

PUBLIC ACCESS ROOM

A division of the Legislative Reference Bureau

NEWSLETTER

Hawaii State Capitol ♦ 415 South Beretania Street ♦ Room 401 ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 587-0478 ♦ Website: <http://lrbhawaii.org/par/>

CONTACT US!

Public Access Room (PAR)

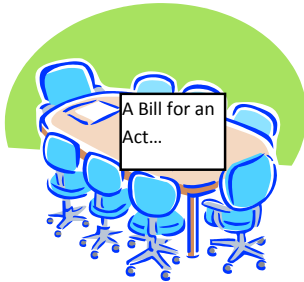
Phone.....(808) 587-0478
TTY(808) 587-0749
Email.....par@capitol.hawaii.gov

Neighbor Islands (Toll Free): Use these numbers, and then enter extension 7-0478 followed by the # sign.

Hawai'i974-4000 Kaua'i274-3141
Maui.....984-2400 Moloka'i/Lana'i ... (800) 468-4644



Conference Committees



A bill you support has survived all of the committees in the originating chamber, and three votes (readings) on the floor...

It then crossed over to the other chamber and survived all of those committees, and three votes (readings) on the floor of that chamber...

It crosses back to its originating chamber, and you've now been told they've "disagreed" and it's ready to "go to conference." *Whaaat!?!*

Read on...

What is a conference committee?

If one version of your bill comes out of the Senate, and another version comes out of the House of Representatives, it poses a problem: only one version can go off to the Governor for consideration. As a result, unless one of the chambers agrees to the other's version, the bill moves into the *conference process*. For each bill that reaches this point, members of both chambers are appointed by the Senate President and the House Speaker in order to come to agreement on a final version.

(Continued on page 2)

2016 Legislative Timetable

April

- 7th First Crossover for Concurrent Resolutions
- 8th Second Decking (Bills): Last day to file bills for Third Reading in non-originating chamber
- 14th Second Crossover (Bills) & Last day to disagree
- 22nd Constitutional Amendments: Deadline for final form
- 25th Second Crossover for Concurrent Resolutions
- 28th Last day to file Non-Fiscal Bills to deck for Final Reading
- 29th Last day to file Fiscal Bills to deck for Final Reading

May

5th Adjournment *sine die* (Session pau!)

Governor's Deadlines

June

27th Notice of intent to veto deadline (35th day after adjournment *sine die*)

July

12th Veto deadline (45th day after adjournment *sine die*)

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"Conference Committees (Continued from page 1)

The members are often called "managers" or "conferees." The conference committee chairs are usually the subject matter committee chairs for a given measure (typically the bill's first committee referral).

Can the public testify?

The public has had opportunities to testify during committee hearings. Conference, on the other hand, is the time when legislators work out compromises among themselves. They'll be crafting the final language and logistics of the bills.

Meetings are open to the public though no testimony is accepted and, except for the budget bills, no new subject matter should be inserted. You may find it helpful to attend the meetings in order to follow the discussions and to provide input if asked for by a conferee.

How can I stay informed about conference committee actions?

The bill's status sheet will be updated as its conferees are assigned and meetings scheduled. While the conference procedures* usually require that notice of the *first* meeting be posted in advance for a minimum time period, subsequent meetings can be convened just a few hours later. The procedures will specify what constitutes a required quorum for a vote to be taken. Legislators may serve on numerous conference committees and scheduling votes can be a challenge for legislative staff.



Tip

To make things easier to follow during conference, the Legislature's webmasters have set you up with some great tools.

From the [homepage](#), click on "[Reports and Lists](#)" and then "Conference Committee."

You'll find easy links to help find conference notices, action sheets, and conferees.

How can I advocate at this stage?

- You may want to contact the conference members independently and concisely communicate what aspect of the bill you believe is a "must have" or an "absolutely not" to any final version they come up with.
- You may also want to ask your own Senator or Representative for assistance in influencing the legislation.
- You may want to encourage constituents from the conferees' districts to communicate with their legislators about the legislation.

What's the deadline for the conference committee to come to a decision?

Final decking for non-fiscal bills is April 28, 2016.

