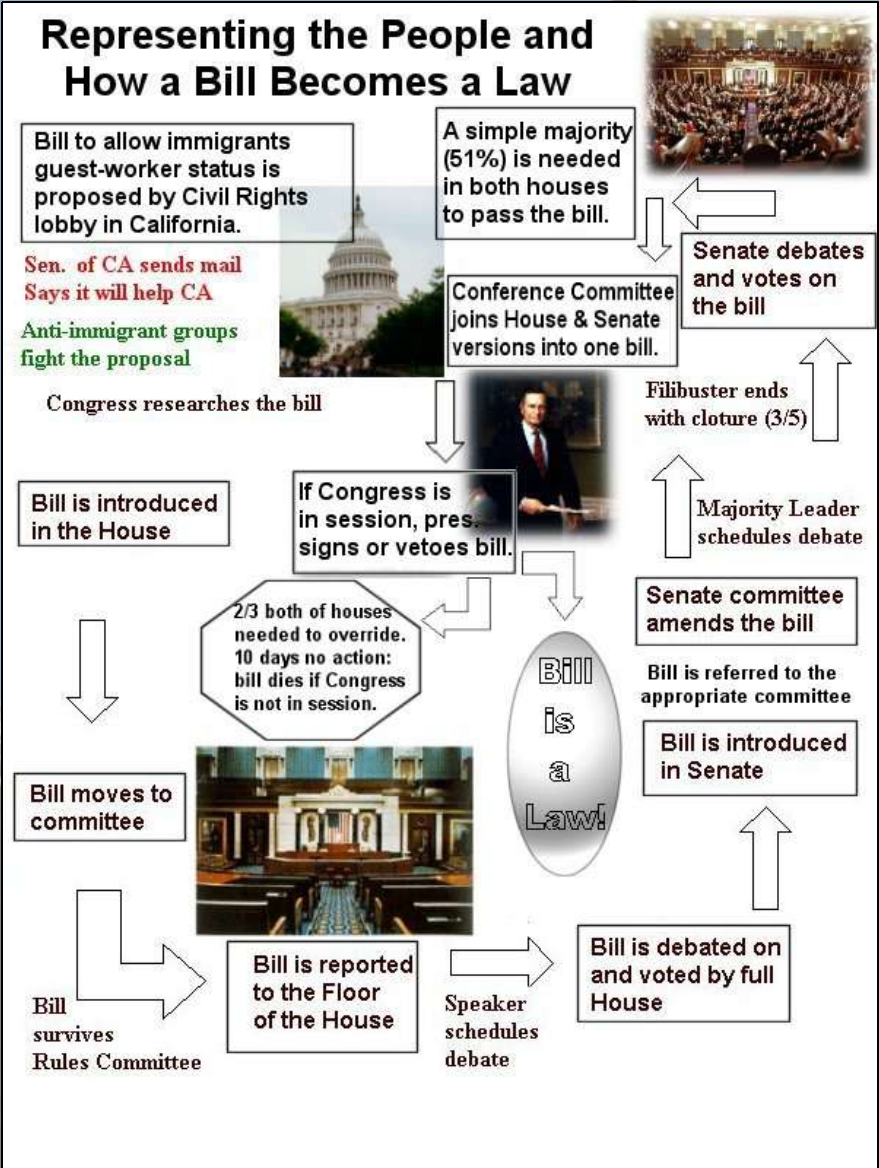




How a Bill Becomes a Law

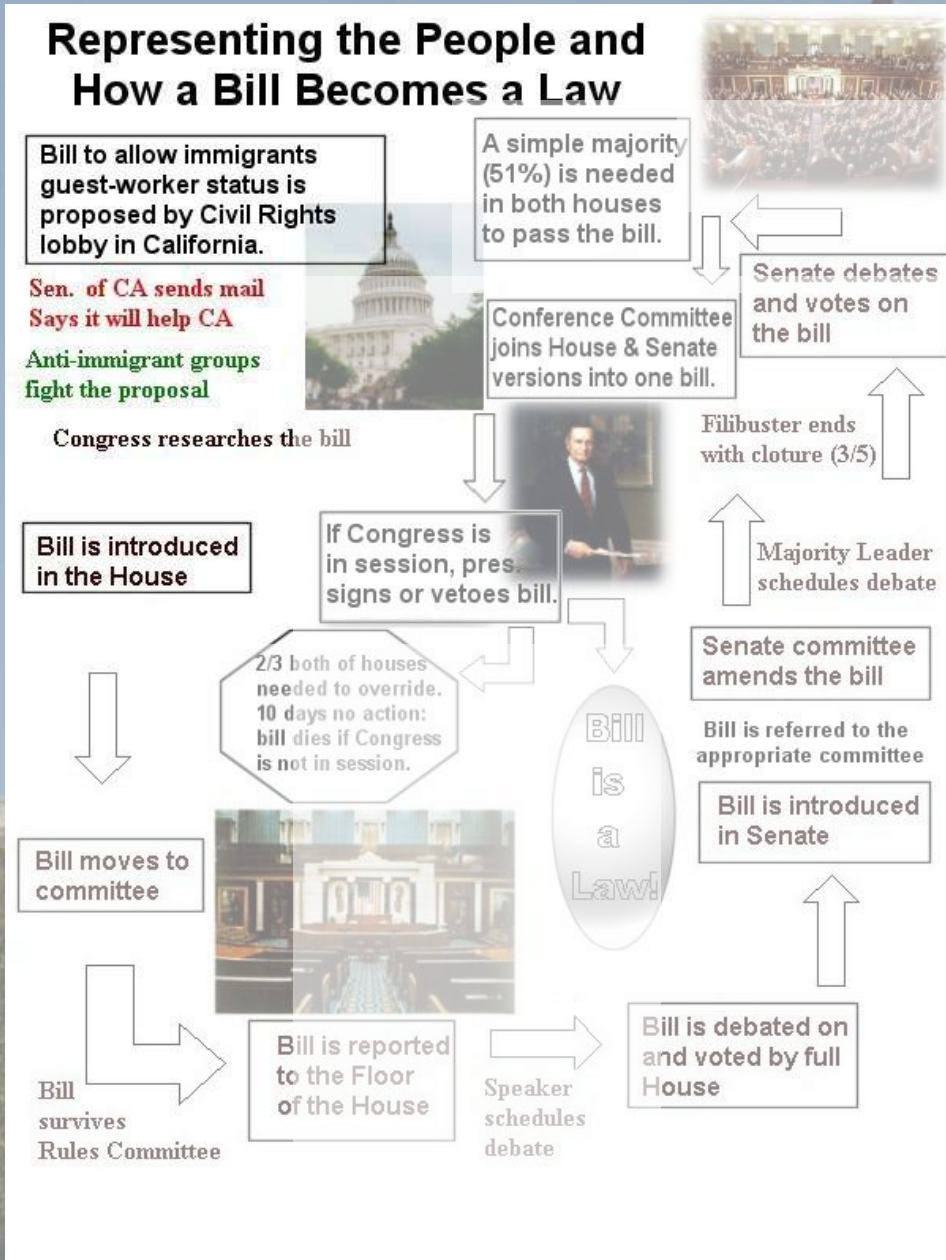
The Journey of a Bill

