



How a Bill Becomes a Law Resource Guide

Georgia Performance Standard SS8CG2c

The Green Tree Frog: How a Bill Becomes a Law Resource Guide

This Resource Guide contains the following:

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HOW a BILL BECOMES a LAW

Resource Guide

"I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power." --Thomas Jefferson to William C. Jarvis, 1820.

"Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government;... whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights." --Thomas Jefferson to Richard Price, 1789.

Georgia curriculum standards (Georgia Performance Standard SS8CG2c) require that students learn about Georgia government. One of the basic steps in learning how our government works is to know what government does. Teenagers need to know how government affects them – personally – in order to prepare them for citizenship in a country that survives by having an informed electorate (see quotes above). A creative way is with the animated program, "How a Bill Becomes a Law."

This is based on a true story. A group of fourth grade students in Rome, GA decided they wanted the green tree frog to be the Georgia state amphibian. They contacted their state representative and convinced her to write a bill that would make this happen (see article in this guide). It took two years to get the bill through the entire legislative process. When the bill was signed by the governor, the class went to the State Capitol to witness the results of their hard work. It was a great example of how government works for the people – even those who are not yet old enough to vote.

There are several blackline masters in this resource guide. Use them, add to or change any of them to suit the learning level(s) of your class(es).

The flowchart could be used on an overhead or other teaching device as a visual organizer. This usually helps students understand (or picture) this process.

Another project in this resource guide is called “**Legislation 200_ - Tracing a bill through the Georgia General Assembly.**” This experience helps students go through the process of a bill’s passage. Students get on the website for the legislature by the end of January. Usually most of the bills have been presented by this time. They should choose a bill having to do with an interest they have (driving, drunk driving, drugs, animals, divorce, HOPE scholarship, or others). (Try to stay away from controversial topics – abortion, capital punishment, pornography, prostitution, etc.) They should print out the bill and find the information needed on the title page of the final product. (see “Requirements”) Students might also be able to write what would change about Georgia law should this bill be passed. (Anything underlined in the bill is a change in Georgia law.) They should be encouraged to look in the paper, online, or write to/e-mail the sponsor of the bill to find out why someone would not want the bill passed. (Even though a sponsor might want the bill passed, he/she has an idea about why other legislators might not want it.) Contacting his/her own Representative or Senator (see vote-smart.org) to ask about this bill is a good citizenship activity. (Point out that active citizens who want democracy to succeed know and contact their representatives to express their opinions or to find out about laws being passed.)

Tree frog to become state amphibian Tuesday

04/21/05

Sen. Preston Smith

ATLANTA - State Sen. Preston Smith (R-Rome) and a group of sixth graders from Armuchee Elementary School in Rome will stand with Gov. Sonny Perdue Tuesday as he signs Senate Bill 41 making the green tree frog the official state amphibian.



Two years ago, while these same students were studying the political process and "how a bill becomes law" in fourth grade classes taught by Marilyn McLean and Ruth Pinson at Armuchee Elementary, they decided to see if they - a group of school children - could get a bill passed.

They contacted Rep. Barbara Massey Reece and asked her to sponsor their legislation. Rep. Reece filed the bill which passed the House in 2004, but failed to make it through the Senate.

This year, the students asked Sen. Smith to sponsor the bill, and it sailed through both the Senate and House with nary a whimper. On Tuesday at 9 a.m., the students who began their quest to put the tree frog in alongside Georgia's other "official" symbols - including grits, azaleas, the brown thrasher, the peach, the peanut and the Cherokee Rose - will witness the measure becoming law when the Governor signs his name to it. Afterward, they will take a field trip organized and sponsored by Sen. Smith to tour Atlanta's Fernbank Museum of Natural History with its current exhibit "Frogs: A Chorus of Colors" featuring the state's new official amphibian, the green tree frog.

"The students in Ms. Pinson's fourth grade class made this happen," Sen. Smith said. "It is only right that they be here when their idea comes to fruition."

Sen. Smith said he felt the students' frustration when the bill did not pass in 2003 or in 2004. "It was a good civics lesson, albeit a tough one, for them to learn," Sen. Smith continued. "It taught them that sometimes the wheels of government move slowly, but if you persevere, and keep working with the legislature, eventually you may see your idea become law.

