

AFTER THE VOTE

Transforming a Bill into Statute (on not) After it Passes the General Assembly

Many are familiar with the steps in the legislative process while a bill is going through the Illinois General Assembly. **But what happens after a bill passes both houses of the legislature?**

When a bill passes both houses, the Secretary of the Senate (for Senate Bills) and the Clerk of the House (for House Bills) have 30 days to *enroll* or consolidate any amendments into the bill and send the bill to the Governor. Typically the Senate and House take the full 30 days before sending the bill, unless enactment is urgent or there is a special request of the bill's sponsor.

Each page of every bill is **signed by the Speaker of the House and the Senate President** to certify that the bill has met the requirements of passage according to each chamber's rules and the Illinois Constitution. It is then **delivered by hand** to the Governor's Office.

Once received, the Governor has 60 days in which to take action on the bill. The 60th day is called the "Drop Date". **If the Governor does not take action on the bill by the drop date, the bill automatically becomes law**, a rarity in Illinois.

The last time a bill became law because of lack of gubernatorial action was in November, 2007. Governor Rod Blagojevich did not take action on Senate Bill 837 (Haine/Moffitt), a bipartisan bill amending the Emergency Telephone System Act. Blagojevich also let 5 bills go unsigned in August of 2003, his first year as Governor. Publicly, the Governor's Office claimed that the inaction was intentional. However, it is widely believed that the Governor's staff either miscalculated the drop date or simply lost track of the number of days they had the bills in hand.

The Governor's review process often depends on the content of the bill. All bills are reviewed and analyzed by the Governor's legal, legislative and policy staff members. **During this time the lobbying process continues. For example, meetings are arranged with the Governor, his staff, or agency heads.** Grassroots campaigns in the form of letters and other communications received from supporters and opponents are reviewed, collected and included in an electronic bill tracking system.

If the governor decides to **sign** the bill; it becomes law. If a bill does not specify an effective date and if it passed prior to June 1st, its effective date is January 1 of the next year.

Most bills are signed without great fanfare. However, a bill signing ceremony might be scheduled for high profile legislation. Typically these bills are signed at a ceremony scheduled at a relevant location and features invited guests, dignitaries, legislators and of course, the media.

The governor can choose to **veto** a bill in its entirety or **amendatory veto** it (makes a change in the language).

In the final step in the process, a bill is sent to the Secretary of State's Index Division. If the bill is signed, it is formally included in the state's official statutes. If the bill is vetoed or received an amendatory veto, the Index Division notifies the General Assembly. The General Assembly then has 30 days to **accept (simple majority) the veto** or **override (super or 3/5ths majority) it** in the fall veto session. **If the General Assembly does not override the governor's veto or amendatory veto, the bill is dead.**