



HOUSE OF LORDS

Briefing

Bills and How They Become Law

Stages of legislation and types of bills

Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Explanatory notes to the Bill, prepared by the Cabinet Office, are published separately as HL Bill 26-EN.

EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Lord McNally has made the following statement under section 19(1)(a) of the Human Rights Act 1998:

In my view the provisions of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill are compatible with the Convention rights.



Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011

CHAPTER 1

✉ House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

☎ 020 7219 3107

@ hinfo@parliament.uk

🌐 www.parliament.uk/lords

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Explanatory Notes have been produced to assist in the
understanding of this Act and are available separately

Passage of a public bill through Parliament and guide to stages

Stages in the House of Commons



First reading

- Formal reading out of the title of the bill by a clerk.
- The bill is ordered to be printed.

Second reading

- Main opportunity to debate the bill. A division (vote) at this stage represents a direct challenge to the principle of the bill.
- After second reading, government bills are timetabled by programme motions.

Committee stage

- Chance to debate and vote on the detail, clause by clause.
- Amendments **selected** by the chairman (advised by a clerk).
- All bills go to one of three committee types.
 1. Committee of the whole House – for constitutional bills and parts of the Finance Bill.
 2. Public bill committee – most usual procedure; 16-50 MPs, in proportion to overall party strengths.
 3. Select committee (infrequently used).
- A committee considering government bills has powers to send for persons, papers and records; holds up to four extra sittings when it can hear oral evidence in private and public.

R

Report stage

- A further chance to consider amendments, new clauses and, for MPs not on the committee, to propose changes.

Third reading

- The final chance to debate the bill.
- A vote gives chance to show dissatisfaction with the amended bill.
- The bill now goes to the Lords.

Timing



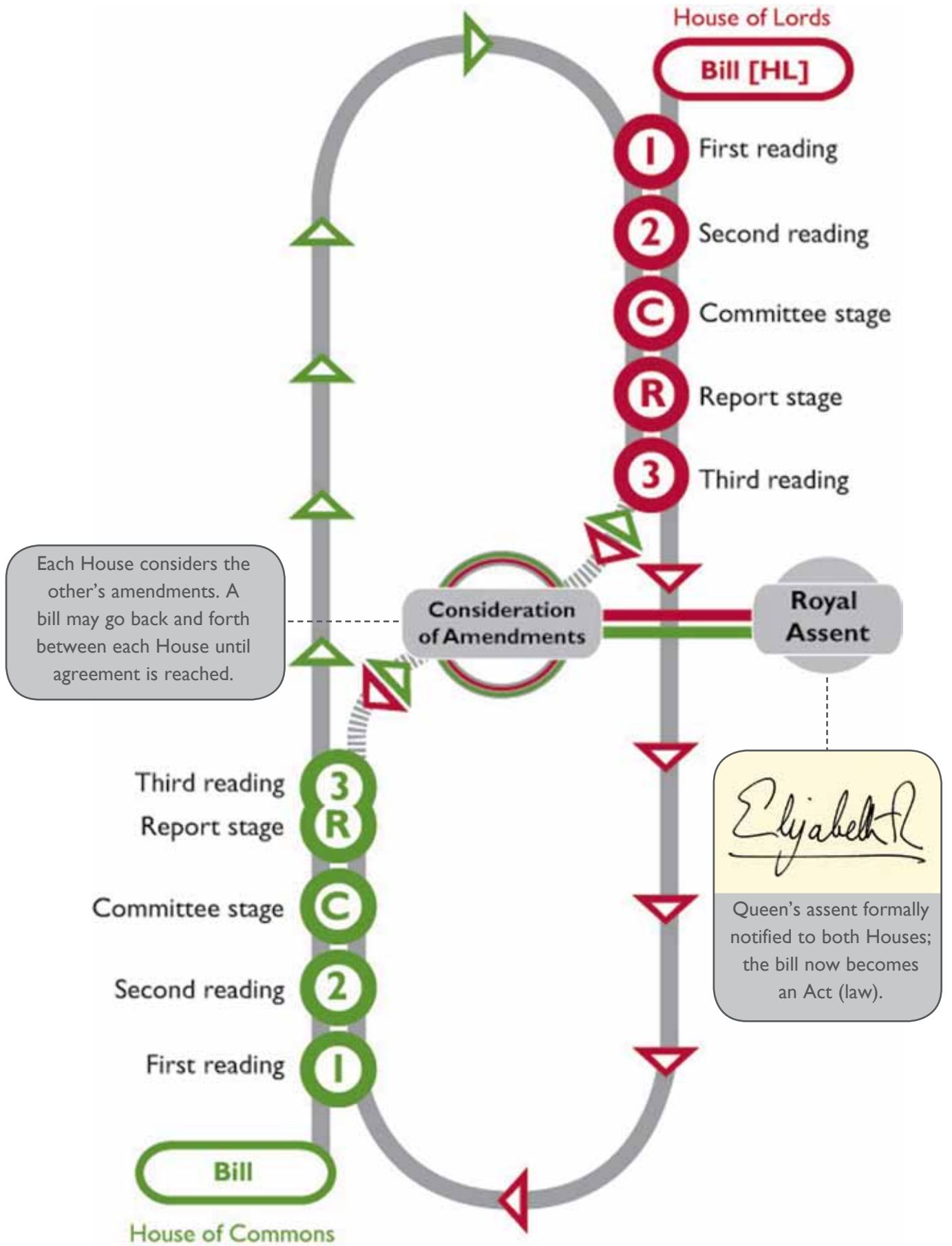
Two weekends usually elapse after first reading.