Congress Makes Federal Laws



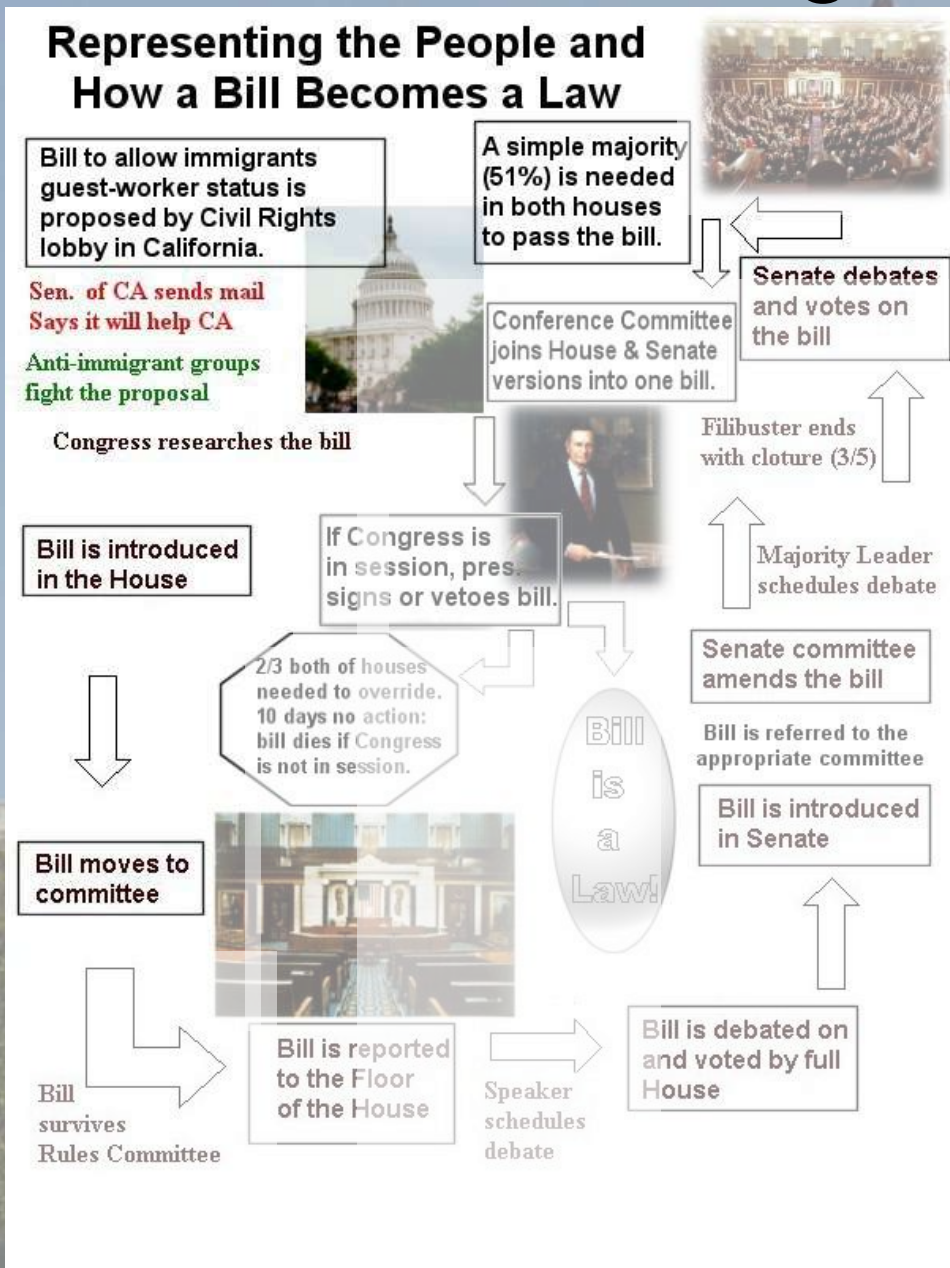
Follow the bill as it moves through Congress

