



The Basics of the Legislative Process

Marquis Barefield
Assistant National Legislative Director

BASICS OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

As a DAV leader, you can be an effective advocate for ill and injured veterans and their families when you familiarize yourself with how the public policy process works and the times in which your advocacy can have the greatest impact.

BASICS OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

1. Congress
2. How a Bill becomes Law
3. DAV Resolutions



CONGRESS



CONGRESS

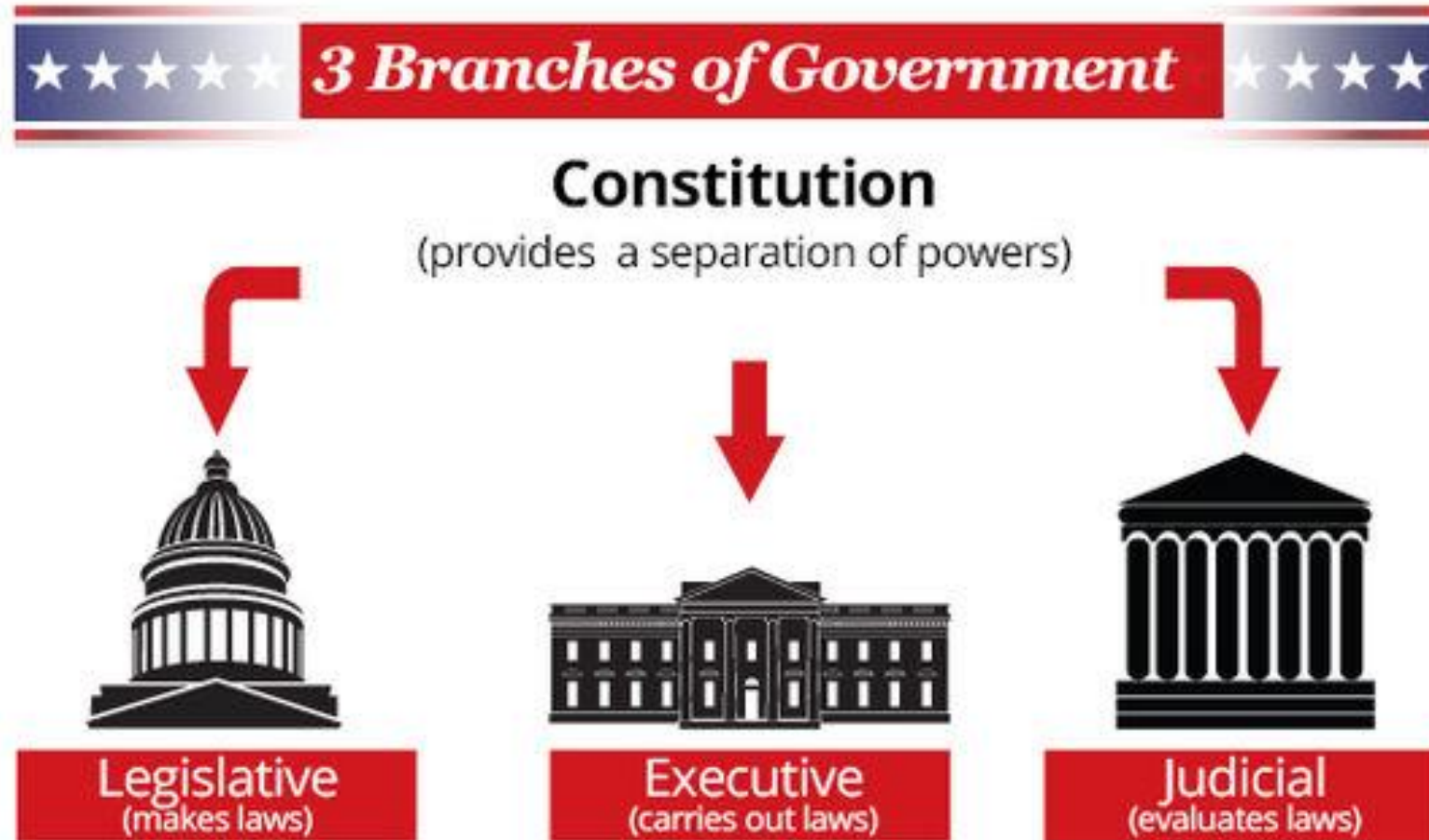
Per the U.S. Constitution, our federal government is separated into 3 branches, which provide checks and balances on each other.

