



# GOVERNMENT 101

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**Information to help you better advocate  
for the Parkinson's community**

Advocacy efforts are critical to driving change and better supporting the Parkinson's community. But it can be difficult to understand what's going on in Washington, D.C., and it sometimes feels like our lawmakers are speaking another language! Here we provide more information about how things work on Capitol Hill, and we define often-used policy terms and acronyms.

This presentation covers:

- The composition of Congress
- The legislative process
- Legislative committees
- Key policy terms



# THE COMPOSITION OF CONGRESS

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## The Senate

- There are 100 total senators (two from each state)
- Senators are elected to six-year terms
- Every two years approximately one-third of the Senate is up for re-election

## The House of Representatives

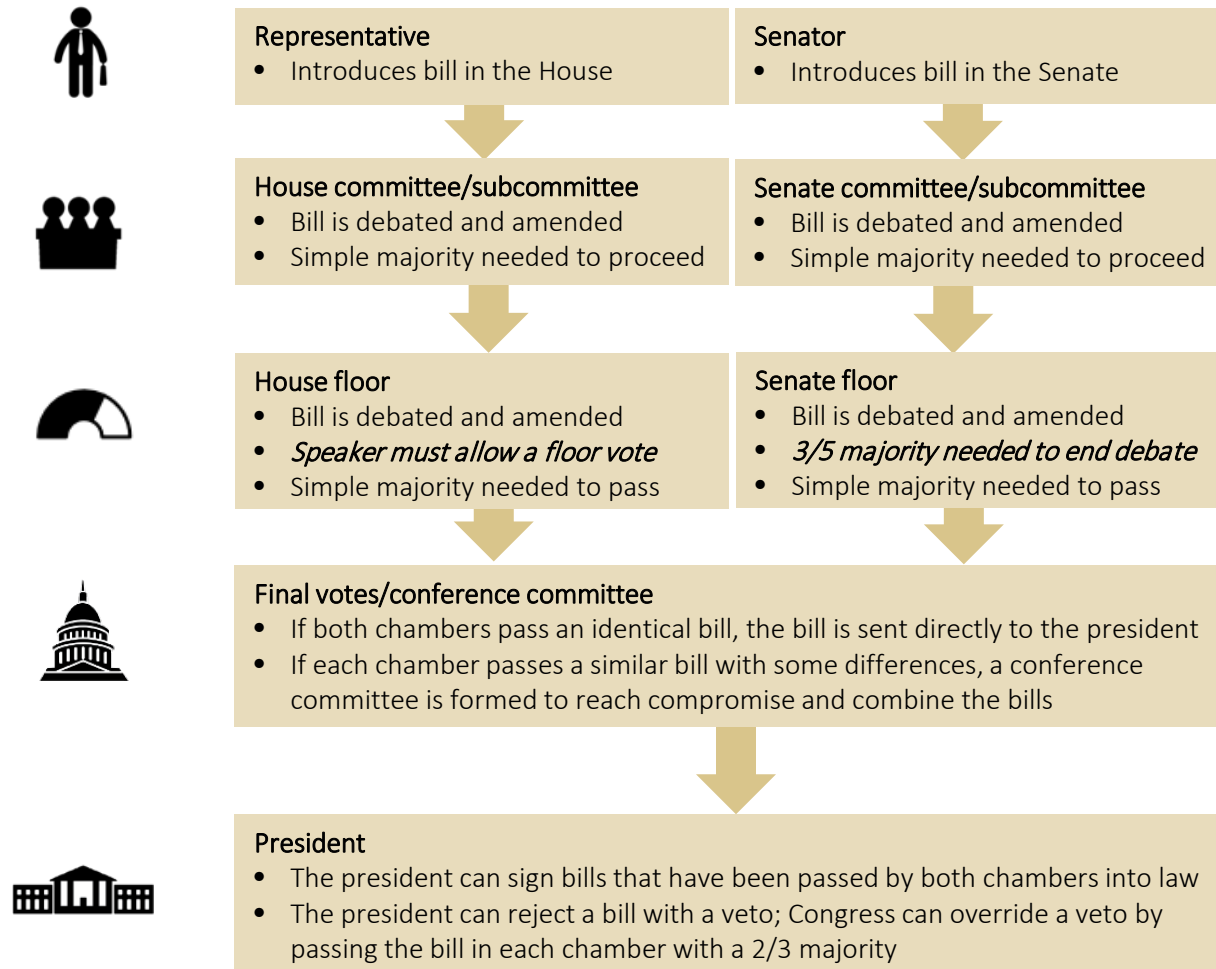
- There are 435 total representatives (a varying number of seats are allocated to each state based on population size)
- Six additional non-voting members represent Washington, D.C. and the five inhabited U.S. territories
- Representatives are elected to two-year terms, meaning all 435 seats are up for election every two years



