**Law making process in Pakistan**

A federal bill must pass three readings in both the National Assembly and the Senate before it is passed into law.

*1.  Introduction, Order of the Day, and First Reading*

The legislative process is initiated by the introduction of a bill.  Any matter on the Federal Legislative List may originate in either house of Parliament—the National Assembly or the Senate. According to the National Assembly’s Rules of Procedure, a minister must give notice when introducing a Government bill.  The notice must “be accompanied by a copy of the Bill, along with a Statement of Objects and Reasons signed by the Minister.  A certificate whether it is a Money Bill or not shall also be attached with the notice.” Subsequently, when the item is called, “the Minister shall move to introduce the Bill, thereupon the Bill shall stand introduced.”  A copy of the bill must be supplied to the members upon its introduction. Ten-days’ written notice is required before introduction of a private member’s bill. A motion for leave to introduce a private member’s bill must be set down in the Orders of the Day on private members’ day.

After a bill is introduced it is published in the official gazette as early as possible.  It is at this point a bill (not a finance bill) and must be referred to a standing committee unless a motion is carried to dispense with this rule. When a bill has been received back from the standing committee, or deemed to have been received back as a result of suspension of the above rule, it must be set down in the Orders of the Day for a motion in regard to the bill.

*2.  Bills Repugnant to the Injunctions of Islam*

Before its first reading, a member may raise an objection that the bill in question is “repugnant to the Injunctions of Islam.”  The National Assembly may then, by a motion supported by at least two-fifths of its members, “refer the question to the Council of Islamic Ideology for advice as to whether the Bill is or is not repugnant to the Injunctions of Islam.” The Council of Islamic Ideology is a constitutional advisory body on Islamic law (Shari‘a) issues.  Article 227 of the Constitution stipulates that “[a]ll existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the Injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah, in this Part referred to as the Injunctions of Islam, and no law shall be enacted which is repugnant to such Injunctions.” Article 229 further states, “the President or Governor of a province may, or if two-fifths of its total membership so requires, a House or a Provincial Assembly shall, refer to the Islamic Council for advice any question as to whether a proposed law is or is not repugnant to the Injunctions of Islam.”

However, the Assembly may at any time proceed with a bill even without the advice of the Islamic Council, if it considers that quick passage of the bill is in the public interest. If the advice of the Council is provided after a bill referred to that body has been enacted and such advice is to the effect that the law is repugnant to the injunctions of Islam, the Minister concerned must move to have the law considered for further action within seven days of receiving the Council’s advice

*First reading*

The bill then goes through its first reading, where it is circulated to members for discussion.  The principles of the bill and its general provisions may be discussed, but according to the rules, “the details of the Bill shall not be discussed further than is necessary to explain its principles.” Moreover, “[a]t this stage amendments to the Bill may not be moved.” Subsequently a bill may be considered and referred to a select committee or the opinions of all members may be elicited.  The Rules of Procedure on how a bill may be handled at this stage provide as follows:

* (2) . . . if the member-in-charge moves that the Bill be taken into consideration or referred to a Select Committee, any member may move as an amendment that Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by a date to be specified in the motion.
* (3) Where a motion that a Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon is carried and the Bill is circulated in accordance with that direction and opinions are received thereon, the member-in-charge may, if he wishes to proceed with his Bill thereafter, may move that the Bill be referred to the Standing Committee concerned or a Select Committee or that it be taken into consideration.

*3.  Select Committee Stage*

The National Assembly may constitute select committees on bills under Rule 244.  These committees “may allow the bill to be taken into consideration as a whole, with respect to particular clauses or amendments only or with instruction to make some particular or additional provision in the bill.” The committee presents a final report to the National Assembly.

*4.  Second Reading*

After a bill has been circulated, it then undergoes a second reading, which consists of reading the entire bill, clause by clause.  According to the Parliament Watch and Reforms Project (PWRP), “[t]he member(s) give one-day notice of amendments from the day a bill is to be considered.  The whole bill, clause by clause, goes through the second reading and the Speaker decides if amendment(s) proposed meet conditions of admissibility.” The National Assembly Rules of Procedure provide that “[t]he Speaker may call each clause separately, and when the amendments relating to it have been dealt with, he shall put the question: ‘That this clause (or, as the case may be, that this clause as amended) do stand part of the Bill.’ ”

*5.  Third Reading & Passage of Bill*

When a motion that a bill be taken into consideration has been carried and no amendment is made, the minister who introduced the bill may immediately move for the bill’s passage.  No amendments may be made at this point “except verbal amendments, which are of a formal or consequential nature.” Debate on a motion that a bill be passed must be of a general character, confined to arguments supporting or rejecting the measure.”

*6.  Repeated in Other House*

After a bill is passed in one house of Parliament, it is sent to the other house for agreement.  The legislative process of the Senate is very similar to the one in the National Assembly described above.  According to the PWRP,

[b]ill(s) except the Money or Finance Bill is sent to the Senate for its consideration after its successful passage from the National Assembly.  The same process is followed in the Senate.  Bill(s) passed from the Senate are sent to the President for his assent.

*7.  Presidential Assent*

Presidential Assent is the last stage that a bill must complete before officially becoming an Act of Parliament and part of Pakistan’s laws.  According to the National Assembly website,

[i]f the Bill is presented to the President for assent, he shall assent to the Bill in not later than ten days.  If it is not a Money Bill, the President may return the Bill to the Majlis-e-Shoora with a message requesting that the Bill be reconsidered and that an amendment specified in the message be considered.  The Majlis-e-Shoora shall reconsider the Bill in a joint sitting.  If the Bill is passed again, with or without amendment, by vote of the majority of the members present and voting, it shall be presented to the President and the President shall give his assent within ten days; failing which such assent shall be deemed to have been given.[