Legislative

Executive

Judicial

CONGRESS





Terminology can be very confusing, so who makes up the Congress?

CONGRESS

Congress is the Legislative Branch and is comprised of a bi-cameral system. In other words, 2 chambers. Bills must pass both chambers to become law:

Senate

House of Representatives

COMPARING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE SENATE

House		Senate
435	Number of Members	100
2 Years	Length of Terms	6 Years
25	Minimum Age for Members	30
Many Rules, More Formal	Organization	Few Rules, Less Formal
By Population	Representation of the States	Equal

SENATE



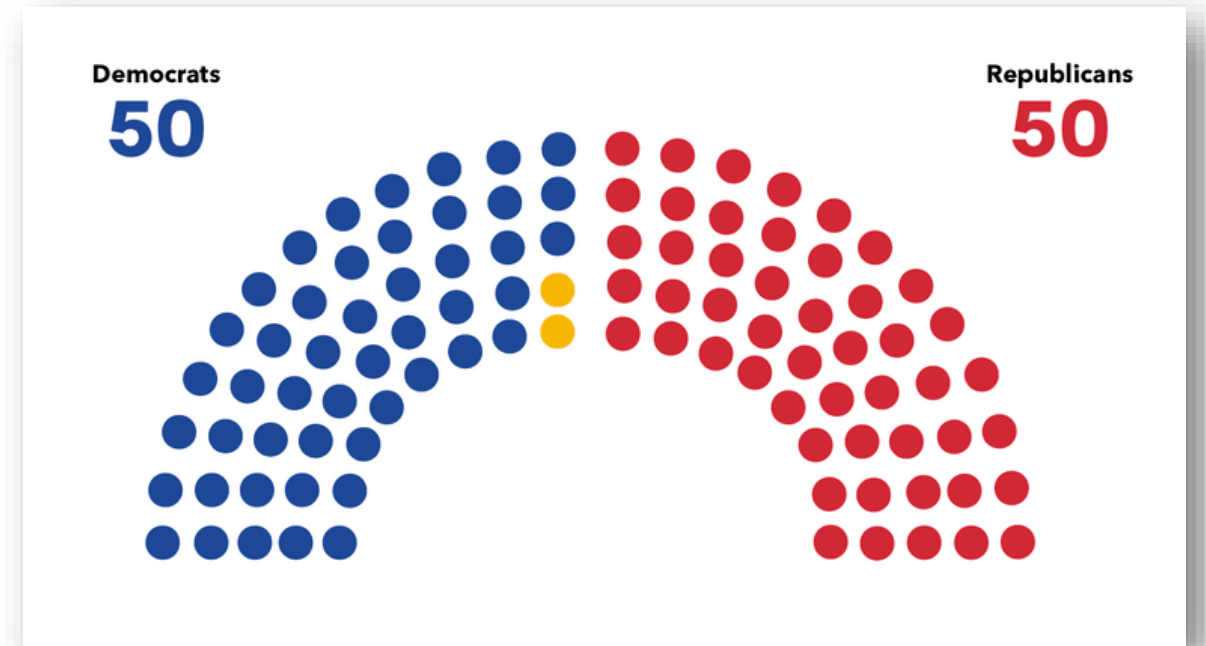
SENATE

The Senate is the upper house/chamber of Congress. 100 Members.

Each Senator serves a six-year term. The Senate can act slower and consider the long-term effects of laws.

SENATE

Only 1/3 of the Senate seats are elected every two years. So 33 to 34 senators are up for election at one time.



SENATE

The Senate is comprised of 16 Committees. Each Committee has a Chair and a Ranking Member.

