Before a bill can make it to the chamber floor for debate and vote it must first make it out of the Rules Committee. This can be a fairly confusing process, especially since the House and Senate use different terminology for parts of the Rules Committee process.

The Rules committee is a powerful committee and is often referred to as "The Gatekeeper." Some people also say that the Rules committee is where bills go to die. This is because it is a big hurdle to get pulled out of the Rules committee and brought to the floor and many bills don't make it through. The process for getting pulled from Rules can seem complicated and can also be difficult to influence.

The simplified explanation of the Rules committee is that it is a two-step process to determine which bills will be placed on the floor calendar for amendment, debate, and ultimately for a vote by the full chamber (House or Senate). The following is a brief summary of each chamber's process for the Rules Committee. The processes are very similar, but, given the use of different terminology and some nuances, this primer describes them separately. You can also get more details on the Rules Committee here.

SENATE RULES COMMITTEE PROCESS
In Senate Rules there are two calendars – the white sheet and the green sheet. The white sheet is where bills are sent immediately after passing out of a standing committee. The green sheet is a consideration calendar made up of bills that have been "pulled" by Rules committee members from the white sheet and is essentially the list of bills eligible to go to the floor. Bills can be pulled from the white to green sheet without debate or vote. Senate Rules Committee members get a predetermined number of pulls. Once on the green sheet they are eligible to pull to the floor at the next Rules meeting, but to make it to the floor they are first debated and voted on by Rules committee members. Bills can also be pulled in "packages" where groups of bills may be voted out of Rules at one time. Senate Rules also allows what is known as a "leadership pull," which is where a package of bills can be pulled by leadership from the Review and/or Consideration calendars to the floor. If a bill is voted out of the Rules committee it is added to the floor calendar for second and third reading.

HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE PROCESS
There are also two calendars in House Rules – the "Rules Review" calendar and the "Rules Consideration" calendar. Bills referred from a standing committee are placed on the Rules Review calendar. Rules Committee members can then pull a bill from the Rules Review calendar to the Rules Consideration calendar. This is the first pull. House Rules Committee members get a predetermined number of pulls. At a later meeting a member can do a second pull to move the bill from the Rules Consideration calendar to the floor calendar. Rules members vote on every motion to pull a bill. If a bill is voted out of the Rules committee it is added to the floor calendar for second and third reading. House Rules also allows what is known as a "leadership pull," which is where a package of bills can be pulled from the Review and/or Consideration calendars to the floor.

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