Usually starts two weeks after second reading and can take anything from one meeting to several months.

Usually two weekends elapse between end of committee and report stages.

Usually immediately after report stage on the same day.

Note: For the purpose of this guide, the bill is assumed to have started in the Commons. Bills may equally be introduced in the Lords.



Note: the initials '[HL]' after the bill title indicate the bill was introduced in the Lords.

Stages in the House of Lords

First reading

- Formal presentation.
- The bill is reprinted in the form finally agreed by the Commons.

R

Second reading

- Debate on general principles of the bill.
- **Government bills included in the election manifesto are, by convention, not opposed at the second reading**, but 'reasoned' amendments may be tabled as a means of indicating dissent and can be voted on.

Committee stage

- Bills usually go to a committee of the whole House (in the chamber) or grand committee (away from the chamber) and rarely to other types of committee (see over).
- Detailed line by line examination.
- **Unlike the Commons, there is no selection of amendments – all can be considered.**
- **Unlike the Commons, debate on amendments is not timetabled or 'guillotined'.**

R

Report stage

- Further chance to amend the bill.
- May be spread over several days.

R

Third reading and passing

- Unlike the Commons, 'tidying up' amendments can be made. Issues debated and decided at an earlier stage can't be reopened.
- Passing: the final opportunity for Members to comment and vote on the bill.

The bill now goes back to the Commons for MPs to consider Lords' amendments – 'consideration of amendments'.

No significant delay in the transfer between the two Houses.

Two weekends usually elapse after first reading.

Usually starts at least 14 days after second reading. Often spread over several days.

Usually starts at least 14 days after committee stage.

Usually at least three sitting days after report stage.



R indicates the bill is reprinted at these points if amended at the previous stage.

Types of bills

A bill is a draft law. It has to be approved by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords before it receives the Royal Assent and becomes an Act of Parliament (law). This paper describes briefly the different types of bills and illustrates how a bill becomes an Act of Parliament. The guide opposite notes important differences between the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Public bills

These are bills of general effect and relate to public policy. Bills may start in either House. The title of a bill which starts in the House of Lords is followed by the initials '[HL]' during its passage through the two Houses.

Most major bills are introduced by ministers on behalf of the government and are outlined in the Queen's Speech which sets out the government's plans for each parliamentary session. Public bills introduced by a backbench Member are called private members' bills. They must not be confused with private bills. Members of the House of Lords have an unrestricted right to introduce private members' bills. However, because time is limited – particularly in the Commons – only bills which command general support will succeed in reaching the Statute Book.