Veterans' Affairs (SVAC)
Armed Services (SASC)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



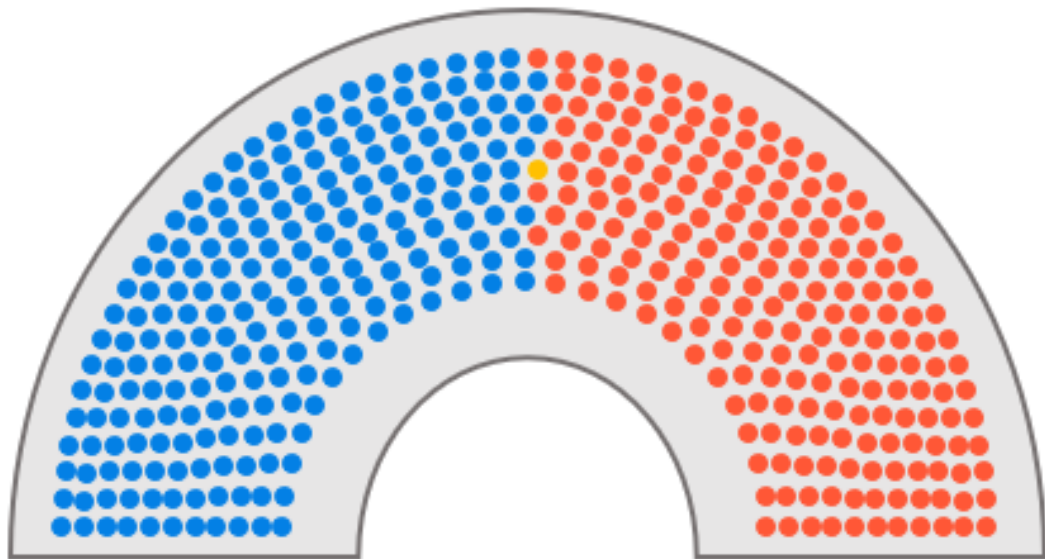
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The “House” is the lower house/chamber.

435 Members and each serves a 2-year term.

Laws dealing with revenue must start in the House.

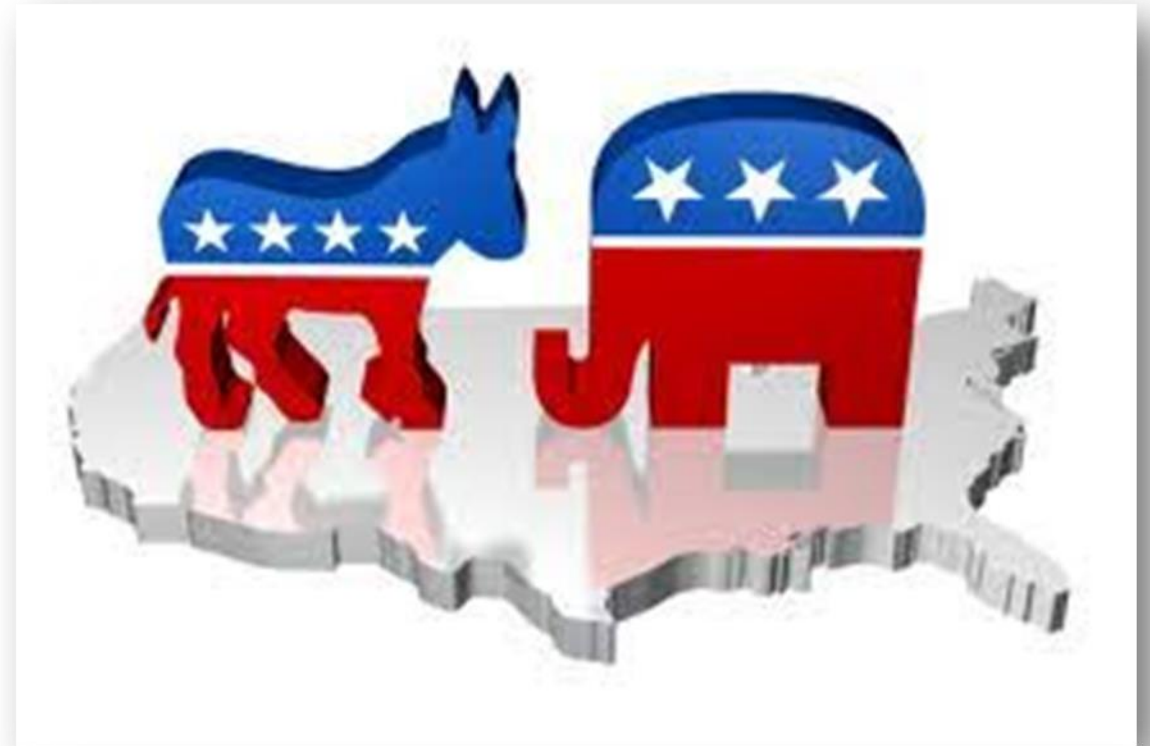
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



All 435 seats in the House are up for reelection every two years. The next election for all Representatives is November 2022.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The House is comprised of 21 Committees. Each Committee has a Chair and a Ranking Member.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) is broken down into subcommittees:

- Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA)
- Economic Opportunity (EO)
- Health
- Oversight and Investigations (O&I)
- Technology Modernization (Tech Mod)

CONGRESS

What does the “117th Congress” mean?