"Some of my colleagues who serve in the legislature have waited

many, many years to get a single bill passed - so the students did well. It was a fiscally responsible bill - it will not cost the state a dime. In addition, it didn't hurt anyone or take away anyone's rights.

Through this long procedure the students were able to make the process of state government come alive in a way that they will never forget."

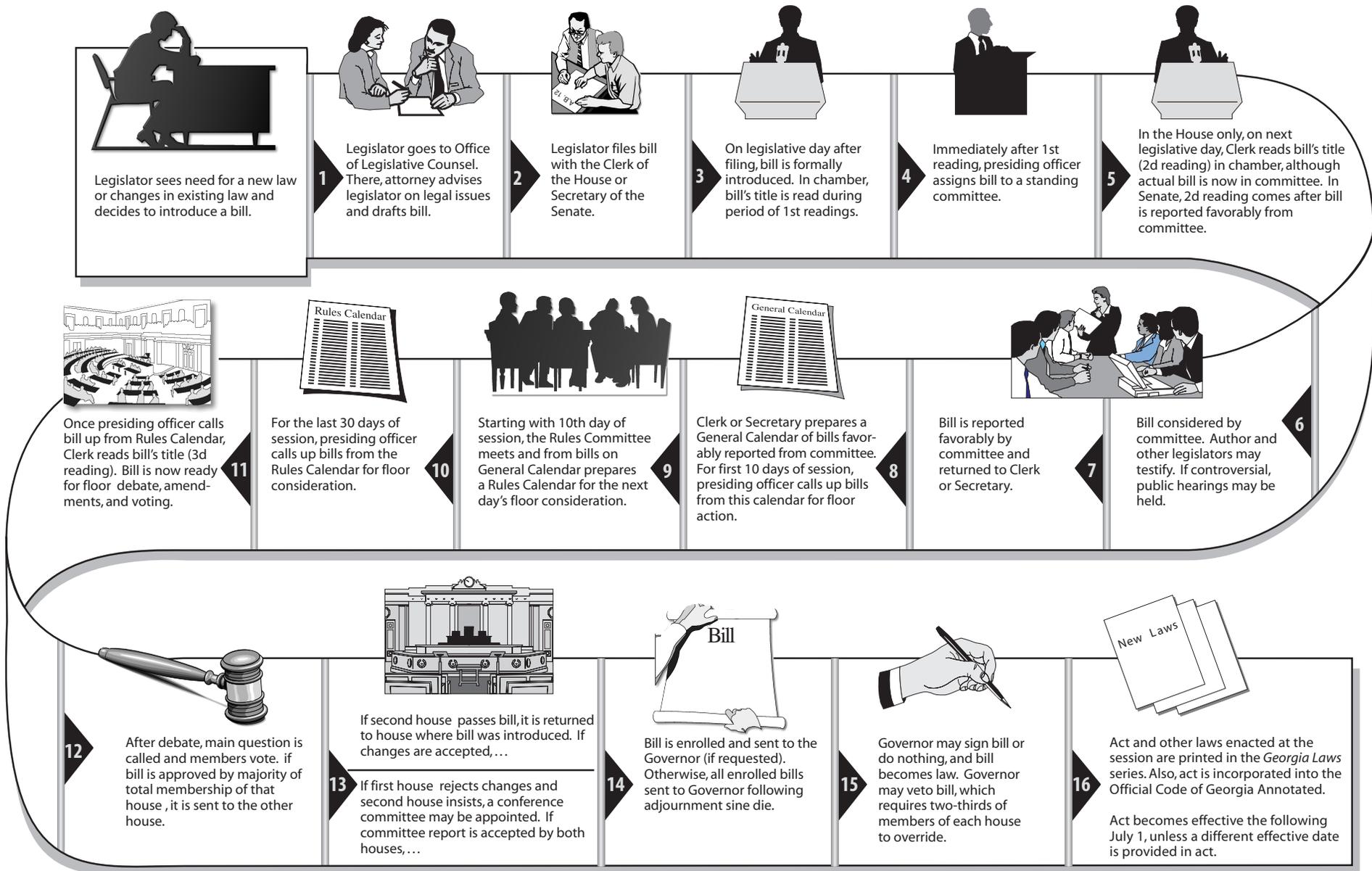
The students will take a bus from Rome to the State Capitol on Tuesday and then head to Fernbank for a tour of the frog exhibit and lunch.

