



CHAPTER 12

Congress in Action

Chap 12.1 Congress Organizes Congress Convenes- House

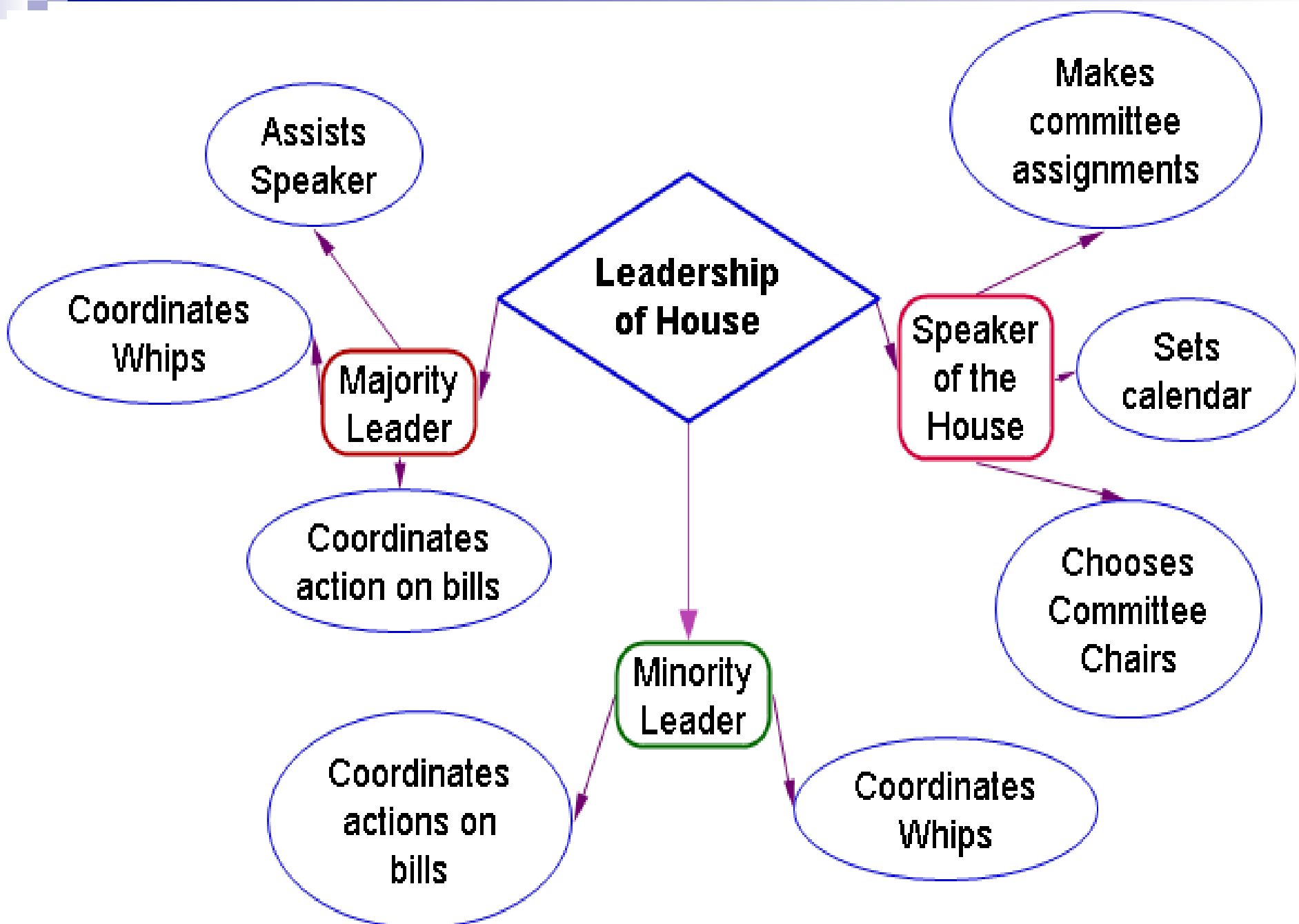
- Congress convenes every two years — on January 3 of every odd-numbered year.
- The House has formal organizational meetings at the beginning of each term to determine committee membership and standing officers.

Congress Convenes- Senate

- The **Senate**, because it is a **body**, has **fewer organizational issues** to address at the start of each term.
- When Congress is organized, the President presents a **State of the Union** message to a **joint session of Congress**. This message, in which the President reports on the state of the nation as he sees it, is given **annually**.

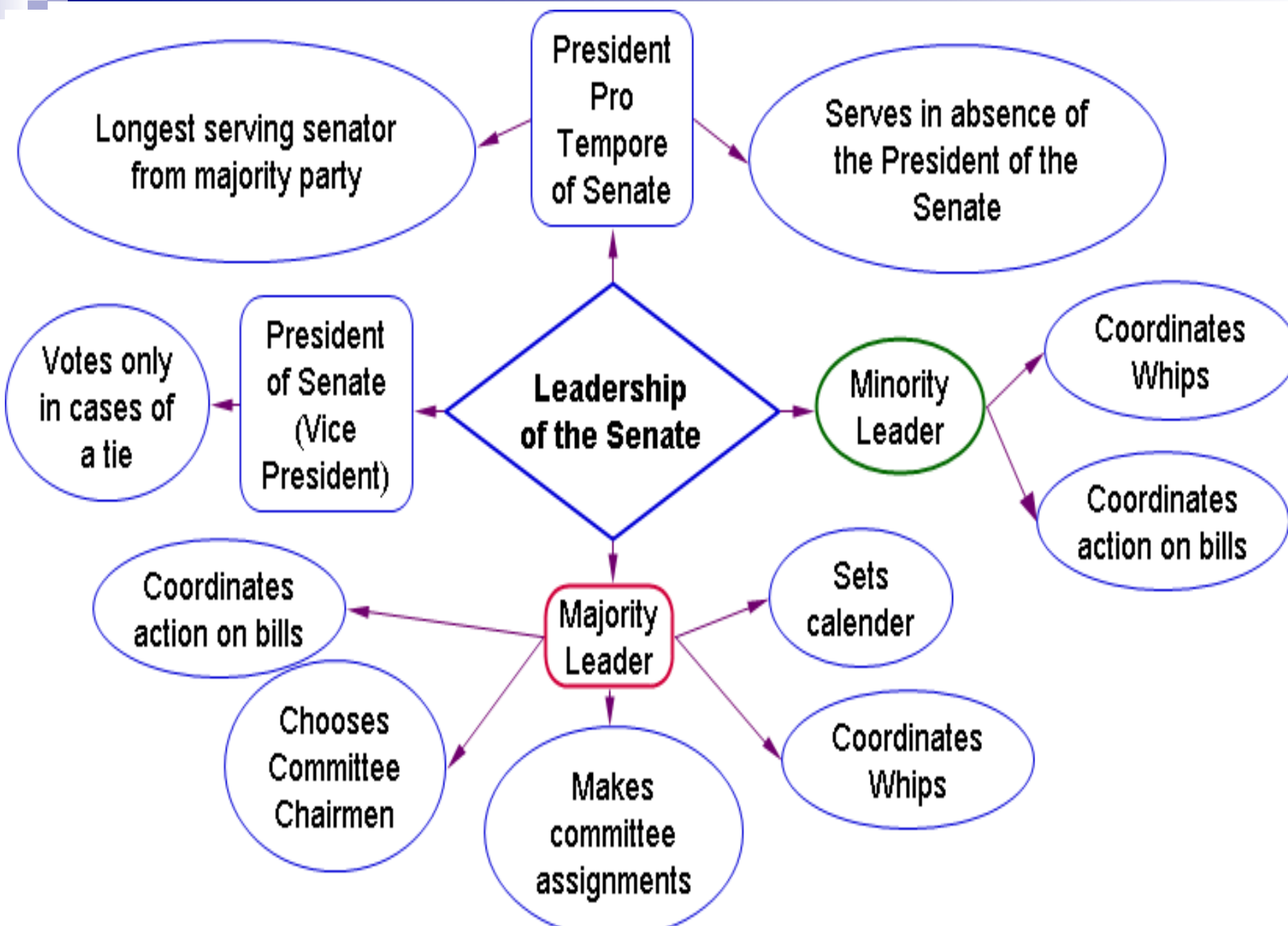


Composition of the House



The Presiding Officers- House

- The Speaker of the House is the presiding officer of the House of Representatives and the acknowledged leader of the majority party.
- The Speaker's main duties revolve around presiding over the House and maintaining order in the House.
- The Speaker names the members of all select and conference committees, and signs all bills and resolutions passed by the House.



President Pro Tempore of Senate

Longest serving senator from majority party

Serves in absence of the President of the Senate

Leadership of the Senate

President of Senate (Vice President)

Votes only in cases of a tie

Minority Leader

Coordinates Whips

Coordinates action on bills

Majority Leader

Coordinates action on bills

Sets calender

Chooses Committee Chairmen

Makes committee assignments

Coordinates Whips

The Presiding Officers- Senate

- The Constitution designates the Vice President as president of the Senate.
- The president of the Senate has many of the same duties as the Speaker of the House, but cannot cast votes on legislation except to break a tie.
- The president pro tempore, the leader of the majority party, is elected from the Senate and serves in the Vice President's absence.

Party Officers

- The party caucus is a closed meeting of the members of each party in each house which deals with matters of party organization.

Party Officers

- The floor leaders are party officers picked for their posts by their party colleagues.
- The party whips assist the floor leaders and serve as a liaison between the party's leadership and its rank-and-file party members.

Committee Chairmen

- **The Committee Chairmen are the members who head the standing committees in each chamber of Congress.**
- **The chairman of each of these permanent committees is chosen from the majority party by the majority party caucus.**

Committees and the Iron Triangle



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Ways and Means
First Session, 102nd Congress

Committee Members, seated left to right, are now: Harold E. Ford, Dan J. Rostenkowski, Nancy Pelosi; Frank J. Guintoli, Thomas J. Downey, Ed Jenkins, Andy Jacobs, Jr., Charles E. Rangel, F.J. Beckley, Sam M. Gibbons, Dan Rostenkowski, Chairman, Bill Archer, Clay Vander Jagt, Dick Scheles, Bill Gooden; Bill Thomas, Raymond J. McGrath; and standing: E. Clay Shaw, Jr., Dan Santapau, Nancy L. Johnson.

