



The Basics of the Legislative Process in Congress

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Basics of Legislation in Congress

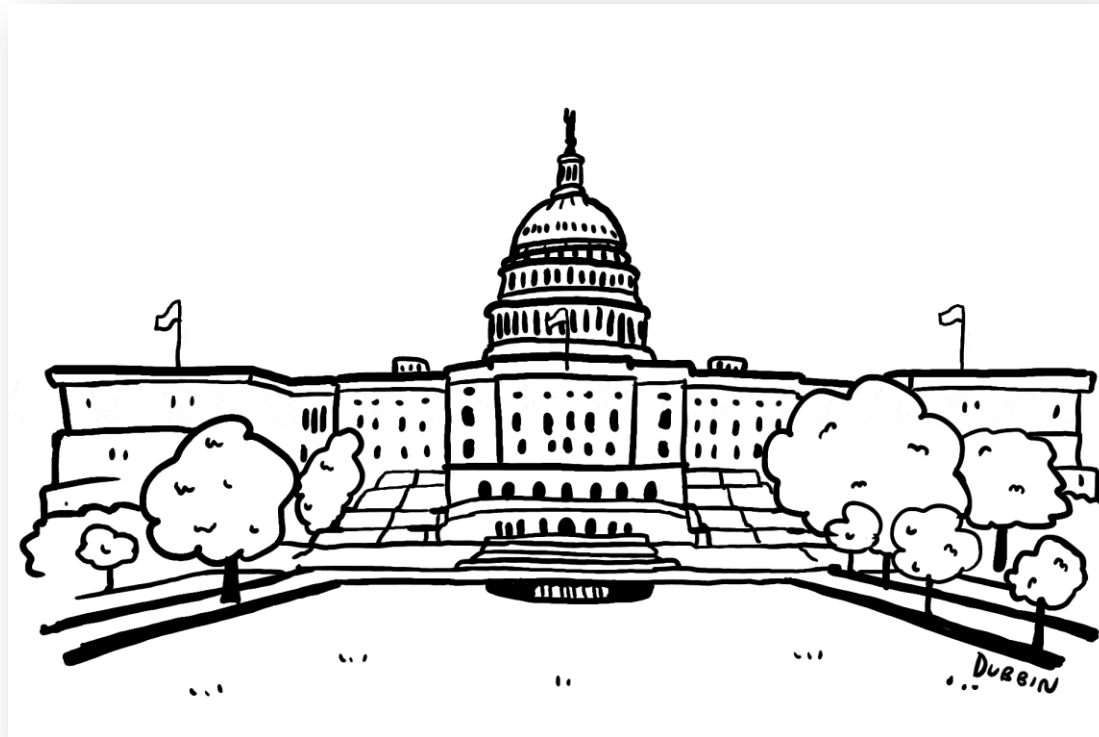
As a DAV leader, you can be an effective advocate for ill and injured veterans and their families when you familiarize yourself with how the public policy process works and the times in which your advocacy can have the greatest impact.

Basics of Legislation in Congress

- Congress
- How a Bill becomes Law
- DAV Resolutions



CONGRESS



Congress

Per the U.S. Constitution, our federal government is separated into 3 branches, that provide checks and balances on each other.

1. Executive
2. Legislative
3. Judicial

CONSTITUTION

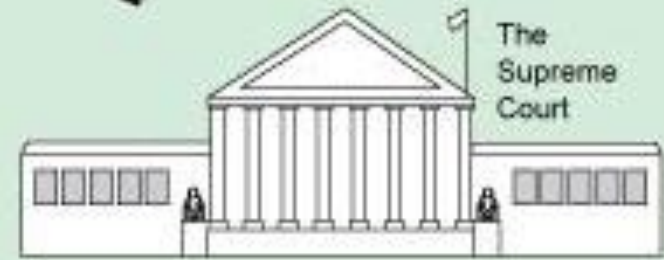


LEGISLATIVE

CONGRESS



EXECUTIVE



JUDICIAL



Congress



*I hear so much
different terminology,
that it can be
confusing, so what is
Congress?*