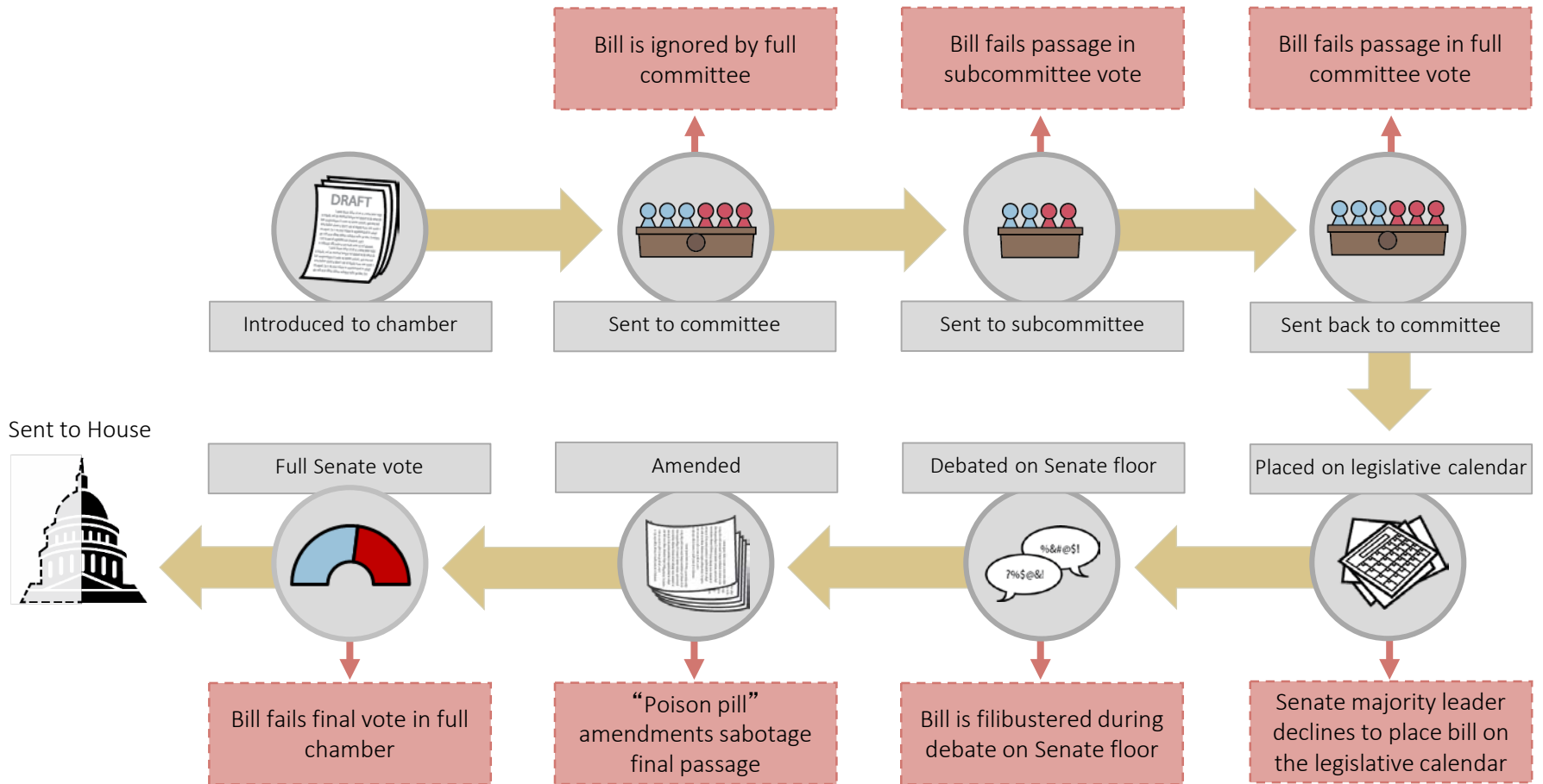
# THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

