

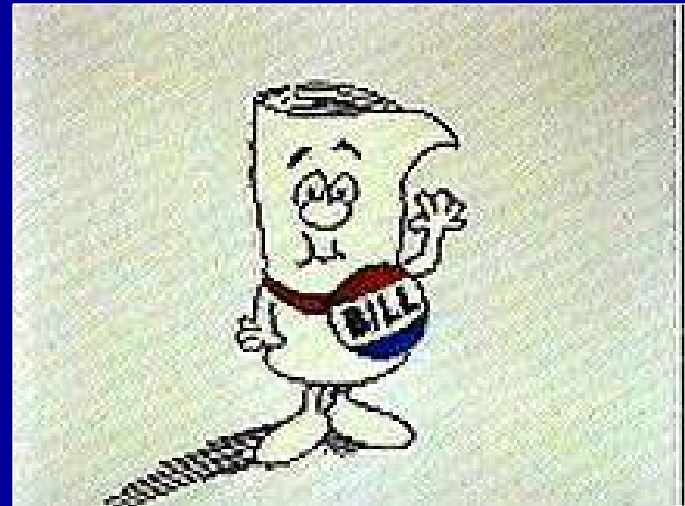


# How Congress Works

## *The Legislative Process*

# A Bill v. A Law

*Bill* - a proposed new law introduced within a legislature that has not yet been passed, enacted or adopted



# A Bill v. A Law

*Law* - a bill or  
act passed by a  
legislative  
body





# Types of Bills



- *public bill* – proposed legislative bill that deals with matters of general concern and application
- *private bill* – a proposed legislative bill that deals with specific private, personal, or local matters rather than general affairs
- *appropriation bill* – legislative motion authorizing the government to spend money



# Types of Resolutions



***resolution*** - a measure expressing opinions on policies or issues

- ***simple resolution*** – measure dealing with “house-keeping” or procedural matters that only affect one house
- ***joint resolution*** – measure when approved by both houses and the president carries the force of law
- ***concurrent resolution*** – legislative motion that must be approved by both houses, but does not have the force of law

# Congressmen Wear Many Hats



# A Congressman's Balancing Act

How should I  
vote? My  
constituents  
first or my  
country???

Floor vote  
on the  
Energy  
Bill!