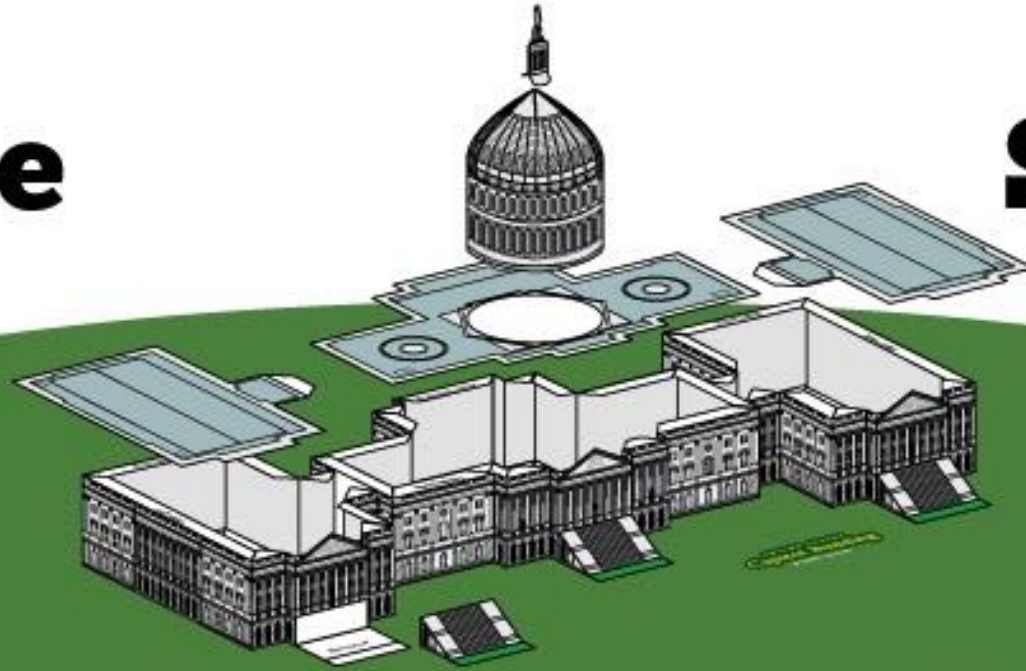
Congress

Congress is the Legislative Branch and is comprised of a bi-cameral system. In other words, 2 chambers. Bills must pass both chambers to become law:

