

Statutory Revision

The legislature established a permanent statutory revision program, requiring the Legislative Council to develop an overall plan for continuing revision of state statutes, including a simplified classification, improved numbering system, and clarification of the statutes without substantive change.

Numbering of Bills

On filing, each bill is assigned a prefix indicating the house of origin and a number. Bills introduced in the House carry the letter H; Senate bills the letter S. In both chambers, bills are numbered consecutively as filed during a session and retain the same number throughout the biennium.

The first bill filed in the House is known as H.B. 1; the first in the Senate as S.B. 1.

History and Status of Legislation

Members of the legislature have on-line access to complete and timely information about the history and status of legislation. The public may access that information on-line at the legislative council's Internet web site www.tlc.state.tx.us. Information is also available on-line and in printed text at the Legislative Reference Library (www.lrl.state.tx.us). Copies of a master numerical list of bills and resolutions, indices of bills and resolutions by subject matter, and histories of bills and resolutions listed by number are available at the legislative council's document distribution office located in room B.353, Robert E. Johnson Bldg., 1501 N. Congress Avenue.

Senate Records and Status Reports

The calendar clerk of the Senate maintains a ledger, or record, of every action taken on a House or Senate bill while the bill is in the Senate. A subject index is also maintained by this desk for all bills and resolutions referred to a Senate committee. To facilitate location of a measure in this file, there are multiple listings for all measures under several possible headings suggested by the subject matter. The calendar clerk of the House employs similar procedures.

Information Retrieval System

Due to the increasing volume of reference and status information requirements and in order to speed the dissemination of data, the indices and files maintained by the Legislative Council and the calendar clerk of the Senate are presently supplemented by a computerized information retrieval system. The full text of each bill is available to read on-line. Copies of bills can be found on the Internet at: www.tlc.state.tx.us.

CHAPTER 4

PREPARING, READING AND MODIFYING A BILL

While a great deal of assistance in drafting legislation is available to the legislator, the most effective members are those who become familiar with the structure of a bill and the implications of the proposed measure. Insights into the technicalities of bill drafting and the amending procedures are basic to understanding the legislative process.

DRAFTING LEGISLATION

During legislative sessions, the Texas Legislative Council staff primarily serves the Senate and House by drafting bills, resolutions, amendments, committee substitutes, and conference committee reports. Additionally, the House of Representatives receives assistance from the council staff in editing and text processing the daily House Journals, in engrossing and enrolling House documents and in distributing House bills.

READING A BILL

There are several ways a legislator can become familiar with the contents of a bill: conversation with sponsors, bill analysis, committee testimony. There is, however, no effective substitute for reading the bill itself.

Questions regarding meaning and equivocal language are frequent obstacles to immediate understanding of a bill. Such problems of clarity should not be minimized, since they are often the very ones that cause difficulties in executing the law for which the bill is drawn. The proper course for the legislator, therefore, is to seek clarification of any questions of interpretation since these confusions may well have escaped the attention of those who sponsored or drafted the proposal.

STRUCTURE OF A BILL

Understanding the structure of a bill will assist greatly in comprehending the subject matter and impact of the proposed legislation.

All pertinent information is given in a fixed sequence in drafting a bill. The parts, or elements, appear in the following order.

The *heading* shows the house in which the bill was introduced, the bill number assigned upon introduction, and the signatures of the sponsors.