

A Guide to the California Legislature

EXERCISE YOUR POWER

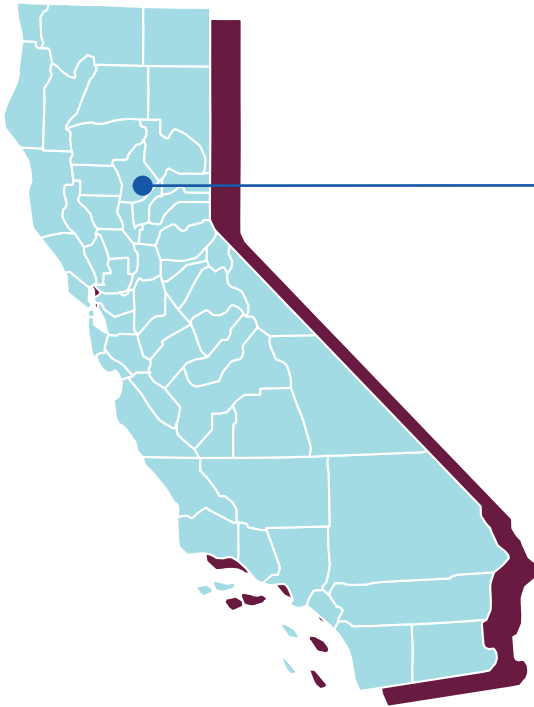
WE THE PEOPLE



HOW THE LEGISLATURE WORKS



California elects from two houses



120

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS

40

SENATORS

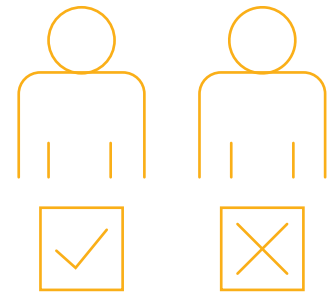
Serve 4 year terms

80

ASSEMBLYMEMBERS

Serve 2 year terms

LEGISLATORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR

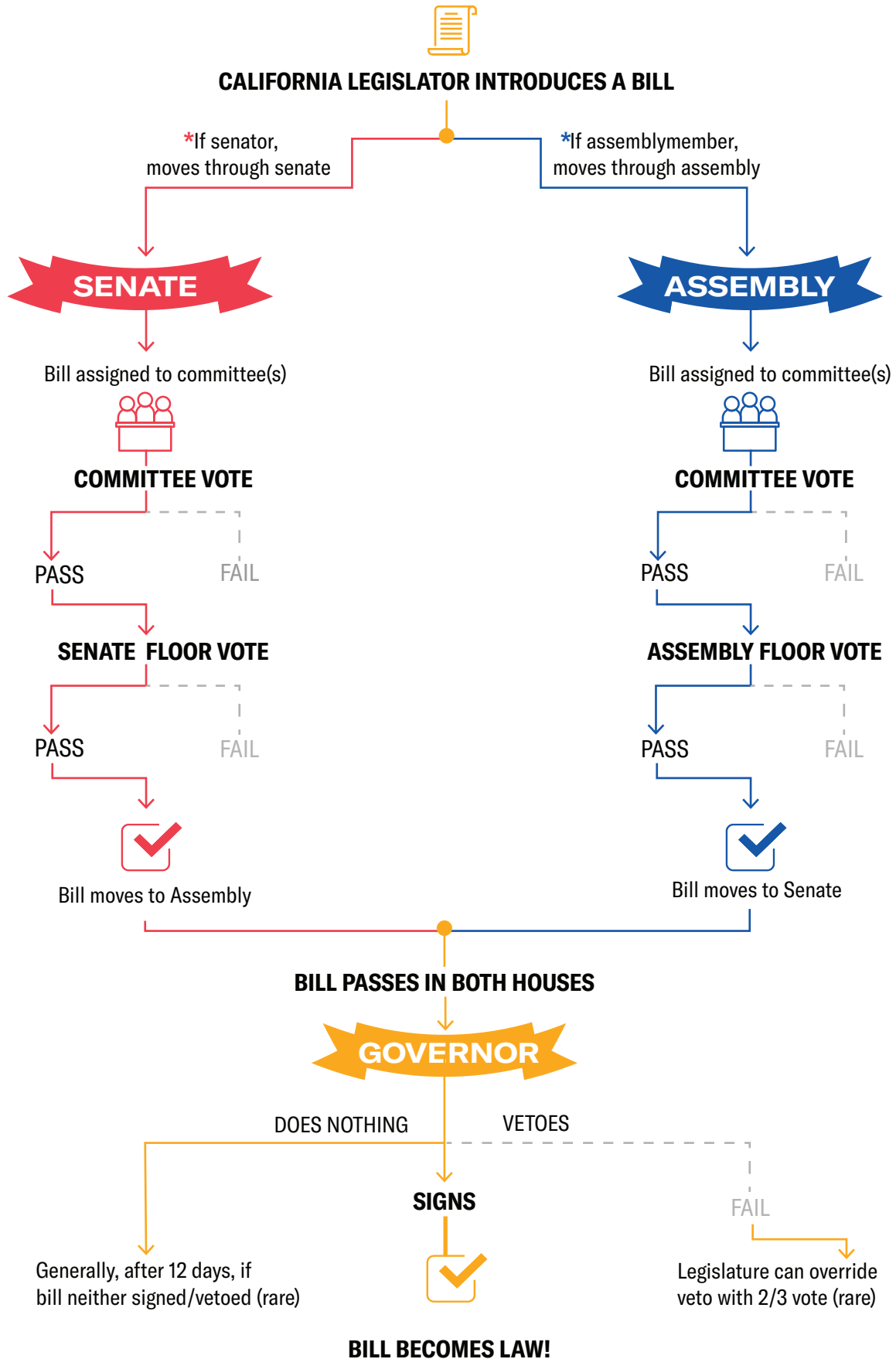


Drafting & introducing bills

Debating the merits of bills

Voting to pass or kill bills

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW



*Bills that start with “**SB**” are introduced in the senate

*Bills that start with “**AB**” are introduced in the assembly

THE STATE BUDGET PROCESS

Governor releases proposed budget for next fiscal year

BY JANUARY 10



Senate & assembly budget committees & subcommittees review the gov.'s budget & craft their own version.

Governor releases revised budget proposal

BY MAY 14



Senate & assembly budget committees & subcommittees review the revised budget & work to finalize their version.



Legislative leaders meet with the governor to iron out any issues and finalize a budget.

Legislature must pass a balanced budget

BY JUNE 15



Budget passes & goes to governor for a signature

Start of the next fiscal year

JULY 1