1. U.S. Senate
2. U.S. House of Representatives

House

Senate



**% Population in
each state**

Representatives

Each state receives repre-

435 100

**50 x 2 Senators
per State**

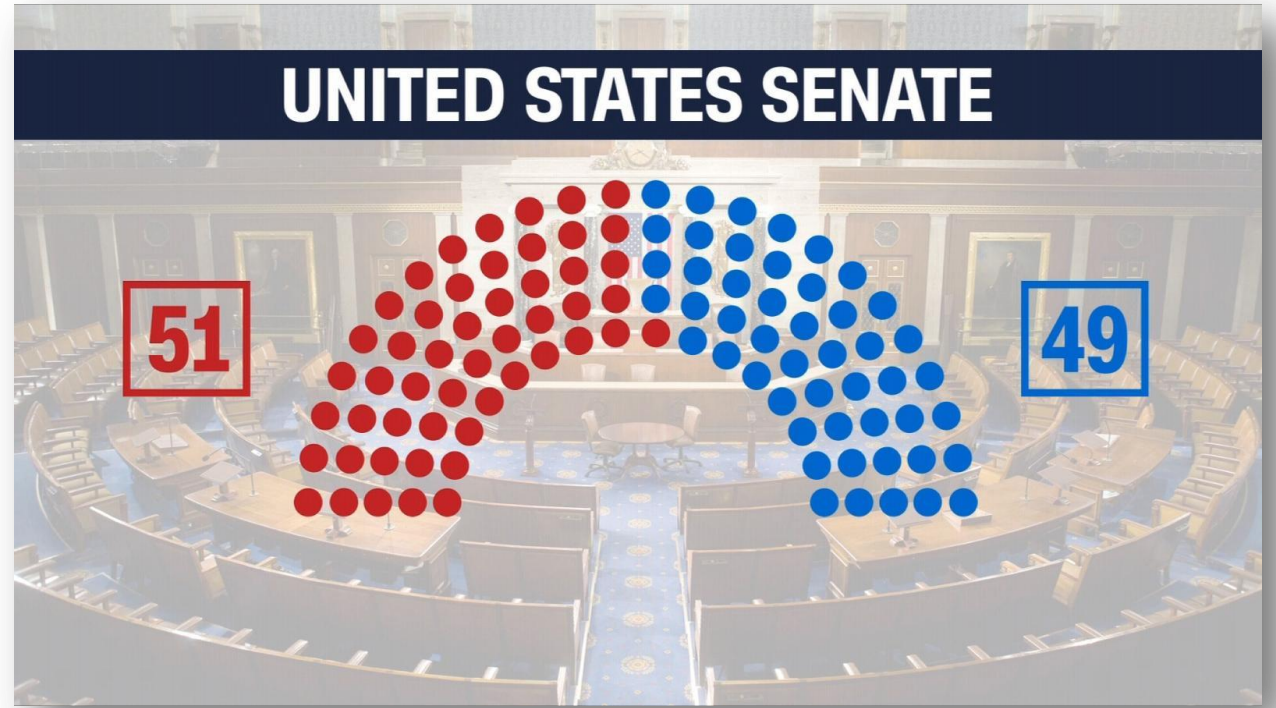
Senators

U.S. Senate

- The Senate is the upper house/chamber of Congress. 100 Members.
- Each Senator serves a six year term. The Senate can be slower and consider the long-term effects of laws.

U.S. Senate

Only 1/3 of the senate seats are elected every two years. So only 34 or 33 senators are up for election at one time.



U.S. Senate

The Senate is comprised of 16 Committees. Each Committee has a Chair and a Ranking Member.

