



LEGISLATIVE PROCESS: HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW and **FRC's ROLE IN THE PROCESS**



1. Introduction:

A bill may be introduced by any Member of Congress in his or her respective chamber. When a bill is introduced in the House or Senate, the bill is given a number and then referred to the committee or committees that have jurisdiction over its subject matter.



FRC monitors the content of introduced legislation and evaluates it, as well as its co-sponsors, to determine the impact on the family.

FRC often helps craft legislation at the request of allies in Congress.

2. Committee Action:

Most of the work done on a bill occurs at the committee level. Generally, a committee will refer a bill to the proper subcommittee, since subcommittees have a narrower focus than committees. In the subcommittee, three main steps occur:

★ **Hearings**—Witnesses are called to testify about the merits and shortcomings of a bill, policy, or oversight topic.

FRC experts testify before the subcommittee, or FRC supplies the committee with names and bios of qualified, pro-family expert witnesses.



★ **Markup**—The committee refines the language of the bill and members propose amendments to change the legislation.

★ **Adoption or Rejection**—If a majority of the subcommittee supports the bill during the markup, it is “reported out” to the full committee which goes through the same consideration process. Otherwise the bill dies. If the full committee approves a bill, it is reported out to the full House or Senate. At this point the committee staff prepares a written report explaining the committee’s views of the bill.

FRC responds to allies in Congress, members and staff, with input regarding a bill. **FRC** often has the opportunity to educate members regarding the pro-family view of a bill via research or “talking points” prepared by FRC staff. FRC also generates action alerts or petitions whereby constituents contact members expressing the pro-family viewpoint.



3. Floor Action in the House or Senate

The bill is placed on the House or Senate calendar for debate by the full chamber. In the House, the Rules Committee sets the terms of debate, including the time allotted for debate and the number and type of amendments that can be offered. In the Senate, the terms of debate are often set by a Unanimous Consent Agreement. A Senator may filibuster, that is, speak against a piece of legislation, until cloture is invoked (which requires that 60 Senators vote to end debate).

FRC monitors the amendments offered and tracks the debate and votes.



FRC sends letters to Congress on high-priority pro-family issues alerting the House Members or Senators that their vote will be tallied on our congressional scorecard for annual distribution in congressional districts.

FRC places print or broadcast ads to support/oppose the bill.

FRC issues press statements on the bill to the media and constituents to impact public opinion.

When debate concludes in either chamber, a vote takes place to approve or defeat a bill.

4.

Conference Committee



If the House and Senate pass different versions of the bill, House members and Senators are selected for a conference committee that meets to work out any differences. Once differences are resolved, the Conference Committee generates a report and both chambers must vote again to approve the bill as agreed upon in conference. If the conference report passes both chambers, the bill is sent to the President for his signature.

5.

Presidential Action

The President has four choices upon receiving legislation:

- ★ sign the bill into law
- ★ veto the bill and send it back to Congress with suggestions for reconsideration
- ★ take no action while Congress is in session, in which case the bill will become law in 10 days without the President's signature
- ★ take no action and let the bill die after Congress has adjourned for the session, which is called a "pocket veto"



FRC sends letters, including coalition letters containing signatories from like-minded organizations, urging the President to approve pro-family legislation or veto anti-family bills.

FRC sends national action alerts to constituents asking them to call, write or sign petitions expressing their support for or opposition to a bill.

6. The Bill Becomes Law

If a bill is signed by the President or his veto is overridden by both chambers of Congress, it becomes a law.



FRC works to ensure that enforcement of the bill protects the family. If legislation undermines the family, FRC works to pass new legislation that will correct its anti-family effect.

FRC prepares and distributes talking points or other educational materials, action alerts or ads at any strategic point during the legislative process where the action will be most helpful in affecting the legislation.