

AAP ADVOCACY TRAINING



OVERVIEW OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



INTRODUCTION

- You don't need to be an expert on the legislative process, but a general familiarity can help you feel more comfortable and confident.
- Know where to go to get more information if you need it:
 - AAP Advocacy Guide
 - AAP Chapter
 - AAP Division of State Government Affairs
 - AAP Department of Federal Affairs
 - AAP Community Pediatrics Training Initiative (CPTI)



Public Policy & Children's Health

- Local, state, and federal governments have processes for enacting and changing the public policies and laws that affect children's health.
- Public policy refers to a rule, guideline, or framework and can be defined broadly.
- Public policy is what government, together with advocates, chooses to do or not to do. This can happen at the local, state, or federal level.
- These public policies, bills, and regulations are enacted at the local, state, or federal level.



BASICS OF GOVERNMENT

- Local, state, and federal government, has three independent Branches:
 - **The legislative branch makes the laws.** An example of the legislative branch at the local level could be a city council. An example of the legislative branch at the state and federal level includes the Senate and the House of Representatives.
 - **The executive branch carries out the laws and also has the power to set budgets.** The executive branch includes mayors, governors, and the president, as well as cabinet members.
 - **The judicial branch interprets the law.** The judicial branch includes courts at all levels of government.



OVERVIEW OF LOCAL LAWMAKING

- Municipalities—including towns, cities, and counties—make laws and set budgets that affect children’s health and well-being.
 - Counties set budgets for county hospitals and public health programs
 - School boards can determine numerous health and well-being policies such as what is sold in school vending machines
 - Towns and cities can also set budgets and pass local ordinances related to child health issues, such as bike helmet safety and smoke-free areas
- The law-making process will vary from one municipality to the next, but one thing is usually consistent—many locally elected officials have more direct contact with to their constituents.



OVERVIEW OF STATE LAWMAKING

- State legislatures are active players in the day-to-day governing of the country. In fact, state legislatures on average pass 80 state bills for every 1 federal bill that Congress enacts.
- State legislatures are responsible for raising enormous amounts of money through state tax revenue and coming up with new solutions to managing complex public problems.
- State legislatures create laws affecting children on issues such as the state's Medicaid program, child abuse prevention, and safety laws.



STATE LAWMAKING

- Each state operates under a different law-making process, however many commonalities exist among states.
- Forty-nine states have bicameral, or 2 chamber legislatures. The “upper” chamber is commonly known as the Senate and the “lower” chamber is known as the house of representatives or the assembly. The exception is Nebraska, which is unicameral, or 1 house.
- Legislative sessions vary from state to state and year to year.
- The governor is the chief executive of a state and is responsible for the administration of the government.



OVERVIEW OF FEDERAL LAWMAKING

- The United States Congress is responsible for passing federal legislation and appropriating funds for federal and many state programs.
- The US Congress has 2 chambers—the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- Each chamber has its own leadership, its own committee structure, and its own set of rules. Senators serve 6 year terms and Representatives serve 2 year terms.
- Each state has 2 senators representing the entire state. The number of representatives for each state depends upon the state's population. This number may change every 10 years when the US Census is taken.