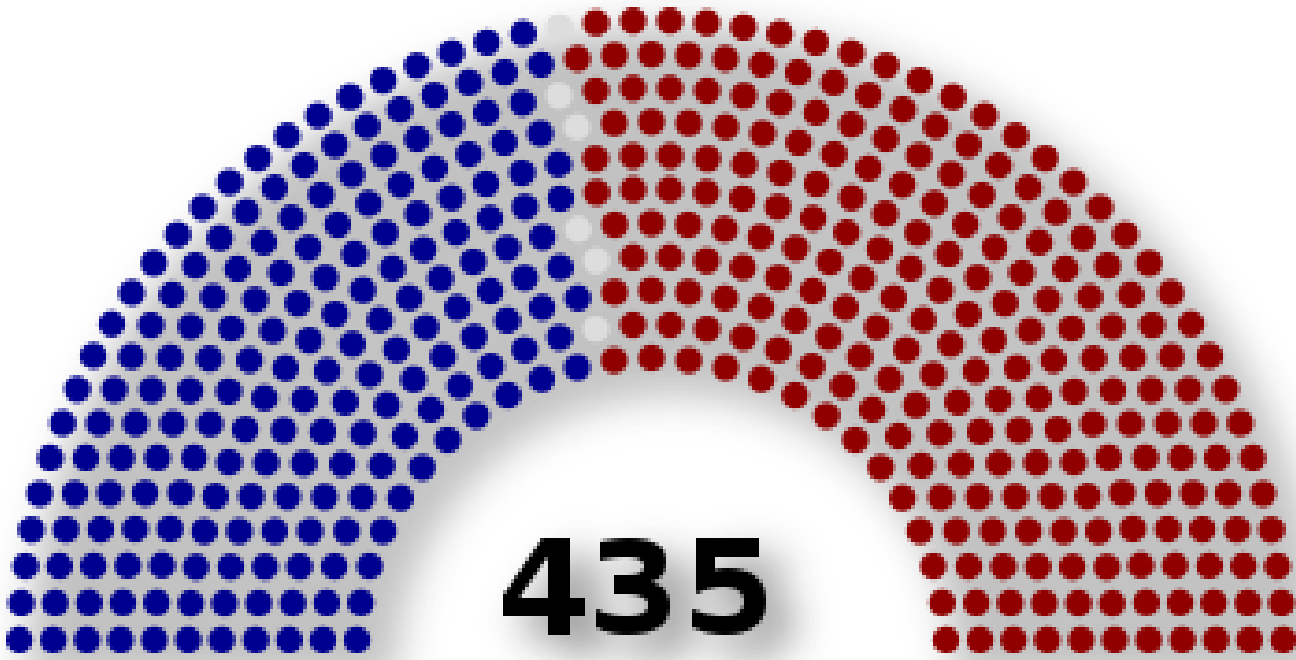
- Veterans' Affairs
- Armed Services

U.S. House of Representatives

- The “House” is the lower house/chamber.
- Each serves a 2 year term. 435 Members.
Laws dealing with revenue must start in the House.

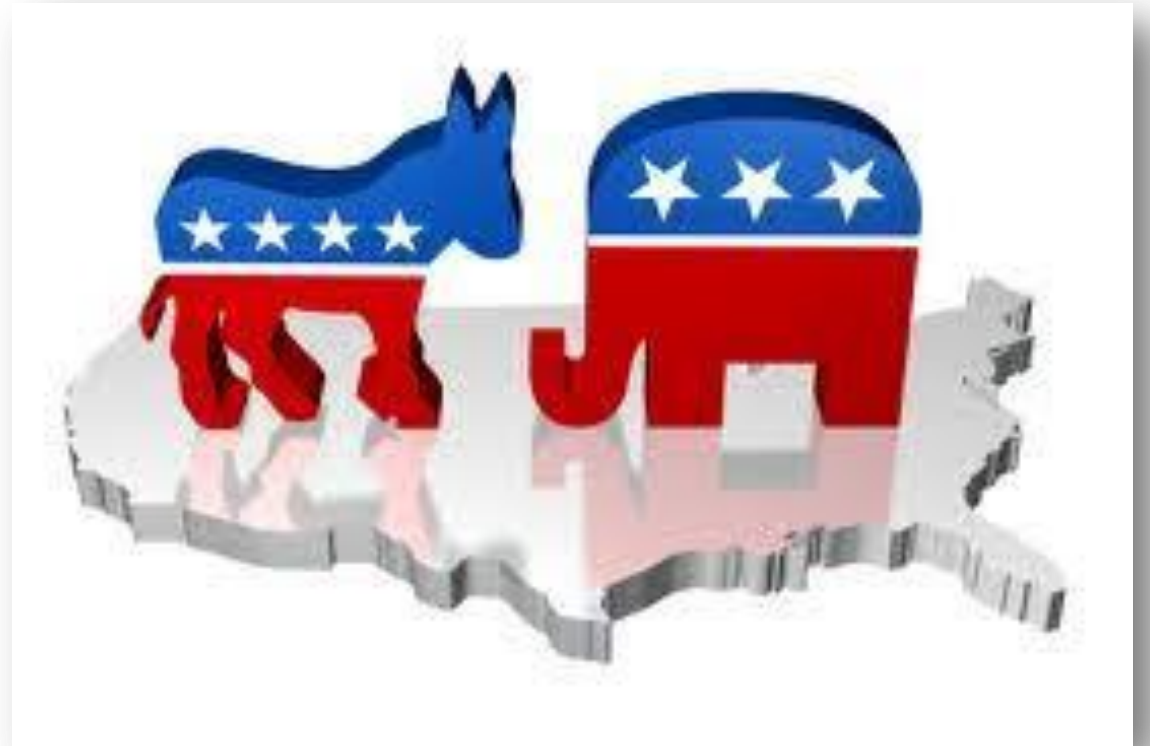
U.S. House of Representatives

All 435 seats in the House are up for reelection every two years.