# Navigating the Legislative Obstacle Course





# Step 1: An Idea for a Bill

## Sources:

**Member(s) of Congress**

**Private Citizen**

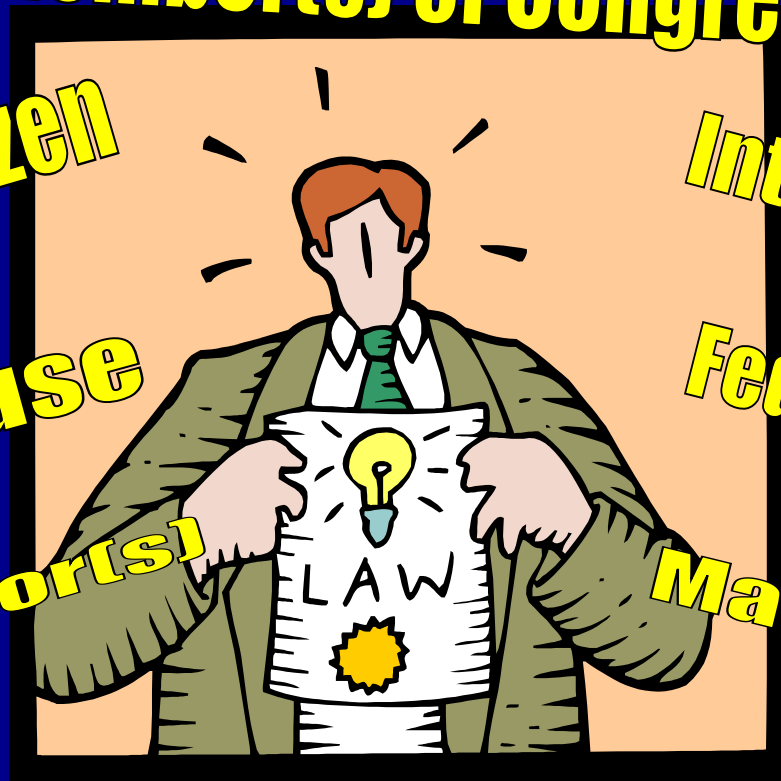
**Interest Group**

**White House**

**Federal Agency**

**Governor(s)**

**Mayor(s)**



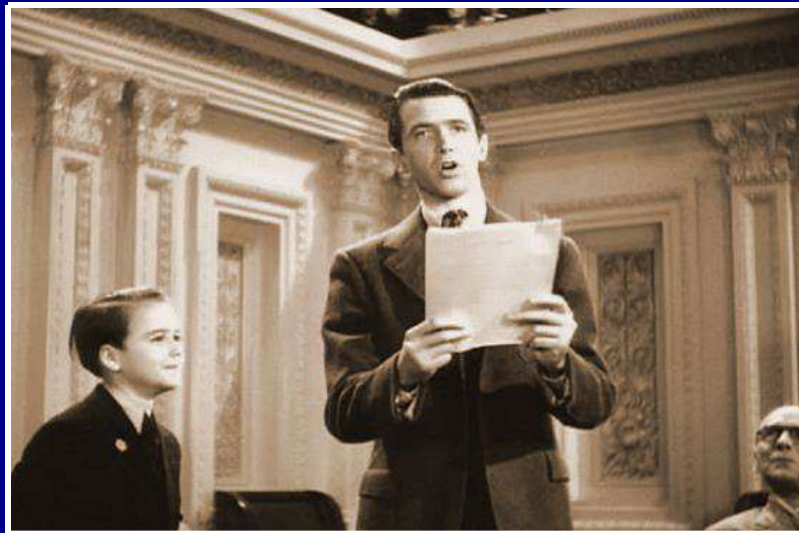
# Step 2: Writing & Introduction of Bill

## Senate:

- Bill formerly read aloud on floor
- Bill then given to clerk
- Referred to committee by Steering Committee

## House:

- Bill dropped in hopper
- Referred to committee by the Speaker



Sen. Smith introduces bill on the Senate floor

~ *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*

# Step 3: Committee Action

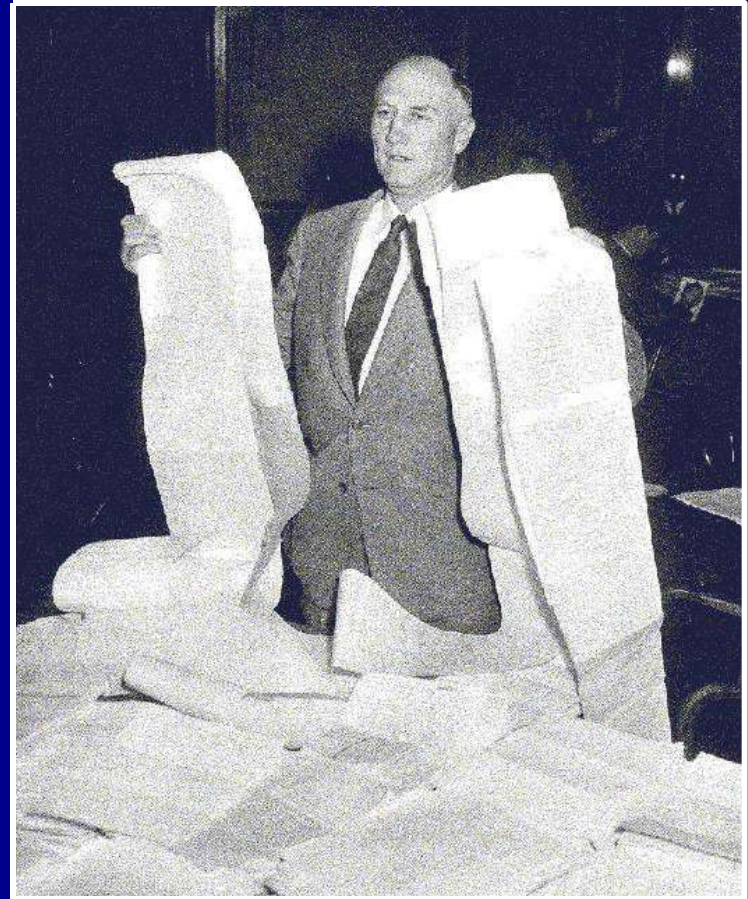
- House & Senate committees conduct public hearings
- Experts testify
- Markup of bills
- Committee vote: report favorably, unfavorably, or table bill



House Armed Services Committee

# Step 4: Floor Action - Senate

- Party leaders schedule bills for floor debate on the calendar
- Unlimited debate
- *Filibuster* - member(s) keep talking to block debate on a bill
- *Cloture* vote by 3/5 of Senators (60) can end filibuster
- Floor vote: Roll Call, Standing, Voice



