

WHAT IS GRASSROOTS AND HOW CAN I HELP?

A Resource for the Members of the General Building Contractors Association

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PART I: Introduction to Grassroots

As a member of General Building Contractors Association (GBCA), you are a vital part of our local, state, and federal legislative efforts to be the voice of the union construction industry. While the GBCA staff members work hard to promote legislation that is beneficial for you, we are most effective when **YOU** are involved as well.

As a business leader, you are a source of information for legislators. As a voter and a constituent, your legislators are very interested in what you have to say. We are looking to you to use your knowledge and contacts to promote grassroots activity, especially among other GBCA members and your employees.

Who is looking out for me?

As a GBCA member, you benefit from the **GBCA Public Affairs Department** working directly with Philadelphia City Council and city agencies to monitor local legislation. The department offers periodic updates on legislation affecting the construction industry. Questions concerning City Council legislation can be directed to communication@gbca.net or 215.568.7015 at any time.

For more information visit: www.gbca.net/membership/government-affairs/

In conjunction, as a GBCA member you benefit from two additional associations looking out for your best interests.

The GBCA is one of the founding members of the **General Contractors Association of Pennsylvania (GCAP)** which monitors the PA Legislature and State agencies in Harrisburg. GCAP represents a statewide voice for union contractors, with the GBCA in eastern PA, the Keystone Contractors Association (KCA) in central PA and the Master Builders Association (MBA) in western PA. Together these associations offer union contractors a united voice in Harrisburg.

For more information visit: www.generalcontractorsofpa.org

Finally, GBCA members also benefit from membership in the **Associated General Contractors Association of America (AGC)** which has a dedicated staff committed to realizing the legislative priorities facing the commercial construction industry and growing the construction economy on a national level.

For more information visit: www.agc.org/cs/advocacy

What is Grassroots?

Grassroots is the effective deployment of constituent-based political power to impact and influence legislation that is important to you and your business. Grassroots activities are the best way to impact legislation.

The information below covers everything about grassroots, from forming relationships with your legislators to tips for effective communication.

Through our collaborative grassroots efforts, we can:

- Establish contacts to quickly and effectively reach out to officials on issues
- Educate and train GBCA members to be effective advocates and spokespersons for the construction industry
- Be truly effective in helping to craft favorable legislation in Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Washington by reaching out to legislators in meaningful ways

PART II: Contacting Your Legislators

Legislators respond best to the people they represent. Any legislator will tell you (s)he would rather hear from a constituent than anyone else. City Council, the PA Legislature and the US Congress depend on GBCA members like you to tell them how proposed legislation or regulations will affect the construction industry, your district, and your company and its employees.

Take the initiative to get to know your legislators. They make it a priority to spend as much time as possible in their districts to keep in touch with local issues and their constituents' needs. Take advantage of this opportunity to meet face to face or communicate regularly via mail.

Forging understanding and trustworthy relationships with your legislators opens the door to communicating what is important to you, your business, and other GBCA members in your district.

Note: It is not necessary for you to be a member of the same political party as your legislators, or for you to agree with them on every issue. If your legislators learn to trust and respect your views, you will become a valuable resource to them on all construction and business-related issues.

Note: If you already have relationships with local, state, and/or federal legislators, let the Public Affairs Department know at communication@gbca.net or 215.568.7015. The GBCA maintains a list of member-legislator relationships for grassroots activities. Sharing your relationships allows the GBCA to better craft communication strategies.

Communication Tactics

There are many methods of communication that can be used with legislators. The following information offers different communication processes to get your voice heard.

Remember these guidelines when communicating with your legislator:

- Always be truthful. Never risk your credibility.
- Communicating at least four times a year will help to build a strong foundation.
- Do not be hypercritical of a legislator's vote on any one bill. Be sure to review his or her voting record as a whole. This does not mean however that you cannot make your opinion or displeasure known.
- Respect the legislative office and act accordingly.
- Do not be too partisan. Focus on the issue, not the designation.
- Thank your legislator for being helpful or supporting GBCA issues. Be sure not ignore your legislator when there are NOT important GBCA issues facing votes.

And remember that the **GBCA Public Affairs Department** is the first stop in your grassroots effort. The Public Affairs department can provide you with names and contact

information for your legislators and guide you through the following communication tactics. Be sure to let the GBCA know if you would like help.

Call GBCA Government Affairs at 215.568.7015, visit www.gbca.net/membership/government-affairs/ or email communication@gbca.net with questions.