House of Representatives

The House is comprised of 21 Committees. Each Committee has a Chair and a Ranking Member.



House of Representatives

In the House, Committees are broken down into subcommittees, Veterans Affairs:

- Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
 - Economic Opportunity
 - Health
- Oversight and Investigations
- Technology Modernization

Congress

The U.S. Congress operates in 2-year terms called Congress.

Currently we are in the 115th Congress (2017-2018).



Congress

- Each “congress” is divided into two terms and currently we are in the 2nd session (2018).
- The 115th Congress ends in December, the 116th Congress will start in January 2019.

Congress

- Coincidentally, this November all 435 Seats of the House of Representatives and 33 Seats in the Senate are up for election.
- Thus in January 2019, the 116th Congress will start with the newly elected Members of the House and Senate.

Congress

*Why is it important to
know that the 115th
Congress ends in
December?*



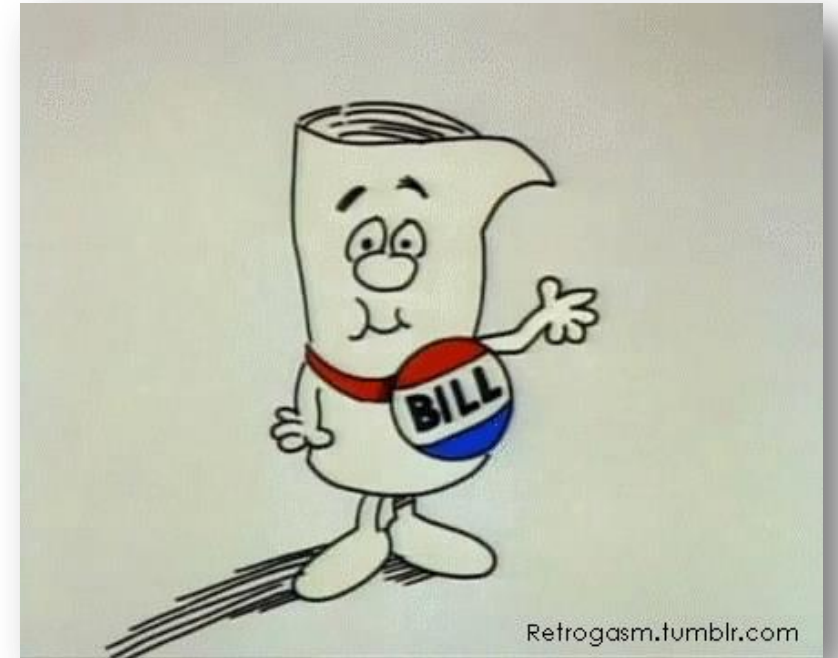
Congress



Any bills introduced during the 115th Congress (2017-2018) and have not been reported or voted out of Committee will die and have to be introduced in the 116th Congress.



How a Bill becomes Law



Bill to Law

There are 7 basic steps for a bill to become law. Before we discuss, let's put this process into some perspective:

- 110th Congress, 11,056 bills were introduced
- 9,904 of those bills did not pass out of Committee
- Only 4% of bills introduced become law

Bill to Law

STEP 1: The Creation of a Bill

Members of the House or Senate draft, sponsor and introduce bills for consideration by Congress. Only Members of Congress can introduce bills. After introduction, the bill is usually assigned to a Committee.

Bill to Law

STEP 2: Committee Action

Often a committee or subcommittee may request reports from government agencies, hold hearings so experts and interested parties have an opportunity to offer testimony regarding the issue, “mark up” or revise the bill.

Bill to Law

STEP 2: Committee Action

The full committee may make a recommendation to pass the bill, to revise (i.e., mark up) and release the bill (also known as reporting the bill out of committee), or to lay the bill aside (also known as tabling the bill).

Bill to Law

STEP 3: Floor Action

The bill is returned to the full House or Senate for further debate and approval. At this point members may propose amendments to the bill, add additional text, or otherwise alter the bill.