Senator Strom Thurman still holds the record for the longest filibuster - 24 hrs 18 min. on the 1957 Civil Rights Act



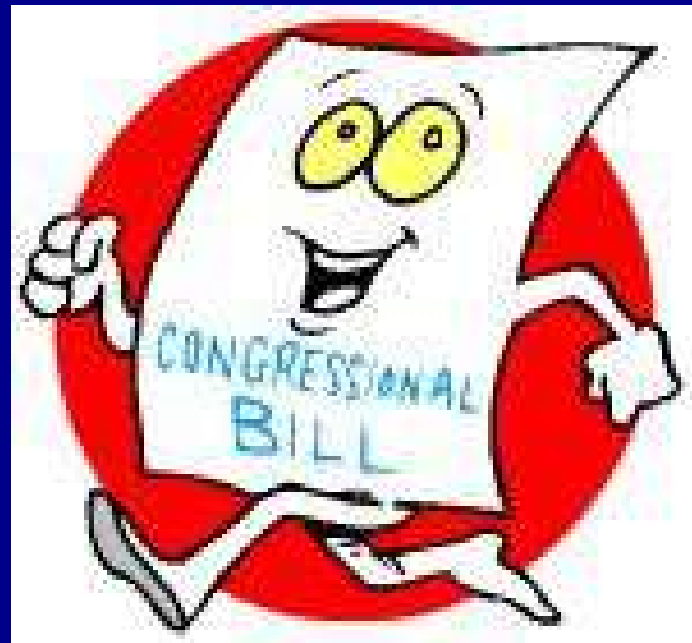
## Step 4: Floor Action - House

- *Rules Committee* schedules bills on calendar & decides whether amendments may be added
- Limited debate
- Floor vote:  
Recorded,  
Standing,  
Voice



## Step 5: Approved Bill Crosses Over to Other House

- Approved bill must pass each chamber by a simple majority



# Step 6: Conference Committee

- Members from each chamber meet to reconcile differences in the two bills



Senate-House Conference Committee works out details of the  
2003 Healthy Forest Restoration Act

# **Step 7: Both Chambers Vote on Final Version of the Bill**





# Step 8: President Considers Bill

## President can:

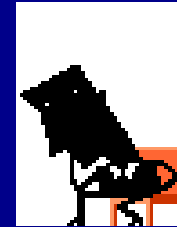
- sign the bill into law
- veto bill
- pocket veto



Note: Congress can override veto with 2/3 vote in each house;  
only 4% of vetos have been overridden



# Critical Thinking:



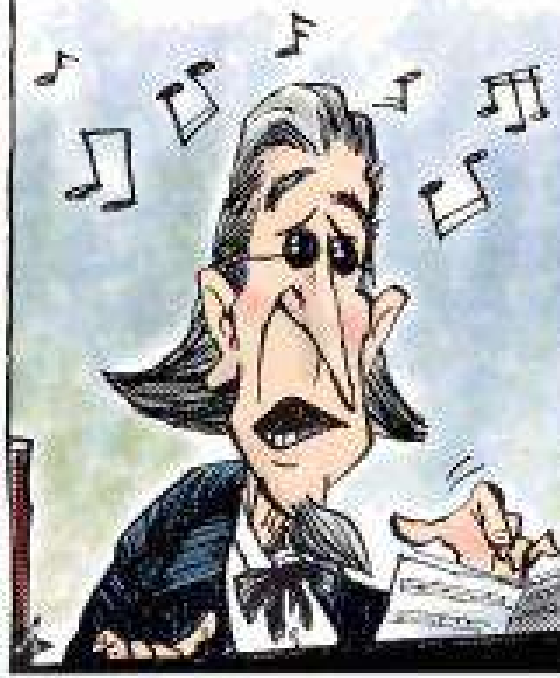
***Fact: About 5,000 bills are introduced in Congress every year, but only about 150 are signed into law.***

1. Explain why so few bills become law.
2. Is that a good thing or a bad thing?
3. Should the legislative process in Congress be reformed? If yes, what changes would you recommend? If not, why not?

IMAGINE THERE'S NO CONGRESS.  
IT'S EASY IF YOU TRY.  
NO HELP ON HEALTH CARE,  
OR ON THE GAS THAT'S HIGH.  
IMAGINE ALL THOSE LEADERS  
HELPING US TODAY...



IMAGINE THERE'S NO BORDERS.  
IT ISN'T HARD TO DO.  
NOTHING ON IMMIGRATION  
AND NO AMNESTY TOO.  
IMAGINE ALL THOSE LEADERS  
PASSING A BILL TODAY.