Letter

An effective way to communicate your concerns with your legislators is by writing a letter. Writing a letter is simple and is the most popular method of reaching legislators.

When drafting a letter, keep these few basic suggestions in mind:

- **Be Direct:** State the purpose of writing your legislator in the first paragraph of the letter.
- **Be Accurate:** Target a specific piece of legislation whenever possible and reference the bill number and title in your correspondence. Know your facts. Providing inaccurate or biased data will damage your credibility, as well as that of GBCA, and can diminish your ability to influence future issues.
- **Be Specific:** Explain how the bill or issue affects you and your business, and how it would affect the construction industry in your district. If possible, provide anecdotal examples. If a bill or proposed solution is off the mark, offer alternatives or suggestions, in addition to your opinion.
- **Be Concise:** Keep the letter to one page if possible. Address and discuss only one issue in each letter.
- **Be courteous:** If your legislators' positions contradict your own, acknowledge their views and state why you disagree.
- **Be Efficient:** Faxing your letter, as opposed to mailing it, is highly recommended. If an email address is available, feel free to email as well. Mail can take weeks to reach your legislator's desk.

See Appendix A for a sample letter to Congress

Communicating by Telephone

Calling is a great option when trying to convey your opinion immediately. Call your legislators' office prior to an important vote to remind him or her how you would like them to vote. Legislative offices frequently count the number of calls received for and against certain pieces of legislation, and consider these calls an informal gauge of their constituents' opinions.

See Appendix B for a Guide to Effective Calls

Letters to the Editor & Op-Eds

Writing to the editor of local newspaper(s) is an incredibly powerful way to communicate with your legislators. Elected officials pay close attention to what is written in their district newspapers.

A letter to the editor (LTE) or an article for the newspaper's opinion page (Op-Ed) is an excellent way to keep an issue at the forefront of a legislator's attention and to educate others in your community.

Tips for writing and placing a letter to the editor or an op-ed:

- Most LTEs are 250 words and Op-Eds are between 500 and 750 words. Keeping your article within those limits will help get it published.
- Focus your article on one key point – don't try to fit too much into your article.
- Be concise and clear. Avoid big words or jargon.
- Have a strong point of view.
- Real life stories engage readers – share your personal experience and perspective.
- Explain your stake in the issue near the top of your article.
- In the case of an op-ed, after sending your article to the paper, follow up with the editor to explain why it should be published.

Always contact the GBCA Government Affairs Department at communication@gbca.net or 215.568.7015 when submitting LTEs or Op-Eds.

See Appendix C for a list of LTE/Op-Ed guidelines.

Involve Your Employees

Because legislative offices count the number of communications received as a gauge of constituent opinion, it is imperative that GBCA companies involve their employees.

Keeping employees educated on GBCA's important legislative issues, letting them know when important votes are taking place and updating them on where your legislator stands are some of the most important things you can do.

Staying informed

Staying informed of your legislators' activities and positions is vitally important. You can do this in a variety of ways:

- Read and take action when you receive communication from the GBCA asking for your help with grassroots initiatives
- Become active on the GBCA Government Affairs Committee
- Regularly visit your legislators' websites, as well as the GBCA website (www.gbca.net) and the AGC National website (www.agc.org) to keep track of how legislators voted on key GBCA issues.
- Ensure that your name is on your legislators' mailing lists to receive newsletters and position papers.

The GBCA Public Affairs Department is a great resource and can provide tips, talking points and more for any way you choose to communicate with your legislator. Contact the GBCA anytime at communication@gbca.net or 215.568.7015.

PART III : Meeting Your Legislators

It is always a good idea to take advantage of the opportunity to meet face to face when one of your legislators holds a public meeting or forum in your district. In addition, it is important to organize periodic personal meetings in an effort to become acquainted and maintain a relationship with your legislators.

One-on-One Meeting

Setting up a meeting at your legislator's office is a great way to build your relationship. When meeting with legislators and candidates, the following tips help you make the most of every minute you spend with elected officials and those seeking office.

- Be considerate of your legislator's schedule and time constraints (If you are meeting in your legislator's office, he or she may only have 15 to 20 minutes to meet). State your views succinctly to leave time for discussion.
- Be prepared. Understanding political issues is important, but your personal experience is also an asset. Develop talking points before the meeting to make certain you stay on message.
- Understand the basis of your legislator's views. Understanding his or her views provide valuable insight into how you might support or change those views.
- Ask for specific legislative action or support.
- Leave a one-page summary of your key points and your contact information when the meeting is over.
- Follow up the meeting with a written thank-you note re-emphasizing your key points. Write a separate thank-you note to the staff members who helped arrange the meeting.
- Follow up with any additional information or materials you promise to provide.

