Getting a message to Congress

What every SMART TD member should know about

TD PAC, Lobbying and the Legislative Process

SMART Transportation Division
24950 Country Club Blvd., Suite 340
North Olmsted, OH 44070-5333
216-228-9400
www.smart-union.org/td
The purpose of this booklet…

This booklet has been prepared by the SMART Transportation Division’s National Legislative Department at its Washington, D.C., offices to help SMART TD in its active and successful legislative program.

SMART TD wants every member, and the families and friends of members, to realize the great importance and significance a simple letter, email or telephone call may have in the consideration of a proposed law that may greatly help – or severely damage – their lives and careers as railroad, bus, airline and transit employees.

In addition to legislation and regulations that are directly connected with SMART TD members’ jobs and the rail, bus, airline and transit industries, SMART TD is equally interested in protecting the rights of retirees.

We live in the greatest country in the world. Let’s keep it that way by becoming personally involved in the making of new laws, the changing of old laws and protecting current laws and regulations that are beneficial. YOU CAN HELP.

NOTE:

Additional copies of this booklet are available to individuals or groups interested in legislation affecting their members and their families. Please email PAC_td@smart-union.org or send written requests to:

SMART TD PAC
SMART Transportation Division
24950 Country Club Blvd., Ste. 340
North Olmsted, OH 44070-5333
Register to vote and vote on Election Day

You and your voting age family members (even your friends and neighbors) can use the SMART TD website to register to vote!

Go to www.smart-union.org/td, look toward the bottom right hand side of the home page and click on the blue Legislative Action Center button. Once you’re on the Legislative Action Center home page:

- Click on the “Elections” tab,
- Click on your state,
- Then either download the voter registration form (fill out and mail in) or click to register online (not available in all states).

Then simply follow the instructions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructions to Voter</th>
<th>Instrucciones para el Elector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To vote:</strong> completely darken the oval ((circle)) to the left of your choice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Para votar:</strong> oscurce completamente el óvalo (círculo) a la izquierda de su elección.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note the permitted number of choices directly below the title of each candidate office. Do not mark the ballot for more choices than allowed.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenga en cuenta el número permitido de opciones directamente debajo del título de cada cargo para el que se postulan los candidatos. No marque en la papeleta más opciones de las permitidas.</strong></td>
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Getting a Message to Congress

What every SMART TD member should know about

TD PAC, Lobbying and the Legislative Process
Appendix III

Your legislators

United States senators

Senator ____________________________ Senator ____________________________

Washington address _______________ Washington address _______________

Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

Telephone (202) 224- ___________ Telephone (202) 224- ___________

State office address _______________ State office address _______________

Washington, D.C. _______________

Telephone________________________ Telephone________________________

Email address _______________ Email address _______________

United States House of Representatives

Representative __________________________

Washington address __________________________

Washington, DC 20515

Telephone________________________

District office __________________________

Telephone________________________

Email address __________________________
Appendix II

Legislative Action Center

SMART TD has made it easier for members to make their voices heard in the nation’s capitol. The Legislative Action Center (LAC) enables members to learn about issues and legislation that directly impact their jobs and livelihoods. The LAC provides members with easy access to contact your federal representatives to let them know your views.

By using the LAC, active and retired members and their families can:

- View a directory of our nation’s senators and representatives by state,
- Learn about legislative issues currently affecting our members and take action by writing to legislators about those issues,
- Learn about the committees in Congress and contact the congressmen and women on those committees.
- See how Congress has voted on the issues SMART TD supports,
- See stats on the president and learn who the members of the cabinet are,
- Download the voter registration form and absentee ballot,
- Learn when your next election for your state is, and
- See a listing of local newspapers, listed by state, and write a letter to the editor.

The LAC is accessible by visiting www.smart-union.org/td and clicking on the blue “Legislative Action Center” button near the bottom right of the homepage. Go directly to the LAC by copying and pasting this following address into your browser:

http://www.congressweb.com/smart_transportation/

About this booklet…

Because of the importance of legislation in our work and in our daily lives, it is vital that every member know how their voluntary efforts can help strengthen SMART TD’s clout in Congress and state legislatures. We cannot avoid the introduction of anti-union legislation, but we can join the fight against such legislation and together we can help elect members who are friendly to our cause of Congress and state legislatures.

This booklet begins with an explanation of SMART Transportation Division PAC (TD PAC) – SMART TD’s voluntary Political Action Committee (PAC) – and continues with a guide to the legislative process, lobbying and various ways of getting a message to members to Congress and state legislatures.