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# How a Bill Becomes a Law

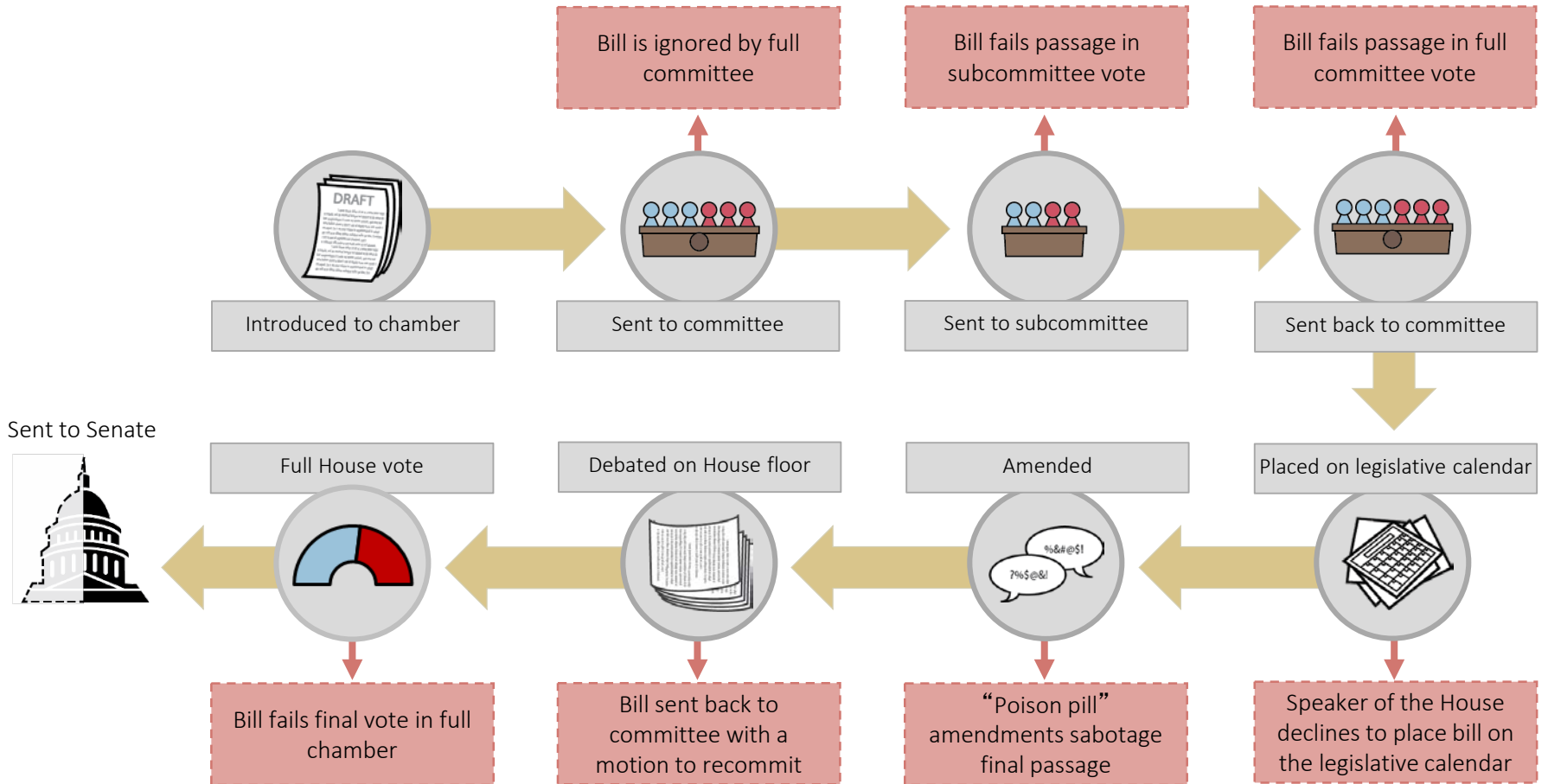


# Legislation in the Senate



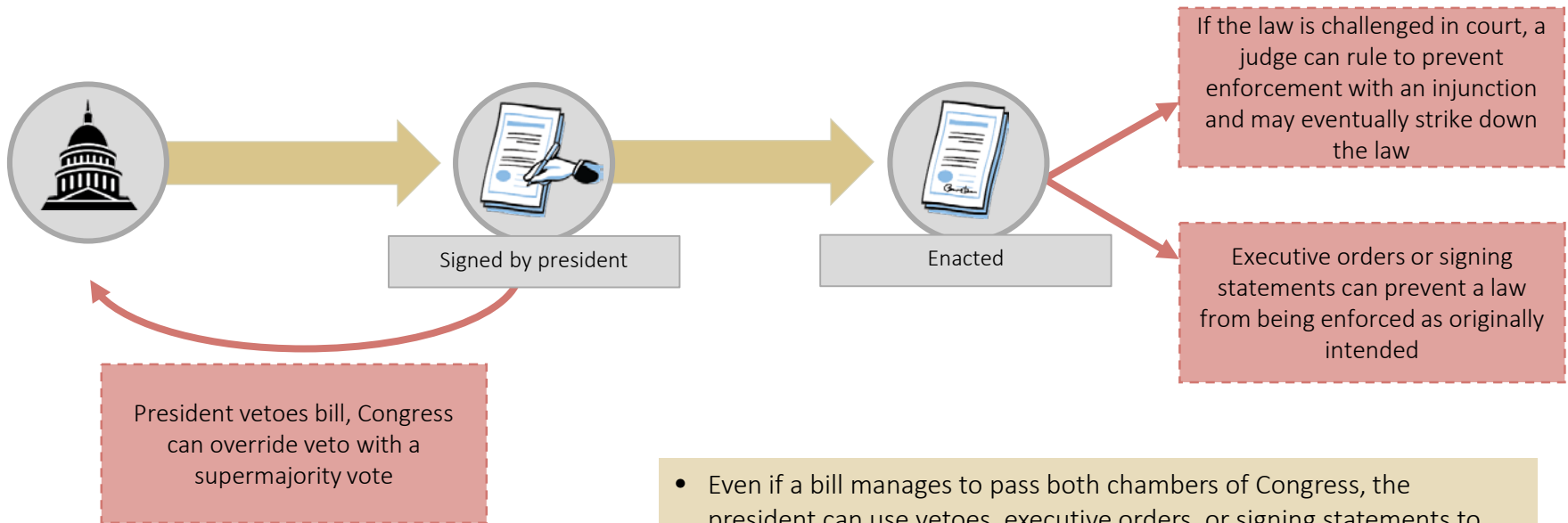
The Senate relies on unanimous consent to operate efficiently; therefore, individual senators have the power to delay or prevent a bill's passage by creating additional procedural hurdles, including filibusters.