For many reasons, you may end up meeting with a member of the office staff who handles the issue at hand. While you may be disappointed, don't be discouraged. Treat the meeting the same as planned, ask that your information be provided to the legislator and for him or her to follow up with you about the meeting.

Host a Legislative Event

Hosting an event at which your legislator can meet and talk with a group of GBCA members is a successful way to create a lasting impression and relationship. Though it may sound intimidating at first, organizing a meeting can be done in a variety of settings—luncheons, dinners, informal coffee hours, etc.

Tips for scheduling an event include:

- Send your legislator a written invitation three to four weeks before the date of the event. The GBCA Public Affairs Department can help advise you of good times to meet with a legislator.
- Be considerate of the legislator's schedule by offering several possible dates and times.
- Clearly state the purpose of the event and the expected attendance.
- When the legislator confirms, send a written confirmation to his or her office, reiterating the purpose and format of the event and including the following:
 - o time, location, and length of the program
 - o topic or purpose of the event and the legislator's function at the event
 - o proper attire
 - o expected attendance
 - o a profile of the audience (e.g., GBCA members, general constituents, business owners)
 - o whether other legislators, candidates or participants have been invited
 - o whether the legislator is expected to speak and if so, for how long
 - o whether the legislator requires any audio-visual equipment
 - o if food will be served. (Be aware: restrictions exist regarding the amount of food that can be served. Contact communication@gbca.net prior to the event to ensure you are in compliance with the law).
 - o One week before the event, telephone the invitees to ensure good attendance.
 - o After the event, send thank-you notes to the legislator as well as to the participants emphasizing the positive results of the event and the value of similar events in the future.

Contacting the GBCA Public Affairs Department at communication@gbca.net or 215.568.7015 is the best way to ensure that your event is successful. It also helps the Department track the grassroots initiatives of all GBCA members.

Plan a Jobsite Tour

Inviting legislators to see the industry at work and to meet your company's employees is a great way to show them how their actions impact your business and its employees. Legislators look forward to learning more about constituents and businesses in their districts. Use the visit as an opportunity to reinforce your personal relationship with your legislator and to discuss relevant issues.

When scheduling the tour send a written invitation well in advance, providing alternative dates and follow up the written invitation with a phone call and, if accepted, written confirmation.

Have a definite tour schedule, but leave enough time to adequately tour the jobsite and enjoy informal discussion.

Before the tour, decide on the three key points and messages you want to convey. Do not overload the legislator with an enormous amount of facts and figures. Introduce the legislator to company officers and management personnel before the tour begins. Use this opportunity to provide a brief history of your company.

Provide the legislator with written information, such as:

- number of company employees
- gross annual payroll or revenue
- total dollar investment in plant and equipment, as well as the estimated economic impact of the completed job
- costs of safety and environmental compliance
- health standards, safety devices and accident prevention programs
- number of dollars spent locally to purchase supplies
- environmental equipment, programs and associated costs
- energy conservation efforts
- federal, state and local taxes paid

Note: This key information about your company is also helpful for GBCA's lobbying efforts. Please take the time to send it to the Public Affairs Department at communication@gbca.net or 215.568.7015.

A principal or project manager should lead the tour. This person should be able to respond to questions from the legislator and introduce other field managers. Notify employees of the time and date of the tour. If you are a general contractor, advise your subcontractors of the visit and coordinate participation by the subcontractors and their employees.

During the tour, introduce the legislator by name and office and allow time during the tour for employees to speak with him or her. It may further engage your employees and legislators welcome the opportunity to speak with as many constituents as possible.

Have appropriate personal protective equipment available for the legislator.

Following the tour, be sure to send a letter of thanks and reiterate the key points made during the visit. Provide any information requested by the legislator and provide copies of photographs taken during the tour.

Be sure to send information about the visit to the GBCA Public Affairs Department at communication@gbca.net or 215.568.7015. Send a brief description of your meeting highlighting the issues discussed and comments made by your legislator. This will enable GBCA to reinforce your views when meeting with the legislator and his or her staff members.

