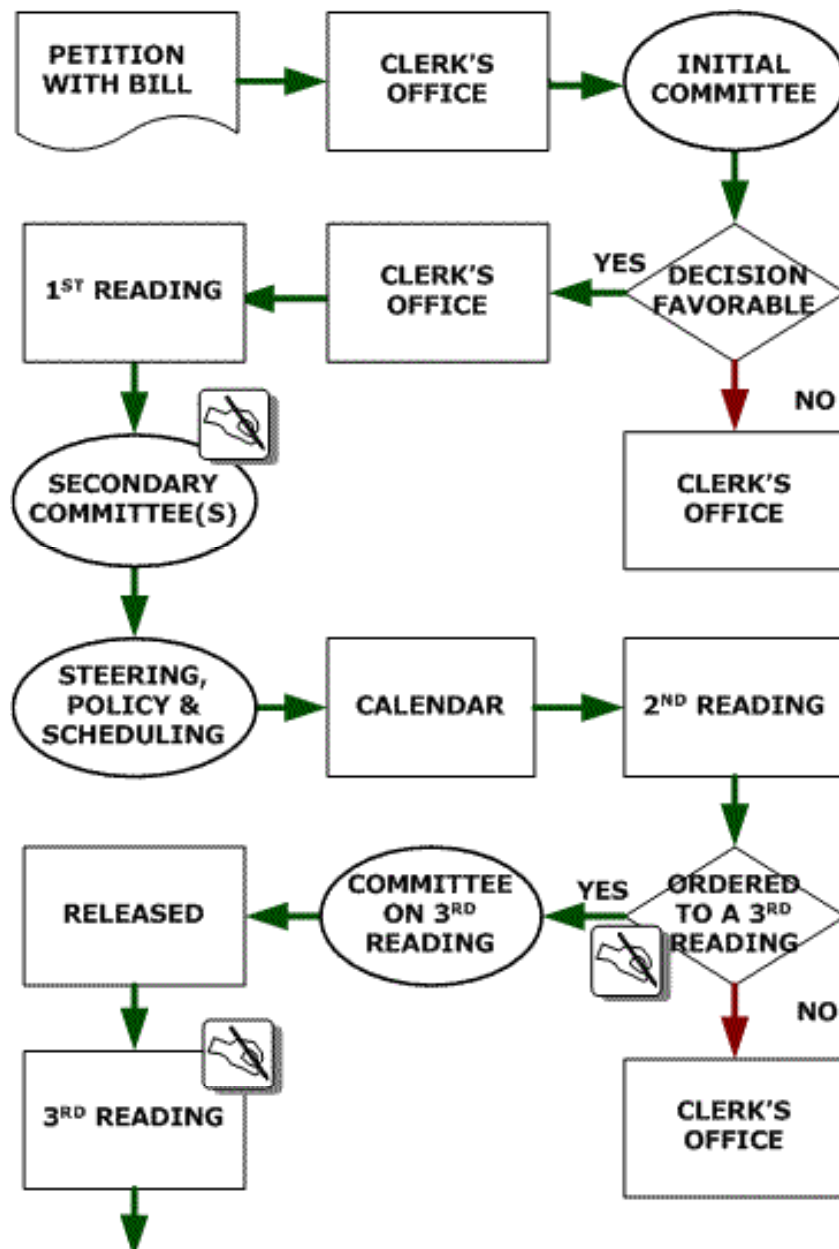