Members now, left to right: Robert E. Mann, Boyd Anthony, Jr., Byron E. Dorgan, Barbara B. Kennelly, Brian J. Donnelly, William J. Coyne, Michael A. Andrews, Sander M. Levin, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jim McDermott, Fred Grandy, Jim Rensing.

Staff, standing left to right: James Jaffe, Reginald Greene, Wendell Prince, Charles M. Brice, Robert J. Leonard, Philip D. Howley, James Clark, Deborah Collins, William T. Crippen, Janice May.

Members absent: Festus Pate Suck, Jim Moody, Philip M. Crane.

Seniority Rule

- The **seniority rule**, an unwritten custom, holds that the **most important posts** will be **held by** those **party members** with the **longest** records of **service in Congress**.
- The **head of each committee** is often the **longest-serving member** of the committee from the **majority party**.

Assessment

1. The presiding officer of the House of Representatives is
 - (a) the President.
 - (b) the Speaker of the House.
 - (c) the majority whip.
 - (d) the president pro tempore.

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Assessment

2. The party whips are responsible for all of the following EXCEPT

(a) serving as a liaison between party leaders and rank-and-file members.

(b) presiding over the House or Senate.

(c) informing the floor leader of anticipated vote counts in key decisions.

(d) seeing that all members of the party are present for important votes.

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Chap 12.2 Committees in Congress



- **Standing committees** are permanent panels in Congress to which bills of similar nature can be sent.
- Most of the standing committees handle bills dealing with particular policy matters, such as veterans' affairs or foreign relations.


Committees



- **The majority party always holds a majority of the seats on each committee (the lone exception being the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct).**

HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEES	JOINT COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS	SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES
Agriculture	Economic	Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Appropriations	The Library	Appropriations
Armed Services	Printing	Armed Services
Budget	Taxation	Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
Education and the Workforce		Budget
Energy and Commerce		Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Financial Services		Energy and Natural Resources
Government Reform		Environment and Public Works
House Administration		Finance
International Relations		Foreign Relations
Judiciary		Governmental Affairs
Resources		Indian Affairs
Rules		Judiciary
Science		Labor and Human Resources
Small Business		Rules and Administration
Standards of Official Conduct		Small Business
Transportation and Infrastructure		Veterans Affairs
Veterans Affairs		
Ways and Means		

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- The House Rules Committee decides whether and under what conditions the full House will consider a measure.
 - This places great power in the Rules Committee, as it can speed, delay, or even prevent House action on a measure.

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- Select committees are panels established to handle a specific matter and usually exist for a limited time.
 - Most select committees are formed to investigate a current matter.

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- A joint committee is one composed of members of both houses.
 - Examples of joint committees include the Joint Economic Committee, the Joint Committee on Printing, and the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress

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- A conference committee—a temporary, joint body—is created to iron out differences between bills passed by the House and Senate before they are sent to the President.

Assessment

3. The House Rules Committee
 - (a) establishes codes of conduct.
 - (b) determines when and under what conditions the full House will consider a measure.
 - (c) oversees the execution of bills once they are passed into law.
 - (d) determines which members of the Senate may vote on a measure.

Assessment

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 - (a) establishes codes of conduct.
 - (b) determines when and under what conditions the full House will consider a measure.
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 - (d) determines which members of the Senate may vote on a measure.

Assessment

4. A conference committee is formed to
 - (a) iron out differences in bills passed by the House and Senate before they are sent to the President.
 - (b) hold press conferences.
 - (c) appoint Supreme Court justices.
 - (d) determine rules for debate.



Assessment

4. A conference committee is formed to
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 - (b) hold press conferences.
 - (c) appoint Supreme Court justices.
 - (d) determine rules for debate.



The First Steps

- A **bill** is a **proposed law** presented to the House or Senate for consideration.
- A bill or resolution usually deals with a single matter, but sometimes a **rider** **dealing with an unrelated matter** is included.
- The clerk of the House numbers each bill, gives it a short title, and enters it into the House Journal and the Congressional Record for the day. With these actions the bill has received its **first reading**.

BILL

A proposed law or draft of a law; public bill applies to the entire nation; private bill applies only to certain people or places

JOINT RESOLUTION

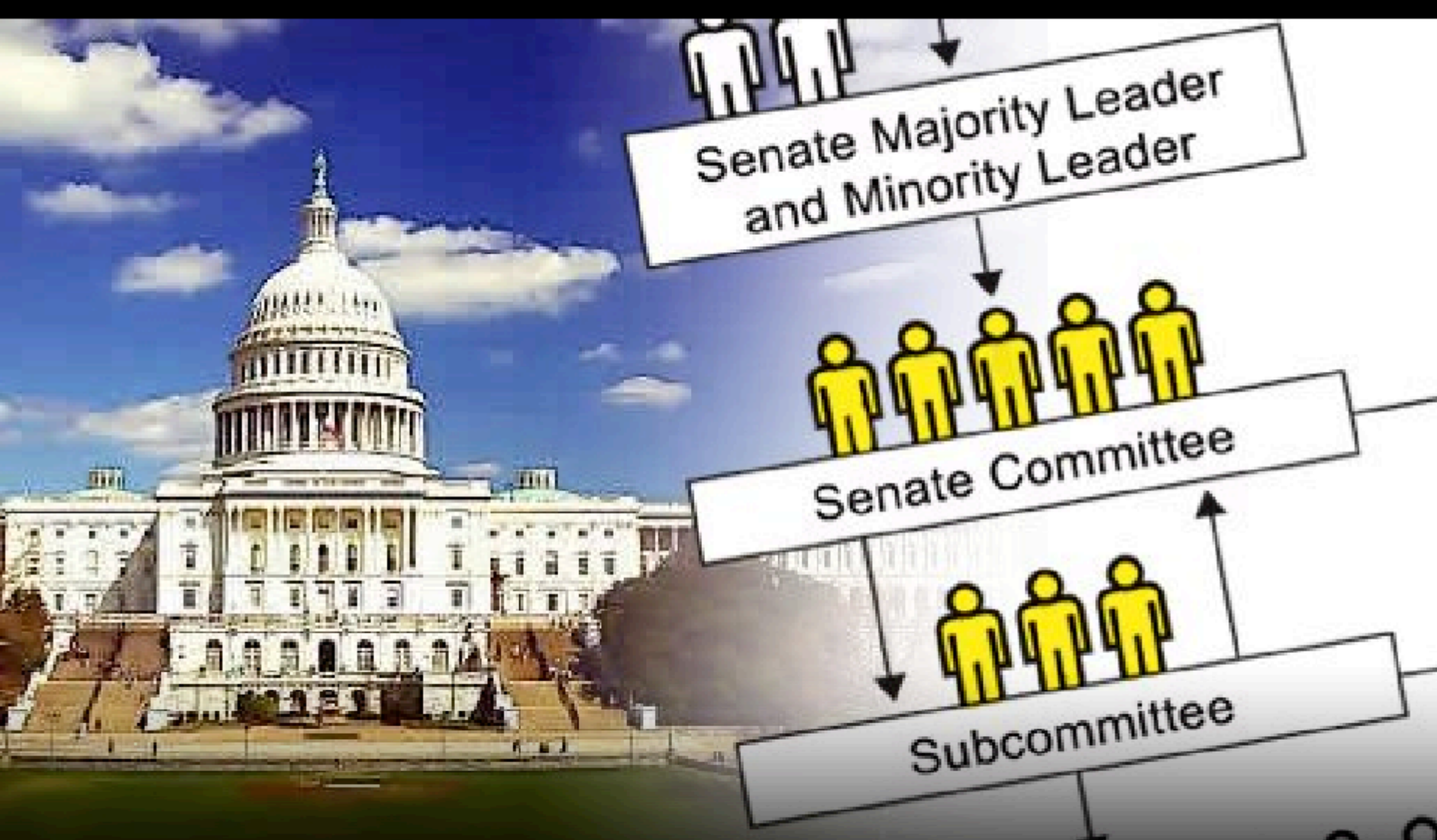
A proposal for action that has the force of law when passed; usually deals with special circumstances or temporary matters

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

A statement of position on an issue used by the House and Senate acting jointly; does not have the force of law; does not require the President's signature