Explaining the purpose and operation of TD PAC will help you understand the political process. We work for and help those people who we feel are capable, knowledgeable and who recognize the problems that affect railroad, bus, airline and transit workers and will work toward enacting laws that protect their interests.

Active and retired SMART TD members, SMART TD Auxiliary members, spouses, families and friends have helped to make the SMART TD’s Legislative Department one of the most effective union lobbyists on Capitol Hill. With your active participation in the lobbying effort, we hope to gain a more powerful voice in Congress and in the White House.

With this booklet, you will learn how a bill becomes a law and how to effectively communicate your ideas to a member of Congress. The importance of letters, phone calls and emails to your representative and senators cannot be overstated and are some of the best ways to get your message to Congress.
We hope this booklet will motivate you to become part of SMART TD’s legislative and political activities.

Remember, 10 personal communications from 10 constituents are worth far more than a petition with 100 names. Members of Congress pay attention to emails and letters that are signed and include the writer’s home address.

Appendix I

Contacting your legislators

To learn the names, addresses (including email addresses) and telephone numbers of your elected officials in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, visit the SMART TD Legislative Action Center by going to our website at www.smart-union.org/td. Click on the blue “Legislative Action Center” button near the bottom of the TD homepage. Once at the LAC, click on “Directory” and choose your state to find out who represents you in Congress.

If you do not have access to a computer, ask your local legislative representative or state legislative director for assistance, or call the SMART TD Washington Legislative Office at 202-543-7714.

Write the names and other information in Appendix III of this booklet (on page 25) so that it is readily available.

Remember, the names, email addresses and telephone numbers of your representatives may change each January following national elections, which occur in even-numbered years. Changes also occur when members of Congress die or retire before the end of their terms. So it is a good idea to visit the SMART TD website periodically to check for updates.

The Capitol switchboard number is 202-224-3121.
Letters to the editor

A short, well-written letter to the editor of a local newspaper, or a guest editorial in the newspaper or on local television, can greatly help get your point across to members of Congress and to other citizens. An effective message will prompt many letters and other messages from interested and concerned constituents of the representative. This type of message can generate lots of attention because legislators always keep tabs on news from the people back home.

Remember to keep your message short and concise. Draw on personal experience and similar experiences of people in the local area. You’ll be surprised at the results.

Here are a few more examples of how you can get in direct contact with your elected representatives:

- Attend a congressional workshop/forum/meeting. Most representatives hold special meetings to speak to their constituents and to hear voters’ opinions. You should take every opportunity to attend events where your representative speaks or appears as a guest. Ask questions and try to meet with legislators after the workshop has ended. Be sure to identify yourself as a SMART TD member and constituent.

- Invite the legislator to your local meeting, local picnic, SMART TD Auxiliary meeting or similar function. You can put together a low-cost dinner and hold it in your local meeting hall, a church basement or community hall to honor a friend of the SMART TD. A retiree dinner is another excellent opportunity for meeting your representatives.

- Hold a congressional breakfast for SMART TD members. It is simple to arrange and afford, and it gives your legislator a chance to meet many people.

To make the most of your efforts, make publicity arrangements to announce in advance of your meeting with legislators or gatherings attended by them. You should prepare a press release for the local media and arrange to have photographs taken. This type of publicity will help both the legislator and the public image of the SMART TD.
Dear Rep./Sen. Jones:

As a voter and constituent represented by you in the (House of Representatives/United States Senate), I am writing to urge you to (support/oppose) (S. _______/H.R. _______), a bill to ___________________. This ___________________ (or on the floor of the House/Senate).

(Passage/defeat) of this legislation is important to me as a/n (active/retired) member (or spouse of a member) of the Transportation Division of the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation workers union because _____(in your own words, state reasons) ___________________.

When this bill comes up for consideration, I urge you to vote (for/against) it for these reasons.

I would appreciate your support of this position, and would like to know your views on the issue and how you intend to vote on this bill.

Thank you for taking time to consider my views.