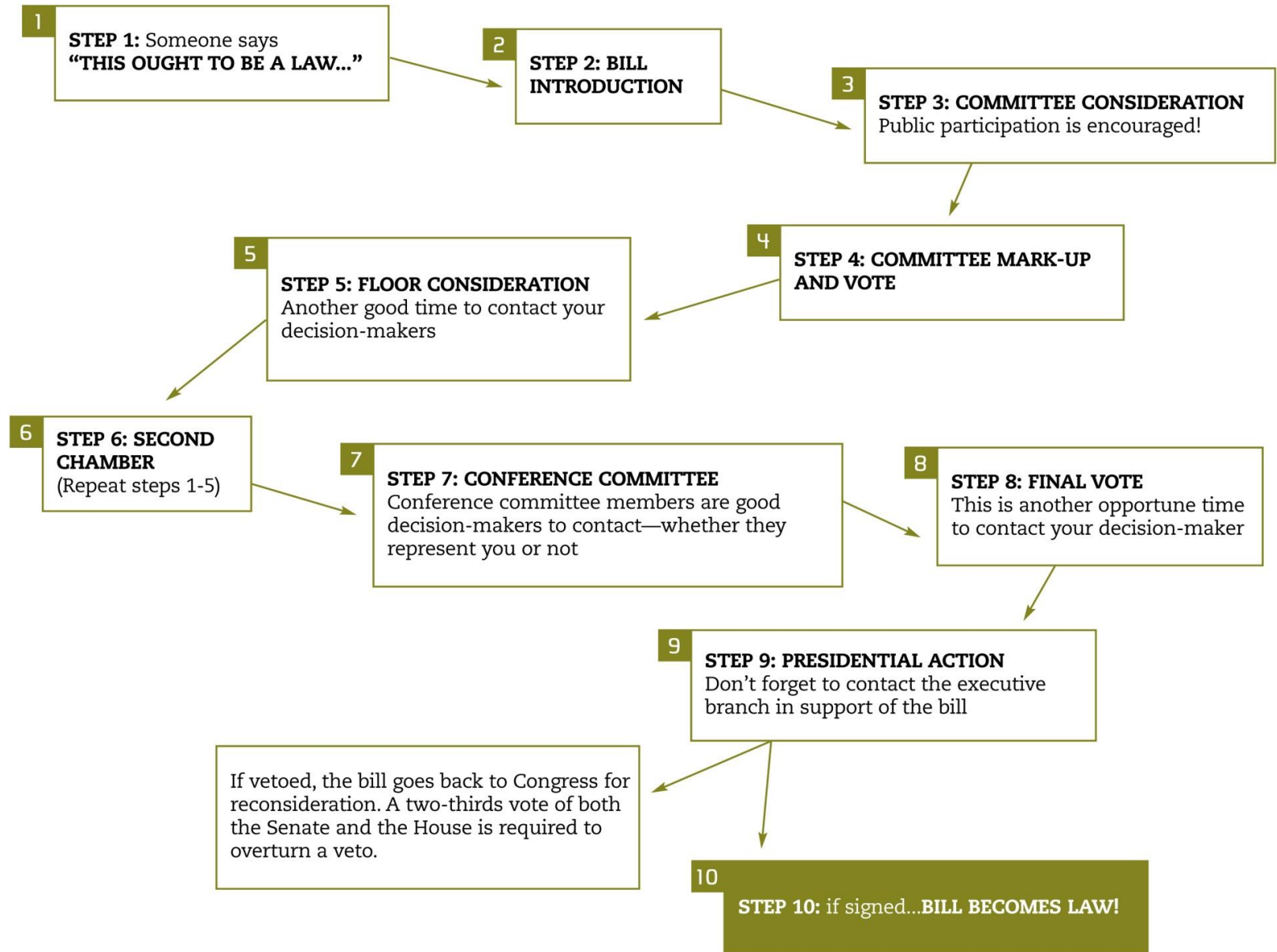
FEDERAL LAWMAKING

- Each Congress has 2 sessions, each lasting 1 year. A new Congress always begins in January of odd-numbered years. National elections occur in November of the 2nd session of a Congress.
- The executive branch consists of the president and the various departments of the federal government.
- Each department is headed by a secretary who is a member of the president's cabinet. A cabinet secretary not only serves as the chief administrative officer for that department, but also as an advisor to the president on policies relating to his/her department.



HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

- Whether you are working at the local, state, or federal level, each decision-making body has a process they go through to take an idea and turn it into a law.
- The process will differ somewhat by state or municipality.
- Regardless of the exact process used in your city, county, or state, the important thing to know is where you can influence the process by sharing your perspective, story, and experience.
- The following slide illustrates how a bill becomes a law at the federal level. For more information on how a bill becomes a law in your state visit: <http://www.aap.org/commpeds/CPTI/pdf/1HowABill.pdf>





MAKING A DIFFERENCE

- You don't have to be a legislative expert to effect change.
- Decision-makers do not necessarily have health or medical backgrounds and need to hear from people who do.
- Opportune times to weigh-in:
 - during committee hearings
 - before key votes
 - during the budget process—when budget is being created by executive branch and when being adopted by legislative branch
 - before a bill reaches the governor's desk
- Decision-makers that need to hear from you include:
 - your own decision-maker(s)
 - committee members and conference committee members
 - governors and other members of the executive branch



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & INFORMATION

- AAP Advocacy Guide (www.aap.org/moc/advocacyguide)
- AAP Chapters (www.aap.org/member/chapters/chapters.htm)
- AAP Division of State Government Affairs (www.aap.org/moc/stgovaffairs)
- AAP Department of Federal Affairs (<http://federaladvocacy.aap.org>)
- AAP Community Pediatrics Training Initiative (www.aap.org/commpeds/CPTI)