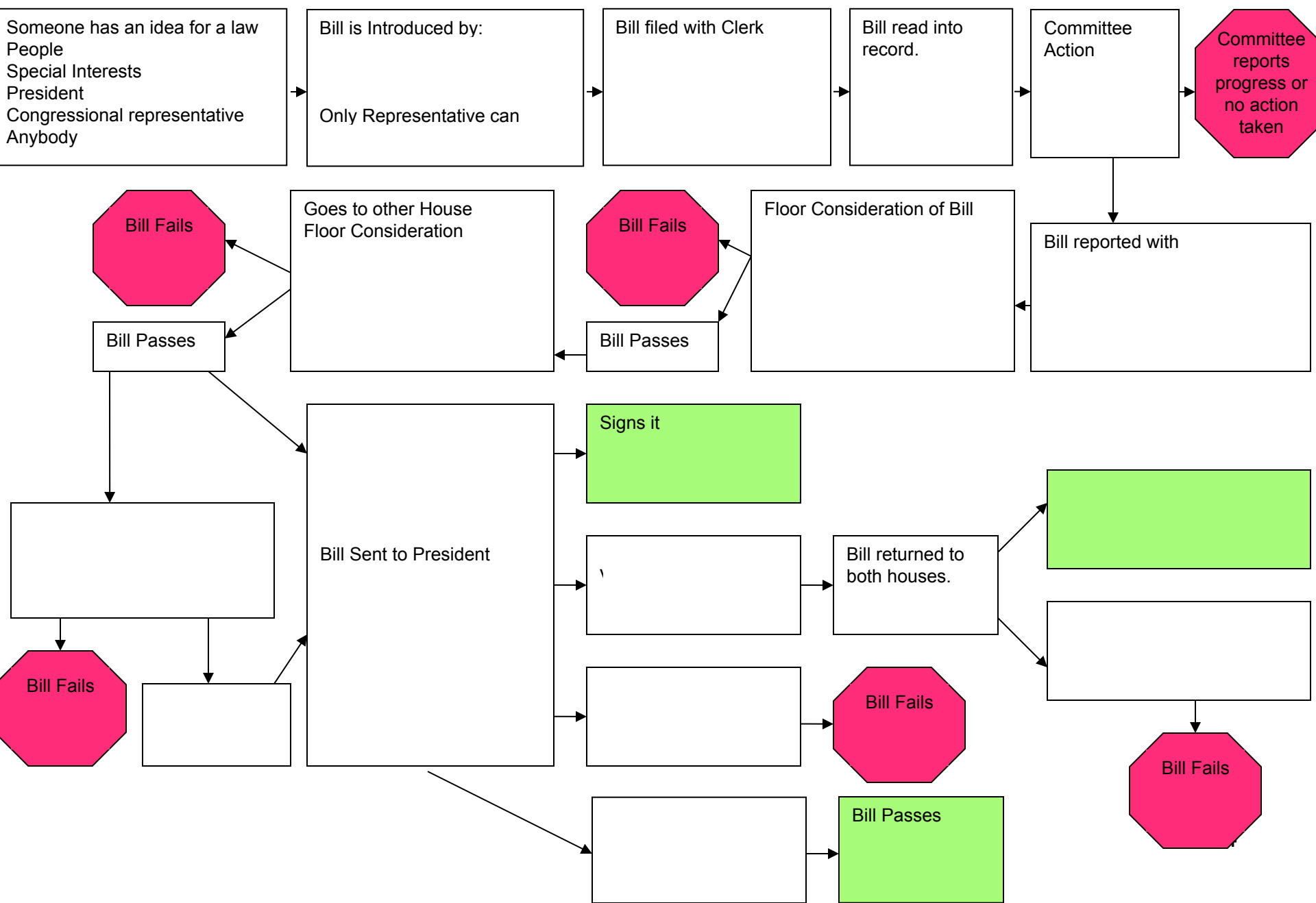
RESOLUTION

A measure relating to the business of either house or expressing an opinion on a matter; does not have the force of law; does not require the President's signature