Sincerely,

Sam Smith
123 Main St.
Anytown, ST 45678
555-555-5555
**Why you need TD PAC, and why it needs you**

**What is TD PAC?**

The United Transportation Union, now SMART Transportation Division (SMART TD), formed the Transportation Political Education League (TPEL) because federal law prohibits unions from using membership dues or assessments for political activities. In 2004, the name TPEL was changed to UTU PAC and in 2019 SMART TD changed the name to SMART TD PAC or TD PAC. As we all know, legislation on the state and national levels drastically affects us and our jobs. Therefore, we must work for and help those people who we feel are capable, knowledgeable and who recognize the problems that affect railroad, bus, airline and transit workers.

Political campaigns and publicity programs cost money, and they are one of the few ways that candidates can let the public know of their record and their desire for election or re-election to public office. Candidates running for office need financial assistance to explain to voters their opinions and positions on legislation and other matters of interest. Voluntary contributions to TD PAC help provide these funds.

**How does TD PAC operate?**

TD PAC is governed through bylaws established for its operation in conformance with state and federal laws. TD PAC bylaws determine operation, financing and general disbursement of funds for political and legislative activities.

TD PAC is governed by a national committee composed of a chairperson, vice chairperson and a secretary/treasurer. The TD PAC national chairperson is the SMART TD president, national vice chairperson is the SMART TD national legislative director and the national secretary/treasurer is the SMART TD successor president. The state TD PAC committees have a chairperson – which is almost always the state’s legislative director – vice chairperson and secretary at the state levels. They receive contributions from TD PAC members and the funds are used to support candidates who support the interests of the SMART Transportation Division.

**Addressing your letter**

Here is how to address your letter:

- The President
- The White House
- Washington, D.C. 20500

Mr. President: __________

Dear Senator __________:

- Rep. (full name)
- U.S. House of Representatives
- Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative __________:

Dear Secretary __________:

The Honorable (full name)

Governor of __________

(State capitol and ZIP)

Dear Governor __________:

On the following page is a sample for a letter you might write to your representative or senators. Note how it follows the guidelines outlined on pages 18 and 19.
level. All TD PAC officers serve on a voluntary basis, and no TD PAC funds are used for salaries or other expenses.

The SMART TD headquarters maintains the records and files the necessary reports for TD PAC. Federal law prohibits the union from using dues assessments for political purposes, but it does not prohibit using the SMART TD facilities for accounting and filing. The complete record – from the important pledge you sign indicating the amount of your voluntary donation and collection of it, to the cancelled checks and records of income and disbursement – is maintained at SMART TD headquarters. The law also requires TD PAC to make regular reports to state and federal agencies. These records are available for your inspection at any time at headquarters, your state chairperson’s office or at the secretary of state’s office in individual state capitals.

How are TD PAC funds distributed?

TD PAC funds are split on a 50/50 basis, with one half being guaranteed for use within the state where the member’s local is headquartered, and the other half being used at the national level. State funds are used for assisting candidates for offices which are statewide in nature, such as governor, attorney general, public utility commissioner, treasurer or state legislators. National funds are used in Federal elections for national offices such as President, senator or member of Congress.

TD PAC funds do not go to just one political party. Candidates from both political parties receive TD PAC assistance on the basis of their past record and attitude or position on subjects or goals which are vitally important to SMART TD members, rather than their political affiliation.

- Keep your letter down to one page or less, and to the point. State your complaint or support in the first paragraph, mentioning the bill number if available. Give clear reasons why and how the legislation could affect you, your family and your community;
- Use the correct name, title, address, city, state and ZIP code. Sign your name and address legibly at the end of your message;
- Avoid sending letters to Washington about state issues unless the issues involve federal legislation;
- Avoid copying from newspapers or what someone else has said. Lawmakers can spot key phrases and paragraphs as originating from special interest groups, so use your own words. Your personal experiences are the best supporting evidence. Don’t send mass-produced form letters;
- If you need to contact more than one lawmaker (your own representative and the head of a special committee, for example) write to each personally rather than sending a copy;
- If you have met the representative personally or have some other connection, draw attention to it in your letter;
- Ask that your representatives state their position on the issue by replying to you;
- Don’t just write when you have a complaint. You can write to express your opinion, to congratulate and thank a representative for a particular vote, or to express polite disapproval;
- Write as soon as possible. Try to write your position on a bill while it is in committee. Your representative can usually be more responsive to your appeal at that time.
Republic and Democratic parties have both good and bad representatives as far as the interests of SMART TD members are concerned.

To determine support, the candidate’s record is first examined to see if he or she has done a good job in the past. If so, the person deserves support; if not, the person is denied assistance, particularly if his or her actions have been detrimental to SMART TD families and goals. In cases of new candidates for office where there is no past record for evaluation, the candidate is interviewed and screened on his or her attitudes and positions on matters of importance to labor in general and SMART TD members in particular.