Bill to Law

STEP 4: Vote

House and Senate members vote on their respective versions of the proposed bill.



Bill to Law

STEP 5: Conference Committees

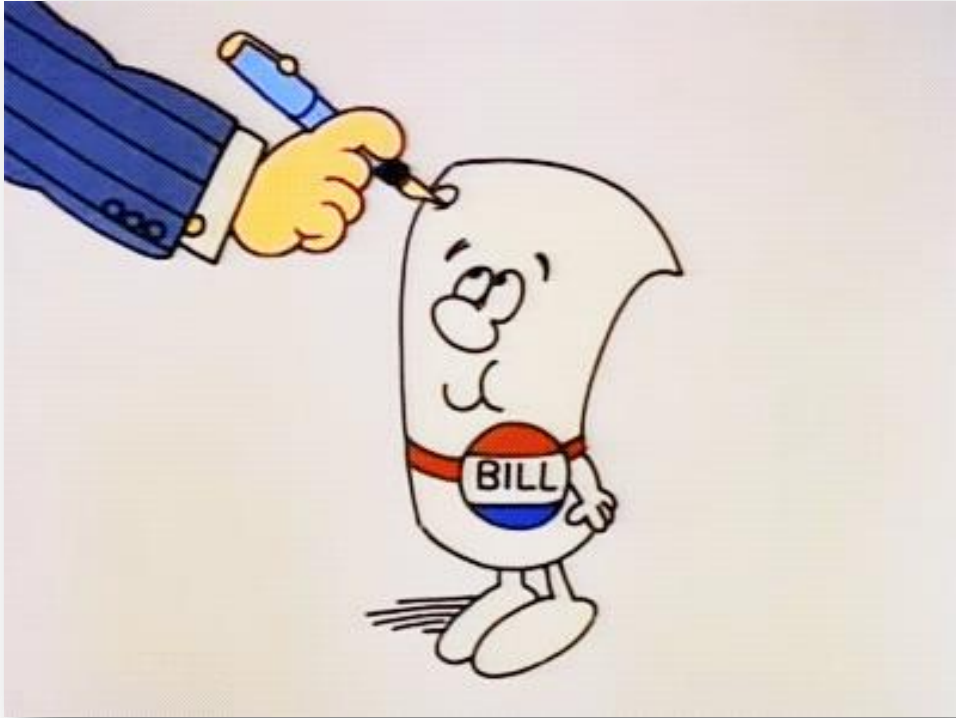
A bill must be approved by both Chambers of Congress. If passed by the House, the bill will be referred to the Senate and assigned to the Committee of Jurisdiction, vice versa.

Bill to Law

STEP 5: Conference Committees

When either Chamber approves a bill that was passed by the other Chamber, the two Chambers must resolve any legislative differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill by way of a conference committee.

Bill to Law



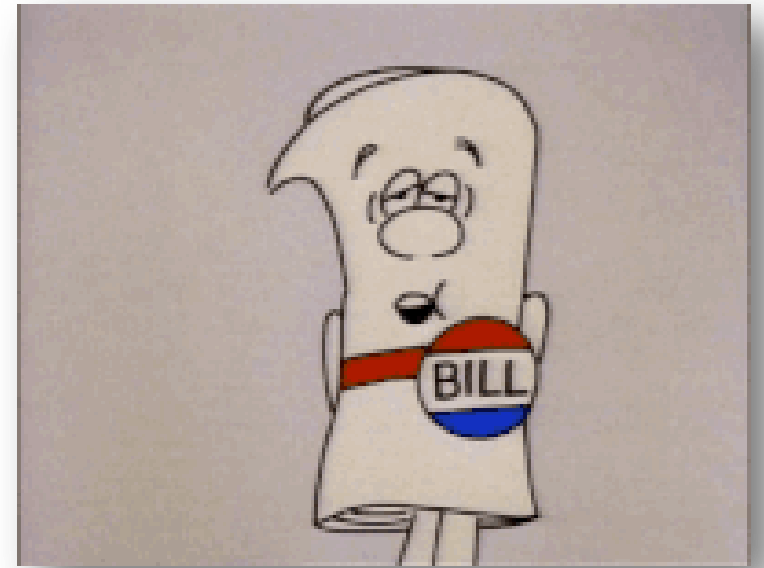
STEP 6: Presidential Action

After the bill is passed by both Chambers it is sent to the President for his approval or his signature, which if granted creates a Public Law.

