Hundreds of bills enter the legislative process each time the Virginia General Assembly meets. As a Representative Democracy, two groups of elected citizens - 100 Delegates and 40 Senators - study, discuss and vote on bills, and by doing so act for the people of Virginia.

The following steps are the typical process by which a bill becomes a law in Virginia.
An idea for a bill can come from anyone.

A bill is an idea for a new law, or an idea to change or do away with an existing law.
A member who introduces a bill is called the bill’s patron or sponsor.
The bill is assigned a number, and then the bill is referred (sent) to the proper committee.

- The House of Delegates has 14 committees and the Senate has 11 committees.
- Visit the website http://lis.virginia.gov to see the committee lists.
If the House of Delegates Education Committee or Senate Education and Health Committee consider a bill for students to attend school on Saturday, what would you tell them if you were for or against the bill?
If the committee agrees the bill would make a good law, the committee reports the results to the House or the Senate.

- The committee may suggest amendments (changes) to the bill.
- After listening to all information the committee votes if the bill will make a good law.
The bill is returned to the chamber (House or Senate) it was introduced in and read or printed in the Calendar (agenda) three times.

- Just like school, members follow rules when speaking.
- First Reading: A bill is read by the Clerk or printed in the calendar.
- Second Reading: A bill may be amended and debated.
On the Third Reading the bill’s title is read and put to a vote.

- Third Reading: Members vote to pass or not pass the bill.
To make sure laws are created democratically, the House of Delegates and the Senate share responsibility for making and passing laws.

If a bill passes in the House of Delegates, it goes through a similar process in the Senate.
If the bill passes both chambers, it goes to the Governor for approval. The Governor has four choices . . .

- The bill must pass with the same wording in the House of Delegates and the Senate before it can go to the Governor.
Well that was easy!
But remember, it’s a long road to get here and this may not have been the Governor’s first choice . . . .
The House of Delegates and the Senate must both agree to the changes or the bill will not become a law.

The Governor returns the bill with changes (amendments). If the House of Delegates and Senate approve changes, the bill becomes law.
If the House of Delegates and the Senate do not overrule (override) the bill, it will not become a law.

The Governor vetoes (does not approve) the bill. The House of Delegates and Senate may overrule the veto by a two-thirds vote of both chambers.
The Governor does not sign the bill but does not veto it. The bill still becomes a law!

- This very rarely happens!
- In fact, some Governor’s have not done this.
Bills that become laws during the Regular Session, which is 30 days in odd years and 60 days in even years, take effect on July 1st.
Congratulations!!!!!
You learned how a bill becomes a law in Virginia.

What ideas would you like to become laws?