Of course, you can’t be sure what decisions a political candidate will make in the future. However, a study of his or her past voting record will usually show a pattern that the person will follow in the future. We look for a dependable legislator who supports our positions, or at least an open-minded individual who will listen to us and make a fair judgment. The established records and the current positions of all candidates are weighed, and the decision for or against TD PAC support is made.

A complete accounting is made of all TD PAC disbursements, so you know where the money goes. Both national and state expenditures are listed on the TD PAC financial report which is sent regularly to every state TD PAC chairperson. Any SMART TD officer or member can examine the TD PAC accounting of all disbursements by contacting his or her state chairperson.

How can I contribute to TD PAC?

Contributions to TD PAC are voluntary and can be started at any time – the sooner the better. Get a TD PAC pledge card from a local union officer or SMART TD headquarters, fill it out and sign it, keep a copy for yourself, and give the form to your local treasurer or send it to SMART TD headquarters at SMART TD, c/o TD PAC, 24950 Country Club Blvd., Ste. 340, North Olmsted, OH 44070-5333. Your pledge will be entered in the records and the contribution will appear on your dues...
receipt each month.

A TD PAC member may increase or decrease his or her pledge at any time by filling out and sending a revised TD PAC pledge form to the local treasurer or headquarters indicating the change in the amount of the contribution. After processing, the new amount will appear on your dues receipt and in records at headquarters.

You may stop your contributions at any time. If you decide to withdraw your pledge, notify your local treasurer or SMART TD headquarters of your decision and the voluntary TD PAC contribution will be stopped. No questions will be asked; it is your decision alone.

It is also possible to make a one-time direct contribution by mailing it to SMART TD, or by giving it to any local or national officer. You will receive an acknowledgement from the SMART TD president as a receipt.

The union awards different TD PAC lapel pins, membership cards and baseball-style caps to those members who contribute $10 or more monthly.

There are six club levels and corresponding pins based on your annual contribution. Below is a chart of the different club levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club Level</th>
<th>Monthly Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silver Club</td>
<td>$10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Club</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar-A-Day Club</td>
<td>$30.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond Club</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platinum Club</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President’s Circle</td>
<td>$208.33+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All TD PAC members also receive a personal thank-you letter from the TD PAC National Chairperson.

There are thousands of SMART TD members – many of them retired with fixed incomes – now participating in TD PAC. Even though many retired members are on limited incomes, they gladly participate in TD

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**Getting your message across – Contacting your representatives**

**Communicating with Congress**

Of course, the best method of communicating with Congress on an issue is face-to-face with a member. Since that rarely happens, sending an email message is a good method. Given security methods on Capitol Hill, sending mail to members of Congress is not timely. SMART TD has made it easy to contact your state and national leaders via the Legislative Action Center (LAC). Read more about the LAC in Appendix II on page 24.

**Email**

Begin your message with either thanks for something the legislator has done in the past or with your specific request. Include your mailing address in the email, so they know that you are a constituent.

**Phone calls**

If you don’t have access to a personal computer, or you’re unsure of your representative’s or senators’ email address, call their office. If you don’t know the name of the relevant staff person, tell the person answering the phone the subject and you will be told which staff person handles it.

If you talk to a “live” person, offer to follow up with an email with more information. If you get their voice mail, leave a substantive message, leaving your name, phone number and address (so they know that you are a constituent). The staff person may not have time to actually return your call, but they will get the message.

**Mail**

If you do use regular mail, send it to the district office, not the Washington, D.C. office. Due to security measures, regular mail takes a very long time to reach Capitol Hill.

Again, don’t forget to include your name and address.
PAC and urge all working members to realize the importance of friends in Congress.

For proof, look at the legislative record of the SMART TD. The union, with its TD PAC program, has made great legislative and political accomplishments in the last few years, and could increase these gains with assistance from you and other TD PAC members. You joined your fellow workers for the fraternal benefits of membership in the SMART TD, so why not join them in the movement toward better laws and good government through TD PAC?

We would be very proud to welcome you into the club. Make your pledge now by filling out a TD PAC application form, signing it and taking it or sending it to your local treasurer or SMART TD headquarters. You will help yourself to better government.

NOTE: Contributions or gifts to TD PAC are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.
The legislative process –
How laws are made

If you want to successfully influence the legislative process, you must understand how it works.

