



TRACKING CRIMINAL LEGAL REFORM IN GEORGIA

Beginning on the second Monday in January, 236 state legislators (56 Senators and 180 Representatives) convene in the Georgia State Capitol for the biennial legislative session. In 40 legislative days, the Georgia General Assembly must pass a balanced budget. Lawmakers also introduce, debate, and vote on hundreds of bills, including legislation impacting the criminal legal system.

The Legislative Process

- A bill is **introduced** in the House or Senate, given a number (HB 440 or SB 228), and assigned to a committee.
- The committee holds a **hearing**, listens to testimony and public comment, may make changes to the bill, then takes a vote. If a majority of the committee votes to pass the bill, it moves to the next step in the process.
- If a bill is scheduled for a **floor vote**, the full House or Senate will debate the bill and take a vote. If the bill passes, it is sent to the opposite chamber, where the process starts again -- a committee hearing and vote then a floor vote.
- To become law, a bill must be passed by both the House and the Senate in identical form; a **conference committee** is appointed to reconcile any differences in versions.
- After the House and Senate have agreed to a final version of the bill, the bill is sent to the Governor who can **approve** or **veto** the bill.

Committees that work on criminal legal issues:

Senate: Appropriations -
Judiciary - Public Safety

House of Representatives:
Appropriations - Public Safety
Judiciary Non-Civil - Juvenile
Justice

**A bill becomes law after the House and Senate have passed
it and the Governor has approved it.**

Check out www.legis.ga.gov for information about legislators, copies of bills, committee meeting notices, and video archives.