PART IV : The Keys to Being Effective

Building and maintaining relationships with your legislators requires thoughtful and informed communication. This is the only way to be truly effective.

Remember the Staff

While it is important to work directly with your legislators, it also is helpful to develop good relationships with their staffs. Legislative aides are heavily involved in assembling background materials and developing position papers used by legislators. Most importantly, they are the gatekeepers to any office, so they determine what information reaches the legislator's desk and who receives meeting time with their legislator.

Do Your Homework

Learn as much as you can about your legislators' positions on issues. GBCA's Public Affairs staff is a great resource for background information. The Department can provide information on GBCA's priority issues. It is helpful to become familiar with your legislators' personal backgrounds as well. You may find many common interests such as hobbies, sports, children, or charitable causes that can help you build relationships.

Grade Legislators

As an GBCA member, you play a key role in the Association's grassroots effort. You are crucial to the success of our shared legislative agenda. Much of that success lies in holding legislators accountable for their votes. GBCA offers several tools to help you evaluate your legislators' work. The AGC tracks US Congressional members' voting records and that information is available at www.agc.org.

Before you make first contact with your legislator, use this record as snapshot of how your legislator voted on GBCA issues. Having that information will help you be more effective as an activist and will help guide your choices at election time. You can also contact the Public Affairs Department at communication@gbca.net or 215.568.7015 for specific voting information.

PART V : Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Letter to Legislators

Dear [SENATOR/CONGRESSMAN] _____:

As the [TITLE] of [COMPANY NAME] located in [CITY, STATE], I am writing to strongly urge you to [SUPPORT/OPPOSE] Bill [NUMBER].

We feel strongly that Bill [NUMBER] contains several [BENEFITS/OBSTICLES] including:

- [LIST BENEFITS/OBSTACLES]
- [LIST BENEFITS/OBSTACLES]
- [LIST BENEFITS/OBSTACLES]

Thank you for your time. On behalf of your constituency, I urge you once again to [SUPPORT/OPPOSE] Bill [NUMBER].

Sincerely,
[Your Name Here]
[Your Company Here]

Appendix B: Guide to Effective Calls

While it usually is best to put your views in writing to your legislators, when a vote is scheduled to take place immediately, calling your representative's office is a very effective way to make your views known.

Points to keep in mind:

1. Unless you are a personal friend of the legislator, it is not necessary to speak directly with him or her. You can leave a message about your concerns with the individual who answers the phone, or, better yet, with the legislator's staff member who handles the particular issue in question. "I'd like to talk to the individual in your office who handles labor legislation."
2. Try not to argue. Just express your opinion. Say why you feel the way you do, and state what action you want your legislator to take.
"I am against H.R.100 because it will cost my business more than \$1,000 extra per employee each year— this is something I just cannot afford. Please let Representative Smith know that I urge him to vote 'no' on this bill."
3. Seek assurances that the message will be transmitted to your legislator, and request a response in writing. "Would you please pass this message directly to Representative Smith, and also send me a letter about his views on the bill?"
4. It is very important when calling a legislator's office to remember these rules:
 - The telephone numbers of home district offices of your state legislators usually can be found through local directory assistance and are generally located in the largest city in the area.
 - Be sure to give your full name and address; and, keep your call short and to the point.

Appendix C: Letters & Op-Eds

Philadelphia Inquirer

There are many opportunities for readers to have their opinions published in The Inquirer either as letters (about 200 words) or essays (about 700 words or less). The writer's name, home address, and day and evening phone numbers must be included for verification purposes.

Submissions to the main letters section may be e-mailed to Inquirer.Letters@phillynews.com; mailed to Readers Editor, The Inquirer, Box 41705, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101; or faxed to 215-854-4483. Questions? Call 215-854-5801.

Submissions to the op-ed page may be e-mailed to oped@phillynews.com; mailed to Commentary Page Editor, The Inquirer, Box 41705, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101; or faxed to 215-854-4483.

Submissions to the South Jersey Commentary Page may be e-mailed to sjletters@phillynews.com; mailed to South Jersey Commentary Editor, The Inquirer, 53 Haddonfield Rd., Suite 300, Cherry Hill, N.J. 08002; or faxed to 856-779-3221.

Submissions to the Pennsylvania Commentary Page may be e-mailed to suburbanletters@phillynews.com; mailed to Pennsylvania Suburban Commentary Editor, The Inquirer, 800 River Rd., Conshohocken, Pa. 19428; or faxed to 610-313-8230.

