



How a Bill Becomes Law

A practical handbook on the law-making process in the
Provincial Assembly of the Punjab

A clear guide for students, professionals, public officials and general readers. It follows the ordinary provincial legislative process, with separate explanations of Money Bills, the Governor's role, ordinances and implementation.

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Scope. This handbook explains the normal route of an ordinary provincial bill in the Punjab Assembly. Constitutional amendment bills, the annual budget and some exceptional legislative matters may involve additional procedures.

1. Understanding Bills and Acts

A law begins as an idea, but an idea does not acquire legal force until it is converted into a bill and completes the constitutional and parliamentary process.

What is a bill?

A **bill** is a formal proposal for a new law or for changing an existing law. It contains proposed legal rules, definitions, powers, duties, procedures and, where necessary, penalties. A bill can be debated, amended, postponed, referred to a committee or rejected.

What is an Act?

An **Act** is a bill that has been passed by the Provincial Assembly and has received, or is constitutionally deemed to have received, the Governor's assent. Once enacted, its clauses become sections and its legal requirements bind the persons and institutions to whom the law applies.

Bill	A proposed law. It has no final legal force merely because it has been introduced.
Act	An enacted law passed by the Assembly and assented to under the Constitution.
Ordinance	A temporary law promulgated by the Governor when the Assembly is not in session and immediate action is considered necessary.

Core principle: Introduction is only the beginning. A bill becomes law after scrutiny, debate, approval by the Assembly and completion of the Governor-assent process.

2. Constitutional Authority to Make Provincial Laws

The Provincial Assembly of the Punjab may make laws for Punjab on matters within provincial legislative competence. Before a bill is drafted or introduced, the proposer should confirm that the subject falls within the province's constitutional authority.

Four questions to ask

1. What public problem is the proposed law intended to solve?
2. Does the Provincial Assembly have authority to legislate on the subject?
3. Would the proposal conflict with the Constitution, fundamental rights or an applicable federal law?
4. Is legislation necessary, or can the matter be handled through existing law, rules or administrative action?

Legal and policy checks

A sound proposal is checked against the Constitution, existing provincial and federal laws, fundamental rights, financial implications and practical enforceability. A bill that exceeds provincial competence or contradicts a superior constitutional rule may later face legal challenge.

Important: A useful policy idea is not enough. The proposed law must be constitutionally valid, clearly drafted and capable of being implemented.

3. Main Types of Bills

Government Bill

A Government Bill is introduced by a provincial minister on behalf of the Provincial Government. Government Bills commonly give effect to public policy, establish institutions, regulate sectors, amend administrative laws or create enforcement arrangements.

Private Member's Bill

A Private Member's Bill is introduced by a member who is not acting as a minister. It allows an individual member to propose a new law or an amendment. Under the parliamentary guidance published by PIPS for the Punjab Assembly, a private member normally gives fifteen days' notice of the intention to move for leave to introduce the bill.

Money Bill and Finance Bill

A Money Bill concerns constitutionally defined financial matters, including provincial taxation, borrowing, the Provincial Consolidated Fund, the Public Account of the Province and related public-finance matters. A Money Bill, or an amendment that would involve expenditure from the Provincial Consolidated Fund or withdrawal from the Public Account, cannot be introduced or moved without the consent of the Provincial Government.

Who decides? The Speaker decides whether a bill is a Money Bill. The Speaker's certificate accompanies a Money Bill presented to the Governor and is conclusive for constitutional purposes.

4. The Legislative Process, Step by Step

1

Identify the problem.

A department, minister or member identifies a matter that may require legislation.

2

Develop the policy.

The desired outcome, affected people, costs, powers and implementation arrangements are defined.

3

Draft the bill.

The policy is converted into precise legal language, supported by a statement of objects and reasons.

4

Give notice and complete procedural checks.

The required notice, governmental consent and other constitutional requirements are examined.

5

Obtain leave and introduce the bill.

Where leave is required, the House permits formal introduction. Introduction does not amount to approval.

6

Refer the bill to a committee.

The Speaker ordinarily sends the bill to the appropriate Standing Committee for detailed examination.

7

Receive the committee report.

The committee reports its findings and recommended amendments to the Assembly.

8

Debate the principles.

The House considers the purpose, policy and general provisions of the bill.

9

Consider clauses and amendments.

The Assembly examines the bill clause by clause and decides proposed amendments.

10

Take the final vote.

The member in charge moves that the bill be passed. If the required majority supports it, the bill is passed.

11

Authenticate and send to the Governor.

The final approved text is checked, authenticated and presented for assent.

12

Publish and implement.

After assent, the Act is published in the Gazette and brought into force according to its commencement provision.