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY



ELECTED OFFICIALS

CONSTITUENTS

Legislators' job is to represent the interests of their constituents. That means they work for you. **Here's how you can contact them:**



CALL & WRITE THEM



MEET THEM IN PERSON

- ✓ **TIP 1**
Know the name of your legislator.
- ✓ **TIP 2**
Plan out what you will say. Be prepared to provide your home address.
- ✓ **TIP 3**
Remember to mention the bill number & why you are contacting your legislator. (i.e. "Vote yes on SB xxxx!")

- ✓ **TIP 4**
Make it short and sweet.
- ✓ **TIP 5**
Tell a personal story, if you have one.
- ✓ **TIP 6**
Frame the problem, solution, & action.



STEP ONE
Schedule your meeting.



STEP TWO
Be flexible & patient.



STEP THREE
Prepare, educate yourself, & establish a clear goal.



STEP FOUR
Make a clear ask (i.e. "Vote yes on SB xxxx") & take notes.



STEP FIVE
Follow up & say thank you!

RESEARCH YOUR LEGISLATOR

www.assembly.ca.gov
www.senate.ca.gov



Not sure who your legislators are?

www.findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov



CONNECT WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS EARLY & OFTEN

Make sure you sign up for our e-mail action alerts at aclu.org for timely opportunities to contact your legislators.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.

Your participation
strengthens our democracy.



ACLU
California