

The Legislative Process in Massachusetts



First Wednesday in January: The House and Senate convene for the beginning of the new session.

Third Friday in January: Deadline to file legislation. Bills can be filed later in the year, but after this date are called "late files." Bills may originate in either the House or the Senate, though policy-related bills with budget measures must start in the House.

Bills are sent to a legislative committee based on the bill's subject matter. Public hearings are organized for each bill starting in March. Committees must decide whether to move the bill forward by mid-March of the second year. The committee may report the bill out favorably, or send it to study.

Any budget related bills must go to Ways & Means Committees before they go to the floor.

Bills are sent to the floor for a vote. If the majority votes in favor, the bill is passed by the House and the bill is "engrossed."

This same process is repeated in the other chamber.

If the House and Senate versions of the bill are identical, they both have votes of enactment. If the two versions are different, they set up a Conference Committee made up of 3 members from each chamber to resolve the differences. Once the bill is enacted by both the House and the Senate, it is sent to the Governor.



The Governor has ten days to sign the bill into law. If they do not, the bill dies, unless both branches of the legislature override this veto by a two-thirds vote.

The Massachusetts legislature operates on a two year schedule. The first year runs from January through mid-November. The second year runs from January to late July.

This process is for policy-related bills that go through the legislature's formal session. Other bills on local matter may be passed during informal session, which runs throughout the two year period.



**MASSACHUSETTS
Rivers Alliance**

11 Curtis Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144
617-714-4272 • massriversalliance.org

Questions?

Contact Heather Clish, Policy Director
heatherclish@massriversalliance.org