



## Introduction of the Bill

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Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](http://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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**Reference Number:** MTAS-992

Once the bill is drafted, it usually will be submitted to the General Assembly's Office of Legal Services. This department often changes a bill's wording, so carefully check the language coming out of this office to make sure the bill's meaning has not been altered. The Office of Legal Services enters the bill in the legislature's computer system, which keeps track of bills and amendments. This department will also place the bill in Senate and House color-coded folders (jackets) and make it ready for introduction.

After a bill has been jacketed, it is ready to be given to a sponsor — a member of the Senate or House who agrees to help pass the bill. The sponsor must explain the bill in committee hearings and on the floors of the respective houses. Choosing a sponsor can be very important to a bill's passage.

Different legislators have different interests. Some legislators know a great deal about fiscal and tax matters and therefore like, or at least are willing to sponsor, bills dealing with those subjects. Others are interested in agriculture, conservation, and a whole range of other subjects. There are some legislators who are particularly concerned with and act favorably toward cities. Knowing which legislators are interested in what is one of the keys to finding good sponsors.

A sponsor must be obtained for each bill in each House. Securing a sponsor means going to the selected legislator, explaining the bill, and asking him or her to sponsor it. Often sponsors agree; sometimes they don't. Sometimes they agree to sponsor if certain changes are made. When they don't agree to sponsor the bill for some reason, or if they ask for too many changes, other sponsors must be found. Once you've gained a willing sponsor, he or she must file the bill with the clerk of the sponsor's House, who assigns the bill a number. In the Senate, the number of the first bill introduced will be SB 1 (short for Senate Bill Number 1). In the House, the first bill will be HB 1 (short for House Bill Number 1), and so on. Each bill in one House should have an identical, or companion, bill in the other House. The companion bills, although identical, will not usually have the same bill numbers. It should be pointed out here that each House has rules setting deadlines, or bill cutoff dates, for introducing general bills. These deadlines make it imperative to draft all bills by the beginning of each legislative session.

Bills may be pre-filed before the beginning of each session, however, in accordance with T.C.A. 3-2-108 and 109 (see Provisions from Tennessee Code Annotated [1]). Pre-filing a bill simply means dropping it in the legislative hopper before the session starts. Bills must be passed on three different days to become law. The first two considerations are usually routine, and bills are passed en masse. The third consideration is when the bill, if it makes it that far, will get individual scrutiny. Before getting to the floor for the third consideration, however, the bill must be considered by at least one Standing Committee and scheduled for floor action by the Calendar Committees of each House. The Calendar Committee in the Senate merely schedules bills for floor action if they have been approved by the proper Standing Committee. In the House, the Calendar and Rules Committee exercises greater authority and may schedule the bill, defeat the bill, or send it back to the committee from which it came.

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### Links:

[1] <http://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/reference/bill-provisions-tca>

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