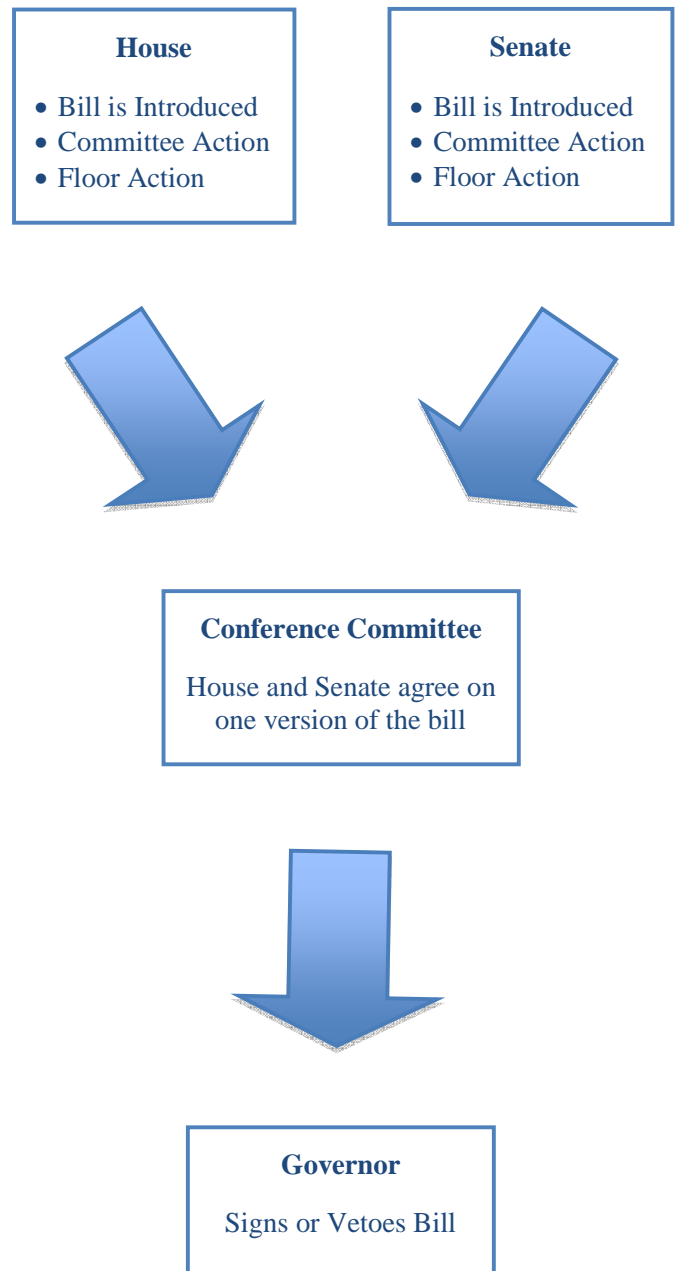




## Following Reproductive Rights Bills in the Texas State Legislature

### How a Bill Becomes a Law: An Overview

1. A bill may be drafted and filed by any member of either the **Senate** or the **House of Representatives**. The bill is then assigned to that chamber's appropriate **committee** for consideration. Committees are small groups of legislators who examine bills based on topic.
2. In committee, legislators hold **public hearings** and listen to testimony about the bill. After deliberating, committee members may decide to do nothing with the bill or to send it to the chamber floor. The committee can also recommend specific changes.
3. Once the bill is sent to the floor, members have a chance to **debate** it and add **amendments**. After a period of discussion, the members vote. If the bill passes by simple majority, it gets sent to the opposite chamber (House or Senate) for more debate.
4. After going through the committee process and floor debate in the second chamber, the bill is voted on. If there have been any changes or amendments, the bill must be sent back to the first chamber for approval. Any disputes between versions are resolved by a **conference committee**, made up of both Senators and Representatives who meet to work out a compromise.
5. Once the House and Senate agree on the same version of the bill, it gets sent to the **Governor** to be either **vetoed** or **signed into law**. The Governor can also take no action, in which case the bill becomes law without a signature.





## Following Reproductive Rights Bills in the Texas State Legislature

### Getting Involved With the Process

#### Places to Watch

##### **Congressional Committees**

It's important to know where to watch for legislation that may affect your reproductive rights. The following committees handle most bills dealing with sexual and reproductive health. Keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive – bills can sometimes be referred to committees you would not expect.

##### House Committees:

- Appropriations (subcommittee on Health and Human Services)
- Human Services
- Public Health
- State Affairs

##### Senate Committees:

- Health and Human Services
- State Affairs

##### **Other Places to Watch**

There are a few other places where lawmakers try to make changes that can impact your rights.

##### Budget Process:

Every legislative session Texas approves a new budget outlining how the state will spend its money over the next two years. The budget process determines funding for things we support (like family planning clinics and contraception) and things we don't (like crisis pregnancy centers and abstinence-only sex ed).

##### Executive Orders:

The Governor can make certain types of changes without legislative action through something called an executive order. For example, Governor Rick Perry issued an executive order in 2007 requiring girls across Texas to receive the HPV vaccine before sixth grade. (The order was later reversed by the legislature.)

#### What You Can Do

##### **Stay Informed**

Read the news regularly and follow reproductive rights issues in Texas. NARAL Pro-Choice Texas can help you keep tabs on the legislative process. Join our Choice Action Network at [prochoicetexas.org](http://prochoicetexas.org), follow us on Twitter ([naraltx](https://twitter.com/naraltx)), and friend us on Facebook for timely updates about legislation that could affect you.

##### Useful Online Resources:

NARAL Pro-Choice Texas  
[www.prochoicetexas.org](http://www.prochoicetexas.org)

Project Vote Smart  
[www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

Texas Legislature Online  
[www.legis.state.tx.us/Home.aspx](http://www.legis.state.tx.us/Home.aspx)

##### **Contact Your Legislators**

Let your lawmakers know how you feel about women's health and reproductive rights! You can express your views by calling, writing a letter, or setting up a meeting. See our "How to Contact Your Lawmakers" guide for tips.

##### **Spread the Word**

Let your friends and family know when the Texas Legislature is considering an important bill or issue. Encourage them to contact their lawmakers as well.

##### **Support NARAL Pro-Choice Texas**

Your support allows us to stay on top of the issues, keep you informed about the latest developments, and continue fighting for women's health and reproductive rights in Texas. Visit [www.prochoicetexas.org](http://www.prochoicetexas.org) to donate or get involved!