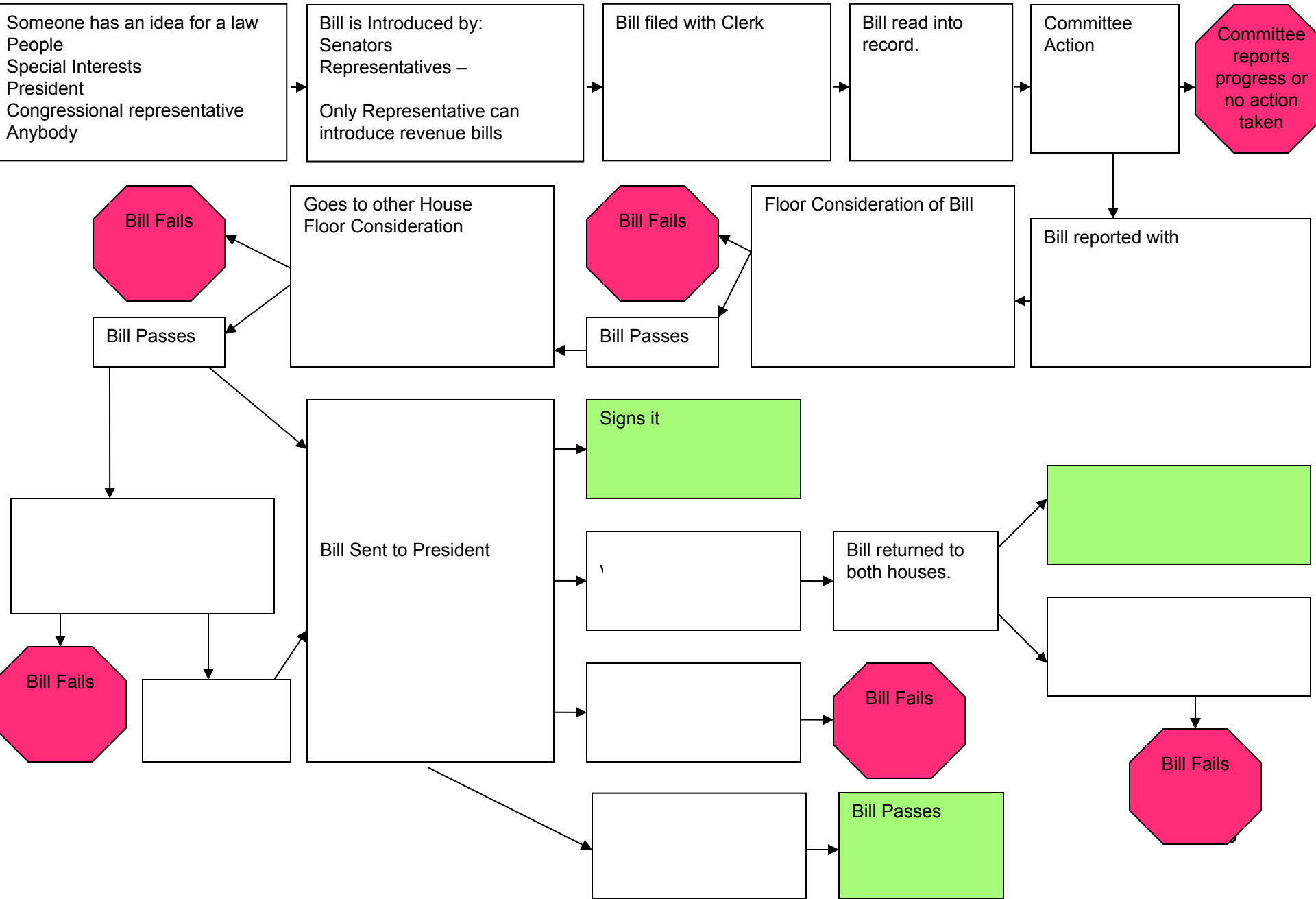


Route of a Bill through Congress

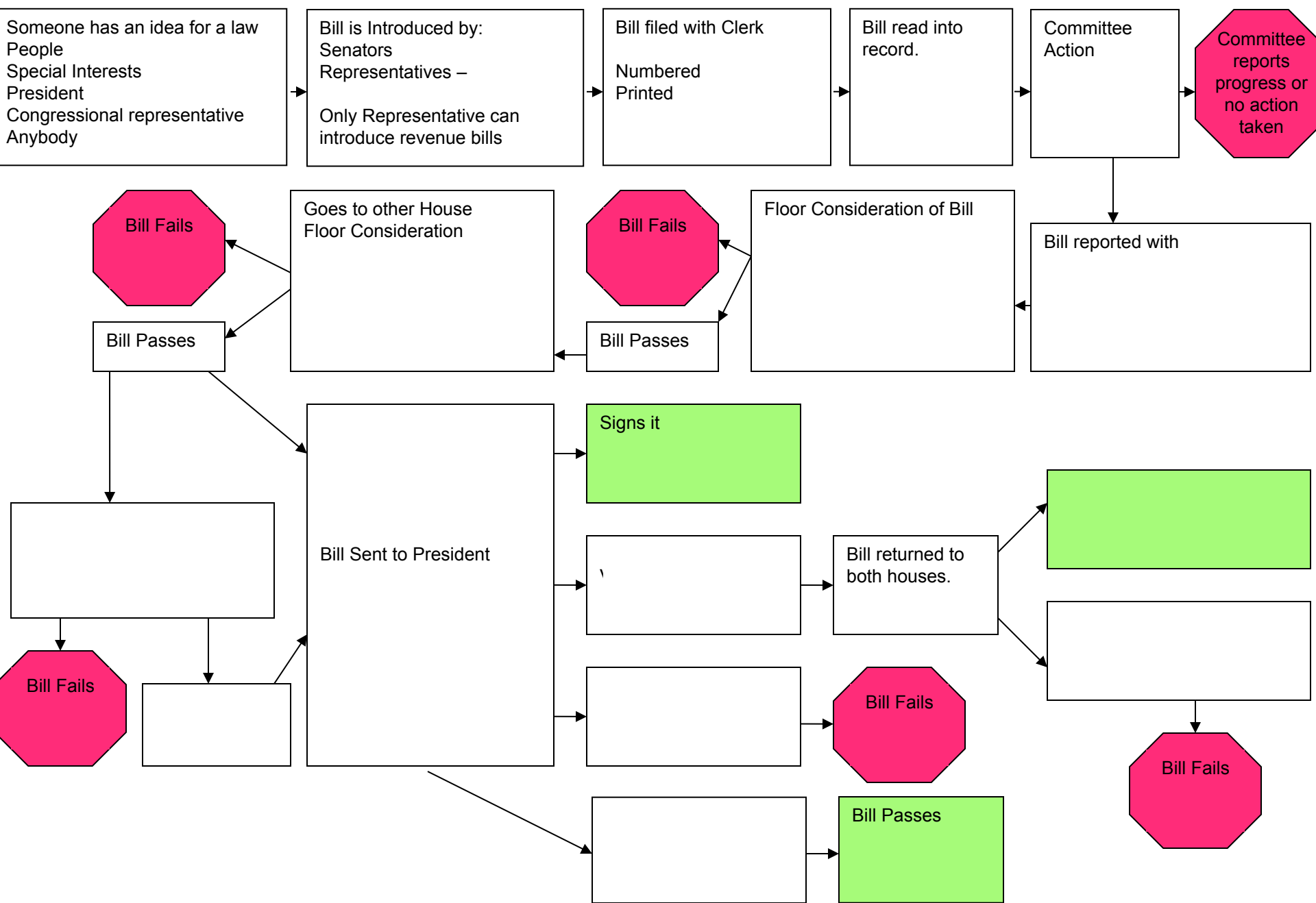
How a Bill Becomes Law



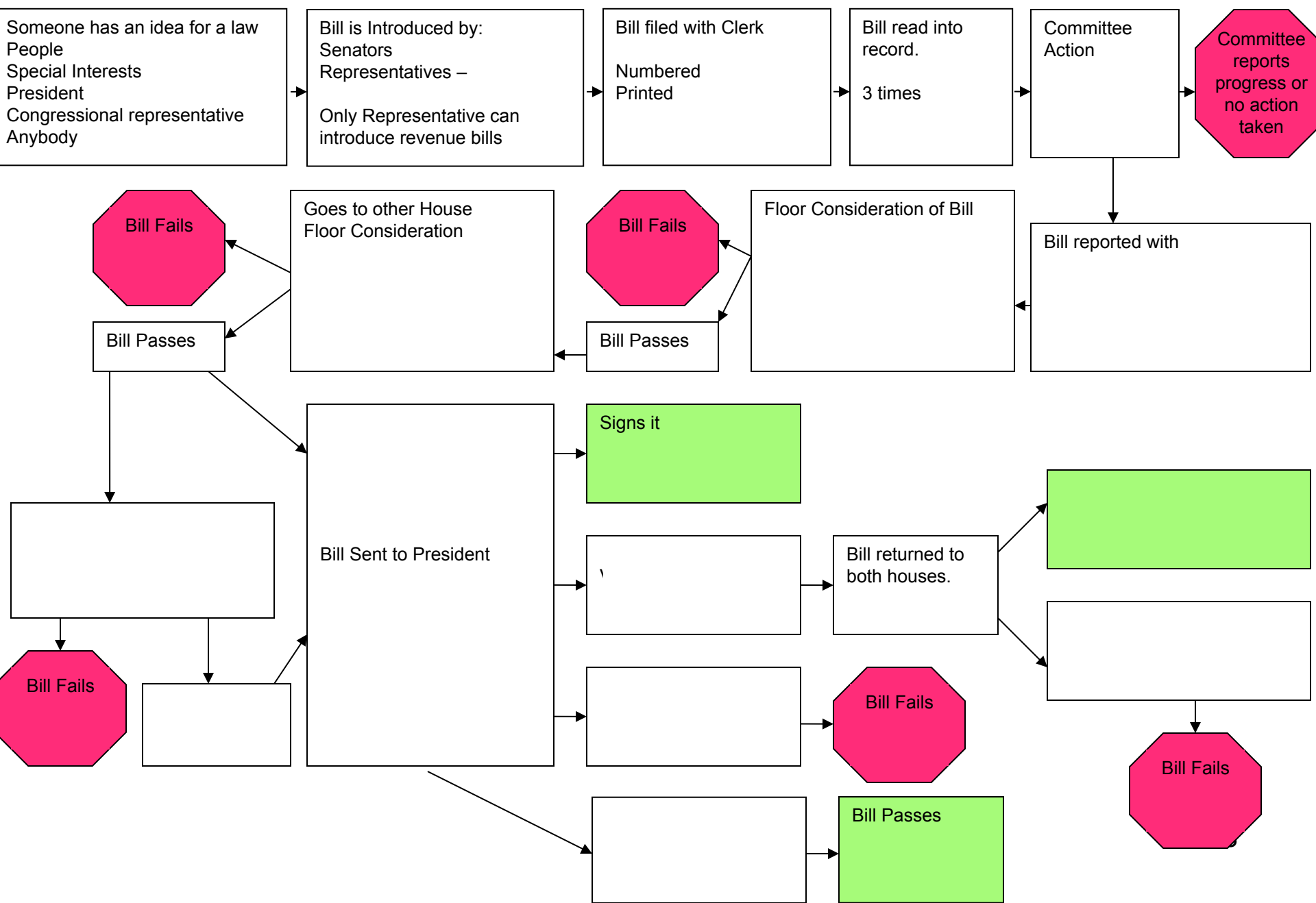
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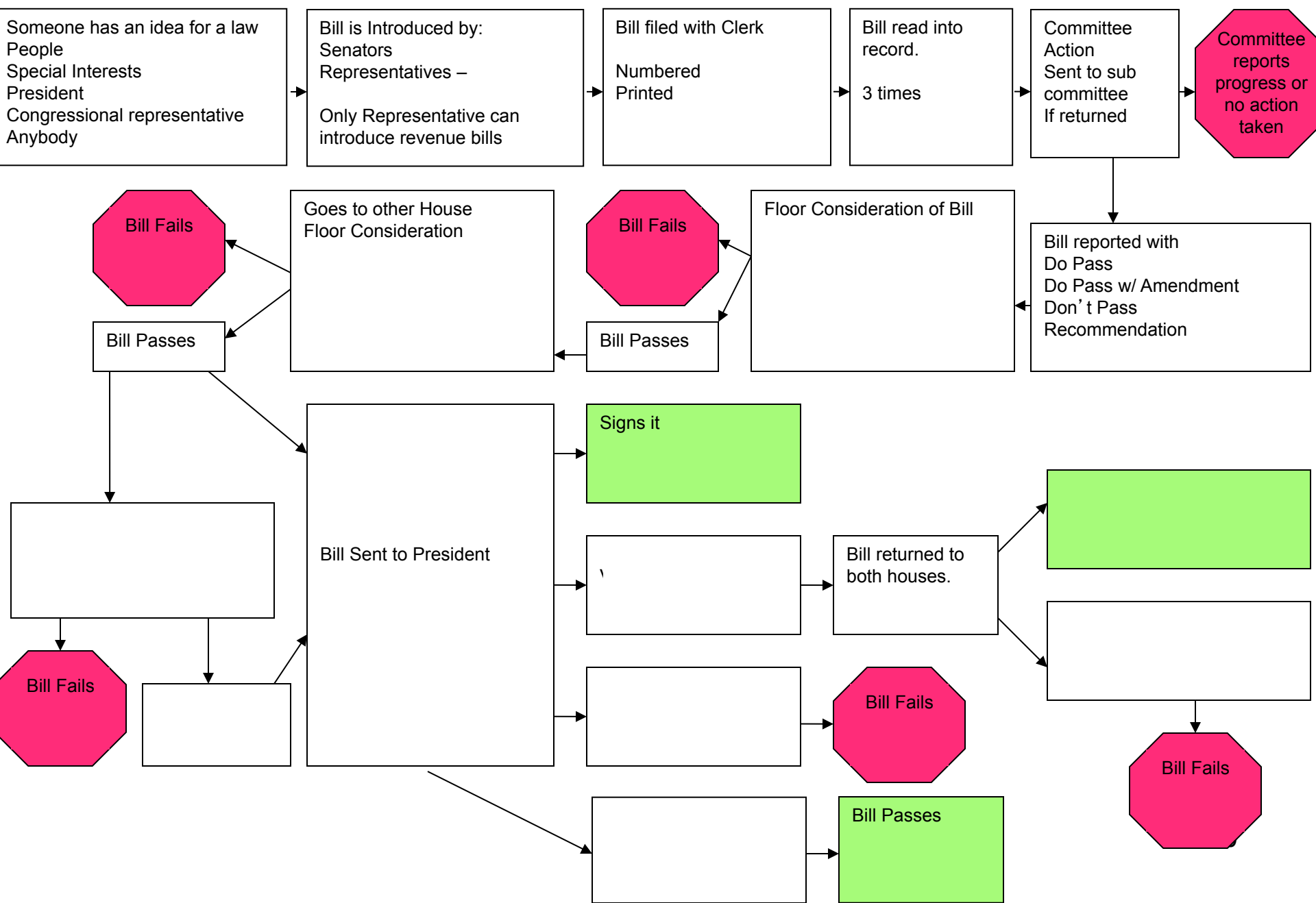