What a properly drafted bill usually contains

- Short title
- Long title
- Commencement provision
- Definitions
- Substantive rules
- Powers and duties

- Enforcement provisions
- Penalties where needed
- Rule-making power
- Repeal or amendment clauses
- Schedules where needed
- Statement of objects and reasons

5. Committee Scrutiny

After introduction, a bill other than a Finance Bill is ordinarily referred to the Standing Committee responsible for the relevant subject. Committee scrutiny allows detailed examination that is difficult to conduct during a general debate in the full House.

What the committee examines

- Constitutional validity and provincial legislative competence
- Clarity and consistency of definitions and clauses
- The reasonableness of powers given to officials or institutions
- Implementation capacity, financial cost and administrative burden
- Possible effects on citizens, businesses and public bodies
- Whether consultations or expert evidence are required
- Whether amendments are necessary

Possible committee recommendations

The committee may recommend passage without amendment, passage with amendments, reconsideration, further consultation or rejection. Its report guides the House, but the final authority remains with the Assembly.

Committee power is advisory in the legislative process. The House may accept, reject or modify the committee's recommendations.

Reference to the Council of Islamic Ideology

During consideration, a member may move that a bill or a specific provision be referred to the Council of Islamic Ideology for advice on whether it is repugnant to the injunctions of Islam. Such a reference is a defined parliamentary step and is not automatic for every bill.

6. Readings, Amendments and Voting

First Reading: principles and general provisions

In the Punjab Assembly parliamentary guide, the discussion on the principles and general provisions of a bill is described as the First Reading. Members debate the purpose of the bill, the problem it addresses, its policy choices and its likely effects.

The House may take the bill into consideration, refer it to a Select Committee, send it back to a Standing Committee, circulate it for public opinion, postpone it or reject the motion.

Second Reading: clause-by-clause consideration

Once the motion for consideration is carried, the Speaker submits the bill to the Assembly clause by clause. Members may move admissible amendments to add, delete or replace provisions, alter definitions, adjust powers, change penalties or correct inconsistencies.

Clause one, the preamble and the title are generally considered after the other clauses and schedules.

Third Reading: final passage

After clause-by-clause consideration, the member in charge moves that the bill be passed. The final debate concerns the bill as a complete measure, including amendments already made. The Speaker then puts the motion to the House.

Voting

An ordinary bill is generally decided by a majority of members present and voting, subject to the Constitution, quorum requirements and any special voting rule that applies to the particular matter.

7. The Governor's Assent

After the Assembly passes a bill, the final text is prepared and authenticated. The Constitution requires the bill to be presented to the Governor for assent.

The ten-day constitutional period

Under Article 116 of the Constitution, the Governor must act within ten days after a provincial bill is presented.

Governor's action	Effect
Assent	The bill becomes an Act.
Return a non-Money Bill	The Governor may ask the Assembly to reconsider the whole bill, a specified provision or a suggested amendment.
No return power for a Money Bill	A Money Bill cannot be returned under the reconsideration provision.

If the Assembly passes the returned bill again

If the Assembly reconsiders and passes the returned bill again, with or without amendment, by a majority of members present and voting, it is presented to the Governor again. The Governor must assent within ten days. If assent is not given in that period, assent is deemed to have been given.

Practical effect: The Governor may require reconsideration of a non-Money Bill once, but cannot permanently block a bill that the Assembly passes again in accordance with Article 116.

8. Gazette Publication and Commencement

After assent, the law is published in the official Gazette as an Act of the Provincial Assembly. Gazette publication provides the authoritative public record of the enacted text.

When does the Act start operating?

The Act may commence:

- immediately on assent;
- on publication in the Gazette;

- on a date stated in the Act; or
- on a later date appointed by government notification.

Implementation after enactment

Passing the Act is not the end of the work. The responsible department may need to prepare subordinate rules, issue notifications, appoint officers, establish an authority, allocate funds, create procedures, train staff, inform the public and develop inspection or complaint systems.

Implementation risk: A legally sound Act may still fail to achieve its purpose if funding, rules, institutions and accountability arrangements are not put in place.

9. Special Rules for Money Bills

Money Bills are subject to stricter constitutional controls because they concern public revenue, funds and expenditure.

1. A Money Bill cannot be introduced except by or with the consent of the Provincial Government.
2. A bill or amendment involving expenditure from the Provincial Consolidated Fund or withdrawal from the Public Account also requires that consent.
3. The Speaker determines whether a bill is a Money Bill.
4. A Money Bill presented to the Governor carries the Speaker's certificate.
5. The Governor cannot return a Money Bill for reconsideration under Article 116.

A bill does not become a Money Bill merely because it contains a fine, a licence fee, a service charge or a local tax imposed for local purposes. The constitutional substance of the financial provisions matters.

10. Ordinances

When the Provincial Assembly is not in session and circumstances make immediate legislation necessary, the Governor may promulgate an Ordinance on the advice constitutionally required for provincial executive action.

