Legislative Process 101
The State Legislature has Two Bodies

House
134 Members

Senate
67 Members
Simple Explanation of the Legislative Process

House
- Bill starts in the House

Senate
- Senate takes action on house file

Governor
- Governor signs or vetoes legislation

Senate
- Bill starts in the Senate

House
- House takes action on Senate file

Governor
- Governor signs or vetoes legislation
Minnesota Operates on a Two-Year Legislative Cycle

• The legislature takes action on the state budget in the odd years. (2007, 2005 etc.)
• The legislature takes action on the bonding bill in even years. (2008, 2006 etc.)
• Bills are alive for two years until the end of the biennium.
• The current legislative session began January 3, 2007 and will end May 19, 2008.
All bills are referred to a committee at the beginning of the process.
A Bill for an Act...

H.F. No. 2710, as introduced – 85th Legislative Session (2007-2008)
Posted on Jan 31, 2008

1.1 A bill for an act
1.2 relating to state government; designating the Black Angus
1.3 as the state Cow; proposing coding for new law
1.4 in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 1.

1.5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF
1.6 MINNESOTA:
1.7 Section 1. [1.1499] [STATE COW.]
1.8 The Black Angus (Bos Taurus) is the official
1.9 Cow of the state of Minnesota.

2.1 The sum of $100,000 is appropriated from the
2.2 general fund to promote awareness of cows.
Who Decides Where Bills Go?

• Each committee has a distinct jurisdiction which is posted on the committee website
• Bills are generally referred to the committee that seems most relevant
• Other committee chairs can request that a bill be brought before their committee
• All spending bills must go through either the tax committee or the finance committee or both

• HF2710 is first being sent to the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee
Step 2: The Committee(s)

Bill introduction
First Reading
Referral to a Committee

Committee holds a hearing and passes the bill

Committee does not hold a hearing

Bill is sent back to the floor for final action

Bill is sent back to the floor and then referred to a second committee

Bill remains alive until end of biennium
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2.1 general fund to promote awareness of cows.

Amendments?
Step 2: The Committee(s)

- Bill introduction
  - First Reading
  - Referral to a Committee

  - Committee holds a hearing and passes the bill
    - Bill is sent back to the floor for final action
    - Bill is sent back to the floor and then referred to a second committee
    - Bill Remains alive until end of biennium

  - Committee does not hold a hearing

Deadlines

• First Deadline: A committee in either body must act favorably on a piece of legislation
• Second Deadline: A committee in the remaining body must act favorably on the legislation
• Third Deadline: Action must be taken on finance bills
• Bills that don’t meet deadlines must go through the rules committee
**Ag Committee**
- First stop in process for HF2710

**Commerce Committee**
- Requested by Chair

**Ag Finance**
- Addresses the fiscal impact

**Finance**
- Ag Finance is a subcommittee of finance

**Ways and Means**
- Sees all bills with fiscal impact
- Decides to pay for marketing with a 1 cent tax per ton of milk

**Taxes**
- Must see the bill because of the tax amendment adopted by ways and means
On the Floor

Second Reading
Signals the conclusion of the committee process and places the bill on the general register.

Floor Debate
Legislators argue merits of bills, make amendments and amend amendments

Third Reading
The bill is now in its final form, no amendments are allowed unless there is unanimous consent within the body.
Passage of Bills

• A simple majority is required for most bills
• 68 members of the House are a simple majority
• 34 Senators are a simple majority
• Bonding bills require the support of at least 60% of the legislature and constitutional amendments require the support of at least 2/3 of each body
What happens after the first body takes action?

Message is received from the first body, the bill is introduced and referred to committee

The bill is heard in committee

The committee amends the first body’s bill, passes the bill on the floor and sends it back for final action in the first body

If the bill remains unchanged passage on the floor by the second body sends the bill to the Governor

The second body can use the bill in place of its own companion bill on the floor

The bill is sent to the Governor
When bills are returned to the House of Origin

When a bill is returned by the other body:

- If the bill was amended by the second body, the originating body must decide whether or not to concur.
- If the bill was not amended by the second body it goes directly to the Governor.

If the originating body concurs, the bill receives its third reading.

If the originating body does not concur, a conference committee must be appointed.
Conference Committees

• Largely influenced by Caucus Leadership
• Tends to be a less open process and is difficult to influence
• Most commonly used for bills that are controversial or when the House and Senate have strong differences in their positions
• The conference committee report cannot be amended by either body, it must be voted up or down on the floor
• Final passage of a conference committee report by both bodies sends the bill to the Governor
Actions by the Governor

Sign Into Law
- If the Governor signs a bill it becomes law on its effective date.

Return Veto
- The Governor can veto an appropriation or an entire act
- It takes a 2/3 majority in both bodies to override a veto

Neither Sign nor Veto
- During session, a bill that is not signed or vetoed by the Governor becomes law automatically
- At the end of session a law that is neither signed nor vetoed by the Governor becomes vetoed automatically
Other FAQs About the Legislature

• What are caucuses and what is their impact?
• Who decides what committees to have and who should serve on them?
• What is the role of lobbyists and how much influence do they have?
• Other questions?