The material presented here describes the highlights of the legislative process. First we’ll look at the party leadership in the two houses of Congress, which directs the flow of legislation. Second, we’ll follow a bill step-by-step as it progresses through Congress to become a law. Third, we’ll take a brief look at the congressional budget process.

As you will see, Congress makes many decisions at different stages of the legislative process – as bills are introduced, examined by committees, scheduled for debate and so forth. There are votes on amendments to bills, votes on allowing debate, votes by subcommittees and committees and votes by the full House of Representatives or the Senate to approve the bill or not.

To successfully influence this legislative process, we must lobby and make our opinions known at every step. Our Legislative Department and many other concerned individuals and groups keep a close watch on these detailed workings of Congress. They realize each separate vote is crucial, so they may call for your support, in the form of letters or telegrams or phone calls, several times on the same piece of legislation as it moves through Congress.

Remember, SMART TD fights for the rights of rail, airline, bus and transit workers in two areas – the collective bargaining area and the legislative area. In the collective bargaining area, SMART TD negotiates an agreement and administers it through the grievance-arbitration procedure. It is the basis for many of our rights and benefits. Collective bargaining, however, cannot serve all our needs or protect all our interests.

The legislative area can be as effective as collective bargaining in affecting our futures. Many benefits enjoyed by SMART TD members, including the right to bargain collectively, were won by laws created in Congress. As you can see, we must protect what we have gained and fight harder to gain new rights for a better future.

GETTING A MESSAGE TO CONGRESS

non-binding guidelines on spending limits for the other committees.

As the various committees and full houses consider and pass spending bills, the Budget Committees assemble approved spending amounts into a Second Budget Resolution. It can closely resemble the First Budget Resolution.

When complete, the Second Budget Resolution is reported out of the Budget Committees and considered by both houses. When passed by both, spending limits become binding, and the authorization and appropriations committees should not spend beyond them.

The Budget Act mandates that the Second Budget Resolution be passed by September 15, and Congress may not adjourn until it is passed.

Reconciliation

To enforce the budget process, the Budget Act provides for a procedure called reconciliation. Reconciliation is put into effect only when the Budget Committees believe that the authorizing and appropriations committees will not limit their spending to the levels set in the second budget resolution.

To require the authorizing and appropriations committees to follow the second budget resolution’s spending limits, the budget committees attach reconciliation instructions to it. They require the committees to report out reconciliation bills which reconcile their spending with the second budget resolution’s limits. These bills are referred to the budget committees, which combine them into a single “omnibus” or overall reconciliation bill in each house, and report them out to the full houses. When passed and signed by the
Your one letter, email, fax, phone call or personal contact can make a difference in how your representative or senators will act. There has been an increasing turnover in Congress in recent times. Today, less than one-half of elected representatives now serving in Congress have held office for more than three terms. As a result, members now are aware that re-election is not guaranteed, so they listen more closely when a constituent speaks his or her mind.

When a legislator is undecided on how to vote on an issue important to a SMART TD member, as few as 20 letters can make the difference in his or her decision. If a legislator is hostile to labor’s view, expressing your view may not change the person’s mind, but it may cause them to become less active in opposing our goals.

Remember, your informed opinion can provide the information your representative or senators need to make the correct decision. Your getting involved can determine how well SMART TD’s lobbying program works.

**Party leadership**

The process of a bill becoming a law is supervised by the party leadership in each house of Congress. The party’s leadership speaks for the party and coordinates its activities. Usually, the majority party is able to control the movement of legislation and decide which bills will be considered by individual committees.
In the House of Representatives, the Speaker of the House is the presiding officer. The Speaker is elected by the full House and so is a member of the majority party. As presiding officer, the Speaker may vote at his discretion.

The Vice President of the United States is the presiding officer in the Senate, also called the President of the Senate. The Vice President, as presiding officer, only votes to break a tie. Because the Vice President is often absent from Senate proceedings, the Senate elects from its ranks a President Pro-Tempore, who presides in the Vice President’s absence. Elected by the full Senate, the President Pro-Tempore is a member of the majority party, usually the party member with the most seniority.

In both houses of Congress, the majority party elects a Majority Leader and Majority Whip, who direct the party’s legislative strategy and serve as its leading spokespersons. The minority party in each house elects a Minority Leader and a Minority Whip, who perform similar duties for their party.