Private bills

These bills contain provisions which explicitly apply to only part of the community rather than the community as a whole. Most are local in character, promoted by bodies such as local authorities or statutory bodies seeking special powers. Private bills are promoted by outside interests and may begin in either House in equal numbers. Procedure is broadly the same in each. Almost all of their consideration takes place off the floor of the House, where those whose interests are adversely affected by a private bill can have their case for redress heard by a select committee.

Hybrid bills

These are a cross between a public and a private bill i.e. public bills which affect private interests. A hybrid bill initially goes through the same procedures as a private bill where, if petitions are presented, it is then sent to a select committee; it is subsequently treated as a public bill.

Follow the progress of all types of bills on the Parliament website:

The screenshot shows the Parliament website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for Accessibility, Email alerts, RSS feeds, and Contact us. The main navigation menu includes Home, Parliamentary business, MPs, Lords & offices, About Parliament, Get involved, Visiting, and Education. Below this, there are links for House of Commons, House of Lords, What's on, Bills & legislation, Committees, Publications & records, Parliament TV, and News. The breadcrumb trail reads: You are here: Parliament home page > Parliamentary business > Bills and legislation > Bills before Parliament 2010-11 > Public Bills > Public Bodies Bill [HL] 2010-11. The main content area features a sidebar with a tree view of Bills & Legislation, Bills before Parliament 2010-11, Public Bills, and Public Bodies Bill [HL] 2010-11. The main heading is 'Public Bodies Bill [HL] 2010-11'. Below this, the 'Type of Bill' is listed as 'Government Bill' and the 'Sponsor' is 'Lord Taylor of Holbeach, Cabinet Office'. A 'Progress of the Bill' section shows a timeline of stages: First reading, Second reading, Committee stage, Report stage, and Third reading, with a final stage for Consideration of amendments. A 'READ THIS BILL' box on the right contains links for 'Latest Bill', 'Explanatory Notes', and 'All Bill documents'.

Committee stage on public bills in the Lords

Committee of the whole House

Many bills are considered in the chamber of the House of Lords with all Members eligible to participate. There are three procedures which may replace committee of the whole House:

Grand committee

The committee has unrestricted membership – all Members are free to attend and participate. A grand committee works in the same way as committee of the whole House, but no votes can take place. This procedure is frequently used for less contentious bills with a view to saving time on the floor of the House.

Public bill committee

A limited number of Members is selected to conduct the committee stage of government bills which are of a technical and non-controversial nature. Members not selected for the committee can participate but may not vote. This procedure is very rarely used.

Special public bill committee

This is a public bill committee which can take written and oral evidence on bills, within 28 days of appointment, before considering a bill line by line. Any bill can be referred to such a committee. This procedure is very rarely used.

In addition, a bill may be referred to a select committee. This procedure allows detailed investigation of the policy in a bill, with taking of evidence. The committee reports the bill to the House, recommending whether or not the bill should proceed. If it is to proceed, the select committee may make amendments and the bill is then re-committed to a committee of the whole House. Private members' bills are occasionally committed to a select committee.

Pre-legislative scrutiny of draft bills



Both Houses of Parliament carry out pre-legislative scrutiny of some draft bills, in the session prior to their introduction.

The purpose of this scrutiny is to take evidence on the policies underlying bills, and to consider whether bills can be improved before they are introduced. Pre-legislative scrutiny should lead to better-informed debates on bills when they are introduced, and may save time in both Houses by identifying problems at an early stage. Such scrutiny may be carried out by select committees of either House, or by joint committees.

To follow the progress of a bill:

Contact the Information Offices or visit the Parliament website:

- ☎ Lords: 020 7219 3107; Commons: 020 7219 4272
- @ hlinfo@parliament.uk; hcinfo@parliament.uk
- 🌐 www.parliament.uk