

Hi, this is Chris Micheli with the Sacramento Governmental Relations Firm of Aprea & Micheli, and an adjunct professor at McGeorge School of Law in its Capital Lawyering Program. Today's podcast concerns the three readings of a bill required by the California Constitution.

The California Constitution requires a bill to be read three times before it can be debated and voted upon by either house. A reading of a bill in the state Assembly or the state Senate is defined as being, "The presentation of the bill before the entire house by reading the bill's number, the author, and the title."

Each time the bill is read, those three provisions are read aloud on the floor by the reading clerk in either the Senate or the Assembly. There's a misconception that the three constitutionally required readings of a bill are all the same. In fact, each is for a different specified purpose.

The first reading of a bill occurs upon introduction of the bill. The second reading occurs after a bill has been reported to the floor from committee, with or without amendments. The third reading occurs when the measure is about to be taken up on the floor of either house for final debate and passage.

Note that the three readings requirement under the Constitution can be suspended by a two-thirds vote in either house. Let's cover the three readings.

**The first reading.** The first reading of a bill takes place when it is actually introduced in either house. The bill is placed across the desk of the Assembly or Senate, which is the official act of introducing a bill in the Legislature.

In the Assembly, the Assembly Chief Clerk or his or her representative at the Assembly desk receives the bill. In the Senate, the Secretary of the Senate, or his or her representative, receives the bill. The bill is then given a bill number upon its introduction.

Once a bill passes over to the other house for consideration, it is simply read for the first time. Note that introduced bills are contained in the Assembly Daily File or the Senate Daily File, but there's actually no first reading portion in either Daily File. No floor analysis is prepared for an introduced bill, either.

**The second reading.** The second reading of the bill takes place after the bill has been reported out of committee, either the policy or the fiscal committee, to the floor of either the Assembly or the Senate.

This process occurs whether the bill has been amended or not amended. Also, a bill can be on second reading several times, such as when the bill has been reported out of the policy committee, and then again after being reported out of the fiscal committee.

There is a second reading portion in both the Assembly and Senate Daily Files. This portion of the Daily Files lists by file number, which is assigned to each bill once it has been listed in the Daily File and it's been reported out of committee to the floor.

The general rule is that a bill remains on the second reading file for one day before moving to the third reading file. Again, no floor analysis is prepared for the second reading filed bills.

You should also be aware that file numbers assigned to bills in the Daily File often change each day, as all the bills get processed and moved onto or off of the Daily File. Generally, bills are taken up on the Assembly or the Senate floors in file item order, unless for some specific reason to do otherwise.

When the presiding officer announces a bill for consideration, it is usually referred to by its file number rather than its bill number.

The third reading file. The third reading of the bill takes place when the bill is about to be taken up for consideration -- that is, its presentation debate and vote on either the Assembly floor or the Senate floor.

There is a third reading portion in both the Assembly and Senate Daily Files. This portion lists by file number each bill that's eligible to be taken up for a final vote on either floor.

A third reading analysis is prepared for bills eligible for consideration and that are pending on either the Assembly or Senate floors in the third reading file. This analysis of the bill generally provides an explanation of existing law, what this bill does to existing law, any amendments thereto, as well as often a listing of supporters or opponents.

Those are the three readings of a bill. Hope you enjoyed this podcast.