The chairmanship of committees in each house is controlled by the majority party, which also has a majority of members on each committee. Democrats in the House of Representatives are nominated to committees by the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, and the Democratic Caucus gives final approval. In the Senate, Democrats are nominated to committees by the Democratic Steering Committee and approved by the Democratic Conference. Republican members in each house of Congress are nominated to committees by the Republican Committee on Committees and approved by the Republican Conference.

How a bill becomes a law

A bill must move through Congress in an orderly and definite series of steps to become a law. This section follows a bill from its introduction, through the Congress, to the president’s desk and into the law books. Although these steps are specific to Congress, the principles set forth apply to other levels of government.

such as funding for Amtrak, mass transit, Railroad Retirement and safety inspectors. It is the center of intense political struggles and legislative maneuvering. The four steps of the process we will be looking at are: authorization, appropriation, budget resolutions and reconciliation.

Authorization

Legislation proposing particular programs or governmental activities, including the spending of funds for these programs and activities, is called an authorization bill. These bills proceed through Congress in the manner described in “How a bill becomes a law.” They are considered by the proper authorizing committee, which deals with the particular subject matter of the bill in question.

For example, bills which most affect SMART TD members come before the following committees:

Senate committees

- Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation & Related Agencies – Department of Transportation, Surface Transportation Board, National Transportation Safety Board;
- Committee on Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs – urban mass transit;
- Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation – interstate commerce, highway safety, regulation of interstate common carriers (including railroads and buses);
- Committee on Energy and Natural Resources – coal production, distribution and utilization;
- Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions – railway labor and retirement matters;
- Finance Committee – taxation.
The bill is introduced

A bill may be introduced in either the House of Representatives or Senate by a respective member of that body. It may be the legislator’s own bill, a bill introduced at the request of the Administration (the president or other officials), or the idea may have originated back home with a business or labor group.

A House member simply drops a bill into the “hopper,” a box on the clerk’s desk. A senator will send the bill to the clerk or propose it on the floor of the Senate.

The bill is given a bill designation and bill number according to the house where it was introduced. For example, “H.R. 235” means that this bill was first introduced in the House of Representatives and was 235th in the order of bills introduced. A bill introduced in the Senate, for example, would be designated “S. 2718.”

Committee action

Once the bill is numbered and printed, it is sent to the committee that has jurisdiction over the subject of the bill.

The committee usually refers the bill to a subcommittee which studies the issue in depth and holds hearings in which concerned citizens, organizations and government agencies can provide facts and offer opinions on the bill. The subcommittee may also vote to amend the bill. When done, the subcommittee reports the bill with recommendations back to the full committee.

The full committee may consider the bill further, make additional amendments, then vote it down, allow it to die by not taking any action, or report the bill favorably to the full House, usually accompanied with a report explaining the bill and the committee’s decision.

The bill is forwarded

If approved by one body (the House or Senate), the bill is sent to the other body where it again moves through the committee procedure. Should the second body pass the bill without changing it, it is sent to the president for a signature.

If the Senate and House pass different versions of a bill, they are sent to a Conference Committee. This committee is made up of members from both the House and Senate committees that first considered the bill. They meet to iron out the differences in the two bills, and, if they can agree on a compromise bill, it is sent back to the Senate and House for approval. No further amendments are accepted, and the bill must be voted up or down. If the Conference Committee fails to reach a compromise, the bill dies in the committee.

The President acts on the bill

When approved by both House and Senate, the bill is sent to the president, who has three choices: Sign the bill, and then it becomes law; veto it and send it back to the House and Senate for reconsideration, where the veto can be overridden only by a two-thirds vote of both houses; or if the president does not sign or veto the bill within 10 days (Congress must be in session), the bill automatically becomes law.

The Congressional budget process

The congressional budget process is important because much legislation affecting SMART TD members comes out of this process,
The bill is debated

After a bill is reported out of committee, it is scheduled for debate by the full House or Senate. In the House a bill is scheduled by the Rules Committee, which determines when the bill will be debated, how much time will be allotted for debate, and whether or not amendments to the bill will be allowed from the House floor. If the bill is not scheduled, it dies in the Rules Committee.

In the Senate, bills go on the Senate calendar and are scheduled for debate by the majority leadership. There is no time limit on debate in the Senate unless agreed upon by unanimous consent.

When the scheduled time arrives, the bill goes to the floor of the House or Senate for consideration by all members. The bill is debated, possibly amended and voted up or down.

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