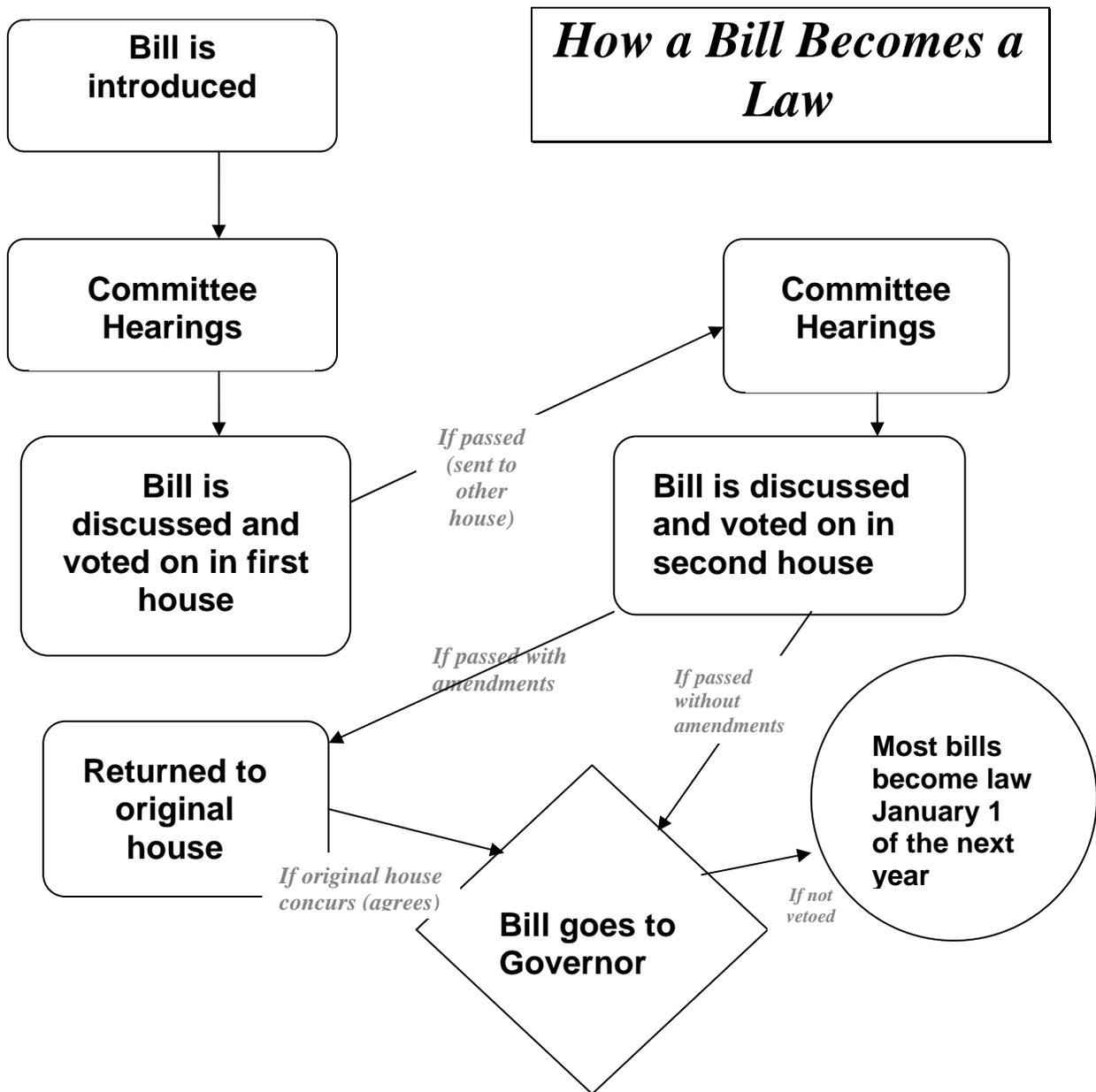
How a Bill Becomes a Law

1. Legislator sees the need for a new law or changes in existing law and decides to introduce a bill.
2. Legislator goes to Office of Legislative Council. There, attorney advises legislator on legal issues and drafts a bill.
3. On legislative day after filing, bill is formally introduced. In chamber, bill's title is read during period of 1st reading.
4. Immediately after 1st reading, presiding officer assigns bill a standing committee.
5. In the House only, on next legislative day, Clerk reads bill's title (2nd reading) in chamber, although actual bill is now in committee. In Senate, 2nd reading comes after bill is reported favorable from committee.
6. Bill considered by committee. Author and other legislators may testify. If controversial, public hearings may be held/
7. Bill is reported favorably by committee and returned to Clerk or Secretary.
8. Clerk or Secretary prepares a General Calendar of bills favorably reported from committee. For first 10 days of session in House (15 days in the Senate) presiding officer calls up bills for this calendar for floor action.
9. Starting with 10th day of session in House (15th day in Senate), the Rules Committee meets and from bills on General Calendar prepares a Rules Calendar for the next day's floor consideration.
10. For the last 30 days of session in House (25 days in Senate), presiding officer calls up bills, from the Rules Calendar for floor consideration.
11. Once presiding officer calls bill up from Rules Calendar, Clerk reads bill's title (3rd reading). Bill is now ready for floor debate, amendments, and voting.
12. After debate, main question is called and members vote. If bill is approved by majority of total membership of that house, it is sent to the other house.
13. If second house passes bill, it is returned to house where bill was introduced. If changes are accepted...go on to #14. If the first house rejects changes and second house insists, a conference committee may be appointed. If committee report is accepted by both houses...go on to #14.
14. Bill is enrolled and sent to the Governor (if requested). Otherwise, all enrolled bills sent to Governor following adjournment sine die.
15. Governor may sign bill or do nothing, and bill becomes law. Governor may veto bill, which requires two-thirds of members of each house to override.
16. Act and other laws enacted at the session are printed in the Georgia Laws series. Also, act is incorporated into the Official Code of Georgia Annotated. Act becomes effective the following July 1, unless a different effective date is provided in act.

From Carl Vinson Institute of Government

How a Bill Is Passed in the Georgia Legislature