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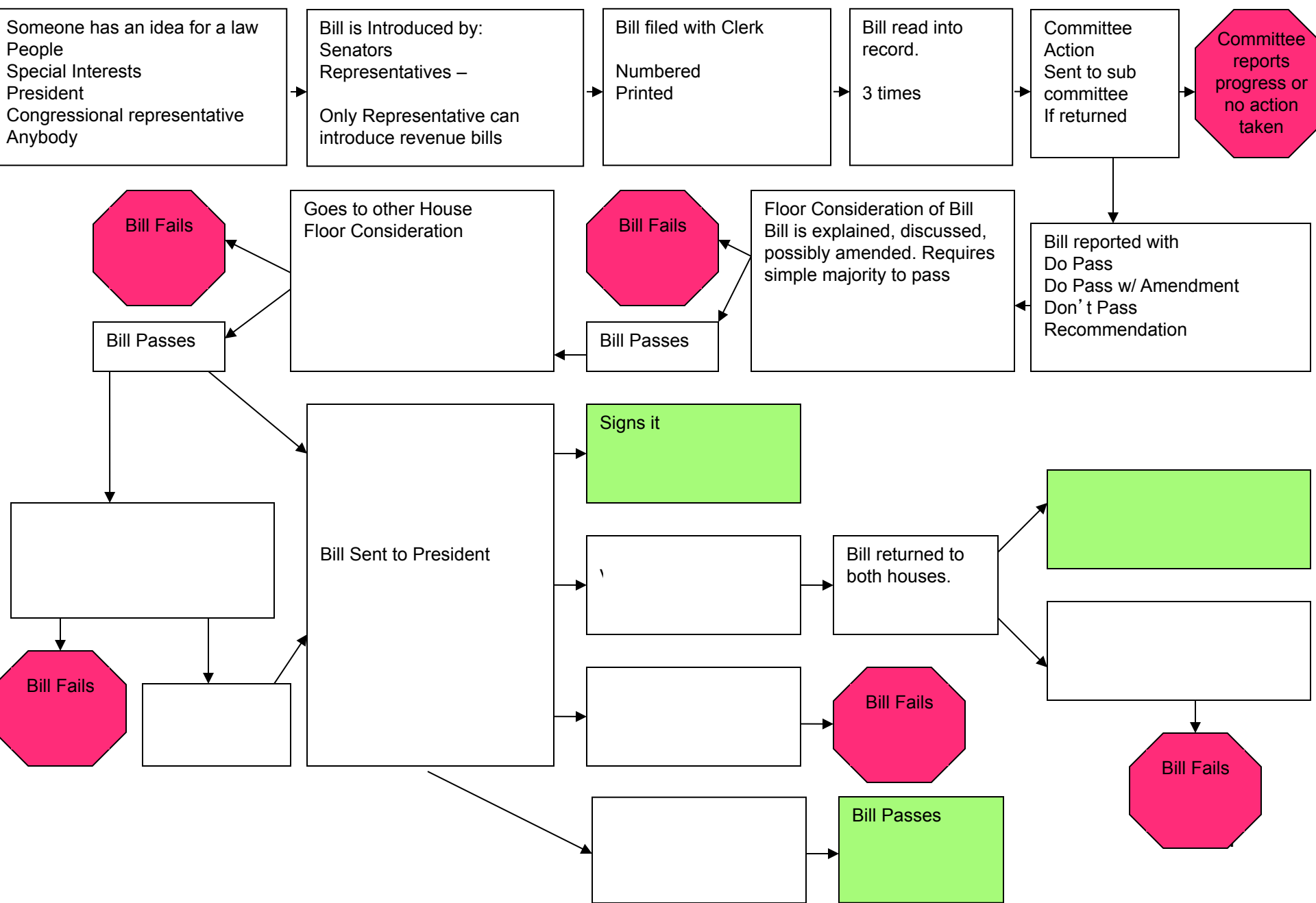
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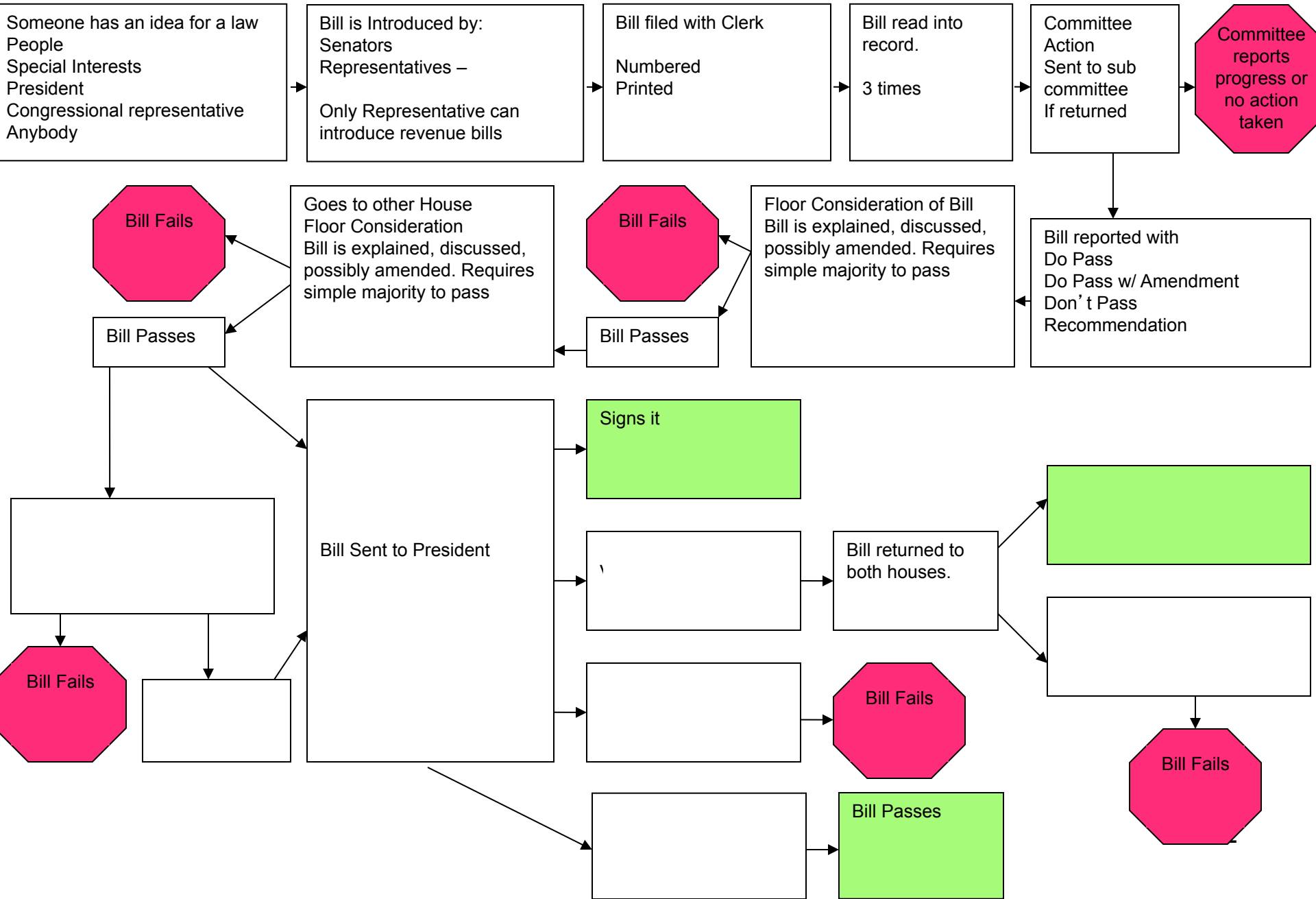
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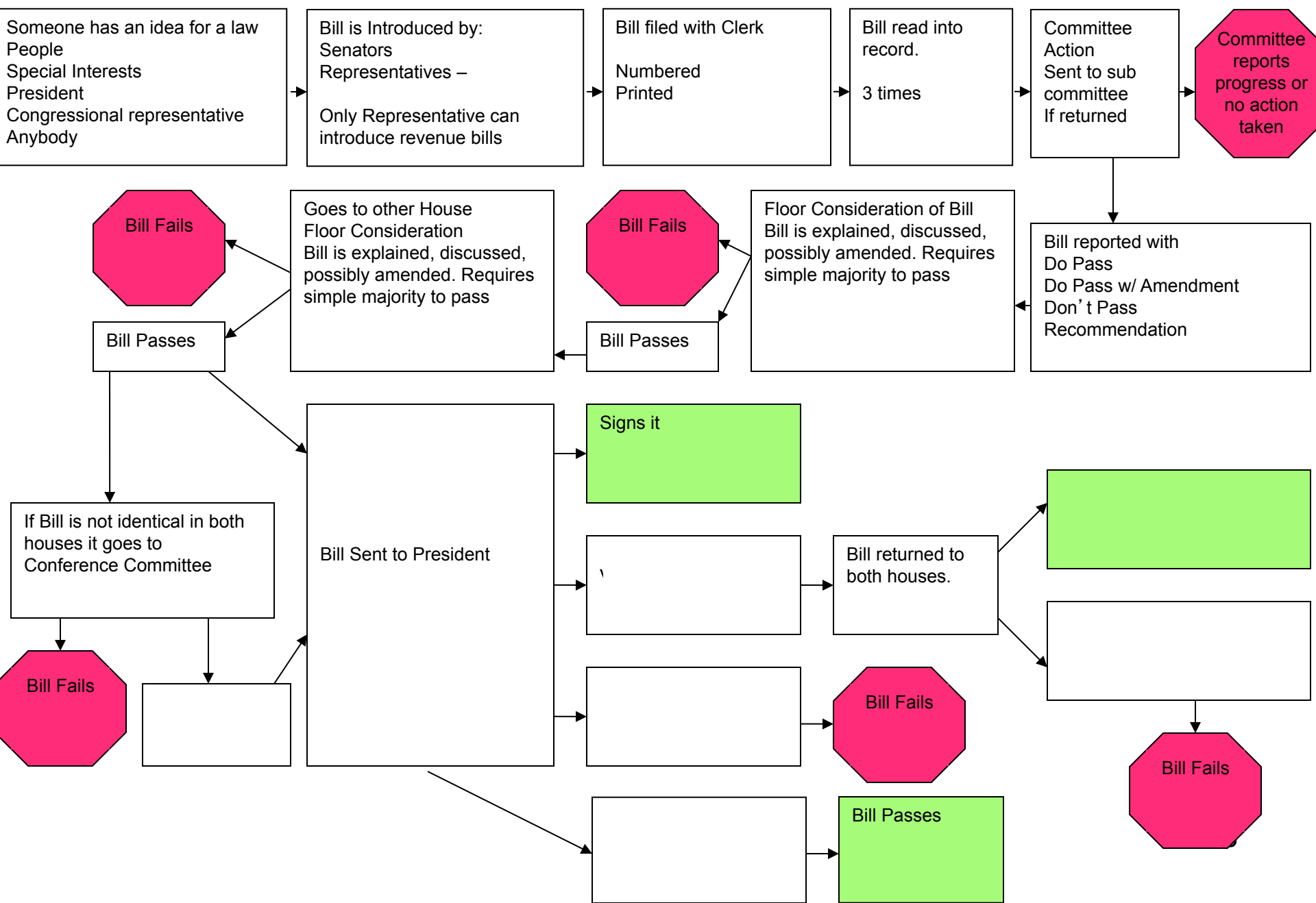
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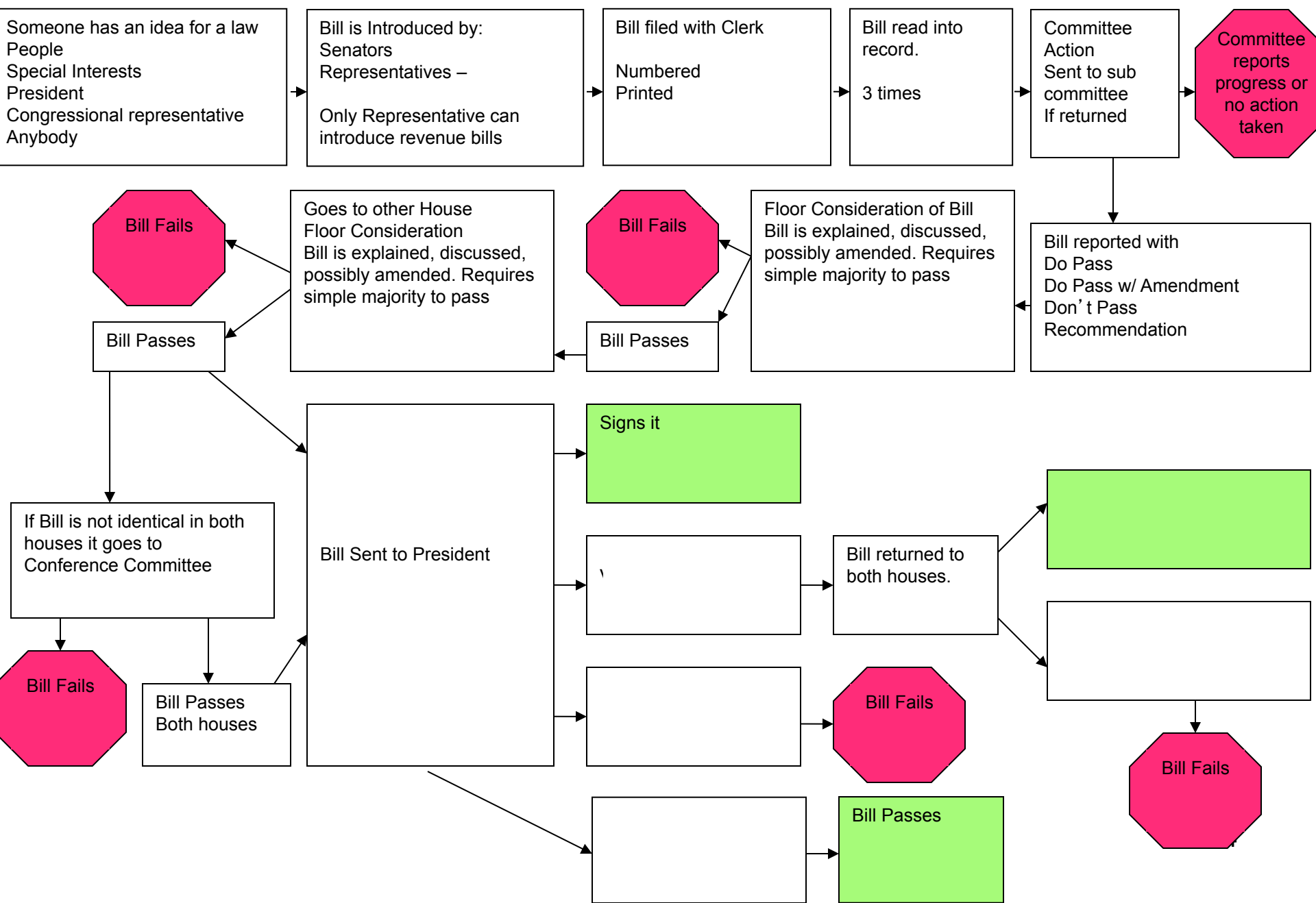
