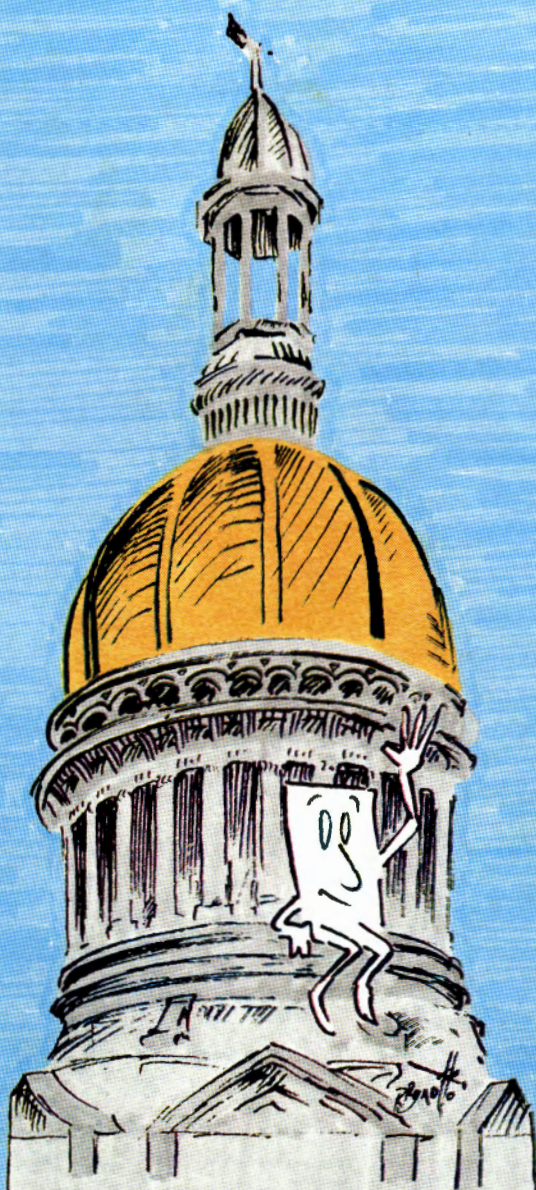


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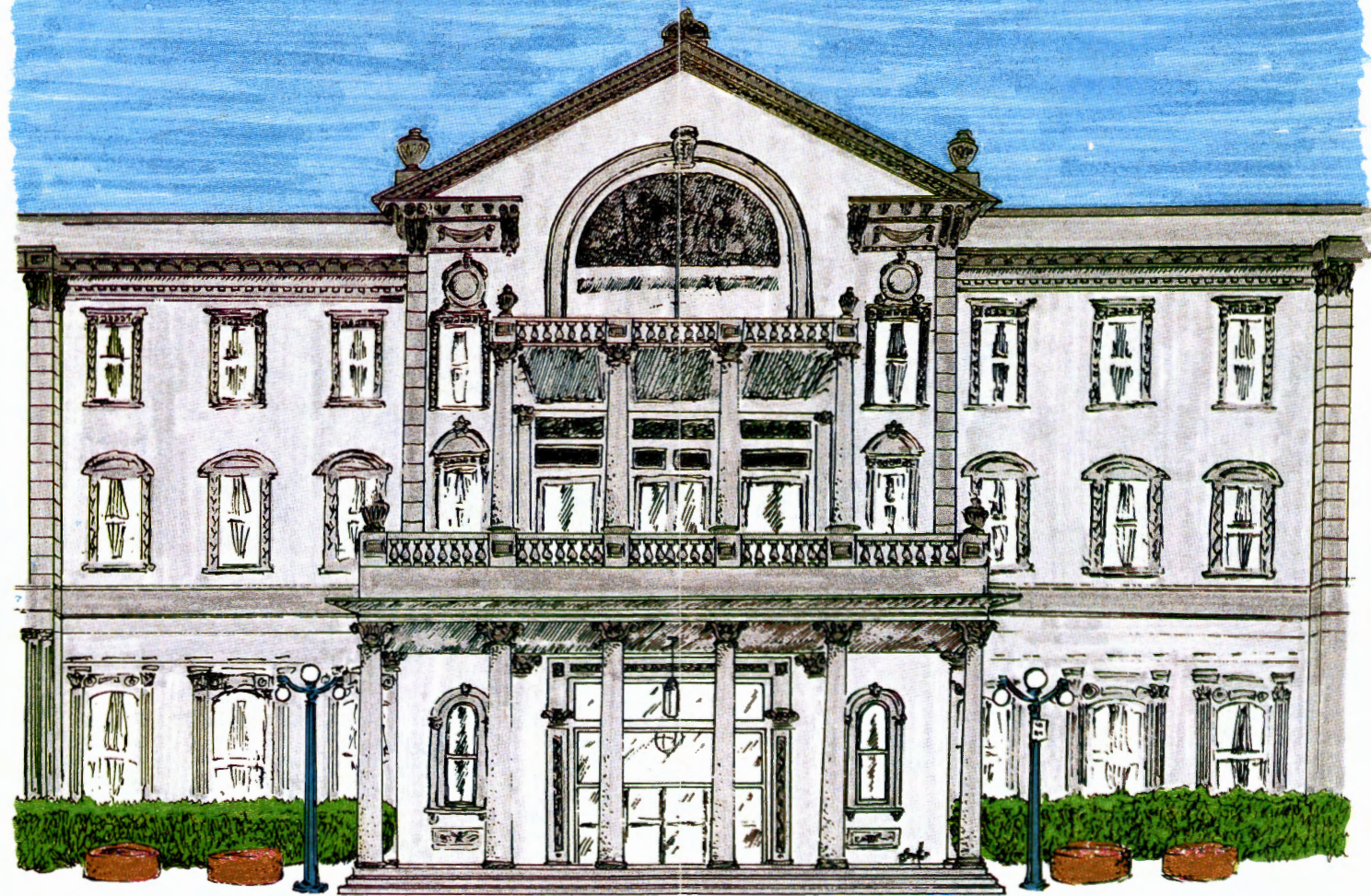
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# Your State Capitol