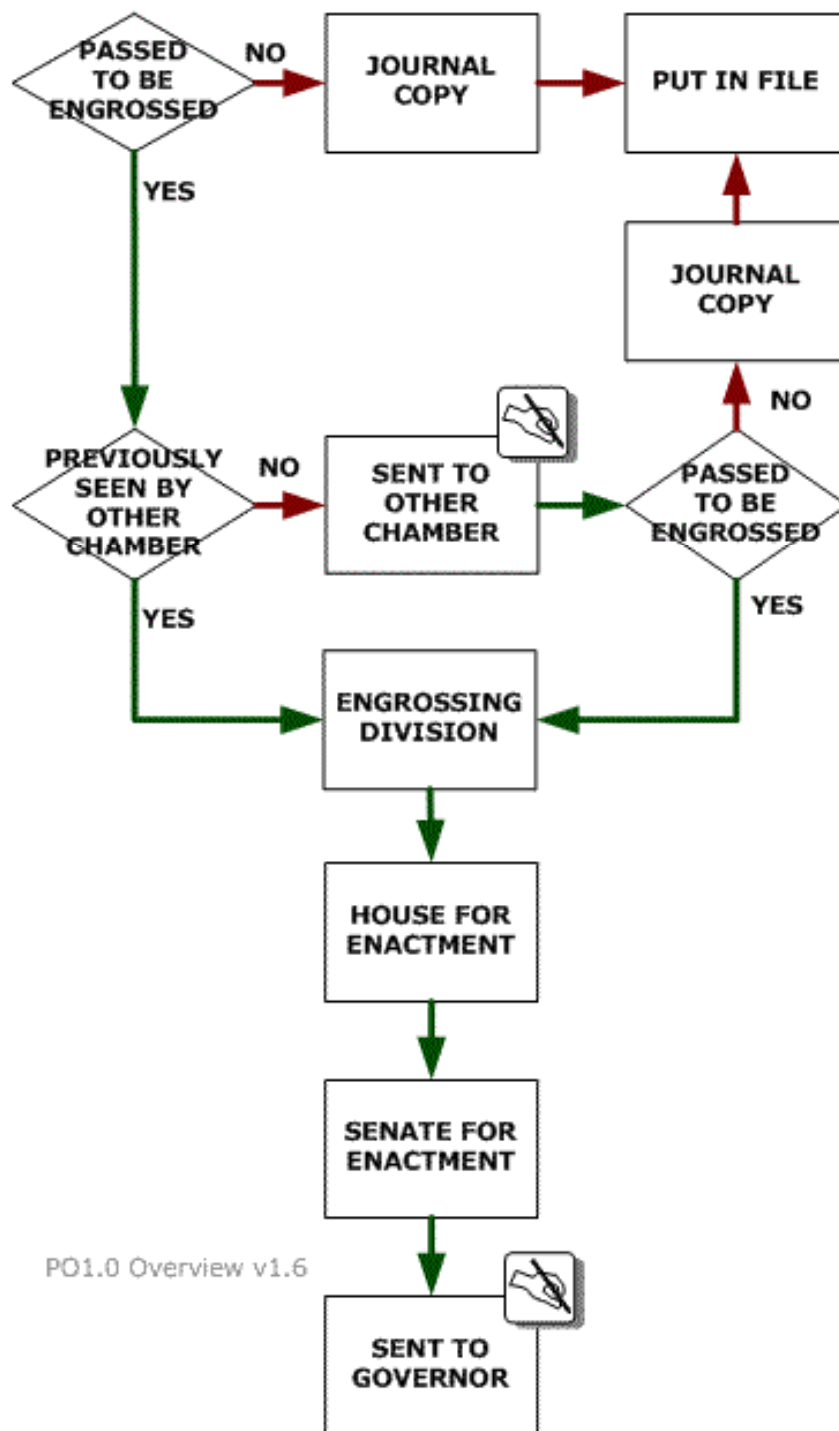