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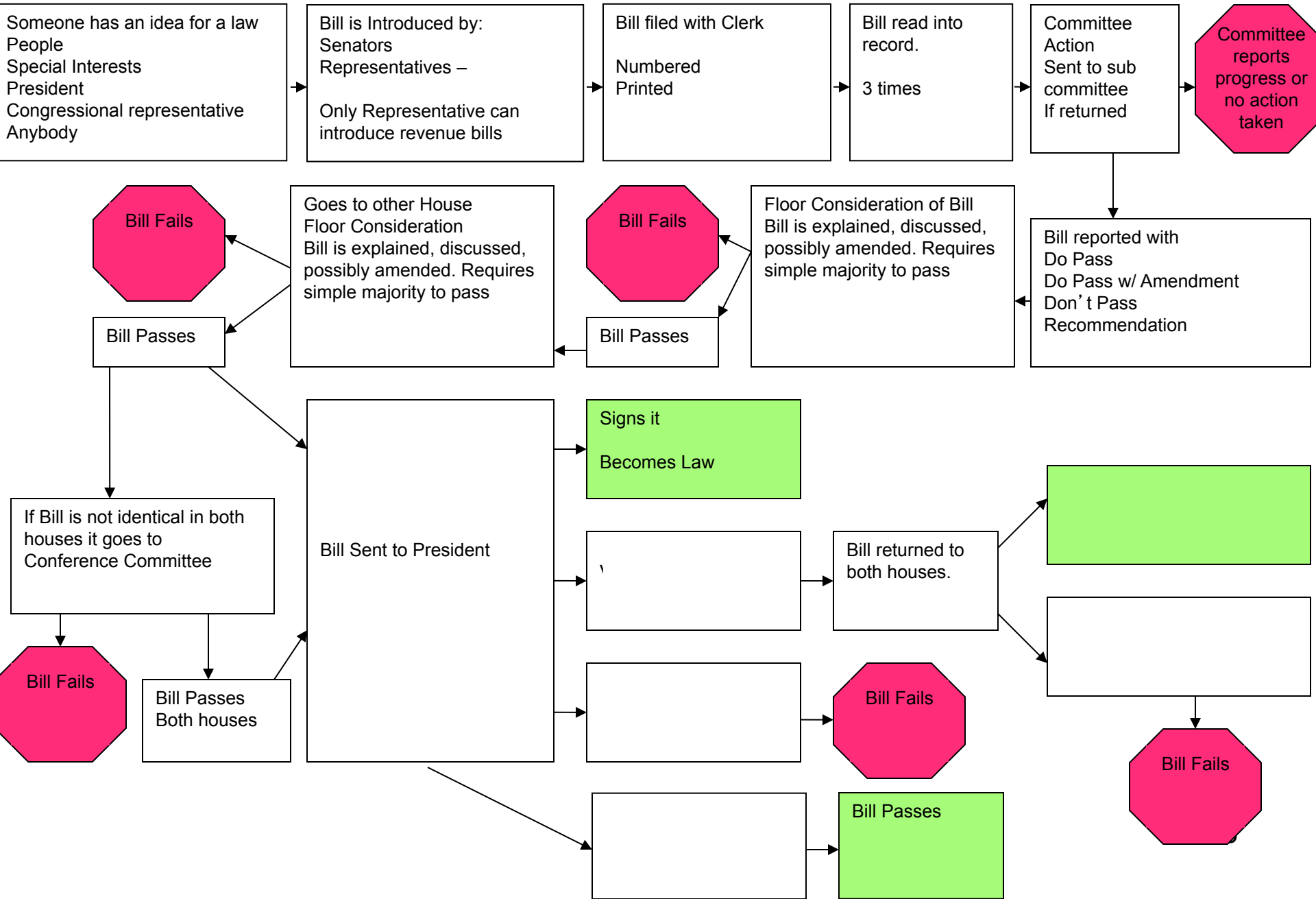
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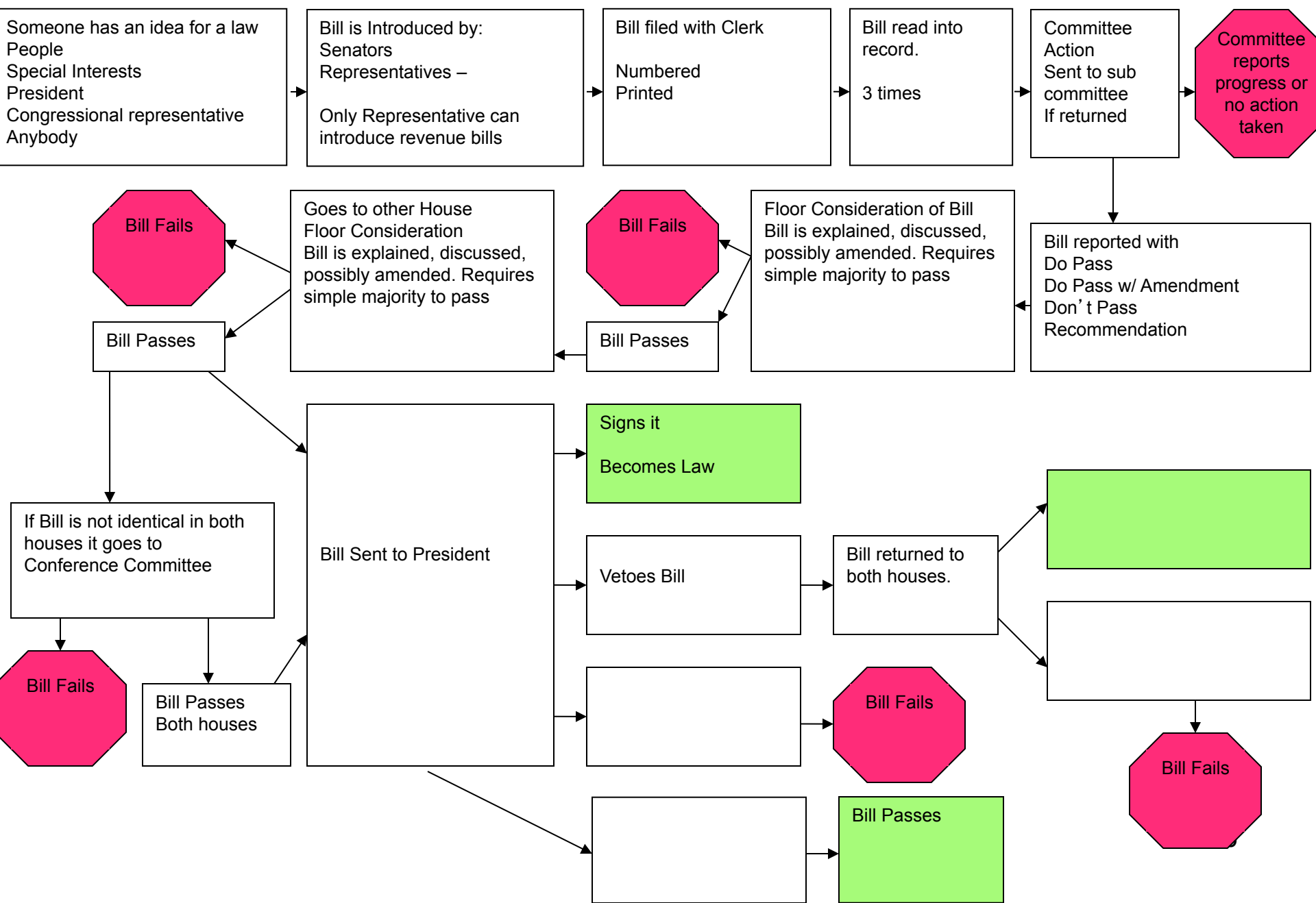
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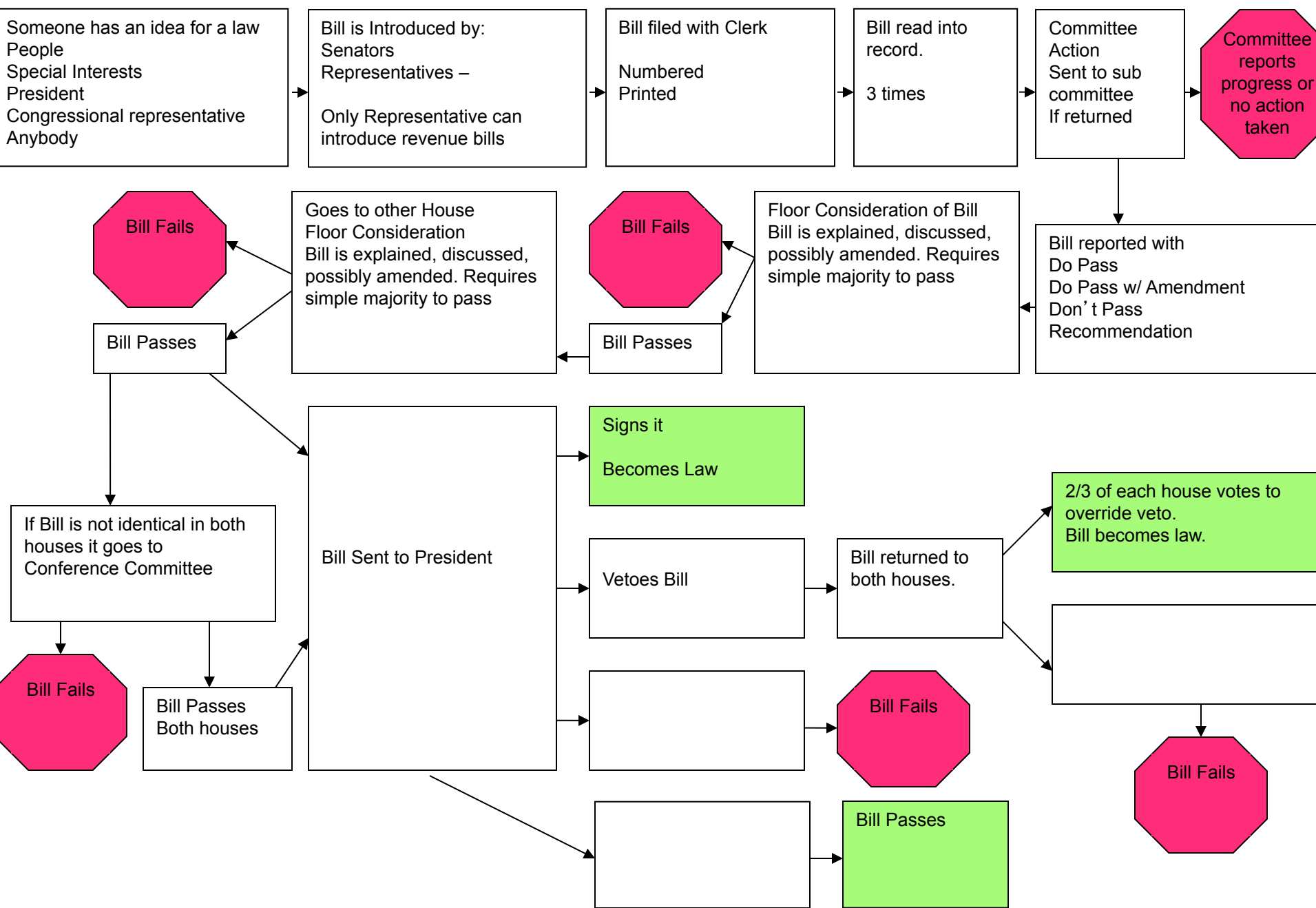