The Georgia General Assembly meets every year from the second Monday in January for a session that lasts 40 days. There are two elected houses called the State Legislature. The House of Representatives has 180 members; the State Senate has 56 members.

In order for a bill (a legislator's idea) to become law, both houses must agree (vote) on the same version of the bill. This bill must go through the same process in both the House and the Senate. The bill must get at least 91 votes in the House and 29 votes in the Senate.

Once it is passed by both houses, it goes to the governor. He may sign it or he may leave it alone for 10 days after which it automatically becomes a law. If he vetoes it, both houses may vote to override the veto by a 2/3 majority in each house. It then becomes a law without the signature of the governor.

HOW a BILL BECOMES a LAW

Fill in the blanks:

1. There are ____ houses of Georgia government that make laws for the state.
2. One of these houses is called the _____, and the other is called the _____.
3. These houses are part of the state legislature known as the Georgia _____.
4. Once a legislator gets an idea for a new law, the first thing they must do is _____.
5. When the bill is filed and given a number, it is _____ the next day and assigned to a _____. This is where the bill is _____ and then _____.
6. The bill is given a number and put on the calendar. When the time comes, it is _____ before the original house and then the legislators _____ on it.
7. If it passes, it goes to the _____.
8. In this place, it must begin with _____, and then it is assigned to a _____. After that it is _____ and _____.
9. There are three things that might happen here (#7). One of them is that it can be _____; another is that it could be _____; and the last is that it could be _____.
10. If it is _____, it goes back to the original house. . (It will be voted on again since the identical bill must pass both houses to go any further.)
11. If it is _____, it is “dead” as a law for this year.
12. If it is _____, it is sent to the governor.
13. If the governor _____ the bill it becomes a law.
14. If the governor _____ the bill it becomes a law.

15. If the governor _____ the bill it does not become a law, but it can become a law if _____.
16. If the bill does not become a law the first year it is presented, it _____ (can, cannot) be presented to the law-making body in a future year.
17. A legislator who presents a bill before the law-making body of government is called the _____ of the bill.
18. True or False: Only a legislator can think of an idea for a bill.
19. True or False: To amend a bill is to change or add to the bill.
20. True or False: Only legislators may vote on bills.

Bonus: (+1 for each correct answer)

Give the name of each house and the number of members in each one.

