

Presenting your bill to the Legislature: The Basics

In order for your bill to be passed into law, it must go through a three-step process: passed by committee, passed by the legislature, and signed by the governor. To have your bill passed by the Legislature or by one of its committees, the following process is used:

Author presentation

This is the bill author's opportunity to present your case as to why this bill should become a law. When the bill is read and the presiding officer asks:

"Is there an author present?"

The author stands and replies:

"Mr./Madam Speaker/President, I move that House/Senate Bill __ be placed on final passage and wish to speak on the same."

The author should present any statistics, research, or pertinent examples that demonstrate the need for this law. Charts, graphs, or any other visual aids may be used, but should be large enough to be seen by the entire legislature. The author will usually have from 2-5 minutes to give your presentation.

Questions to the Author

After making the Author Presentation, members of the legislature will have the opportunity to ask questions to the author about the bill. These may pertain to funding, feasibility, need, or other relevant subjects.

A legislator that wishes to ask a question to the author must first be recognized by the presiding officer and then ask:

"Will the Representative/Senator yield to a question?"

If a legislator wishes to ask more than one question, then they would first be recognized, and then ask:

"Will the Representative/Senator yield to a series of questions?"

If the you the author would like to be asked a question by that legislator, then you would reply:

"The author will yield."

The author may refuse to yield to any legislator who wishes to ask a question.

Open Debate

Open debate is the opportunity for any legislator that wishes to speak their opinion on a bill to come forward and do so. In open debate, a legislator may speak either for or against the bill. They may also come forward to present relevant facts without stating whether or not they want the bill to be passed. As many legislators may speak during open debate as time will allow. Open debate is the only time amendments to a bill may be presented from the floor.

In order to speak during open debate, a legislator must stand up, be recognized and request:

"May I approach the well?"

The well is the area before the legislature where legislators stand to speak. Once a legislator is speaking from the well, they may continue to do so until either:

- 1) They finish speaking and wish to yield the well
- 2) They are asked to yield the well and agree to do so
- 3) Time runs out during open debate

While they are speaking, a legislator may ask for the speaker to yield the well. This may be done by interrupting them while they are speaking.

To do so, they would stand up and be recognized by the presiding officer, then ask:
“Will the Representative/Senator yield the well?”

The legislator in the well then has the option to continue speaking or yielding the well by answering a simple ***“Yes” or “No”***

A question may also be asked to any Representative/Senator who is speaking in the well. This process is the same as asking a question to the author.

A Legislator in the well may also prevent such interruptions from happening by request to the presiding officer once they are speaking in the well. They would simply request to the presiding officer:
“I wish to not be interrupted.”

At this point, the presiding officer will no longer recognize any legislators attempting to be recognized.

Pro/Con Debate

Pro/Con debate immediately follows open debate. During Pro/Con, speakers will alternate speaker either for the bill or against it. The first speaker must speak against the bill, the second speaker must speak for the bill, the third speaker must speak against the bill, the fourth speaker must speak for the bill and so on. Pro/Con Debate will last four rounds or until a set time has expired. A round is one Con speaker and one Pro speaker. Each speaker has thirty seconds to speak. No amendments may be presented during Pro/Con debate. No questions may be asked during Pro/Con debate.

The speakers for Pro/Con debate are recognized by the presiding officer who will ask:
“Is there anyone wishing to speak against the bill?”

After the Con speaker concludes, the presiding officer will ask:
“Is there anyone wishing to speak for the bill?”

If a legislator wishes to speak either for or against the bill, they stand to be recognized at the appropriate time, and after receiving proper recognition, ask:
“May I approach the well?”

Author Summation

After Pro/Con Debate ends, the process moves to Author Summation. This is the opportunity for the author to give any closing thoughts, arguments, or facts about the bill. It is also an excellent opportunity to refute any negative comments that have been made during Open Debate or Pro/Con debate.

When Pro/Con debate ends, the presiding officer will state:
“It is now time for author summation. Does the author wish summation time?”

At this point, the author may come forward and present their summation. The author does not have to be recognized or ask permission to approach the well. Once the summation is concluded, the author will state to the presiding officer:
“I wish to place HB/SB __ on final passage.”

The legislature will then vote on the bill.