

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

How Bills Become Laws

(See Article I, Section 7)

The laws, or rules, our country has were passed to keep our country functioning. There is a long step-by-step process in the making of laws.

Before a law is a law, it is known as a *bill*. A bill is an idea that a representative or a senator has that he or she would like to see become a law. A bill may start in either the House of Representatives or the Senate, except for money bills, which must start in the House.

Let's say Senator X has a bill to proclaim June 21 as National Cardinal Day. He takes his bill in written form to his fellow senators, and it is given a code number. If the other senators disagree with the bill, they vote it down, and the bill is dead. If they agree, the bill is passed over to the House of Representatives.

The bill is given to the House of Representatives to discuss and vote on. If they disagree, they vote it down and send it back to the Senate for changes. If the Senate refuses to make changes, the bill dies. If the House approves the bill, it is given to the president for his approval.

If the president agrees with the bill, he signs it and it becomes a law. The bill can also become law if the president does not respond to it within ten working days.

If the president does not agree with the bill, he *veto*es it. With a veto, the president is rejecting the bill. If the president does not sign the bill within ten days after Congress adjourns, the bill dies. This is known as a pocket veto.

If the bill has been vetoed and Congress is still in session, the bill then goes back to the house where it started, in our case, the Senate.

If two-thirds of the Senate agree with the bill, that is called *overriding* the president's veto. If the Senate votes to override the veto, then the House of Representatives must vote whether to override it also. If both houses vote to override the veto, then the bill becomes a law without the president's approval.