For fiscal bills, it's April 29, 2016.

[Note: Fiscal bills are those that received referrals to the Senate Ways and Means committee and/or the House Finance committee.]

This means any conference draft or decision on final form must be delivered to the House and/or Senate Chief Clerk by the deadline (placed on the Clerks' "decks," or desks).

This allows the required 48-hour notice for **final readings to take place on May 3rd or May 5th**...the last two session days of the 2016 Regular Session. (*Time flies!*)

Tidbit

Often the House Rules, Senate Rules, or Joint conference procedures* specify that a legislator who has voted against the measure will not be appointed to the conference committee. This is one of the reasons that a legislator in opposition to a measure may choose to vote 'aye with reservations' rather than against the measure. In this way, that person can still be eligible to serve on the conference committee, and can then attempt to have input on the bill's final form.

* Conference committee procedures are usually agreed upon in early April. Once available, they usually are first posted under "Recent Updates" in the center of the Legislature's homepage (capitol.hawaii.gov), and filed on the "[Legislative Information](#)" page (click on the bar on the right hand side of the homepage).



Important Deadlines for the Governor (Final Step for a Bill to Become a Law)



As we approach the end of the 2016 Legislative session, now is a good time to review how a bill can become law after it passes through both chambers of the Legislature and is presented to the Governor.

The procedure for enactment, which is set forth in [Article III, Section 16](#) of the Hawai'i State Constitution, varies depending on when the bill is delivered to the Governor and the Governor's subsequent action or inaction in considering the bill.

If the bill is sent to the Governor on or before April 19th (10 or more days before *sine die*), then...

- If the Governor signs the bill within 10 days, the bill becomes law.
- If the Governor neither signs nor vetoes the bill within 10 days, the bill becomes law without the Governor's signature.
- If the Governor vetoes the bill within 10 days, the bill does not become law unless the Legislature reconsiders the bill before sine die and overrides the veto by a 2/3 vote of all members in each chamber.

If the bill is sent to the Governor after April 19th (less than 10 days prior to *sine die*), then...

- If the Governor signs the bill by July 12th (the 45th day after *sine die*), the bill becomes law.
- If the Governor neither signs nor vetoes the bill by July 12th (the 45th day after *sine die*), the bill becomes law without the Governor's signature.
- If the Governor intends to veto the bill, the Governor must inform the Legislature by June 27th (the 35th day after *sine die*) and deliver the veto by July 12th. If the bill is vetoed, it will not become law unless the Legislature successfully overrides the veto in special session by a 2/3 vote of all members in each chamber. The Legislature must convene in special session at or before noon on July 12th to override the Governor's veto.

Saturdays, Sundays, holidays, and any days in which the Legislature is in recess prior to its adjournment are excluded in the calculation of days. The date that a bill goes into effect as law can be found in the bill's last section.

Questions? The Public Access Room (PAR) is happy to help -- 808/587-0478 or par@capitol.hawaii.gov.



Following the Money?



