



City of Seattle  
Legislative Department  
Office of the City Clerk

This guide provides an overview of the process by which a Council Bill becomes an ordinance, or law, in the City of Seattle. A Council Bill can be a proposal for the enactment of a new law, amendment or repeal of an existing law, or appropriation of public money. Every legislative act shall be by ordinance, and every ordinance subject shall be clearly expressed in the ordinance title.

#### **Legislative Information Available Online**

The following is a selection of the legislative databases available at <http://clerk.seattle.gov>:

- Council Bills and Ordinances
- Resolutions
- Comptroller and Clerk Files
- Seattle Municipal Code
- Seattle City Charter
- City Council Meeting Agendas
- Full Council Meeting Minutes
- Budget Documents

~ Office of the City Clerk

*The Office of the City Clerk is committed to fostering civic education, participation, and openness in Seattle city government through facilitation of the legislative process and transparent, accountable stewardship of public information and official records.*

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#### **Contact Us**

Office of the City Clerk  
206-684-8344  
clerk@seattle.gov  
[www.seattle.gov/leg/clerk/clerk.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/leg/clerk/clerk.htm)

#### **Physical Address:**

Seattle City Hall  
600 4th Avenue  
3rd Floor  
Seattle, WA

#### **Mailing Address:**

Office of the City Clerk  
P.O. Box 94728  
Seattle, WA 98124-4728

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The City Clerk's office is open  
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
(except on the ten holidays observed by the City).  
Research questions received after 4:45 p.m.  
will be responded to the next business day.

## A CITIZEN GUIDE

# HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW



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- 1** The Mayor or a city department proposes legislation and transmits the proposal to the City Budget Office for review. This proposed legislation becomes a Council Bill (“Bill”). The City Budget Office reviews the Bill and if it is approved, sends it to the Law Department.
- 2** Once the proposal has obtained final City Budget Office and Law Department review, the Bill is then forwarded to the City Council. Legislation can also be initiated by Councilmembers.
- 3** The Council President distributes the Bills to the Councilmember who chairs the committee to which the legislation would most likely be referred.
- 4** If the Councilmember agrees to sponsor the Bill, it is then forwarded to the City Clerk by noon on Wednesdays.
- 5** City Clerk staff reviews each Bill for conformance to form, recommended sponsorship and committee referral; assigns Council Bill numbers; and incorporates the recommendations into the weekly Referral Calendar.
- 6** At its regularly scheduled Full Council meeting (every Monday at 2:00 p.m.), the Council reviews the proposed Referral Calendar, makes any necessary amendments, then adopts it. The Bills are then delivered to the appropriate committee for consideration.
- 7** Council committees review the legislation, may hold public hearings, direct staff to conduct research, hold the item for further consideration, or amend it. After review and discussion, the committees make a recommendation to the Full Council as to the action it should take on the Bill.
- 8** Bills voted out of a Council committee with a recommendation are then forwarded to the Full Council and placed on the following Monday’s 2:00 p.m. Full Council meeting agenda, prepared by the City Clerk.
- 9** Each committee listed on the Full Council agenda reports to the Council its recommendations. The Full Council may then debate, discuss, amend, re-refer, or hold the Bill. If the Council is ready to take final action, a roll call vote to pass or not pass the Bill is taken. The Council President then signs the legislation and returns it to the City Clerk.
- 10** The City Clerk then updates the Council Bill’s record to reflect the Full Council actions and sends it to the Mayor for approval via the City Budget Office.
- 11** The Mayor may sign the legislation, allow it to go into law without signature, or may veto it. Regardless of the action the Mayor takes, the legislation is sent back to the City Clerk within 10 Calendar days.
- 12** The City Clerk signs all approved Bills, assigns ordinance numbers, orders publication, and files the new ordinances.