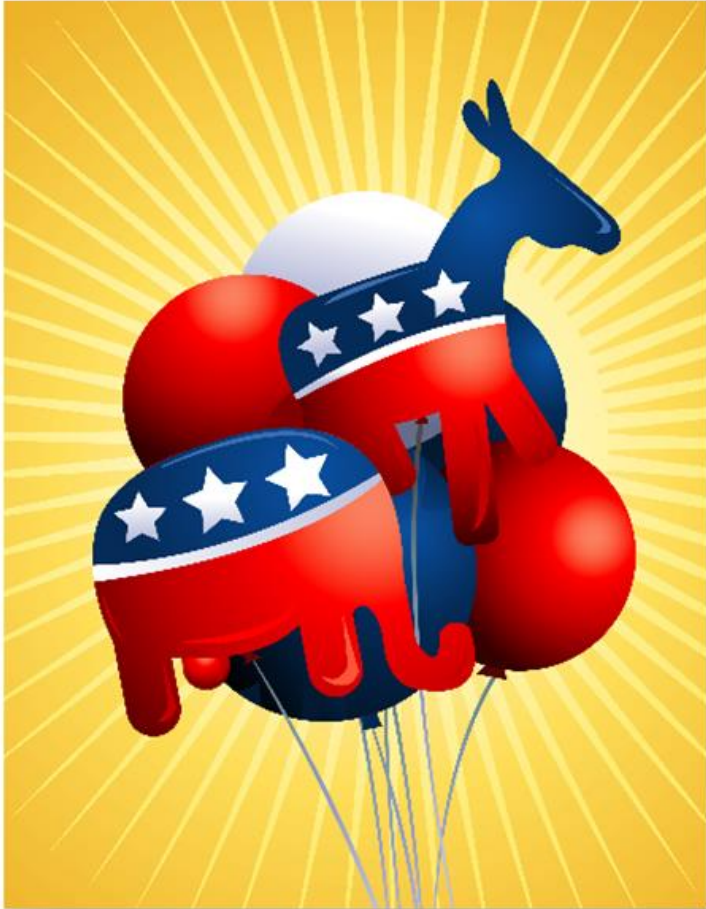


CONGRESS

The U.S. Congress operates in 2-year terms called Congress. Each “congress” is divided into two sessions and currently we are in the 2nd session of the 117th Congress.

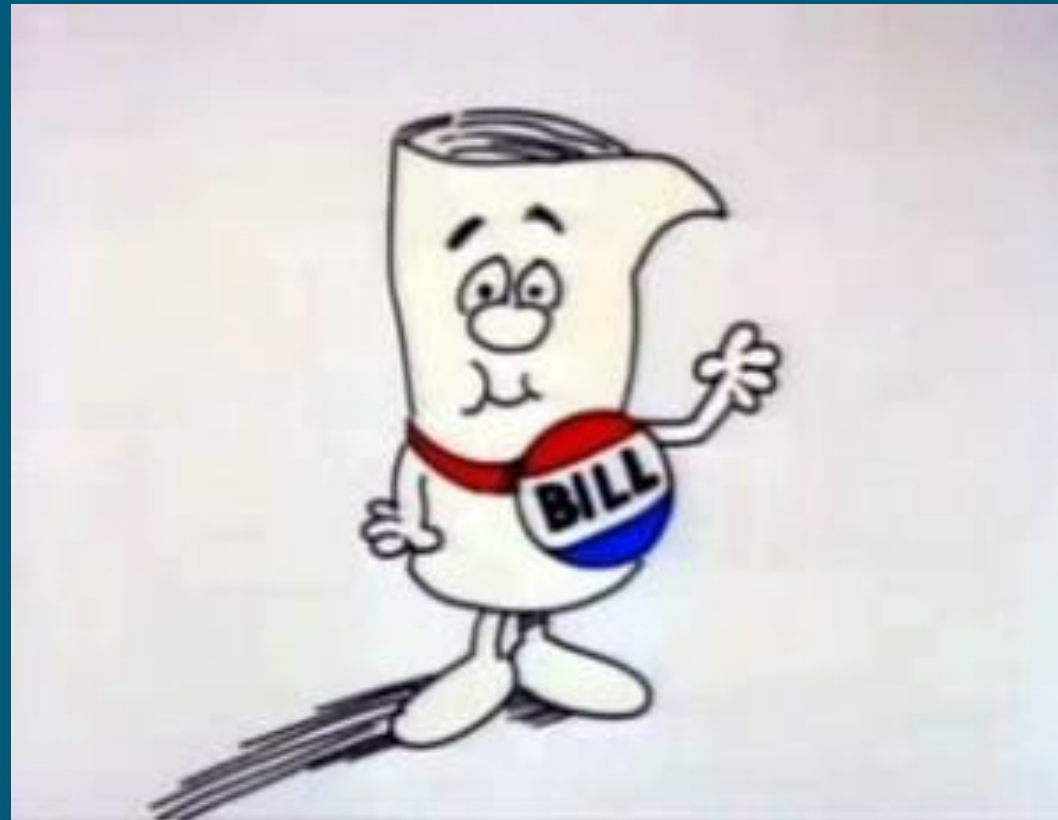
The 117th Congress started in January 2021 and will end in December 2022.