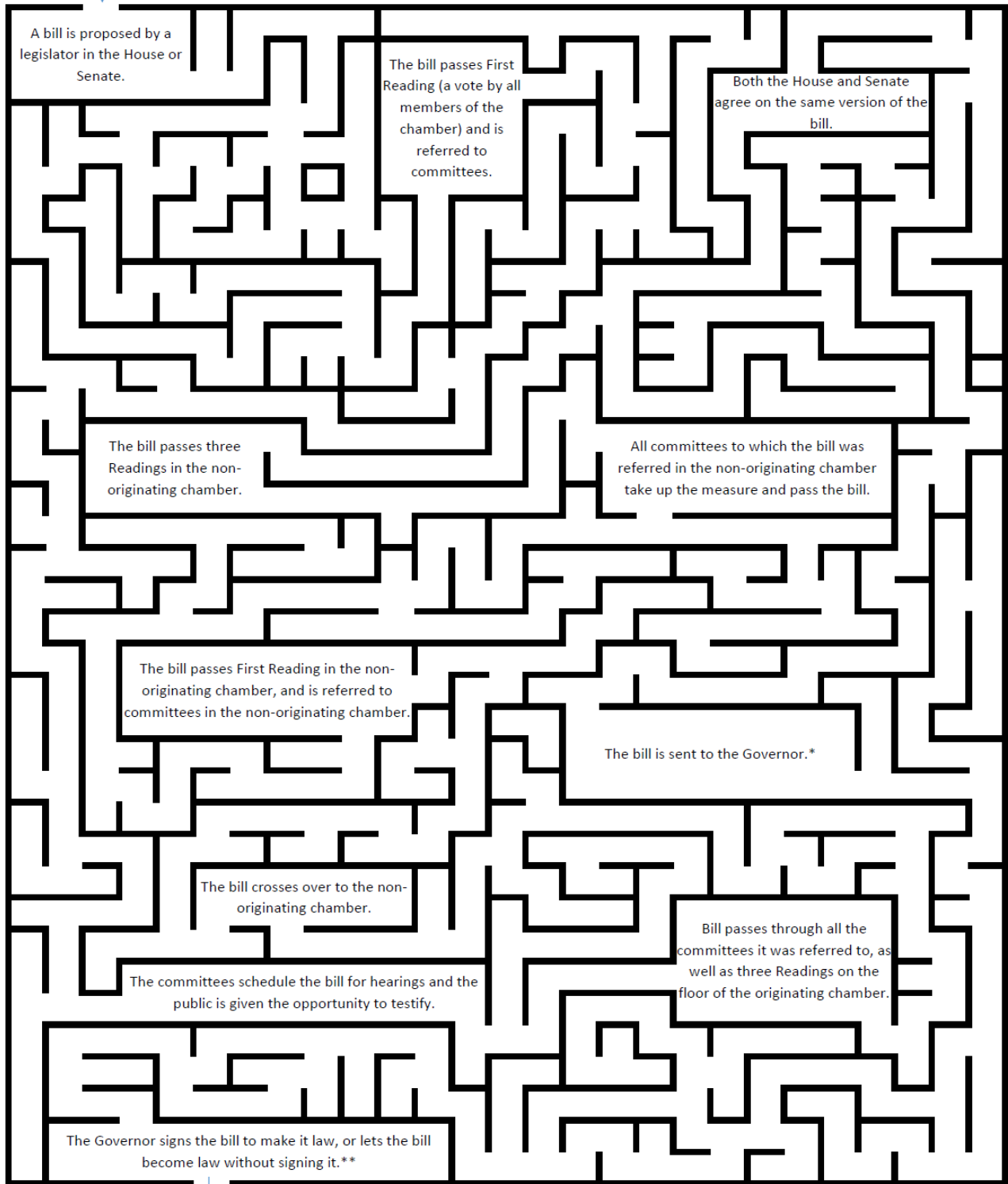
For folks keeping their eye on the Executive Budget (HB1700) and other appropriation bills, here are a few notes that may be helpful:

- Budget Worksheets are available to help you see the differences between one version of the budget and the one that's preceded it. (On the Legislature's homepage, capitol.hawaii.gov, click on the "[Legislative Information](#)" bar that appears on the right. You'll see links to the [Budget Worksheets](#).) If you need help deciphering them, call or email us!
- As we move into conference, budget Comparison Sheets will also be posted with the [Budget Worksheets](#) -- these show various points of disagreement between the House and Senate versions of the budget, and can help those following the discussion.
- Waiting to find out what dollar amount gets "filled in" on your bill? Or if it's going to survive at all? It can be nerve wracking, but often the waiting lasts right up until Final Decking for Fiscal Bills (this year, that's April 29th). As you're waiting to hear, just know that you're not alone! (Feel free to call PAR for moral support!)

How a Bill Becomes Law

Have fun learning the basic steps a bill must go through in order to become law. For more detailed information about the process, contact the Public Access Room.

START with an idea



END with an Act of law

* Bills proposing constitutional amendments do not go to the Governor; instead, they are put on a ballot to be voted on by the public.

** The Governor may instead veto the bill. Then it does not become law unless 2/3 of each chamber of the Legislature votes to override the veto.