# Legislation in the House





# Bills Continue to Face Hurdles After Passage

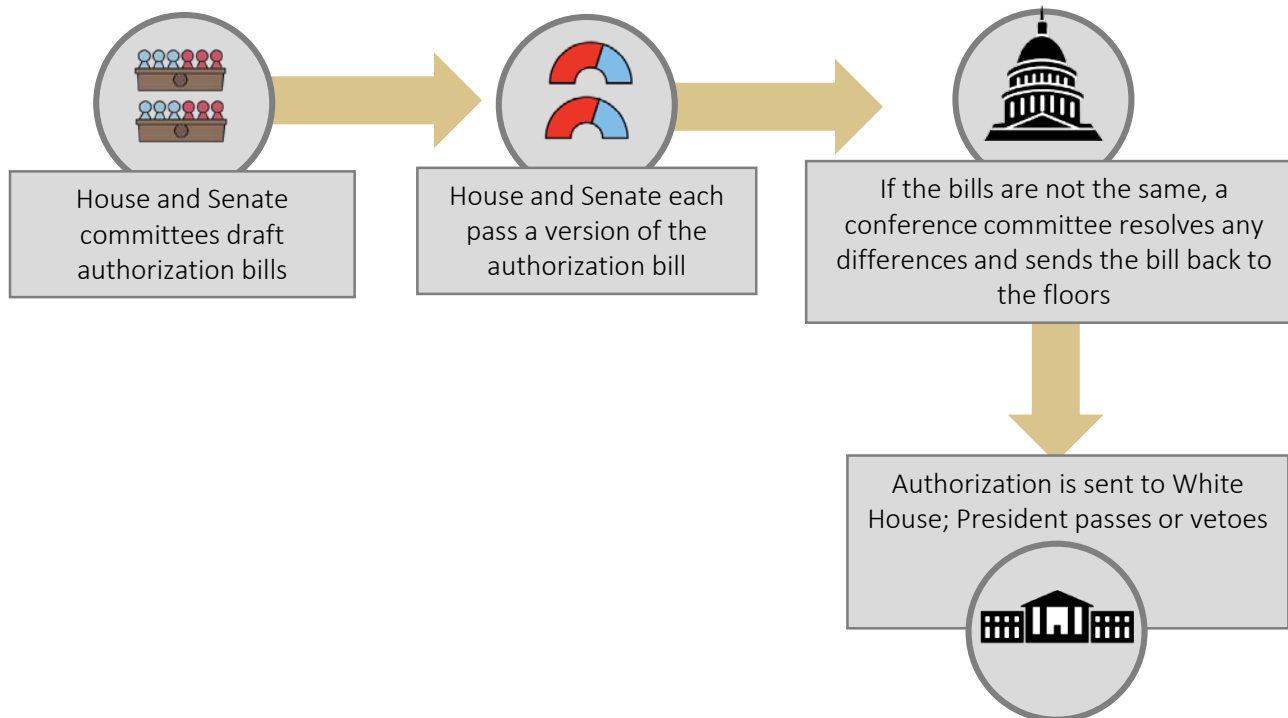


- Even if a bill manages to pass both chambers of Congress, the president can use vetoes, executive orders, or signing statements to prevent the bill from being enacted or enforced
- Opponents of the bill, including those outside of the legislative process, can prevent the law from being enacted by mounting a successful legal challenge