Understand the legislative process

The responsibility for Law-Making in Massachusetts lies with the Legislature, which is officially known as the General Court. The General Court has two branches, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Both branches work concurrently on pending legislation.

Below is a high level flow chart detailing how a bill becomes a law.





PO1.0 Overview v1.6



Petition (Regular)

A Petition is a request sponsored by a legislator and signed by the petitioner(s), and accompanied by a draft of the bill, or resolve embodying the legislation proposed. Petitions can also be accompanied by Proposals, Resolves, Resolutions or Orders. When filed, the petition backing contains only the name and city or town of the Representative sponsoring the petition. All other information is added by the Clerks.

Clerk's Office

The "Clerk's Office" stage represents the filing of paperwork with the Clerk's office.

Committees

During its lifecycle, a bill may be referred to many different committees for judgment on different matters. Many different types of committees exist. Two different types of committee steps are described as part of the House Process:

- **Assignment (Reference)**
In the "Committee Assignment" step, the Bill (or other document) is examined to determine to which committee it should be sent. In many cases a committee reference is written in pencil on the Bill documentation to facilitate navigation to the correct committee when the documentation is sent to appropriate committees later in the process. The Clerk or the Assistant Clerk typically determines which committees are appropriate.
- **Send to**
This step (Send to Committee) refers to the act of physically directing the paperwork to the appropriate committee(s). In certain cases, if more than one committee is necessary, the matter will be transferred to subsequent committees only after a report from previous committees.

Committee Decision Favorable or Ought Not To Pass?

The committee decides in Executive Session to report the bill favorably, unfavorably, or to report that the subject should be further studied.

First, Second and Third Readings

A bill must receive three readings in each branch in order to reach the Governor's Desk. The first reading frequently takes place in the Clerk's Office. The second and third readings always take place in the Chamber.

House Steering, Policy and Scheduling

Committee schedules matters in a manner that will provide for an even distribution and orderly consideration of reports of legislative committees on the floor of the House.

Calendar (Put on Calendar)

"Put on Calendar" refers to placing the action of a specific document or amendment on the agenda for floor action. All reported documents are placed on the Calendar for their relevant branches, unless there is a suspension of specific rules, in which case they can bypass being placed on the calendar and be read in on the floor during a session.

[Navigate to the top](#)

Committee On Bills In The Third Reading

It is the committee charged with the responsibility of perfecting the bill. It may make non-substantive changes to the text that corrects the language.

Put in File (Sent to File)

The "Put in File" stage is not when documents are officially filed, but when they are read in, and then stored or put away for a later time. "Filed" is typically used in a formal sense; while "put in file" (etc.) is used as clerks action of storing the document.

Passed To Be Engrossed

After a bill has been seen by both chambers and the language has been agreed to, it is "Passed to be Engrossed". If the bill originated in the other branch it is "Passed to be Engrossed in Concurrence". This is the vote that sends a bill to the Engrossing Division to be formally printed prior to enactment by both chambers.

Send To Senate (Other Chamber)

1) Reference to a joint committee must be agreed to by the opposite branch. 2) A bill must be approved by both the House and the Senate before it can be placed on the Governor's Desk. After the originating branch concludes its required three reading and passes a bill to be engrossed, it is then transmitted to the other branch. If the second branch amends the bill, it must be transmitted to the originating branch, so that the originating branch may take action on the amendment.

Also Joint Orders require adoption by both branches.

Seen In Senate (Other Chamber)?

If the bill originated in the House, it must be sent to the Senate for its readings. (vice versa)

Engrossing Division

The Engrossing Division prepares bills for final passage. When both the House and the Senate have agreed to identical language, the bill is ready for the Engrossing division. The engrossed Bill, which includes places for the Speaker, President of the Senate and Governor to sign, is then sent to the House for the adoption of an emergency preamble (if required), enactment or (in the case of a bill returned by the Governor with recommendation of amendment) re-enactment.

[Navigate to the top](#)

Enactment or Re-enactment

When both the House and the Senate have agreed to identical language, the bill is ready for the Engrossing Division. The Engrossing Division prepares the bill for final passage. The engrossed Bill, which includes places for the Speaker, President of the Senate and Governor to sign, is then sent to the House for the adoption of an emergency preamble (if the bill contains provisions that would require it to take effect in fewer than 90 days), or enactment, or in the case of a bill returned by the Governor with recommendation of amendment, re-enactment.

Governor

The Governor has 10 days to act. The first day is the day after the bill is placed on the Governor's desk by the Senate. All days are counted, including Sundays and holidays.

[Navigate to the top](#)