



CONVENTION OF STATES

We've received a number of questions about how the legislative process works, and what all the progress reports on our blog mean. Rather than giving you a dry primer on how legislation becomes law, we think this classic video will tell you everything you need to know:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Otbml6WlQPo>

This video describes the legislative process in our federal government, but the states follow essentially the same system. One key difference to note is that our application, unlike a bill, does not need to be signed by the state governor (most states call this a **resolution**). Article V says that the state *legislatures* must apply for a convention, not the state executives.

For those of you who are more inclined to a description of the legislative process, look no further.

To start the process we have to find a current legislator who is willing to introduce our legislation in either the State House or Senate during the next session. This legislator is known as our **sponsor**. The act of submitting the paperwork for our application to the state legislature is known as **filing** (if it takes place during the session) or **pre-filing** (if it takes place before the session begins). Once the legislation is filed (or pre-filed), it is assigned a bill number and sent to one or more committees.

The **committee** is a small subset of current legislators who screen legislation on a particular issue. For instance, most states have a judiciary committee that handles issues of constitutional law. Generally, the committee holds a hearing where members of the public are allowed to testify and state their support or opposition to the legislation. After hearing all the testimony and debating the merits of our application, the committee votes on whether to support it. If the committee votes against the resolution, then it is usually dead. If the committee votes to support the resolution, it can proceed on, usually either to another committee or the House or Senate floor.

Once the final committee has voted in support of our application, it can finally be introduced on the House or Senate **floor**, where the whole legislative body can debate the measure. At this point there is usually no opportunity for the public to comment, so it's important for you to register your support for COS, before our application is debated on the floor.

When the legislators are ready, our application is finally put up for a full vote of the body. If our application fails to get a majority vote, then it dies and can be refiled next year. If it succeeds, then it goes to the other house and starts the process all over again.

Please keep in mind that each state has its own idiosyncrasies. For instance, our application in Alabama went from the House Rules Committee straight to the Senate Rules Committee without going to the House floor for a vote. In some states, like Florida, we filed our application in both the House and the Senate, and it is simultaneously working through committee in both houses. In still other states, like Kansas, our application must receive a 2/3rds supermajority vote to pass. The variations are endless, so I would encourage you to check out your state legislature's website to see how the legislative process works in your state.