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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 92nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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How a Bill Becomes a State Law

As your voice in Madison, my biggest challenge is voting on bills that are brought before the Assembly that will benefit my constituents and the state as a whole. Often times we have to think back to our government class from high school to remember how a bill becomes a law or for some of us we hum the song “I’m Just a Bill” from Schoolhouse Rock. While this is mostly common knowledge, sometimes it is good to have a refresher.

Before a bill even starts the process, it begins with an idea that is thought about in great detail. Many times the idea is brought forth by a constituent or may even be an idea of the legislator. Once the thought is put into words, the drafting process begins.

The first step is to have the bill drafted into legal language that may be edited before it is released to the legislature to sign on as co-sponsors, which is basically a legislator supporting the idea and putting their name on the bill. In addition, there is typically an Assemblyman and a Senator that both have a version of the bill and it goes through both houses, but that is not always a necessity. Remember, that there are typically an Assembly and Senate version of the bill known as a “companion bill.”

After working with concerned citizens, the next step is to send the bill to a committee where a public hearing is held for the public to weigh in on the idea. If the bill receives positive comments it will likely continue through the process and it will be voted out of that committee by members through an “Executive Session.” Once the bill is voted out of committee, leadership will hold their rules committee to debate scheduling the bill on the floor if it makes it that far. Once the bill is scheduled for a floor session vote, typically in both houses, then the entire body may either vote yea or nay on the bill. If the bill has over half the votes, then the bill passes and once passed in both houses it goes to the governor to either sign or veto. This means that it will either become law or the governor may veto and the bill dies or can be overridden.

To watch Schoolhouse Rock’s “I’m Just a Bill” please visit the following link from YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFroMQIKiag>. For further information, please visit <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/assembly/acc/media/1106/howabillbecomeslaw.pdf> to learn more.

As always, feel free to contact my office with questions, comments, or concerns at Rep.Pronschinske@legis.wi.gov.

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