



LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE
of the Connecticut General Assembly

ABOUT BILLS

Prepared by the
Legislative Commissioners' Office

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INTRODUCTION

Many requests for legislation are made informally – a letter, a phone call or a meeting with a legislator addressing a problem or an idea. To have the idea written up more formally and started in the legislative process, the legislator will generally turn to the Legislative Commissioners' Office (more commonly referred to as LCO), the General Assembly's nonpartisan legal counsel. All official legislation is drafted by and processed through LCO. The following is a brief summary of the types of bills, the parts of a bill and the codification process.

WHO CAN INTRODUCE LEGISLATION

Only legislators and committees may introduce legislation. (Members of the public may ask their state senator or state representative to introduce legislation.)

Connecticut alternates between a short session that runs from early February to early May in even-numbered years, and a long session that runs from early January to early June in odd-numbered years. In even-numbered year sessions, the state constitution and the legislative rules limit the introduction of proposed bills to budgetary, revenue and financial matters.

TYPES OF BILLS

All legislation starts out as a bill but, depending on where the bill is in the process, there are different kinds of bills. They are explained briefly here.

Proposed Bills and Committee Bills

A *proposed bill* is introduced by an individual legislator and is not a fully drafted bill, but rather a short statement in non-statutory language expressing what the legislator would like the relevant legislative committee to consider in the way of legislation on a particular subject.

Each proposed bill is submitted to a committee that has responsibility for the proposed bill's subject matter (this is called referring the bill to the committee of cognizance), based on the bill's subject matter. The committee then screens the proposed bills it receives. This screening is usually done by the committee chairpersons with input from other committee members. Those proposed bills that survive the screening process may be brought before the full committee for consideration and for a vote to have the concept in the proposed bill fully drafted in formal statutory language. Once in fully drafted form, the proposed bill becomes a *committee bill*.

If a proposed bill does not survive the screening process to become a committee bill, it may die (i.e., the legislature never takes it up and nothing more becomes of it) or the concept in the bill may get resurrected elsewhere as a *raised bill* (discussed below), as part of a raised bill on a related subject, or as an amendment to a related bill later in the session.

Raised Bills

A *raised bill* is a fully drafted bill in formal statutory language that a committee has voted to have drafted. Unlike a committee bill, a raised bill originates from a concept that is not based on any specific proposed bill; rather, the committee votes on its own initiative to have the bill drafted on a subject within the committee's cognizance (the subject matter areas assigned to that committee). A committee could take an idea from a proposed bill and make it a raised bill, but the content would no longer be associated with the proposed bill, the raised bill would not have the sponsor of the proposed bill's name associated with it (although the legislator could be added on as a sponsor later on in the process) and it would have a new bill number.

Governor's Bills

A *Governor's bill* is a bill, usually budget-related, that is submitted by the Governor to the General Assembly. The sponsors listed on this type of bill are the respective leaders of both chambers of the Governor's party.

Favorables or JF'ed Bills and File Copies

If a committee believes a raised or committee bill should be taken up by the full General Assembly, it votes to give the bill a favorable report. Since the committee is a joint committee (with members from both the House and the Senate), the vote is called a *Joint Favorable Report*. The common expression for such action on a bill is that it is "JF'ed".

If the vote is for a favorable report but with substitute language, as discussed below, the vote is for a *Joint Favorable Substitute*.

A bill can be JF'ed straight to the floor (sent to the House if a House bill, to the Senate if a Senate bill), or it can be JF'ed to another committee (referred to as a "change of reference"). For example, a bill before the Public Health Committee that creates a criminal penalty for contaminating drinking water may be JF'ed to the Judiciary Committee because it is the Judiciary Committee that deals with criminal matters. In the Judiciary Committee, it could be considered and sent on to the floor as is, sent on with changes, sent to the Environment Committee (which also has cognizance over clean water issues), voted against, or have no action taken on it.

A bill that has been JF'ed to the floor can also be referred from the floor to other committees.

A bill that has been JF'ed straight to the floor will be processed in LCO and turned into a *file copy*, which contains the version of the bill voted upon by the committee with the incorporation of any amendments passed in committee, a fiscal note prepared by the Office of Fiscal Analysis and a bill analysis prepared by the Office of Legislative Research. This is the version of the bill that the House or Senate votes on. If there is more than one file copy of a bill, the file with the highest number is the most recent.

Substitute Bills

A *substitute bill* (either a substitute House bill (sHB) or substitute Senate bill (sSB)) is a bill that the committee votes to favorably report out of committee with changes in the bill's language. Substitute language may be merely a minor, technical change or may be a complete rewriting of the bill. The common term for a substitute bill is a "JFS".

Amendments

During the committee process *amendments* may take the form of a proposed substitute that makes a change to the bill that is offered by the chairs and voted upon by the committee, or an oral or written amendment offered by a legislator who is a member of the committee voting upon the bill.

Legislators may also sponsor amendments on the floor of the House or Senate to make changes to the file copy of a bill. Such amendments may make specific changes by citing to the line numbers in the file copy in order to delete or add language, or may strike the entire bill by using language such as "Strike everything after the enacting clause and substitute the following in lieu thereof:", or may add the contents of another bill to the file copy.

