Conference Committees and Final Version of Bill

Sending a Bill to Conference

If the House and Senate version of legislation differ in even the smallest degree, a Conference Committee must resolve such differences. Once both chambers have considered the same legislation, either chamber can call a conference.

Important points

A Conference Committee is composed of a varying number of senators and representatives who meet publicly.

Some bills never make it out of a Conference Committee.

Occasionally, time is a factor at the end of a congressional session and differences are too great to resolve.

What Conference Committee Members Do

Conferees must support their chamber in the negotiations.

Conferees must listen to lobbyists, who try to pressure them to adopt provisions beneficial to their clients.

Conferees are supposed to consider only matters of disagreement in the legislation; however, they sometimes make amendments to other sections.

When Agreement Is Reached

The bill is rewritten by the committee staff; any changes are indicated, and an explanation is given of each side’s viewpoint.

The conference report is signed in duplicate by a majority of conferees from each chamber’s delegation.

The report is submitted to both houses.

The conference version of the bill must then be approved in its entirety by both houses.