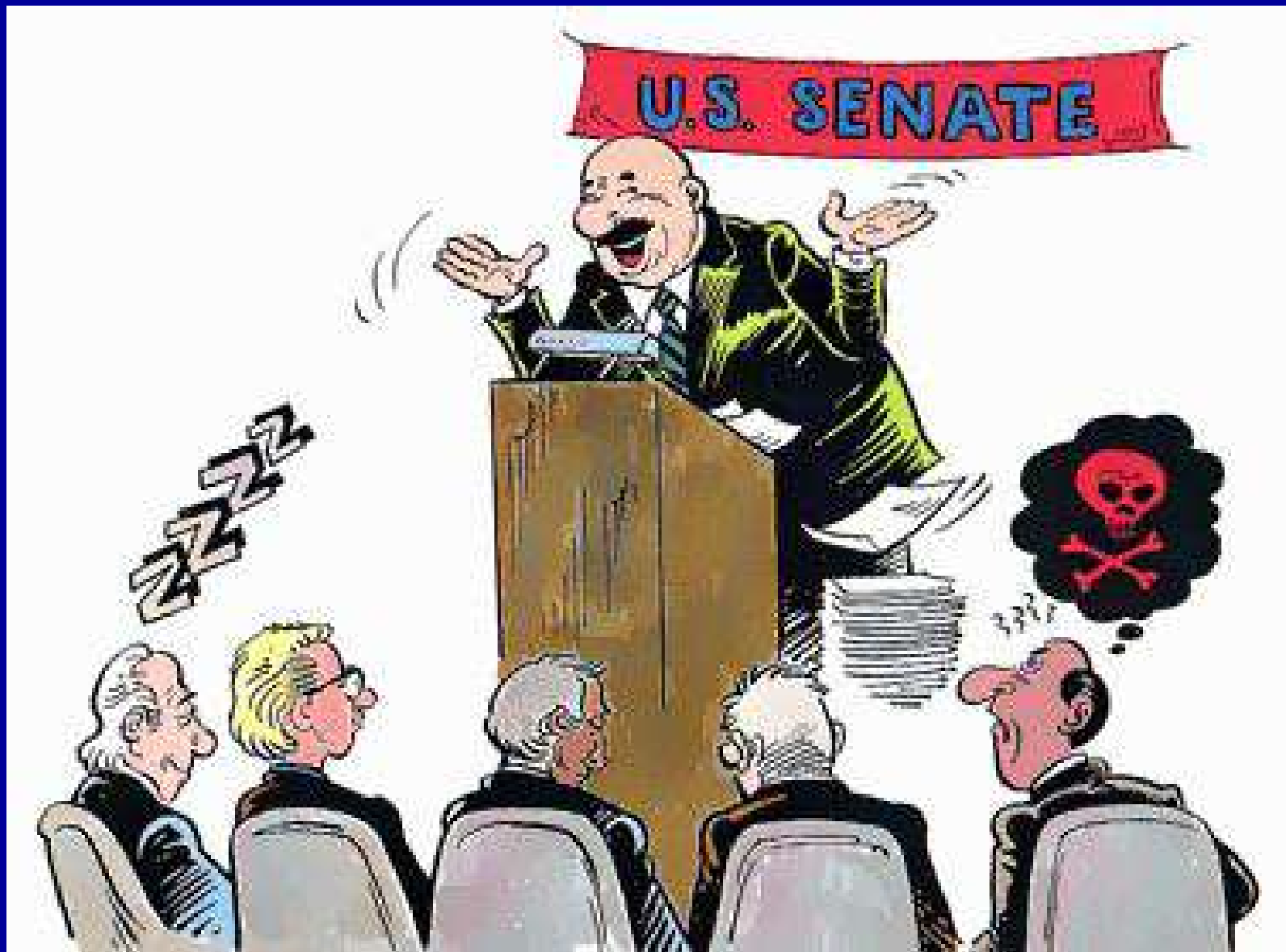
YOU MAY SAY I'M A DREAMER,  
BUT I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE.  
I HOPE SOMEDAY THEY'LL  
WAKE UP... AND THE  
WORK WILL GET DONE.