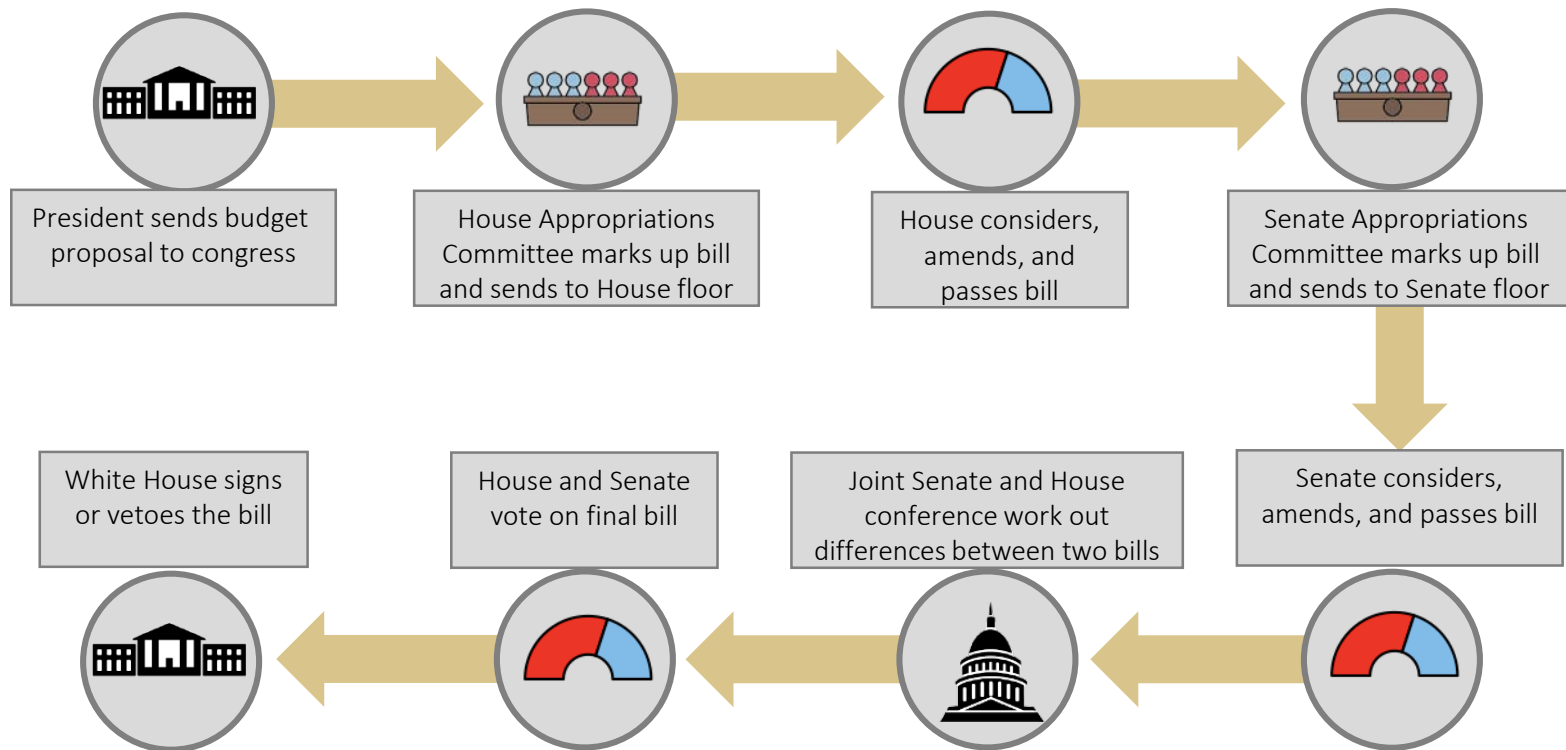
# Authorization v. Appropriation

	Authorization	Appropriation
<b>What it does</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establishes federal programs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Outlines how money will be spent on federal programs during the next fiscal year</li></ul>
<b>Who does it</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Congressional committees with jurisdiction over specific subject areas write the legislation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>There are 12 appropriations subcommittees in each chamber of Congress; they are divided among broad subject areas and each writes an annual appropriations measure</li></ul>
<b>How it works</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Authorization legislation authorizes the expenditure of funds from the federal budget; it may specify how much money should be spent on a program, but it doesn't actually set aside the money or elaborate on where the money to pay for the program will come from</li><li>The committees are supposed to review programs before their expiration to determine how well they are working</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>After subcommittees in the House and Senate mark up appropriations bills in response to the President's budget, the House and Senate must pass the same version of an appropriation bill to give a program funding</li><li>It is very possible for programs to be authorized but not funded</li></ul>

## In order for a program to be funded, it must first be authorized



## Once a program is authorized it can be funded through an appropriations bill





# LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES



**Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee:**

Deals with a large array of issues, including public health and biomedical research. While this committee can create policies and programs related to these topics, it does not have the authority to fund them.

**House Energy and Commerce Committee:** Deals with a large array of issues, including public health and biomedical research. While this committee can create policies and programs related to these topics, it does not have the authority to fund them.

**Senate Appropriations Committee:** Has jurisdiction over discretionary spending. This spending covers 12 specific areas of government (including health, science and defense) and must be renewed annually. Every year, this committee writes bills that provide funding to the government agencies, departments and programs that fall within the 12 areas.

**House Appropriations Committee:** Has jurisdiction over discretionary spending. This spending covers 12 specific areas of government (including health, science and defense) and must be renewed annually. Every year, this committee writes bills that provide funding to the government agencies, departments and programs that fall within the 12 areas.



# KEY POLICY TERMS

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- **ACA:** The Affordable Care Act (also known as “Obamacare”) is the landmark health reform legislation passed by Congress and signed into law in March 2010.
- **Act:** Legislation that has passed both chambers of Congress in identical form, been signed into law by the President or had a presidential veto overridden. This term also can refer to a bill that has been passed by one chamber of Congress (the House or the Senate) and stands as an official copy to go to the other chamber for a vote.
- **Appropriation:** Legislation that provides funds for an authorized agency, program or activity. The formal federal spending process consists of two steps: authorization and then appropriation.
- **Authorization:** Legislation to create or continue an agency, program or activity. The formal federal spending process consists of two steps: authorization and then appropriation.
- **Bill:** A legislative proposal before Congress. A bill is labeled “H.R.” if it originates in the House and “S” if it originates in the Senate.
- **Block Grant:** A program that provides a set amount of federal money to states for broadly defined functions, such as public health, community development or social services.
- **Budget Resolution:** Passed by the Senate and the House, sets overall spending limits but does not decide funding for specific programs.
- **Caucus:** An organization of members from the House and Senate (or both) with the purpose of focusing on an issue of mutual concern.