Philadelphia Daily News

By E-mail: views@phillynews.com

By Fax: 215-854-5691

By Mail: Box 7788, Philadelphia, PA 19101

Sign your letter. Include address and day and evening phone numbers and include those on any e-mail. All submissions become property of the Daily News and may be republished in any form or medium.

Metro

Visit <http://philly.metro.us/metro/yourturn>.

Philadelphia Business Journal

Visit http://philadelphia.bizjournals.com/philadelphia/contactus/contact_editor.html

Evening Bulletin

By E-mail: publisher@thebulletin.us

By Fax: 215-735-3019

By Mail: The Bulletin Newspaper, 1500 Walnut St, Suite 300 , Philadelphia, PA 19102

Pittsburgh Post Gazette

Include your name, address and phone number, and send to

By Mail: Letters to the Editor, 34 Blvd. of the Allies, Pittsburgh 15222.

By E-mail: letters@post-gazette.com

By Fax: 412-263-2014.

Letters should be 250 words or less. All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity and accuracy and will be verified before being published.

Appendix D: How To Address Government Officials

Person	Letter Greeting	Spoken Greeting
President of the United States	Dear Mr. (or Madam) President	Mr. (or Madam) President
Vice President	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Vice President	Mr. (or Madam) Vice President
Cabinet members	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Secretary	Mr. (or Madam) Secretary
Chief Justice	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Justice or Dear Mr. (or Madam) Chief Justice	Mr. (or Madam) Chief Justice
Associate Justice	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Justice	Mr. Justice or Mr. Justice Jones; Madam Justice or Madam Justice Jones
United States Senator	Dear Senator Jones	Senator Jones
Speaker of the House	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Speaker	Mr. Speaker; Madam Speaker
United States Representative	Dear Mr. (or Mrs., Ms.) Jones	Mr. (or Mrs., Ms.) Jones
Governor	Dear Governor Jones	Governor or Governor Jones
State Legislators	Dear Mr. (Or Mrs., Ms.) Jones	Mr. (Or Mrs., Ms.) Jones
Judges	Dear Judge Jones	Mr. Justice or Judge Jones; Madam Justice or Judge Jones
Mayor	Dear Mayor Jones	Mayor Jones; Mr. (Or Madam) Mayor; Your Honor

Appendix E: **How Are Governments Organized & Sample Legislative Process**

Philadelphia

The mayor is responsible for the executive budget and can veto budget bills at will. The mayor appoints a managing director, director of finance, city solicitor, city representative and director of commerce, a civil service commission, and members of various boards and commissions. The mayor also appoints the heads of every department in city

government and all secretaries and other assistants needed to run the city's offices and departments.

The City Council is the legislative branch of city government. It approves the mayor's budget and decides how much money the mayor needs to run the city effectively. The city controller is independent of the mayor and City Council. The controller is responsible for overseeing all city spending.

Council members introduce bills to the Council. If they are passed, they become city ordinances. The proposed bill is distributed at a public hearing or meeting and is available for the public. Passage of a bill requires the favorable vote of a majority of all members of Council. A bill becomes law upon the approval of the Mayor. If the Mayor vetoes a bill, Council may override the veto by a two-thirds majority vote.

PA General Assembly

The General Assembly forms the drafts and passes the laws for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, subject to the Governor's veto power. There are 203 representatives in the House and fifty members in the Senate.

Although legislative posts in the General Assembly are conceived as part-time offices, many legislators consider these offices full-time positions. The General Assembly meets at the state office complex in Harrisburg to conduct the official business of the Commonwealth. Many members also maintain local offices within their district.

U.S. Congress

How legislation is introduced (using the U.S. Congress as an example):

Any member of Congress can introduce a piece of legislation.

House: Legislation is handed to the clerk of the House or placed in the hopper. Members must gain recognition of the presiding officer to announce the introduction of a bill during the morning hour. If any congressman objects, the introduction of the bill is postponed until the next day.

Senate: Members must gain recognition of the presiding officer to announce the introduction of a bill during the *morning hour*. If any senator objects, the introduction of the bill is postponed until the next day.

- The bill is assigned a number (e.g., H.R.1 or S.1)
- The bill is labeled with the sponsor's name.
- The bill is sent to the Government Printing Office (GPO) and copies are made.
- Senate bills can be jointly sponsored.
- Members can co-sponsor the piece of legislation.