Legal effect and duration

An Ordinance has the same force and effect as an Act while it remains valid, but it is temporary. Under Article 128, a provincial Ordinance must be laid before the Assembly and ordinarily expires after ninety days. The Assembly may extend it once for a further ninety days. The Assembly may disapprove it, and the Governor may withdraw it.

Once laid before the Assembly, the Ordinance is treated as a bill introduced in the Assembly. Permanent legislation therefore requires parliamentary consideration.

Bill	Act	Ordinance
A proposal before the Assembly	A law enacted through passage and assent	A temporary law made while the Assembly is not in session

11. Prorogation and Dissolution

Prorogation

Prorogation ends a session of the Assembly but does not dissolve the Assembly. A bill pending before the Provincial Assembly does not lapse merely because the session has been prorogued. It may continue in a later session.

Dissolution

When the Provincial Assembly is dissolved, a bill pending before it lapses. If the proposal is still required, it normally has to be introduced again in the new Assembly and proceed through the legislative process afresh.

Memory aid: A session may end without ending the bill. Dissolution ends the Assembly and the pending bill.

12. Roles of Key Participants

Participant	Main responsibilities
Member or Minister in Charge	Introduces the bill, explains its purpose, moves the required motions, responds to objections and moves final passage.
Speaker	Presides over proceedings, decides procedural admissibility, refers the bill to a committee, rules on amendments, conducts voting, determines Money Bill status and authenticates the passed text.
Standing Committee	Examines constitutionality, drafting, policy, practicality and financial implications; consults stakeholders where appropriate; reports recommendations.
Assembly Members	Debate principles, move amendments, question the member in charge and vote on amendments, clauses and final passage.
Assembly Secretariat	Receives notices, prepares business, circulates bills and reports, records proceedings, prepares the authenticated text and manages transmission and publication steps.
Governor	Assents to a bill or returns a non-Money Bill once for reconsideration within the constitutional framework.
Implementing Department	Prepares rules, notifications, institutions, budgets and operating procedures needed to put the Act into practice.

13. Worked Example

The following fictional example shows how the process may work in practice.

The problem

Road accidents involving school transport have increased. Existing requirements do not provide detailed provincial standards for vehicle inspection, driver training, emergency equipment or school accountability.

The proposal

The Provincial Government or a private member prepares the **Punjab School Transport Safety Bill**. The draft sets inspection standards, driver qualifications, safety equipment, reporting duties and penalties.

Committee stage

The relevant committee examines the bill and may consult the Transport Department, School Education Department, Traffic Police, parents, school operators and vehicle-safety experts. It recommends amendments such as annual inspection, driver background checks, emergency exits and a complaint mechanism.

Assembly consideration

The House debates the principles, considers every clause, decides amendments and votes on final passage. If passed, the authenticated bill is presented to the Governor.

Enactment and implementation

After assent and Gazette publication, it becomes the **Punjab School Transport Safety Act**. The responsible departments then make rules, establish inspection procedures and communicate the new requirements.

This example is fictional and is included only to explain the legislative process.

14. Quick Reference and Key Points

One-page process summary

Problem identified → policy developed → bill drafted → notice and consent checks → introduction → Standing Committee → committee report → debate on principles → clause-by-clause consideration → final passage → Speaker's authentication → Governor's assent process → Gazette publication → implementation.

Ten points to remember

1. A bill is a proposal. An Act is law.
2. Government Bills are introduced by ministers.

3. Private Members' Bills allow non-minister members to propose legislation.
4. Financial measures may require Provincial Government consent.
5. The Speaker determines whether a bill is a Money Bill.
6. Standing Committees provide detailed scrutiny.
7. The House debates principles and then examines clauses and amendments.
8. The Assembly must pass the bill before it goes to the Governor.
9. The Governor may return a non-Money Bill once, but not a Money Bill.
10. Prorogation does not end a pending bill, while dissolution does.

Best legislative practice: A successful law combines constitutional validity, clear drafting, informed scrutiny, democratic approval and realistic implementation arrangements.

Sources and Legal Note

1. **Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.** Articles 115, 116, 117 and 128. Official Pakistan Code, Ministry of Law and Justice.
pakistancode.gov.pk
2. **Rules of Procedure, Provincial Assembly of the Punjab.** Chapter XII: Legislation, as currently published on the official Assembly website.
pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/rlist/en
3. **The Punjab Assembly in Brief.** Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, legislative-process section.
pips.gov.pk

Educational and legal note. This handbook is a plain-language educational guide. It is not an official publication of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab and does not replace the Constitution, the current Rules of Procedure, an enacted statute, an official ruling of the Chair or professional legal advice. Legislative rules and constitutional provisions may be amended. Readers dealing with an actual bill should consult the latest official texts.