House	members
_____	_____
_____	_____

HOW a BILL BECOMES a LAW

Fill in the blanks:

1. There are two (2) houses of Georgia government that make laws for the state.
2. One of these houses is called the Senate, and the other is called the House of Representatives.
3. These houses are part of the state legislature known as the Georgia General Assembly .
4. Once a legislator gets an idea for a new law, the first thing they must do is take it to the legislative counsel to be written.
5. When the bill is filed and given a number, it is read the next day and assigned to a committee. This is where the bill is discussed and then voted on.
6. The bill is given a number and put on the calendar. When the time comes, it is discussed/debated before the original house and then the legislators vote on it.
7. If it passes, it goes to the other house.
8. In this place, it must begin with being filed, and then it is assigned to a committee. After that it is discussed and voted on.
9. There are three things that might happen here (#7). One of them is that it can be amended; another is that it could be passed; and the last is that it could be defeated.
10. If it is amended, it goes back to the original house. (It will be voted on again since the identical bill must pass both houses to go any further.)
11. If it is defeated, it is “dead” as a law for this year.
12. If it is passed, it is sent to the governor.
13. If the governor signs the bill it becomes a law.
14. If the governor does not sign the bill it becomes a law.

15. If the governor vetos the bill it does not become a law, but it can become a law if two-thirds (2/3) of each house votes to override the governor's veto.
16. If the bill does not become a law the first year it is presented, it can (can, cannot) be presented to the law-making body in a future year.
17. A legislator who presents a bill before the law-making body of government is called the sponsor of the bill.
18. True or False: Only a legislator can think of an idea for a bill.
19. True or False: Only legislators may vote on bills.
20. True or False: To amend a bill is to change or add to the bill.

Bonus: (+1 for each correct answer)

Give the name of each house and the number of members in each one.

House	members
<u>House of Representatives</u>	<u>180</u>
<u>Senate</u>	<u>56</u>

QUIZ: GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Name: _____

1. How many State Senators are there in Georgia? _____
2. How many State Representatives are there in Georgia? _____
3. The Georgia General Assembly normally meets during the months of:

4. In what town/city does the General Assembly meet? _____
5. What is the building called where the General Assembly meets?

6. A proposed law is called a _____.
7. True or False: The Governor is a member of the General Assembly. _____
8. A suggested change to a Bill is an _____.
9. What is the name of the person who is the President of the State Senate?

10. What elected office does the President of the State Senate hold
_____?

Bonus:

The website where you will find the bills for the current legislative session is:

