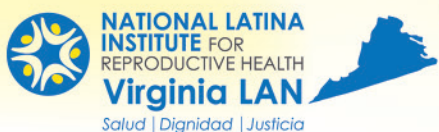


LIFTING OUR VOICES:

Leading Change for Our Families



How a Bill Becomes a Law in Virginia

START!

A NEW BILL

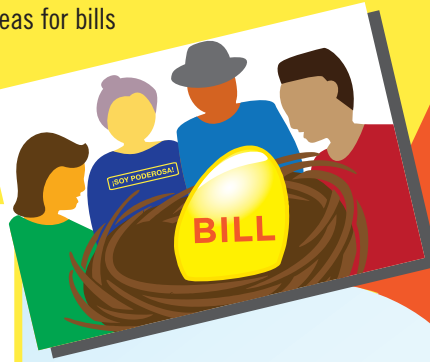
A bill is an idea for a new law, or an idea to change or get rid of an existing law. Ideas for bills can come from anyone – legislators, community members, organizations, even corporations.

The VA LAN tracks legislation

that helps Latin@ families by expanding access to the full range of reproductive healthcare services, promoting justice for immigrants, increasing access to education for young parents, promoting justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and LGBTQ people and their families, and improving economic opportunities.



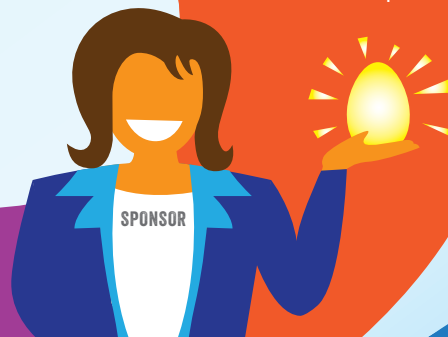
The Virginia General Assembly has two legislative chambers – the House of Delegates and the Senate. There are 100 members of the House of Delegates and 40 members of the Senate. The VA General Assembly meets for 60 days in even years and 45 days in odd years.



STEP 1: INTRODUCE A BILL

A member of the House of Delegates or the Senate can introduce a bill. The member who introduces the bill is called the sponsor.

VA LAN members meet with potential sponsors to share our stories, helping to inform the development of legislation as it is being created.



STEP 2: SEND TO COMMITTEE

Once introduced, a bill gets assigned a number, and then the committee(s) it must be sent to are determined. Once determined, the bill is sent along to the first committee. The House of Delegates has 14 committees and the Senate has 11 committees.

After listening to all of the information and proposed changes, the committee will vote on the bill. If more than half of the committee members support the bill, it moves onto the next step. If the committee doesn't vote on the bill or the bill gets defeated in committee, it cannot move on.



STEP 3: COMMITTEE HEARS THE BILL

The committee studies the bill to see if it would make a good law. Committees often hold hearings, where people testify in support of or in opposition to the bill. Members of the committee can suggest changes (called amendments) to the bill for the committee to consider.



VA LAN activists and supporters share their stories by testifying at committee hearings. VA LAN activists who can't attend in person can submit written testimony into the record. VA LAN members can call the members of the committee to express their support or share their concern about a bill, and we often have days of action to share our experiences with legislators in person.

STEP 5: GOVERNOR'S DESK

If the bill passes both chambers, it goes to the Governor for approval. The Governor has four choices:

1. Governor signs the bill.
2. Governor returns the bill with changes (amendments). If the House of Delegates and Senate approve the changes, the bill becomes law.
3. Governor vetoes (or rejects) the bill. The House of Delegates and Senate may override the veto by a two-thirds vote of each chamber.
4. Governor takes no action. If the Governor doesn't sign the bill, but doesn't veto it, it automatically becomes the law.

While a bill is waiting for the Governor to make a decision, **VA LAN activists call the Governor's office**, send emails, and participate in social media campaigns to urge the Governor to sign or veto the bill.

Bills that become laws typically take effect on July 1 of that year.



GOVERNOR

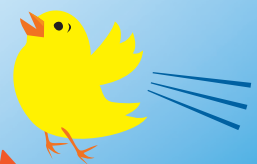
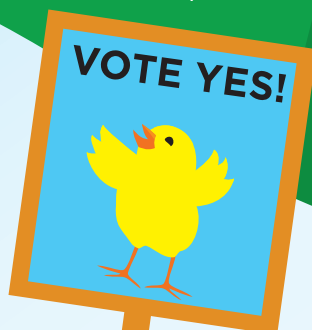
STEP 4: FLOOR ACTION

A bill that is approved by committee(s) returns to the chamber (House or Senate) where it was first passed, where it is read or printed in the calendar three times. After crossover, bills from the other chamber are read once, and then referred to committee. Afterwards, debate and amendments typically happen upon the third reading. To pass the first reading, the bill title is printed in the calendar (the daily printed agenda of business) or is read by the Clerk of the chamber where it first passed. During the second reading, the bill may be amended and debated on the full floor. During the third reading, members vote to pass or not pass the bill. Bills that don't pass on the third reading do not move on in the process.

When a bill is being considered on the chamber floor, **VA LAN activists participate in days of action, calling or visiting legislators** to express their support or opposition to a bill. We may also show up at the Capitol building on the day of a floor vote to rally, speak to the media, and do in-person storytelling with legislators.

If a bill passes in the House of Delegates, it goes through a similar process in the Senate. Before a bill becomes law, it must be approved by **both** chambers of the legislature. The bill must pass with the same wording in the House of Delegates and the Senate before it can go to the Governor. If the Senate amends a House bill, or vice versa, the bill must go back to the original chamber and be approved with the amendments before proceeding.

Sometimes, bills with different amendments end up in a conference committee, where a small group of members from each chamber try to work out the differences.





THE NATIONAL LATINA INSTITUTE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (NLIRH)

is the only national reproductive justice organization dedicated to building Latina power to advance health, dignity, and justice for 26 million Latinas, their families, and communities in the United States through leadership development, community mobilization, policy advocacy, and strategic communications.

latinainstitute.org



STRONG FAMILIES is led and staffed by Forward Together. NLIRH is a member of Strong Families, joining more than 150 groups working to change how we think, feel, act, and make policy about families.

strongfamiliesmovement.org



THE VIRGINIA LATINA ADVOCACY NETWORK (VA LAN)

operates as an extension of NLIRH, serving as the voice and advocacy presence in Virginia. The VA LAN works with activists from throughout Virginia to organize our communities around issue-based campaigns that impact our families and our lives. For more information, contact VA Latina Advocacy Network at 571-436-5673.

latinainstitute.org/en/virginia