- **CBO:** The Congressional Budget Office, a nonpartisan arm of Congress that provides economic analyses of legislation and programs covered by the budget.
- **CDC:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; a federal agency that conducts and supports health promotion, prevention and preparedness activities with the goal of improving overall public health.
- **CDMRP:** Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program; housed in the Department of Defense, and funds disease-specific research aimed to prevent, control or cure disease. The Parkinson's Research Program (PRP) is part of the CDMRP.
- **Chairman and Ranking Member:** The leaders of the majority and minority party, respectively, in committees and subcommittees.
- **Continuing Resolution:** Legislation that permits a government agency to continue to operate at existing funding levels if a new appropriation bill to fund its operations has not been adopted by the start of the fiscal year (October 1).
- **Discretionary Spending:** Also known as appropriated spending; must be renewed each year in order for certain programs to continue operating. Includes funding for medical research, health care programs, defense and education, among others.
- **DoD:** The U.S. Department of Defense; the federal executive branch agency entrusted with formulating military policies and maintaining American military forces.

- **Donut Hole:** A prescription drug coverage gap under Medicare Part D. Once beneficiaries and Medicare have spent a certain amount of money for covered prescription drugs, individuals are responsible for all out-of-pocket drug costs, up to a certain point.
- **FDA:** The Food and Drug Administration, a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The FDA protects and promotes health through the regulation of food safety, tobacco products, dietary supplements, prescription and over-the-counter drugs, vaccines, biopharmaceuticals, blood transfusions, medical devices, electromagnetic radiation emitting devices, cosmetics, animal foods and feed, and veterinary products.
- **Filibuster:** A process only in the Senate that allows lawmakers to stall movement on legislation. This can happen by extending debate on an issue, introducing time-consuming procedural motions or other tactics to prevent a vote. A filibuster can only be overcome if 60 senators agree to stop the process and move forward with the bill.
- **FY:** Fiscal year; the accounting period for the federal government, which runs October 1 through September 30.
- **LD, LA, LC:** Legislative Director, Legislative Assistant and Legislative Correspondent; staff positions in congressional offices in descending order of seniority.
- **Mandatory Spending:** Pays for programs that Congress is required to fund each year. It includes Social Security and Medicare, which are classified as “entitlement” programs because people meeting relevant eligibility requirements are legally entitled to them. Mandatory spending is *not* part of the annual appropriations process.

- **Medicaid:** A health care program that covers medical costs for low-income families or individuals, as well as people with certain disabilities. Medicaid is funded primarily by the federal government and run at the state level, meaning each state has flexibility to determine exactly who it will cover.
- **Medicare:** The federal health insurance program for people 65 and older, certain younger people with disabilities and people with end-stage kidney disease.
  - **Part A** (run by the federal government) covers inpatient hospital stays; skilled nursing facility stays; some home health services and portions of hospice care.
  - **Part B** (run by the federal government) covers physician visits and lab services; allied services (e.g., physical therapy); preventive services (e.g., immunizations); durable medical equipment (e.g., wheelchairs); drugs administered by providers.
  - **Part D** (run by private insurers) covers brand-name and generic prescription drugs.
  - **Medicare Advantage** (sometimes referred to as Medicare Part C) is a program through which individuals can enroll in a private health plan and receive all Medicare Part A/B-covered benefits.
  - **Medicare supplement** (Medigap) is insurance sold by private companies that can help pay for health care costs not covered by Medicare Part A/B.

- **NIH:** The National Institutes of Health; the principal federal agency for health research in the United States. The NIH is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
  - **NINDS:** The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, one of the institutes within NIH. Its mission is to support and conduct research on the structure and function of the nervous system, as well as the causes, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of more than 600 nervous system disorders, including Parkinson's disease.
- **Omnibus Bill:** Combined package of appropriation bills that leadership in both chambers negotiate in order to pass a comprehensive budget.
- **President's Budget:** The document sent to Congress by the president each year, estimating government revenue and expenditures for the coming fiscal year.
- **Reconciliation:** Allows for expedited consideration of certain tax, spending and debt limit legislation. In the Senate, reconciliation bills aren't subject to filibuster and the scope of amendments is limited.
- **Regular Order:** Full passage of appropriation bills through both chambers by the start of the fiscal year on October 1.
- **Veto:** The power of the president to block legislation passed by Congress; a veto can be overridden with a two-thirds majority vote in both houses of Congress.