**A guide to the New Jersey  
State House and the  
lawmaking process**



The State House was originally built in 1792 by Jonathan Doane. The building looked much different than the State House of today. It was a simple rectangular building of rubblestone with a bell tower. According to legend, the bell was rung to call people to the State House.

As the government's duties grew, so did the State House. Many additions were made over the years. Today, the Governor's offices are in the front of the building while the Legislature works in the newly restored rear wings.

The **New Jersey Legislature** is divided into two groups called **Houses**. These Houses are

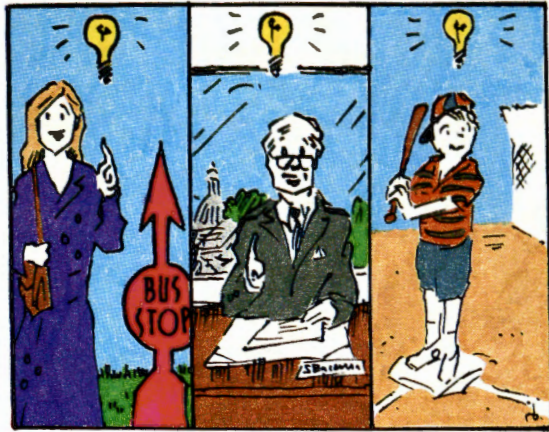
called the **Senate** and **General Assembly**. The Senate has 40 members – one for each of the 40 **legislative districts** in New Jersey. There are 80 members in the General Assembly – two from each legislative district.

Each House has a meeting room, or **chamber**, where **legislators** meet to discuss and vote on new laws. These meetings are called **legislative sessions**. Legislators also work in small groups called **committees** to carefully review and discuss proposed laws.

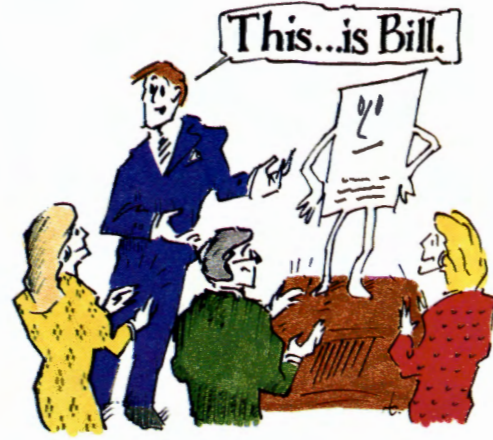
You can watch your legislators at work in sessions and committee meetings.

# How laws are made by the New Jersey Legislature

**1** Any **Senator** or **General Assembly member** may propose or **sponsor** a new law. Ideas for laws can come from many sources, such as citizens, interest groups, public officials or the Governor.



