

How a Bill Becomes a Law

Ch 7 sec 1

I. Types of Bills and Resolutions

- Public bills involve national issues; private bills deal with individual people or places.
- Resolutions may be passed by either house or by both houses jointly.



I. Types of Bills and Resolutions

C. Both houses pass concurrent resolutions, which do not have the force of law.

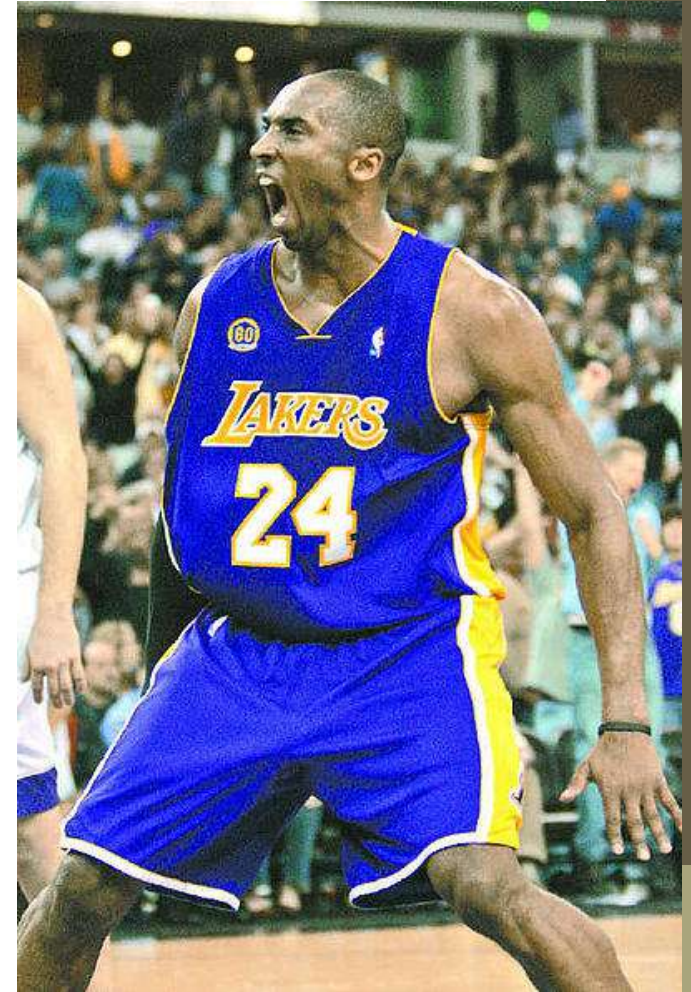
D. A rider is a provision attached to a bill on an unrelated subject.



I. Types of Bills and Resolutions

E. Only a few bills become laws because:

- The process is long and complex;
- Measures must have broad support;
- Supporters must be willing to compromise;
- Many bills are introduced that have no chance of passing.



II. Introducing a Bill

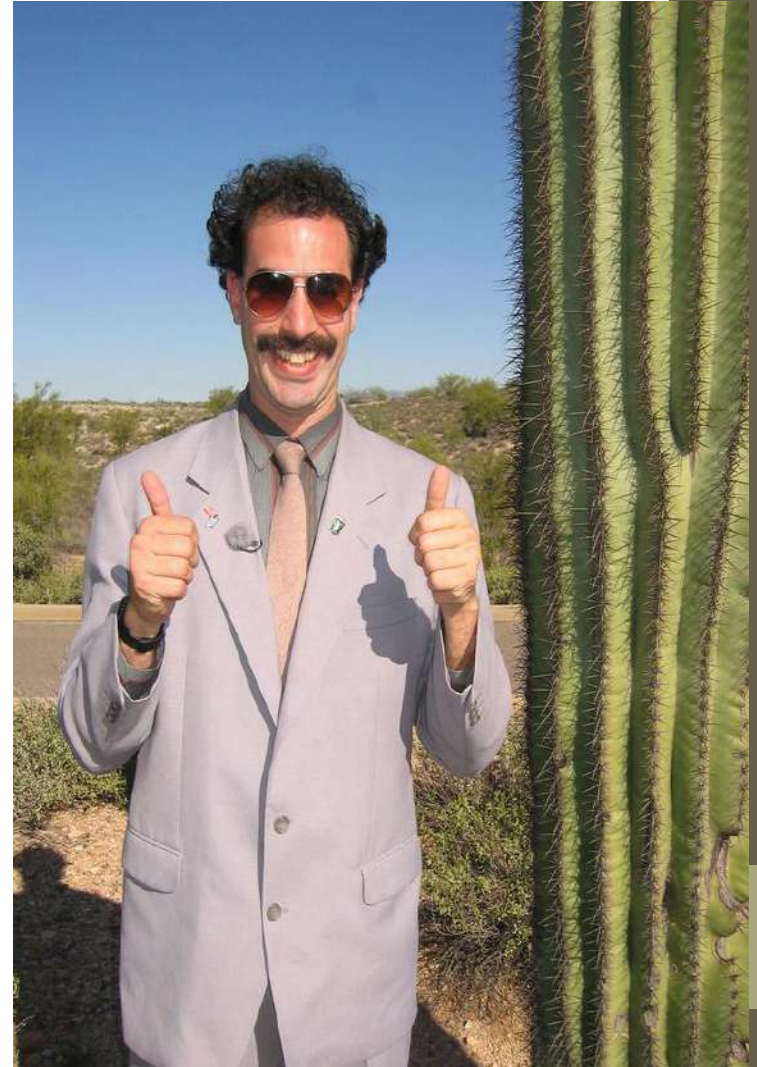
- Introducing a new bill to Congress is the first step in the lawmaking process.
- New bills are sent to committees and sometimes subcommittees.



II. Introducing a Bill

C. Both houses usually agree with the committees' decision on a bill.

D. If a committee decides to act on a bill, it holds hearings on it.



II. Introducing a Bill

- E. When a committee hearing is complete, committee members review the bill line by line and make changes in it by a majority vote.
- F. The committee kills or reports the bill to the House or Senate, sending with the bill a written report that describes the bill, explains the committee's actions, lists changes, and recommends passage or defeat.



III. Floor Action

- During a debate any lawmaker may offer amendments.
- The bill, including proposed changes, must receive a majority vote in both the House and Senate to pass.
- Congress may use standing, roll-call, recorded, or voice votes.



IV. Final Steps in Passing Bills

- To become a law, a bill must pass in identical form in both houses; conference committees work out differences when necessary, and send a compromise bill to each house of Congress for final action.



IV. Final Steps in Passing Bills

- B. The president may then let the bill become law by signing it or keeping it 10 days without signing it, or kill it using a veto or pocket veto.
- C. Congress can override a presidential veto by a two-thirds vote in each house.



IV. Final Steps in Passing Bills

- D. The line-item veto was challenged in the Supreme Court and declared unconstitutional.
- E. After a bill becomes a law, it is registered with the National Archives and Records Service.
- F. Citizens can track legislation using an online information resource called THOMAS.



In your notebook

- Explain why you think democracy would be helped or hindered if passing laws were an easier process. Half-page answer.