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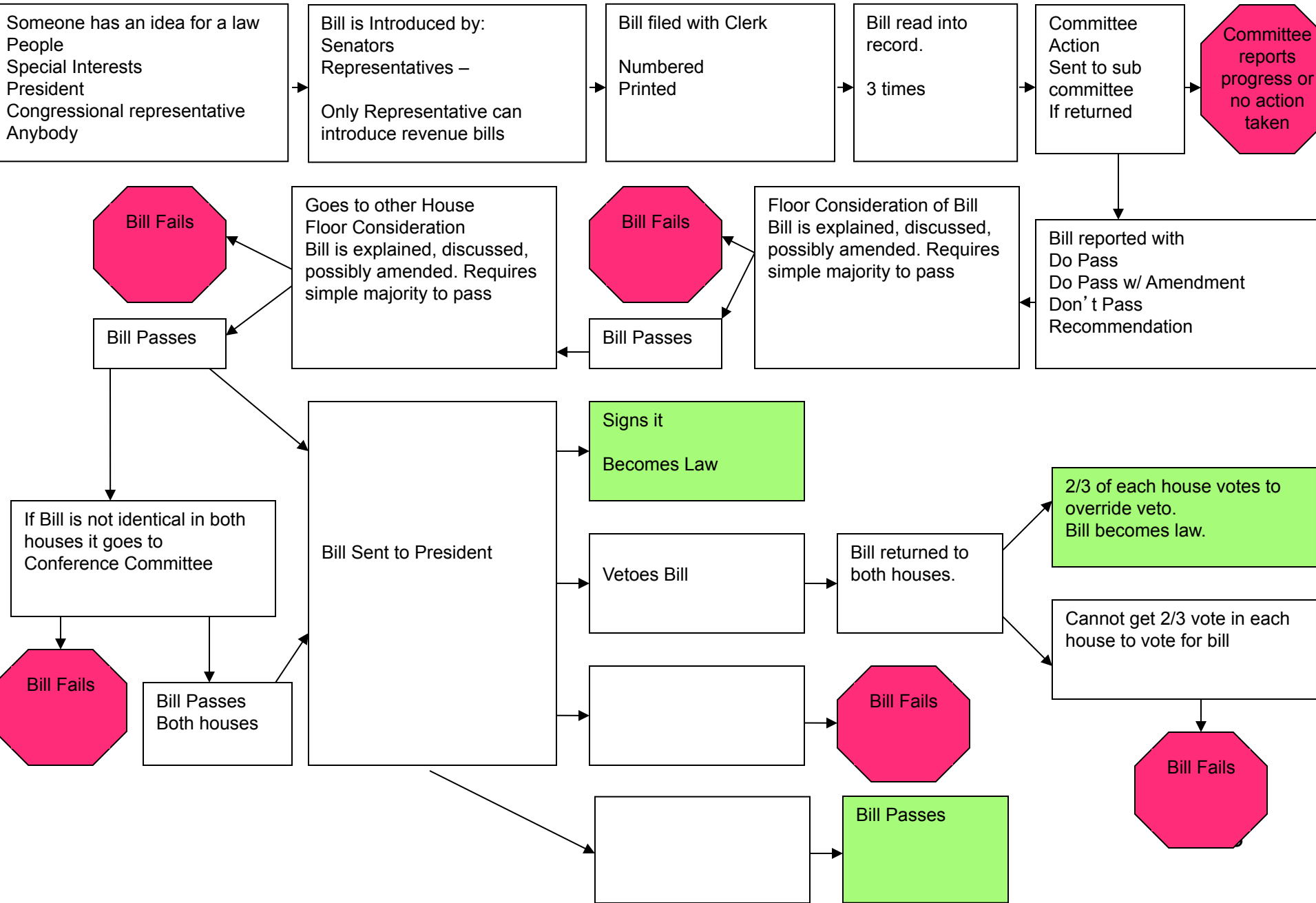
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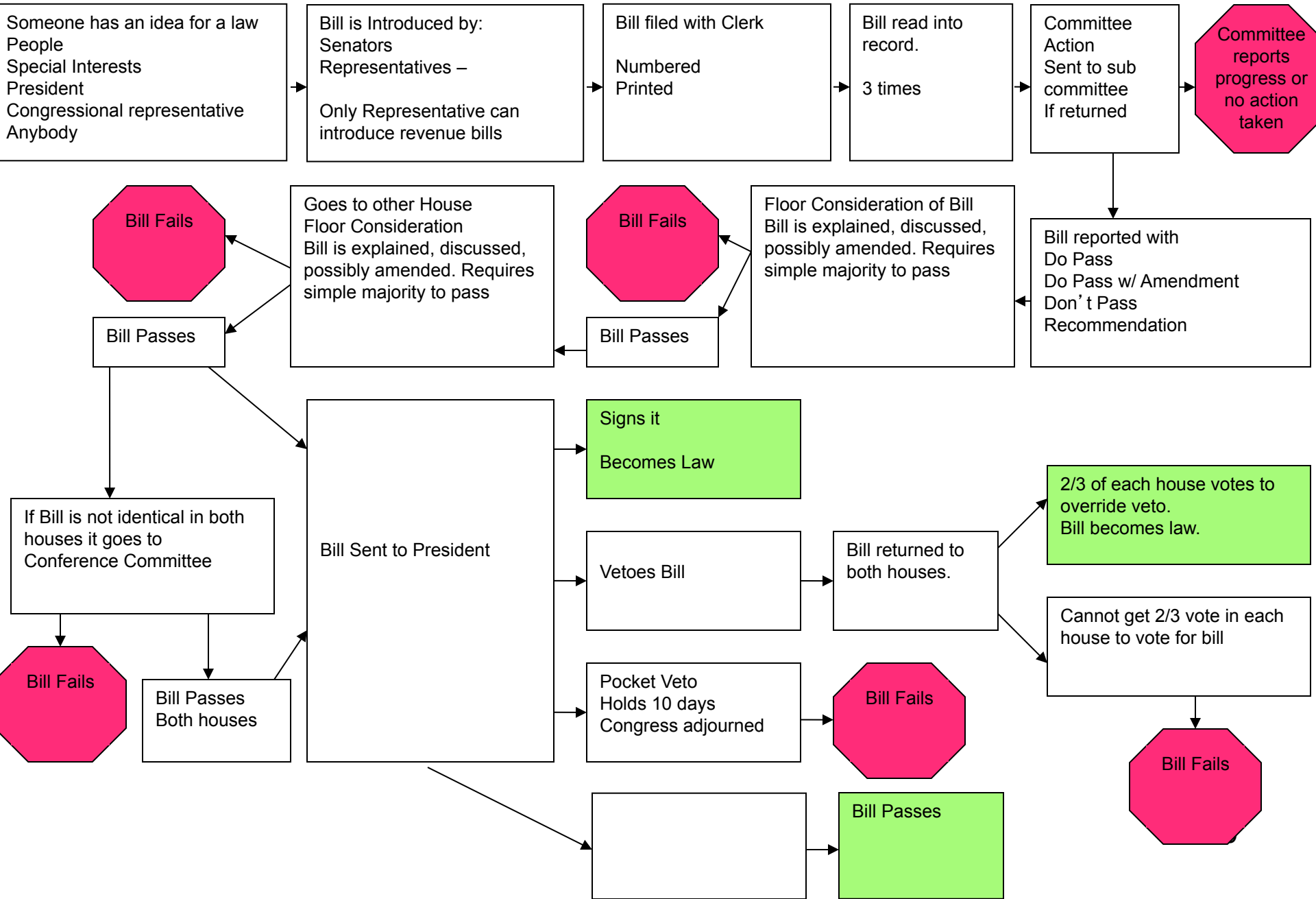
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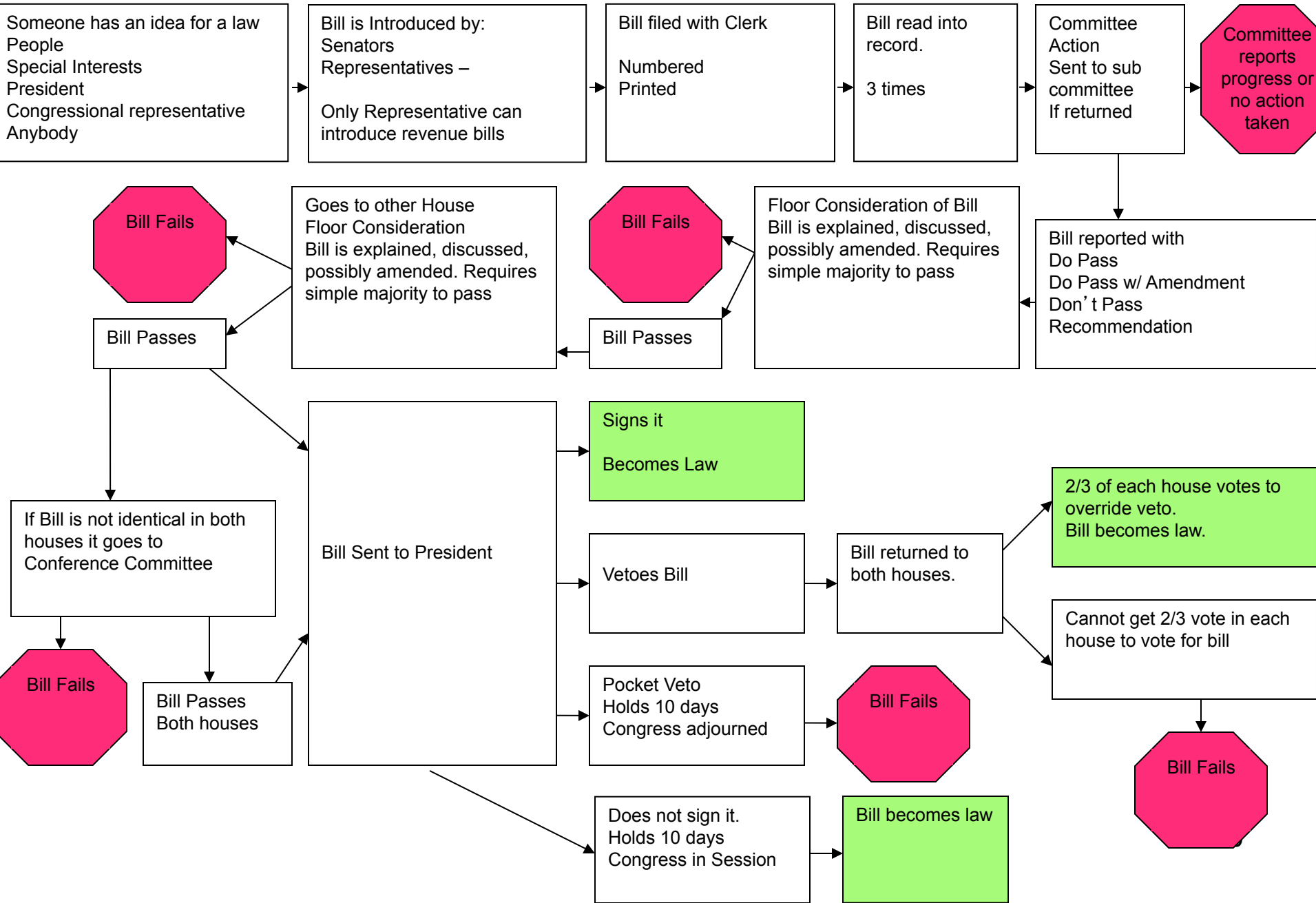
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Veto Power and Judicial Review