Bill to Law

STEP 6: Presidential Action

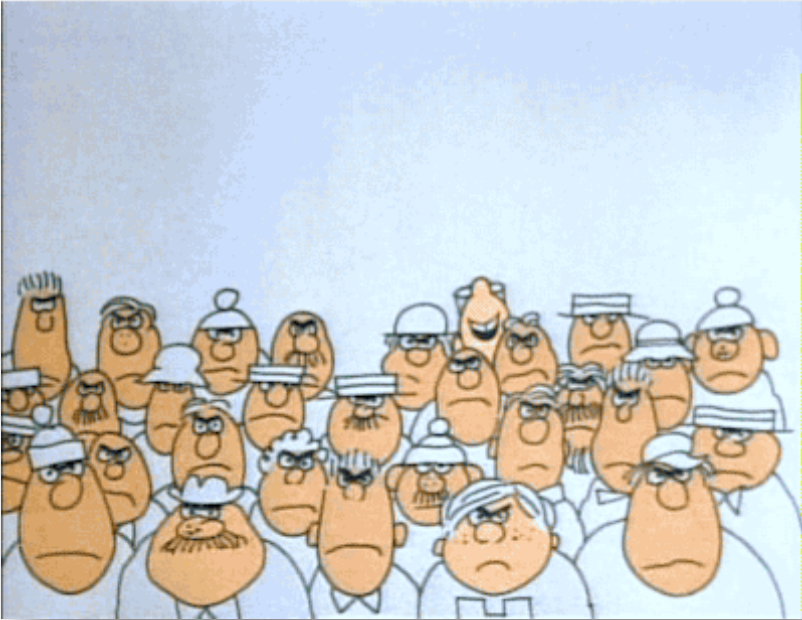
When a President comments on and refuses to sign a bill it is known as a veto. A vetoed bill may return to Congress for reconsideration and requires $\frac{2}{3}$ majority to override a veto.



Bill to Law

STEP 7: The Creation of a Law

The Office of Federal Register assigns the Public Law a number (i.e. P.L. 109-1) and the Government Printing Office prints it.



Bill to Law

*Can you give
us an example
of the
process?*



Bill to Law

HR 299 Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Step 1 Introduction

- 1-5-17 Introduced in the House and Referred to the Veterans' Affairs Committee.
- 1-19-17 Referred to DAMA Subcommittee.

Bill to Law

HR 299 Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Step 2 Committee Action

- 4-5-17 DAMA Held hearings. DAV testified.
- 11-2-17 Full Committee Mark-up, was not voted on and was tabled.
- 5-8-18 Full Committee Mark-up, vote held and was reported out of Committee.

Bill to Law

HR 299 Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans

- **Step 3 Floor Action** 5-8-18 HR 299 went to the Floor of the House for Debate.
- **Step 4 Vote** 6-25-18 Roll Call vote and Passed out of the House.

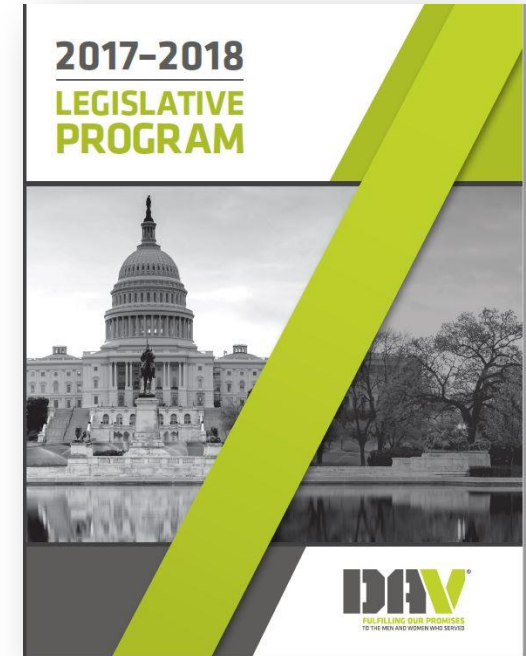
Bill to Law

HR 299 Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Step 2 Committee Action

