

# THE COMMITTEE BILL

A committee bill is a bill or resolution drafted at the request of an interim or other statutory legislative committee (such as the SB 224 Commission on Sentencing or the School Funding Interim Commission). A committee must take a formal vote, and a majority of the committee members must vote in favor to request a committee bill. Typically, a legislator on the committee sponsors the bill and carries it during the session.

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## **When must a committee bill be introduced to the Legislature?**

A committee bill must be preintroduced by 5 p.m. on December 15, 2016 (Joint Rule 40-40(5)(a)).

However, most interim committees are required by the Legislative Council to complete interim work by September 15, 2016, including finalizing work on committee bills.

## **What does preintroduction mean?**

A preintroduced committee bill will:

- Be assigned a bill number (such as House Bill No. 15 or Senate Bill No. 33);
- Contain a line under the legislative sponsor's name indicating that the bill is "By Request of" the committee (see Figures 1 and 2 on page 2); and
- Be printed before the Legislature convenes on January 2, 2017.

A legislator must sponsor the bill and comply with instructions provided by the Legislative Services Division for signing and returning the bill by the deadline or the request will be canceled.

Executive agency bills also are subject to preintroduction deadlines.

## **Why is preintroduction important?**

Preintroduction allows the Legislature to "hit the ground running" by facilitating the assignment of bills to committees so that presiding officers may schedule hearings. Preintroduction also allows legislative staff to complete drafting committee and agency bills before a session starts so staff can then focus on legislator-requested bills.

## **What happens if a committee bill isn't preintroduced?**

Failure to preintroduce a committee bill will result in the bill's cancellation. It will be the responsibility of the committee to find a legislator to request a new bill draft. That draft request is subject to the bill draft request limitations placed on legislators and will be drafted using the regular bill draft priority system. After the preintroduction deadline, a bill will not include the "By Request of" line for an interim committee.

## **Can the public comment on the language of a committee bill?**

Most committee bills are the result of an interim study or other work that the committee performs over the course of several months to a year. As part of this process, a committee must have draft bill language listed as an agenda item for public comment at least once before the committee adopts the draft as a committee bill. Because this work might take several meetings, it is important for committees to plan ahead to ensure the public can participate and to make all deadlines.

Figure 1: Example Committee Bill

64th Legislature HB0043.01

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 43  
2 INTRODUCED BY M. MACDONALD  
3 **BY REQUEST OF THE LAW AND JUSTICE INTERIM COMMITTEE**  
4  
5 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROVIDING THAT THE GOVERNOR HAS THE FINAL AUTHORITY  
6 WITH RESPECT TO CLEMENCY AND MAY DETERMINE WHETHER A CLEMENCY HEARING TAKES PLACE  
7 AND WHETHER CLEMENCY IS GRANTED IF THE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLE DENIES AN  
8 APPLICANT A HEARING OR DENIES CLEMENCY; AMENDING SECTIONS 46-23-103, 46-23-104, 46-23-301,  
9 46-23-302, AND 46-23-307, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN APPLICABILITY DATE."  
10  
11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:  
12

Figure 2: Example Bill that is NOT a Committee Bill

64th Legislature SB0224.01

1 SENATE BILL NO. 224  
2 INTRODUCED BY C. WOLKEN  
3  
4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT CREATING A COMMISSION ON SENTENCING TO STUDY  
5 SENTENCING PRACTICES AND POLICIES; PROVIDING FOR THE SUBMISSION OF RECOMMENDATIONS  
6 TO THE LEGISLATURE BY THE COMMISSION; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND  
7 A TERMINATION DATE."  
8  
9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:  
10  
11 NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Commission on sentencing.** (1) There is a commission on sentencing.

# How a Bill Draft Becomes a Committee Bill

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**1** A committee requests that legislative staff draft proposed bill language.

**2** The committee reviews the draft language, takes public comment, and makes revisions, as desired.

**3** A majority of the committee votes to request a bill draft of any proposal it wishes to forward to the Legislature. Typically, the committee also assigns a legislator to sponsor (or carry) the draft.

**4** The approved proposal is entered into the Legislative Automated Workflow System (or LAWS) to be drafted and assigned an LC#.

**5** The bill draft undergoes formal legal review, edit, and input processes. It is then printed and posted online. Step 5 is actually a lengthy series of steps that can take several days.

**6** The legislator assigned to sponsor the bill receives a preintroduction letter from Legislative Services and signs and returns the letter before 5 p.m. on December 15, 2016.

**7** The bill is assigned a House or Senate bill number. It is now ready for 1st reading when the Legislature convenes.