Section 3 Assessment

1. Riders are
 - (a) measures attached to a bill dealing with an unrelated matter.
 - (b) bills dealing with transportation matters only.
 - (c) measures included in a bill that are unconstitutional.
 - (d) none of the above.



Section 3 Assessment

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Section 3 Assessment

2. All of the following are options for committees to take once they have finished reviewing a bill EXCEPT
- (a) refusing to report the bill.
 - (b) reporting a bill in amended form.
 - (c) reporting a committee bill.
 - (d) passing the bill into law.

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Structure of the Senate

Senate

Introducing a Bill

- Bills are introduced by **senators**, who are formally recognized for that purpose.
- Proceedings are much **less formal** in the Senate compared to the House.



Senate

Rules for Debate

- The major differences between House and Senate rules regard debate over measures.
- As a general matter, senators may speak on the floor for as long as they wish.
- This freedom of debate allows for the fullest possible discussion of matters on the floor.



Power, Committees, and Debates

Senate

- A **filibuster** is an attempt to “talk a bill to death.”
- A senator may exercise his or her right of holding the floor as long as necessary, and in essence talk until a measure is dropped.

Senate

- Rule XXII in the Standing Rules of the Senate deals with **cloture**, or limiting debate
- If at least 60 senators vote for cloture, no more than another 30 hours may be spent on debate, **forcing** a vote on a bill.

Conference Committees

- Any measure enacted by Congress must have been passed by both houses in **identical** form.
- If one of the houses will not accept the other's version of a bill, a conference committee is formed to **iron** out the differences.
- Once a conference committee completes work on a bill, it is returned to both houses for final approval. It must be accepted or rejected **without amendment**.

The President Acts

The Constitution provides four options for the President when he receives a bill:

1. The President may **sign** the bill, and it then becomes law.
2. The President may **veto** the bill, or refuse to sign it. The President's veto can be overridden by a two-thirds vote of the members present in each house.
3. If the President does not act upon a bill within 10 days of receiving it, it becomes **law**.
4. A **pocket veto** occurs if Congress adjourns within 10 days of submitting a bill and the President does not sign it. The bill then dies.



Section 4 Assessment

1. A filibuster is

- (a) a tool used by senators to speed up the process of passing legislation.
- (b) the name for a bill once it is signed into law.
- (c) a delay tactic in which a bill is talked to death.
- (d) an executive privilege that allows for the amending of passed bills.



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Section 4 Assessment

2. All of the following are options for the President for dealing with a bill once he receives it EXCEPT
- (a) allowing it to become law by not acting upon it for 10 days.
 - (b) signing the bill into law.
 - (c) altering the bill and signing it into law.
 - (d) vetoing the bill.

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New Senate Make Up

Senate

Makeup

Democrats Republicans Independent

109th Congress

44

55

1

110th Congress

49

49

2

111th Congress

57

40

2 1 undecided

Change

+13

-15

+1



Senate Leadership

■ **DEMOCRATS**

- President Pro Tempore — Robert C. Byrd, WV
- Majority Leader — Harry Reid, NV
- Majority Whip — Richard J. Durbin, IL

■ **REPUBLICANS**

- Minority Leader — Mitch McConnell, KY
- Minority Whip — Trent Lott, MS



New House Make Up

House Makeup	Democrats	Republicans	Independent
109th Congress	201	232	2
110 th Congress	232	200	3
111 th Congress	254	178	3 vacancies
Change	+53	-54	+1



House Leadership

■ **DEMOCRATS**

- Speaker of the House — Nancy Pelosi, CA
- Majority Leader — Steny H. Hoyer, MD
- Majority Whip — James E. Clyburn, SC

■ **REPUBLICANS**

- Minority Leader — John A. Boehner, OH
- Minority Whip — Roy Blunt, MO