It is important to know the process of how legislation is passed through the U.S. Congress to effectively advocate. PoliticoPro’s comprehensive guide, Essential Guide to Legislation, provides key information on the legislative processes within the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. Please review this resource for detailed descriptions on each step of the legislation proposal process, how legislation changes before it becomes law, and how the two houses resolve legislative differences.

1. Legislation proposal process in the House and Senate:
During a single session of Congress over 10,000 bills are proposed in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate. Only a small portion of these make it through the process of being enacted into federal law.

The proposal process in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate includes: the introduction of legislation, the bill being referred to a committee and then assigned to a subcommittee, the markup and amendment process, markup vote, committee action to report on a bill, scheduling of the bill, how the bill is brought to the floor, debate on the bill, amending process and final passage of the bill.

2. How legislation changes before it becomes law:
When a bill passes in either the U.S. Senate or the U.S. House it is then sent to the opposite chamber for consideration and approval, unless that chamber has already approved a similar bill. Different versions of the same bill from the U.S. House and U.S. Senate are sent to the conference committee. If the U.S. House and U.S. Senate pass the same bill it is sent to the President to sign.

A key difference in the legislative process between the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate is that the majority party has more power in the House than in the Senate, where individual senators have more control through the process, especially on the floor.

3. How the two chambers resolve legislative differences:
For a bill to be signed by the President it must be approved by both chambers. The process may be very simple or complex. For example, the second chamber may approve the same bill the first chamber approved and then it is sent to the President. How the two chambers resolve legislative differences can be explained through the options of compromise; whether the bill is immediately sent to conference committee to be resolved or if it will be decided that the chambers will attempt to exchange amendments.

Special thanks to PoliticoPro for this valuable resource!