CONGRESS



Any bills introduced during this session of the 117th Congress have until December of this year to be acted upon.

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW



BILL TO LAW

There are 7 basic steps for a bill to become law. Before we discuss, let's put this process into some perspective:

117th Congress (2020-2022)

- 18,400 bills have been introduced
- 168 of those bills became law—Less than 1%

BILL TO LAW

STEP 1: The Creation of a Bill

Members of the House or Senate draft, sponsor and introduce bills for consideration by Congress.

Only Members of Congress can introduce bills. After introduction, the bill is usually assigned to a Committee.

BILL TO LAW

STEP 2: Committee Action

Often a committee or subcommittee may request reports from government agencies, hold hearings so experts and interested parties have an opportunity to offer testimony regarding the issue or revise the bill.

BILL TO LAW

STEP 2: Committee Action

The full committee may make a recommendation to pass the bill, to revise (i.e., mark up) and release the bill (also known as reporting the bill out of committee), or to lay the bill aside (also known as tabling the bill).

BILL TO LAW

STEP 3: Floor Action

The bill is returned to the full House or Senate for further debate and approval. At this point, members may propose amendments to the bill, add additional text, or otherwise alter the bill.

BILL TO LAW

STEP 4: Vote

House and Senate members vote on their respective versions of the proposed bill.



BILL TO LAW

STEP 5: Conference Committees

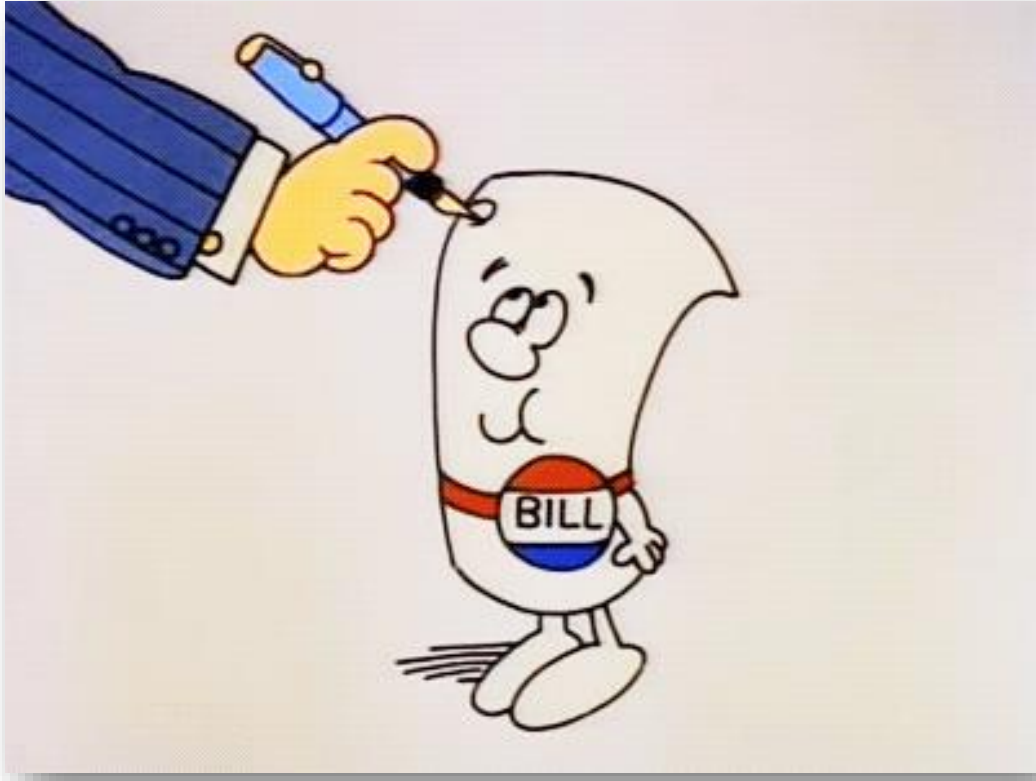
A bill must be approved by both chambers of Congress. If passed by the House, the bill will be referred to the Senate and assigned to the Committee of Jurisdiction, vice versa.