Introduction of the Bill



- The bill can come from a variety of sources:
- Individual citizens,
- Special interest groups
- Corporations,
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Only a member of Congress can introduce the bill
- A bill can start in either House, except revenue bills-Must start in the House of Representatives.

The Bill is Assigned to Committee



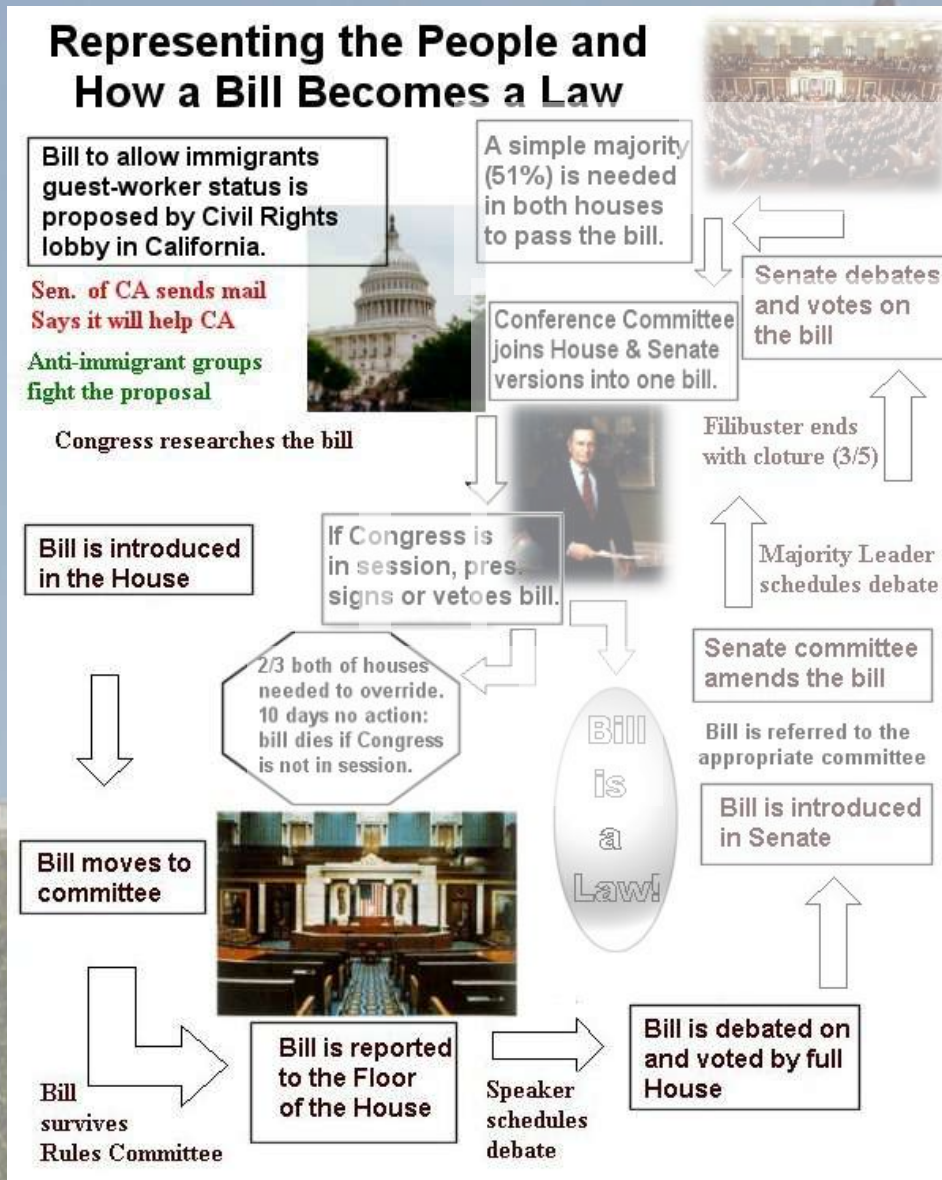
- Each House has standing committees that consider their bills.
- Each committee has a chair (from the Majority) and a ranking member (from the minority).
- They “mark-up” (edit) the bill so it will pass on the floor.
- They can also “pigeonhole” or kill the bill in committee.
- The bill must also pass through the House Rules Committee.

