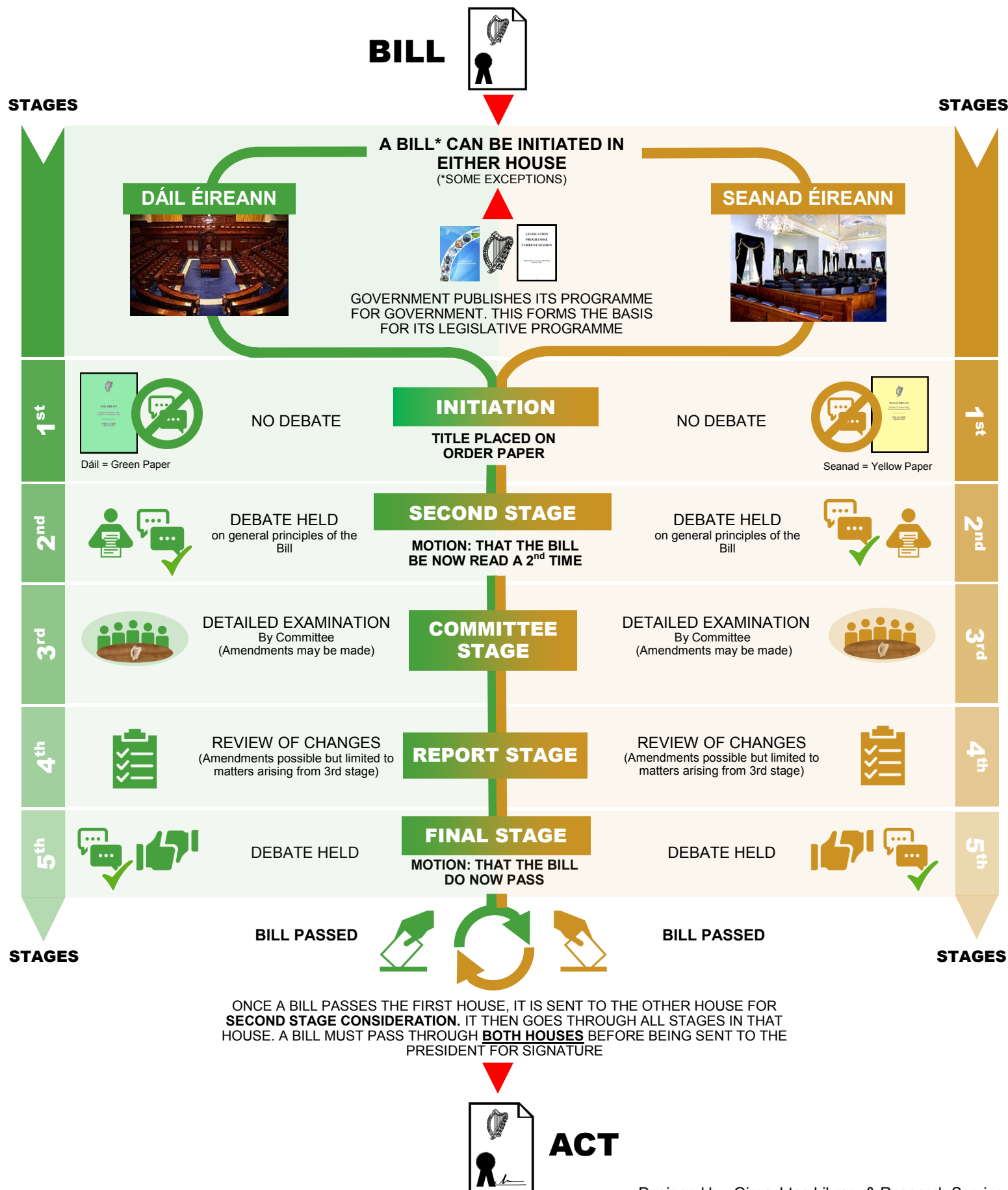




THE OIREACHTAS LEGISLATIVE PROCESS





THE 5 STAGES EXPLAINED

STAGE 1 INITIATION

Standing Orders provide for two methods of initiating a Bill – (a) **presentation** and (b) **introduction**.