**2** At the legislator's direction, the idea is **drafted** as a **bill**. The legislator may ask other legislators to become **co-sponsors**.



**3** The bill is **introduced** when the **Senate Secretary** or **General Assembly Clerk** reads aloud the bill's number, sponsor and title during a legislative session.

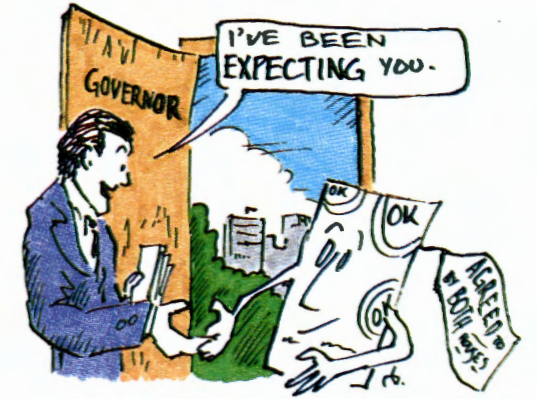
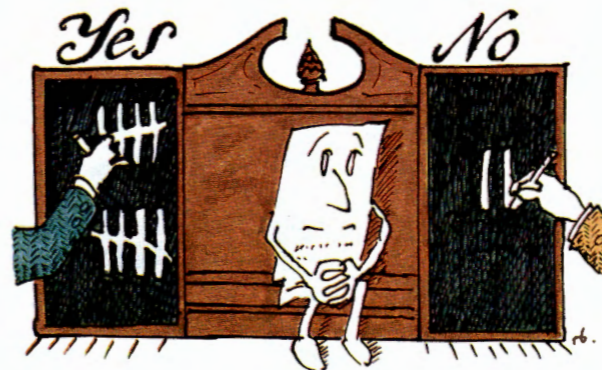


**4** The bill is usually sent to a committee which studies it and makes changes, if needed. These changes are called **amendments**. Committees have open meetings where the public may speak about the bill.

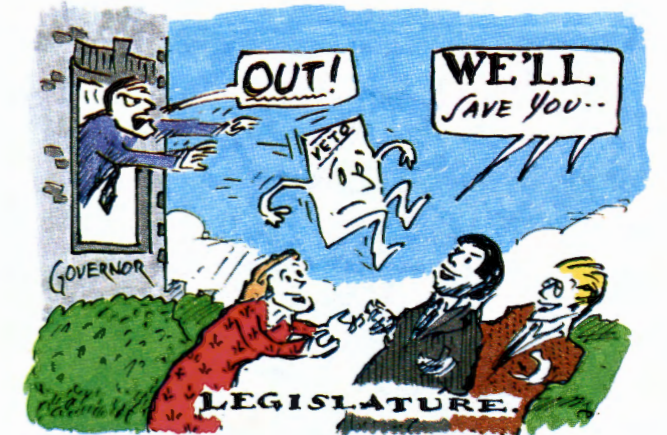
**5** If the committee approves the bill, it is reported to the House and its title is read again. This is the bill's **second reading**.



**6** When scheduled by the **Senate President** or **Assembly Speaker**, the bill's title is read for the third time, and it is debated and voted on. A bill passes if it receives a majority of votes (at least 21 in the Senate or 41 in the General Assembly).



**7** The bill follows a similar path of first reading, committee consideration, second reading, third reading and final passage in the second House. After both Houses agree on the bill, it is sent to the Governor. In most cases, the bill becomes law when signed by the Governor.



**8** The Governor may **veto** a bill by refusing to sign it and returning it to the Legislature with his objections or proposed changes. There are several types of vetoes. Sometimes, a vetoed bill can still become law.

# **Did you know . . .**

*that the New Jersey State House is the second oldest state house in use in the United States. What is the oldest?*

*that a part of the original 1792 State House still exists today. Where is it?*

*that two of New Jersey's three branches of government have offices in the State House. What are they?*

*that real 23 karat gold is used to cover the State House dome. How much gold is needed for one layer?*

*that the State House originally housed the State Museum and State Library. Where are these buildings now?*

## ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **Answers** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

*The Maryland State House in Annapolis was built in 1772, and is still the meeting site for that state's Legislature.*

*A portion of the original 1792 structure is still in use as part of the Governor's offices.*

*The legislative and executive branches both have offices in the State House.*

*It takes only 11 ounces of gold leafing to cover the State House dome.*

*The State Library and State Museum are now in separate buildings located next to the State House Annex, to the west of the State House.*