The Bill is Reported To the Floor



- If the bill is passed by the committee, it is sent to the whole House for debate and vote.
- The committee has “reported the bill favorably to the floor.”
- The Speaker determines which bills are discussed and for how long.
- Committee chairs and ranking members give out time to debate to other members.

The Bill is Debated and Voted On in the House



- Bills can be considered by the whole House at once: called “Committee of the Whole”
- Votes are done electronically in the House. This is a roll call vote.
- A tote board on the wall shows the tally. Red = oppose. Green = Agree Yellow = Abstain
- Votes can be taken by voice “yeas and nays” or a “teller vote” where members file past the sergeant at arms.

The Bill Goes to the Senate



- The bill is sent to the US Senate. A Senate version is written with the letter S. and a number. House bills have HR.
- As in the House, the bill must be referred to the appropriate standing committee.
- Committees hold hearings and make changes to the bill.
- The committee can ‘report’ the bill to the Senate floor.

The Bill is Debated and Voted On in the Senate



- **The Senate Majority Leader determines which bills are scheduled, when and for how long.**
- **As in the House, the bill must be referred to the appropriate standing committee.**
- **Debate in the Senate is unlimited. Filibusters can be used by the minority to block bills.**
- **3/5 (60) of the Senate must agree to end debate (this is called “cloture”)**
- **The Senate Rules committee is much weaker than the House’s.**

Both Houses Must Pass the Bill



- A simple majority in both houses is needed to pass the bill (51%).
- In the House: 218 needed to control the House.
- In the Senate: 51 senators needed to pass the bill (and control the Senate).

Differences Between Houses Must Be Reconciled



- Each house passes its own bill.
- Any differences must be ironed out and made into one bill.
- The bill is considered by a conference committee, made up of both House and Senate members.
- They negotiate and compromise and send the combined bill back to both houses.
- A vote on the “conference report” must be taken and passed by both Houses.

The Bill is Sent to the President

Representing the People and How a Bill Becomes a Law

Bill to allow immigrants guest-worker status is proposed by Civil Rights lobby in California.

Sen. of CA sends mail Says it will help CA

Anti-immigrant groups fight the proposal

Congress researches the bill

A simple majority (51%) is needed in both houses to pass the bill.

Conference Committee joins House & Senate versions into one bill.

Senate debates and votes on the bill

Filibuster ends with cloture (3/5)

Majority Leader schedules debate

Senate committee amends the bill

Bill is referred to the appropriate committee

Bill is introduced in Senate

Bill is introduced in the House

If Congress is in session, pres. signs or vetoes bill.

2/3 both of houses needed to override. 10 days no action: bill dies if Congress is not in session.

Bill is a Law!

Bill moves to committee

Bill survives Rules Committee

Bill is reported to the Floor of the House

Speaker schedules debate

Bill is debated on and voted by full House



- The president can sign the bill if he wants it to become law.
- He can include “signing statements” that say how the law should be enforced or if parts will not be enforced.
- The president can veto or reject the bill. He must include his reasons and recommendations for correction.
- The president can choose not to act on the bill. If Congress is in session, the bill becomes law after 10 days.
- If Congress is not in session, the bill dies after 10 days. This is called a “pocket veto.”

The Bill Becomes Law



- If the president vetoes the bill, both Houses can reconsider the bill.
- Two-thirds (67%) of both Houses are needed to override the President's veto.
- In the House: 369 needed for override. Senate: 67.
- If president signs the bill, it is a federal law that each state must follow.