PARTS OF A BILL (see last page for a sample document)

Bill Number

A bill is assigned a bill number by the House or Senate clerk after the clerk of the committee cognizance submits it for filing. That number stays with the bill throughout the process and no other bill will have that number during the legislative session. If the bill started in the House, it will be a House Bill, indicated by "HB" before the bill number. If the bill started in the Senate, it will be a Senate Bill, indicated by "SB" before the bill number. If the bill later becomes a substitute bill, it will be designated "sHB" or "sSB". Senate bills are numbered from 1 to 5000, House bills from 5001 to 9999.

LCO Number

LCO numbers are unique, computer-generated numbers that appear on any legislative documents that LCO produces, except for Joint Favorable Substitute bills. LCO numbers are used as a way of distinguishing different versions of the same or related bills and, more importantly, as a way of keeping track of various amendments to the same bill.

Title

The title is a concise statement that puts the reader on notice as to the bill's subject. It should not proselytize, mislead the reader, or conceal the bill's content.

Connecticut does not have a one-bill one-subject rule. Consequently, the title might be long in an attempt to cover all the bill's subjects, or it might be short but very general.

As the content of a bill changes as it works its way through the process, the title may change as well. The bill number, however, will remain the same (unless the bill becomes an amendment to another related bill).

Enacting Clause

An enacting clause is the traditional way of announcing the authority under which a law is enacted. It appears immediately after the bill's title. The specific wording is required by the state constitution: *"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:"*

Short Titles And Preambles

With rare exceptions, the Connecticut statutes do not use short titles or preambles. One exception is when either is a part of a uniform law, e.g., "This title shall be known and may be cited as the "Uniform Commercial Code." "

Statement Of Purpose

Each type of bill, while still in committee, is accompanied by a Statement of Purpose, a statement of 150 words or fewer that explains what the bill does. The Statement of Purpose appears at the bottom of the bill but is often the first thing people look at after the title. Readers should not rely excessively on a Statement of Purpose; the language of the bill controls the meaning. Neither the Statement of Purpose nor the title of a bill has statutory effect. Further, if the bill is changed in committee, the Statement of Purpose may or may not continue to reflect the bill's purpose. The Statement of Purpose is removed if the bill gets JFS'ed out of committee, and is not included in the file copy of JF'ed bills that legislators vote on in the House and Senate.

CODIFICATION

A bill becomes a public act when it passes both chambers of the General Assembly. The act is then assigned a public act number, with the first number indicating the year of enactment (e.g., PA 11-250 was enacted in 2011). Note that a public act does not actually become law until the governor has signed it, or it can become law if the governor takes no action (i.e., does not veto the public act).

Most public acts passed over the years have been codified. This means they have been compiled, incorporated into the existing General Statutes and published. The official version of the General Statutes is published by the state in blue paperback volumes and is available in most public libraries.

A special act is an act passed by both chambers of the General Assembly that is of limited application, either as to time or the persons or entities it affects. Examples of special acts are acts to establish task forces or study committees, to validate actions of boards and commissions of towns, to convey state property, to establish a pilot program and to amend the charter of specially chartered corporations. A special act is not codified.

The printed statute books are revised once every two years to incorporate the changes made by the public acts. The binder of each volume states the date up to which the volumes were revised ("REVISED TO ____"); note that this date does *not* include that year. Thus, "REVISED TO JANUARY 1, 2011" means the statutes contain all the legislative changes made up to the end of 2010 but do not contain changes made during the 2011 legislative session. For those changes, one must reference the 2011 public acts or the 2012 Supplement to the General Statutes.

In addition to the printed books, the General Statutes and the even-numbered year supplement (when applicable) are available on the General Assembly web site: www.cga.ct.gov

CONCLUSION

This is only a brief summary of the types of bills, the parts of a bill and codification process and is not meant to provide all pertinent information about the legislative process and the content of bills. There are many other resources available for information about bills, the General Assembly, and the political process.

For more information, please visit the General Assembly web site (www.cga.ct.gov), where you will find such documents as the "How a Bill

Becomes a Law" flowchart at www.cga.ct.gov/html/bill.pdf, "Abbreviations and Acronyms" and "Terms and Definitions" under the Legislative References section, or under the Publications sections on the Office of Legislative Management's web site www.cga.ct.gov/olm/ or LCO's web page.

Specific bills can be tracked during the legislative session through the General Assembly web site: www.cga.ct.gov



General Assembly
January Session, 2009

Proposed Bill No. 38

LCO No. 598

Bill number

LCO number

Referred to Committee on Human Services

Introduced by:
SEN. DOYLE, 9th Dist.
REP. NAFIS, 27th Dist.

Title

AN ACT CONCERNING PAYMENT FOR SPECIALTY CARE TRANSPORTS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Enacting clause

- 1 That chapter 319v of the general statutes be amended to require the
- 2 Department of Social Services to recognize and pay for specialty care
- 3 transports, as defined in subparagraph (C) of subdivision (9) of section
- 4 19a-177 of the general statutes, for recipients of medical assistance.

Statement of Purpose

Statement of Purpose:

To have the Department of Social Services recognize and pay for specialty care transports.

