

## **How a Bill becomes law**

**NB. A Bill can start in either House but has to pass through both Chambers before becoming law.**

### **House of Commons**

#### **First Reading**

This is a formal stage where the title of the Bill is read out by the relevant Minister and a date is agreed for the Second Reading Stage.



#### **Second Reading**

A general debate takes place about the main principles of the Bill. This is normally taken on the floor of the whole House. MPs will then vote to send the Bill through to its next stage.



#### **Committee Stage**

More detailed consideration of the Bill occurs and amendments are made at this stage. The Bill is analysed line by line. The standard procedure is for the Bill to go to a Standing Committee (off the floor of the House and into a committee room where a smaller group of MPs consider the Bill). Sometimes it will remain in the chamber as a Committee of the Whole House and all MPs can review and amend the Bill. Very occasionally it will be sent to a Select Committee for deliberation.



#### **Report Stage**

The amended Bill is then 'reported' back to the whole House and debated further and voted on. More amendments can be made on issues that have not already been considered (in particular significant issues within the Bill or

where the Government has made specific undertakings in the Committee Stage).



#### **Third Reading**

This often follows immediately after the report stage of the Bill and is a brief debate on the amended Bill. MPs will vote on it and it is then sent to the House of Lords.



### **House of Lords**

#### **First Reading**

Again this is a formal stage and the title of the Bill is announced and a date for Second Reading is agreed.



#### **Second Reading**

This stage is very similar to the Commons second reading stage in that a general debate about the main principles of the Bill occurs however traditionally the Lords do not vote on the Bill at this stage.



#### **Committee Stage**

Again the more detailed analysis of the Bill occurs during this stage. This usually takes place as a Committee of the Whole House and all Peers can debate and amend the Bill. Occasionally it can be taken as a Grand Committee.



#### **Report Stage**

Like with the Commons stage further amendments can be tabled and debated.



#### **Third Reading**

Unlike in the Commons more amendments can be tabled at this stage and voted on (although issues that have been fully debated may not be re-opened). The amended Bill is then sent back the House of Commons.



#### **'Ping pong'**

##### **Consideration of amendments**

This invariably occurs at the end of the parliamentary session each year (usually Oct-Nov time) and is where each House debates and votes on each others' amendments to the Bill. So the Bill is sent back and forth between the two Houses.

This continues until the Bill either; runs out of time and falls; or the two Houses reach an agreement and it is sent to the Queen where it receives Royal Assent.



### **Crown**

#### **Royal Assent**

The Bill becomes an Act of Parliament and receives a chapter number (A reference number for the Act).