PRESENTATION

Where a Bill is to be **presented** (by Government, or parliamentary groups provided for in Standing Orders), the Bill is published by the Bills Office and circulated to Members.

OR

LEAVE TO INTRODUCE

Any Member may seek to **introduce** a Bill. The Dáil / Seanad must agree to a Motion before the Bill can be published and circulated to Members. If this Motion is agreed, the House makes an order for Second Stage and the Bill is published by the Bills Office.

In either case, the text of the Bill must be examined by the Ceann Comhairle / Cathaoirleach for compliance with Standing Orders who must also approve an outline description of its purpose (known as the *long title*). If the Bill complies with Standing Orders, its *short* and *long* titles are then placed on the Order Paper.

Exceptions: All Bills may be initiated in either House *except* (a) Money Bills (Dáil only); (b) Bills to amend the Constitution (Dáil only); and (c) Private Bills (Seanad only).

STAGE 2 SECOND STAGE

Debate at Second Stage is on a motion, "That the Bill be now read a second time" (the motion for second reading) and relates to the content of the Bill. Limited amendments are possible but only to either **delay the motion** or to **state a special reason against the second reading**. The proposing Member (usually a Minister) speaks on the motion, followed by the main spokespersons of each of the political parties / groups, and finally all other Members. In the case of Private Members Bills (PMBs) the role is reversed.

STAGE 3 COMMITTEE STAGE

All sections of the Bill are examined by a Committee. Opposition and Government Members (TDs/Senators) use this opportunity to discuss possible amendments and the reasons why changes to the Bill are necessary. The Minister indicates which amendments may be supported / opposed and clarifies the Bill's provisions.

In the Dáil, a Select Committee is the norm but a Committee of the whole House is also possible, as are Special Committees. Committee / 3rd Stage in the Seanad generally takes place in **Committee of the whole Seanad** but may be considered in a Special Committee.

STAGE 4 REPORT STAGE

The outcome of Committee Stage (3rd Stage) is reported back to the House for consideration. Amendments may be made but scope for amendments is limited to matters arising out of Committee Stage (3rd Stage).

STAGE 5 FINAL STAGE

A final debate and vote on the Bill is held. The Bill is revised to take account of agreed amendments and the debate takes place on a motion "That the Bill do now pass". The Bill is then sent to the other House and is re-entered at 2nd Stage. If a Bill is amended in the other House, it must be returned to the first House for those amendments to be considered. Once a Seanad Bill has been amended by the Dáil, it becomes a Dáil Bill.

WHAT ARE STANDING ORDERS?

Article 15.10 of [Bunreacht na hÉireann](#) (the **Constitution**) gives both Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann the power to make rules for the conduct of business – the [Standing Orders of the House](#). The Standing Orders are the written rules of procedure that have been decided and adopted by the House itself. The rules cover a broad range of topics, from the declaration which must be made on election by the Ceann Comhairle, to the deadlines for the submission of motions for the Order Paper.



WHAT IS THE ORDER PAPER?

The [Order Paper](#) is a single document which contains details of all the items of business which are before each House (items such as Bills and Motions). On the first sitting day each week, the Order Paper contains all business before the House. On subsequent days a shortened version is produced, containing only business scheduled for that day and notice of new business.



WHAT IS A MONEY BILL?

A **Money Bill** refers to financial legislation (changes to taxation, or public expenditure).

Under Article 20.1 of the Constitution, Seanad Éireann can not initiate Money Bills but can make recommendations (not amendments) to such Bills.

WHAT IS A PRIVATE BILL?

A **Private Bill** is a piece of legislation which is promoted by local authorities, private organisations or individuals. These are rare.