Committee Action—The bill is referred to the appropriate committee by the Speaker of the House or the presiding officer in the Senate. Most often, the actual referral decision is made by the House or Senate parliamentarian. Bills may be referred to more than one committee and it may be split so that parts are sent to different committees. The Speaker of the House may set time limits on committees. Bills are placed on the calendar of the committee to which they have been assigned. Failure to act on a bill is equivalent to killing it. Bills in the

House can only be released from committee *without* a proper committee vote by a discharge petition signed by a majority of the House membership (218 members).

Committee Steps:

1. Comments about the bill's merit are requested by government agencies.
2. Bill can be assigned to a subcommittee by the committee chairman.
3. Hearings may be held.
4. Subcommittees report their findings to the full committee.
5. A vote by the full committee takes place—the bill is “ordered to be reported.”
6. A committee will hold a “mark-up” session during which it will make revisions and additions.

If substantial amendments are made, the committee can order the introduction of a “clean bill,” which will include the proposed amendments. This new bill will have a new number and will be sent to the floor while the old bill is discarded. The chamber must approve, change or reject all committee amendments before conducting a final passage vote.

7. After the bill is reported, committee members prepare a written report explaining why they favor the bill and why they wish to see their amendments, if any, adopted.

Committee members who oppose a bill sometimes write a dissenting opinion in the report. The report is sent back to the whole chamber and is placed on the calendar.

8. In the House, most bills go to the Rules Committee before reaching the floor. The committee adopts rules that will govern the procedures under which the bill will be considered by the House. A “closed rule” sets strict time limits on debate and forbids the introduction of amendments. These rules can have a major impact on whether the bill passes. The Rules Committee can be bypassed in three ways: members can move rules to be suspended (requires 2/3 vote); a discharge petition can be filed; or the House can use a Calendar Wednesday procedure.

Floor Action

1. Legislation is placed on the calendar

House: Bills are placed on one of four House calendars. They usually are placed on the calendars in the order in which they are reported, although they usually do not come to floor in this order. Some bills never reach the floor at all. The Speaker of the House and the Majority Leader decide what will reach the floor and when. (Legislation also can be brought to the floor by a discharge petition.)

Senate: Legislation is placed on the legislative calendar. There is also an executive calendar to deal with treaties and nominations. Scheduling of legislation is the job of the Majority Leader. Bills can be brought to the floor whenever a majority of the Senate chooses.

2. Debate

House: Debate is limited by the rules formulated in the Rules Committee. The Committee of the Whole debates and amends the bill but cannot technically pass it. Debate is guided by the sponsoring committee and time is divided equally between proponents and opponents. The committee decides how much time to allot to each person. Amendments must be germane to the subject of a bill—no riders are allowed. The bill is reported back to the House (to itself) and is voted on. A quorum call is a vote to make sure there are enough members present (218) to have a final vote. If there is not a quorum, the House will adjourn or will send the Sergeant at Arms out to round up missing members.

Senate: Debate is unlimited unless cloture is invoked. Members can speak as long as they want and amendments need not be germane—riders are often offered. Entire bills

can therefore be offered as amendments to other bills. Unless cloture is invoked, senators can use a filibuster to defeat a measure by “talking it to death.”

3. The bill is voted on. If passed, it is then sent to the other chamber unless that chamber already has a similar measure under consideration. If either chamber does not pass the bill, it dies. If the House and Senate pass the same bill, it is sent to the president. If the House and Senate pass different bills, they are sent to a conference committee. Most major legislation goes to a conference committee.

Conference Committee

1. Members from each chamber form a conference committee and meet to work out the differences.

The committee is usually made up of senior members appointed by the presiding officers of the committee that originally dealt with the bill. The representatives from each chamber work to maintain their version of the bill.

2. If the conference committee reaches a compromise, it prepares a written conference report, which is submitted to each chamber.

3. The conference report must be approved by both the House and the Senate.

The President of the United States—The bill is sent to the president for review.

1. A bill becomes law if signed by the president or if it is not signed within 10 days while Congress is in session.

2. If Congress adjourns before the 10 days and the president has not signed the bill, it does not become law (i.e., pocket veto).

3. If the president vetoes the bill, it is sent back to Congress with a note listing his reasons. The chamber that originated the legislation can attempt to override the veto by a two-thirds vote. If the veto of the bill is overridden in both chambers, it becomes law.

The Bill Becomes a Law—Once a bill is signed by the president or his veto is overridden by both chambers, it becomes a law and is assigned an official number.