

# Guide to Advocacy



## Legislative Process

### How a Bill Becomes a Law

Although the General Assembly has many responsibilities and roles, its primary function is to make the laws that govern Georgia. This involves the proposal of legislation, committee consideration, and finally action by the full house—a series of steps that must be repeated in both houses.

All legislation introduced in the General Assembly is classified as either a “bill” or a “resolution.” Bills are used to propose changes or additions to existing statutory law, while resolutions usually express legislative opinion or recognition on some matter and do not have the effect of law. A bill becomes known as an “act” or “law” when it is passed by both houses in identical form and signed by the governor.

In Georgia bills are either general or local in application. A general bill has statewide application, while a local bill applies only to a named city or county. Regardless

of type, the great majority of bills involve proposals to change existing law.

General bills are drafted to specifically amend the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (or O.C.G.A., which is a complete compilation of all legislative acts currently in force in Georgia, arranged by subject matter, and organized into numbered titles, chapters, and sections). Legislative acts comprising the O.C.G.A. are also termed “statutes”—a term referring to the body of written law enacted by the legislature.

### Legislative vs. Budget Ask

A **legislative ask** is a proposal that can be solved by introducing new legislation or amending existing legislation.

A **budget ask** is a request for funds to be added into the Amended Fiscal Year (AFY) or upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) appropriations bill.

### Why Might a Policy have to be Developed or Changed?

- Basic needs are not being met
- People have been treated unfairly
- Current policies or laws are not enforced or effective
- Proposed changes in policies and laws would be harmful
- Existing or emerging conditions pose a threat to public health, safety, education or well-being

#### Step 1: Drafting the Idea

The first step can start with YOU. If you identify a problem affecting your community, [tell your state legislators](#).

#### Step 2: GA General Assembly

To alter or create a Georgia law, your legislator must take the idea to Georgia's version of Congress, called the [Georgia General Assembly](#).

#### Step 3: State Legislative Session

On the first legislative day after the bill is filed, the bill is formally introduced to legislators through its “First Reading.” The presiding officer then assigns the bill to a standing committee. The majority of legislators' work happens in committee where bills are discussed and reviewed. On the next legislative day — and only in the Georgia House of Representatives — the bill has its Second Reading.

#### Step 4: Third Reading

Once the bill goes through committee, it's ready for its Third Reading. After its Third Reading, the bill finally opens for floor debate by our State Senators and Representatives.

#### Step 5: The Vote

After a bill passes the house where it originates, it must go to the other chamber where it is assigned to a committee to undergo the same procedure. Once both houses agree on the same version of a bill, it's sent to the governor.

#### Step 6: The Governor's Role

During the session, the governor can ask to sign or veto a bill once it passes both chambers. Most often, bills are sent to the governor after the session ends, formally referred to as Sine Die.

#### Step 7: The Bill Becomes a Law

Once a bill is signed by the governor, all the new acts and laws are printed in the Georgia Law series and added to the Official Code of Georgia Annotated. Unless otherwise stated in the bill, all acts/laws passed become effective July 1.