BILL TO LAW

STEP 5: Conference Committees

When either chamber approves a bill that was passed by the other chamber, the two chambers must resolve any legislative differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill by way of a conference committee.

BILL TO LAW



STEP 6: Presidential Action

After the bill is passed by both chambers, it is sent to the president for approval or signature, which, if granted, creates a Public Law.

BILL TO LAW

STEP 6: Presidential Action

When a president refuses to sign and comments on a bill it is known as a veto. A vetoed bill may return to Congress for reconsideration and requires 2/3 majority to override a veto.

BILL TO LAW

STEP 7: Publication of Law

The Office of Federal Register assigns the Public Law a number (i.e. P.L. 109-1) and the Government Printing Office prints it, formalizing the law.



DAV RESOLUTIONS



KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO
AMERICA'S VETERANS

RESOLUTIONS

In previous webinars, we discussed the importance of DAV resolutions and how they create our legislative agenda for each year. Let's discuss 2 ways our resolutions can impact the legislative process in Congress.

RESOLUTIONS

First, Members of Congress have used our DAV resolutions for bill introduction and/or drafting. Congresswoman Julia Brownley (CA) introduced H.R. 444—the Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019.

RESOLUTIONS

Her bill was almost a copy of DAV Resolution No. 102, to eliminate the 12-year period of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation. At the May 1, 2019 hearing, she quoted then-Resolution No. 102 in her testimony.

RESOLUTIONS

Second, DAV uses our Resolutions to support and advocate for bills that are introduced.

OPERATION:
**KEEP THE
PROMISE**

RESOLUTIONS

The DAV Commander's Action Network (CAN) sends out alerts to our network urging them to contact their Members of Congress on specific bills.

All of the alerts sent out through the DAV CAN are based on our resolutions.

RESOLUTIONS



How Can You, Your Chapter and Your Department Help?

RESOLUTIONS

Set up meetings with your Members in your local areas to discuss our resolution book.

Pick out a few Resolutions to discuss with them to introduce as bills.

RESOLUTIONS

After the release of alerts through the DAV CAN, schedule a meeting with your Member's local office.

Use this as a follow-up to the emails sent through DAV CAN and request they co-sponsor the bill.

RESOLUTIONS



The Legislative Program for 2021-2022, is available online.

<https://www.dav.org/learn-more/legislation/resolutions/>



SUMMARY

Congress

- Senate and House are the 2 Chambers
- Senators-6 years /Representatives-2 years
- Bills must pass both Chambers
- A term of Congress is 2 years
- 117th Congress ends in December 2022

SUMMARY

How a Bill Becomes a Law

- STEP 1: The Creation of a Bill
- STEP 2: Committee Action
- STEP 3: Floor Action
- STEP 4: Vote

SUMMARY

How a Bill Becomes a Law

- STEP 5: Conference Committees
- STEP 6: Presidential Action
- STEP 7: Publication of Law

SUMMARY

DAV Resolutions

- Resolutions to introduce a bill
- Resolutions to support bills
- How You Can Help



Thank You!

MARQUIS BAREFIELD

Assistant National Legislative Director

(202) 554-3501

mbarefield@dav.org