http://_____

QUIZ: GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

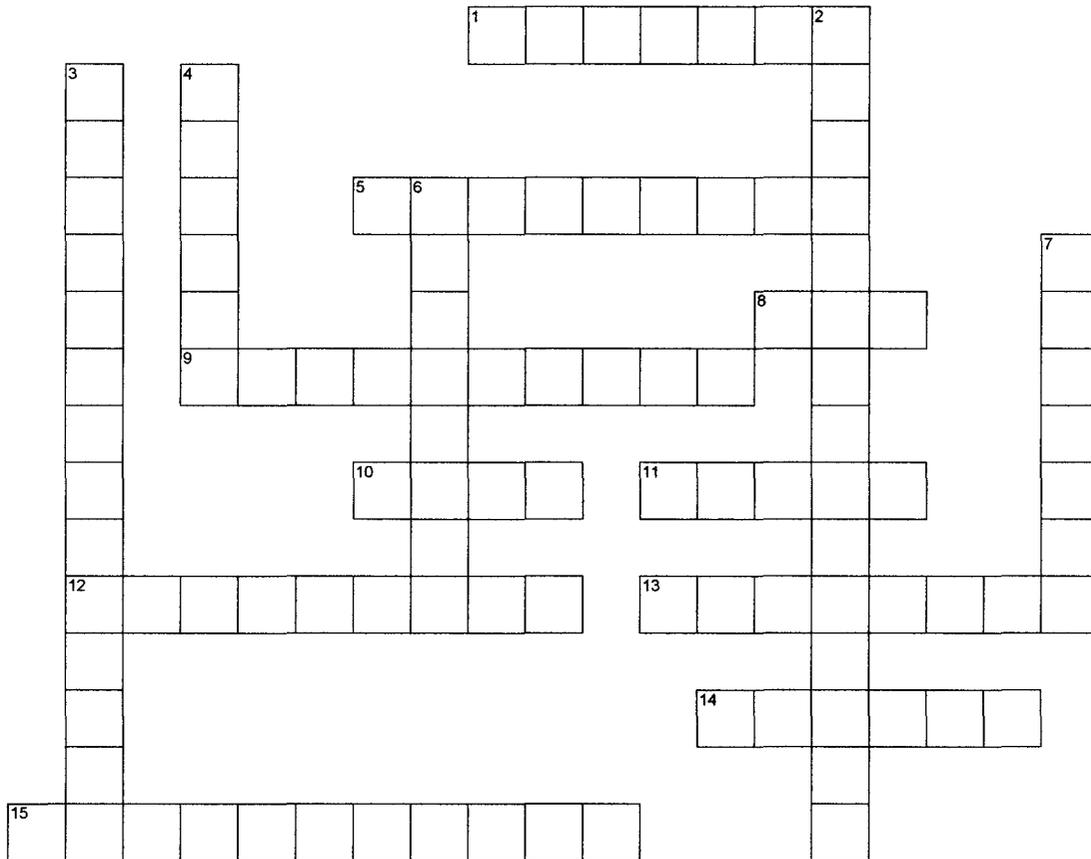
ANSWERS

1. How many State Senators are there in Georgia? 56
2. How many State Representatives are there in Georgia? 180
3. The Georgia General Assembly normally meets during the months of:
January, February, and March
4. In what town/city does the General Assembly meet? Atlanta
5. What is the building called where the General Assembly meets?
State Capitol building
6. A proposed law is called a bill
7. True or False: The Governor is a member of the General Assembly. false
8. A suggested change to a Bill is an amendment
9. What is the name of the person who is the President of the State Senate? varies – see website:
http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2005_06/senate/index.htm
(click on Lieutenant Governor)
10. What elected office does the President of the State Senate hold?
Lieutenant Governor

Bonus:

The website where you will find the bills for the current legislative session is:
<http://www.legis.state.ga.us>

Crossword: "How a Bill Becomes a Law" terms



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

ACROSS

- 1** session during which testimony is given by witnesses or people who have an interest in the matter; a formal investigation
- 5** group of people delegated to perform a function, such as considering, investigating, reporting, or acting on a matter
- 8** piece of legislation approved by an elected body chosen by the people

- 9** authority that exercises control and administration of public policy in a political unit (such as a state or nation)
- 10** draft of a proposed law
- 11** a collective name for either of the two legislative bodies (House of Representatives or Senate)
- 12** a statement or addition to a document or record (or bill)
- 13** ordered list of matters to be considered (as bills

- in a legislative session)
- 14** engage in formal discussion or argument; discussing and investigating all sides of an issue
- 15** elected body of people with the responsibility and power to make laws for a state or nation

- Senate
- 3** elected member of a lower house of the legislature
- 4** formal expression or preference for a candidate, resolution, or issue
- 6** to declare null and void; to set aside
- 7** elected member of a senate or upper house of the legislature

DOWN

- 2** the collective name given to the legislative body; includes both the House and the

REPRESENTATIVE
LEGISLATURE
HEARING
SENATOR
COMMITTEE
LAW
GOVERNMENT
BILL HOUSE
AMENDMENT
CALENDAR
DEBATE

LEGISLATION 200_
Tracing a bill through the Georgia General Assembly
January - March, 200_

Requirements:

Title Page (first page):

Name of bill
Number of bill
Sponsor of bill (introduced by) and district number
Brief synopsis of bill
History of bill

Second Page:

Using your own words and complete, grammatically correct sentences, write about:

- 1) What the bill would change about Georgia law if (or because) it passed.**

- 2) Write about what was said against the bill - why a legislator would not want the bill passed.**

- 3) Write what your opinion is about the bill. Include in this opinion what you think would make it a better bill. Write about why it should or should not have been presented to the legislature this session. Should something be added? taken away? changed? If your bill did not pass this session, write about why you think (or know because you asked your representative/senator why) it did not pass.**

Due: Three days after the 40-day session ends. _____

HOW a BILL BECOMES a LAW
Websites

<http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm> - Project Vote Smart – find your state and national and local representatives

<http://www.legis.state.ga.us/> - Georgia General Assembly – links to the House, the Senate, and all legislation for this session

<http://etext.virginia.edu/jefferson/quotations/jeff1350.htm> - quotes from Thomas Jefferson

<http://www.cviog.uga.edu/Projects/gainfo/legchart/legchart.htm> - How a Bill Becomes a Law flow chart

<http://www.eeingorgia.org/eic/> - Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Education website