Joe Heller 2007  
GREEN BAY PRESS-GAZETTE

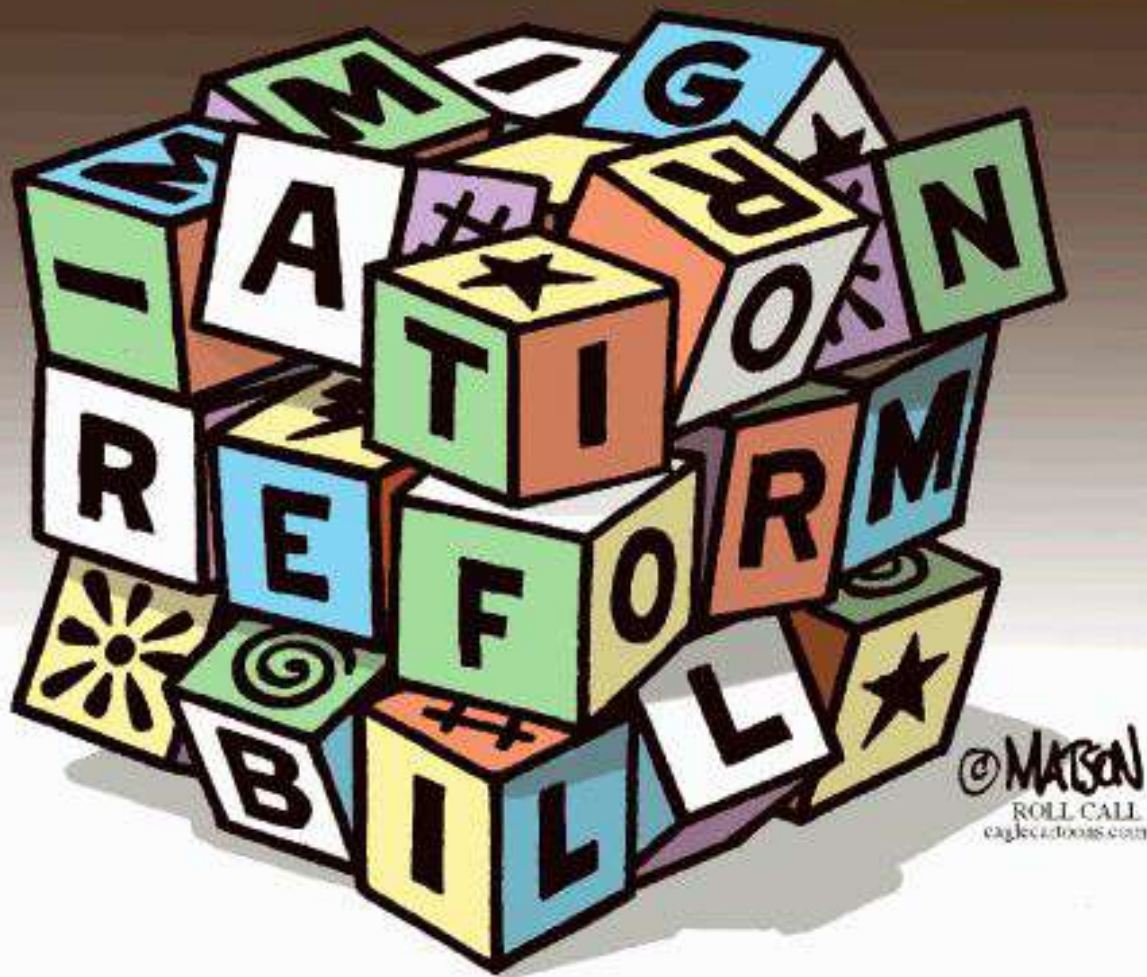
Title: Imagine there's no Congress Artist: Joe Heller, *Green Bay Press-Gazette*

Date: 6/06/07 Source: <http://www.politicalcartoons.com/>



**Title: Breaking the Filibuster is not Enough**

**Source:** [http://www.republicanvoices.org/may\\_2005\\_newsletter.html](http://www.republicanvoices.org/may_2005_newsletter.html)



RUBIK'S CONGRESS

Artist: RJ Matson

Date: 6/14/07

Source:

<http://themoderatevoice.com/category/politics/political-cartoons/>

# HOW A BILL Becomes LAW!

**1.** BILL IS PROPOSED BY ELECTED OFFICIAL.



**2.** IT IS DEBATED.



**3.** IT IS VOTED ON. IF IT PASSES BOTH HOUSES, IT GOES ON TO PRESIDENT.



**4.** PRESIDENT SIGNS BILL.



**5.** AFTER CEREMONY, PRESIDENT ADDS "SIGNING STATEMENT" SAYING LAW DOESN'T APPLY TO HIM.



**6.** NEXT BILL!

