

## Public Participation

Public hearings are a formal opportunity for members of the public to comment on a proposed piece of legislation. Members of the public may also address the Council on a proposed piece of legislation at a Council Committee and City Council meeting when the legislation is on the agenda.

Councilmembers may be contacted at any time to comment on legislation, except on items that fall under the quasi-judicial rules for certain type of land use decisions.

### Seattle City Council

Online: [seattle.gov/council](http://seattle.gov/council)

Email: [council@seattle.gov](mailto:council@seattle.gov)

Phone: (206) 684-8888

PO Box 34025  
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

## Additional Resources

The following resources are available on the City Clerk's website at [seattle.gov/cityclerk](http://seattle.gov/cityclerk):

- Council Bills and Ordinances
- Resolutions
- Comptroller and Clerk Files
- Seattle Municipal Code
- Seattle City Charter
- City Council Meeting Agendas
- Full Council Meeting Minutes
- Budget Documents



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## Contact the City Clerk

### Seattle City Hall

600 Fourth Ave, Third Floor  
Seattle, WA 98104

Hours: Monday through Friday  
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

*Research questions received after 4:45 p.m. will  
be responded to on the next  
business day.*

Online: [seattle.gov/cityclerk](http://seattle.gov/cityclerk)

Email: [clerk@seattle.gov](mailto:clerk@seattle.gov)

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### Mailing Address

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# HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW



[Seattle.gov/cityclerk](http://Seattle.gov/cityclerk)

# How a Bill Becomes a Law

This guide provides an overview of the process by which a Council Bill becomes an Ordinance, or law, in the City of Seattle. A Council Bill can be a proposal for the enactment of a new law, amendment or repeal of an existing law, or appropriation of public money. The Charter of the City of Seattle provides that every legislative act shall be by Ordinance and every Ordinance subject shall be clearly expressed in the Ordinance title. The Council also considers Resolutions, which state policy, create City department work plans, or take certain other actions that do not create new law.

**1** Legislation can be initiated by any of the branches of City government: Legislative (the City Council), Executive (the Mayor), and Judicial (the Municipal Court and the City Attorney, an independent elected official). Members of the public may also forward suggested legislation for consideration through the City Council and Mayor.

**2** By Council Rule, legislation submitted for Council consideration is reviewed by the Law Department. It also must include a Summary and Fiscal Note, which describes the financial impact of the proposal. Legislation sponsored by the Mayor is reviewed by the City Budget Office and the Law Department before it is submitted to Council.

**3** Legislation submitted to the Council is first reviewed by the Council President and then distributed to the Councilmember who chairs the relevant committee. If the Committee Chair agrees to sponsor the legislation, it is then forwarded to the City Clerk.

**4** The City Clerk reviews each piece of legislation for format, recommended sponsorship, and committee referral; assigns Council Bill ("Bill") numbers; and publishes the legislation in the weekly Introduction and Referral Calendar.

**5** At the Council's regularly scheduled City Council meeting, (Tuesdays at 2:00 p.m.), the Council reviews the proposed Introduction and Referral Calendar, makes any necessary amendments, and adopts it. Bills are then delivered to the appropriate committee for consideration. Urgent matters may bypass committee review and be referred directly to the City Council.

**6** During committee review, Councilmembers discuss and debate the proposed Bill. They may direct staff to conduct further research, make amendments, or hold the item for further consideration. The Council's Central Staff is available to conduct and present research findings, provide a general policy review of the Bill, and draft proposed amendments for Council committee consideration. Certain Bills such as land use or budgetary actions require public hearings. Bills in committee are generally considered and voted on in two committee meetings. Routine or non-controversial Bills may be voted out of committee in one meeting, and complex Bills may require additional committee meetings.

**7** Bills voted out of a Council committee with a recommendation are then placed on the appropriate City Council meeting agenda, prepared by the City Clerk.

**8** At City Council, each committee reports its recommendations as to whether the Bill should be passed or not passed. The City Council may then discuss, debate, amend, re-refer, or hold the Bill. If the Council is prepared to take final action, a roll call vote to pass or not pass the Bill is taken. When the Council passes a Bill, the Council President signs it and returns it to the City Clerk.

**9** The City Clerk then updates the Bill's official record to reflect the City Council action. Passed Bills are forwarded to the Mayor for approval via the City Budget Office.

**10** The Mayor has the authority to sign the legislation, allow it to go into law without signature, or veto it. Regardless of the action the Mayor takes, the legislation is submitted to the City Clerk within 10 calendar days. If the Mayor vetoes a Bill, the City Council reconsiders the Bill and if at least 6 Councilmembers vote to override the Mayor's veto, the Bill becomes law.

**11** The City Clerk signs all approved Bills, assigns ordinance numbers, orders publication, and files the new ordinances.