- **6-26-18 Received in the Senate and referred to the Veterans' Affairs Committee.**
- **8-1-18 SVAC held a hearing. DAV provided written testimony.**



DAV Resolutions



Resolutions

In previous webinars, we discussed the importance of DAV Resolutions and how they create our legislative agenda for each year. Let's discuss 2 ways our Resolutions can impact the legislative process in Congress.

RESOLUTIONS

- First, Members of Congress use our DAV Resolutions bill for introduction and/or drafting.



RESOLUTIONS

Example

Congresswoman Julia Brown (CA), introduced H.R. 5452—the Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2018.

RESOLUTIONS

Example

H.R. 5452 is almost a copy of DAV Resolution No. 250, to eliminate the 12 year-period of eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation. At the May 23rd hearing, she quoted Resolution No. 250 in her testimony.

RESOLUTIONS

- Second, DAV uses our Resolutions to support and advocate for bills that are introduced.

OPERATION:

**KEEP THE
PROMISE**

RESOLUTIONS

Example

The DAV Commander's Action Network (CAN) sends out Alerts to our network urging them to contact their Members of Congress.

RESOLUTIONS

Example

All of the alerts sent out through the DAV CAN, are done so based on our Resolutions.

RESOLUTIONS



*How Can You,
Your Chapter and
Your Department
Help?*

RESOLUTIONS

Set up meetings with your Members in your local areas to discuss our Resolution Book.

- Pick out a few Resolutions to discuss with them to introduce as bills.

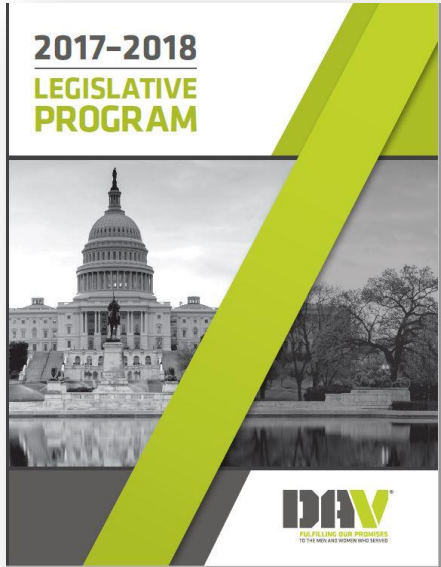
RESOLUTIONS

After the release of alerts through the DAV CAN, schedule a meeting with your Member's local office.

- Use this as a follow-up to the emails sent through DAV CAN and request they co-sponsor the bill.

RESOLUTIONS

The 2017-2018 Resolution Book is on line, however, the most recent, 2018-2019, is in development and will be available in the next few months.



<https://www.dav.org/learn-more/legislation/resolutions/>



Summary of the Webinar

SUMMARY

Congress

- Senate and House are the 2 Chambers
- Senators-6 years /Representatives-2 years
- Bills must pass both Chambers
- A term of Congress is 2 years
- 115th Congress ends in December 2017

SUMMARY

How a Bill Becomes a Law

- STEP 1: The Creation of a Bill
- STEP 2: Committee Action
- STEP 3: Floor Action
- STEP 4: Vote

SUMMARY

How a Bill Becomes a Law

- STEP 5: Conference Committees
- STEP 6: Presidential Action
- STEP 7: The Creation of a Law

SUMMARY

DAV Resolutions

- Resolutions to introduce a bill
- Resolutions to support bills
- How Can You Help

OPERATION:

**KEEP THE
PROMISE**



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