

The purpose of this booklet...

This booklet has been prepared by the United Transportation Union's International Legislative Department at its Washington, D.C., offices to help the UTU in its active and successful legislative program.

The UTU wants every member and the families and friends of members to realize the great importance and significance a simple letter, fax, e-mail or telephone call may have in the consideration of a proposed law that may greatly help them – or severely damage them – in their lives and careers as railroad, bus, airline and transit employees.

In addition to legislation and regulations that are directly connected with UTU members' jobs and the rail, bus, airline and transit industries, the UTU is equally interested in protecting the rights of retirees and the overall good of the country.

We live in the greatest country in the world. Let's keep it that way by becoming personally involved in the making of new laws, the changing of old laws and protecting current laws and regulations that are beneficial. **YOU CAN HELP.**

NOTE:

Additional copies of this booklet are available to individuals or groups interested in legislation affecting their members and their families. Please e-mail utunews@utu.org or send written requests to:

Public Relations Department
United Transportation Union
14600 Detroit Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio 44107-4250



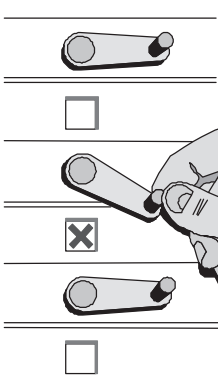
Getting a Message to Congress

What every UTU member should know about

**UTU PAC, Lobbying and
the Legislative Process**

Register to vote and vote on Election Day

You and your voting age family members (even your friends and neighbors) can use the UTU website to register to vote!



Go to www.utu.org, look toward the bottom right hand side of the home page and click on Voter Registration.

Then simply follow the instructions.

Appendix II

Your Legislators

United States Senators

Senator _____	Senator _____
Washington Address _____	Washington Address _____
Washington, DC 20510	Washington, DC 20510
Telephone (202) 224- _____	Telephone (202) 224- _____
State Office Address _____	State Office Address _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Telephone _____	Telephone _____

United States House of Representatives

Representative _____
Washington Address _____
Washington, DC 20515
Telephone _____
District Office _____
Telephone _____

About this booklet...

Because of the importance of legislation in our work and in our daily lives, we think it is vital that every member know how their voluntary efforts can help strengthen the UTU's clout in Congress. We cannot avoid the introduction of anti-union legislation but we can join the fight against such legislation and together we can help elect members of Congress who are friendly to our cause.

This booklet begins with an explanation of UTU PAC – UTU's voluntary Political Action Committee (PAC) – and continues with a guide to the legislative process, lobbying, and various ways of getting a message to members of Congress.

Explaining the purpose and operation of UTU PAC will, we hope, lead to your greater understanding of the political process. We must work for and help those people who we feel are capable, knowledgeable and who recognize the problems that affect railroad, bus, airline and transit workers and will work toward enacting laws that protect our interests.

Volunteers – active and retired UTU members, UTU

Auxiliary members, spouses, families and friends – have helped to make the UTU's Legislative Department in Washington, D.C., one of the most effective union lobbies on Capitol Hill. With your active participation in the lobbying effort, we hope to gain a more powerful voice in Congress and in the White House.

With this booklet, you will see how a bill becomes a law and how effective it is to communicate your ideas to a member of Congress. The importance of letters, faxes, phone calls and email to your representative and senators cannot be overstated and is considered some of the best ways to get your message to Congress.



We hope this booklet will motivate you to become part of the UTU's legislative and political activities.

Remember, 10 personal communications from 10 constituents are worth far more than a petition with 100 names. Members of Congress pay attention to emails and letters that are signed and include the writer's home address.

Appendix I

Contacting Your Legislators

To learn the names, addresses (including e-mail addresses) and telephone numbers of your elected officials in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, go to the webpage at [www. utu.org](http://www.utu.org). To the left of the home page, in the red margin, click on Washington Updates. Then click on Contacting the Congress and follow the instructions.

If you do not have access to a computer, ask your local legislative representative or state legislative director for assistance, or call the UTU Washington Legislative Office.

Write the names and other information in Appendix II of this booklet (on the next page) so that it is readily available.

Remember, the names, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of your representatives may change the January following national elections, which occur in even numbered years. Obviously, changes also occur when members of Congress die or retire before the end of their terms. So it is a good idea to visit the website periodically to check for updates.

Table of contents

Letters to the Editor

A short, well written letter to the editor of a local newspaper, or a guest editorial in the newspaper or on local television, can greatly help get your point across to members of Congress and to other citizens. An effective message will prompt many letters and other messages from interested and concerned constituents of the representative. This type of message can generate lots of attention because legislators always keep tabs on news from the people back home.

Remember to keep your message short and concise. Draw on personal experience and similar experiences of people in the local area. You'll be surprised at the results.

Here are a few more examples of how you can get in direct contact with your elected representatives:

- Attend a congressional workshop/forum/meeting. Most representatives hold special meetings to speak to their constituents and to hear voters' opinions. You should take every opportunity to attend events where your representative speaks or appears as a guest. Ask questions and try to meet with legislators after the workshop has ended. Be sure to identify yourself as a UTU member and constituent.

- Invite the legislator to your local meeting, local picnic, UTU Auxiliary meeting or similar function. You can put together a low-cost dinner and hold it in your local meeting hall, a church basement or community hall to honor a friend of the UTU. A retiree dinner is another excellent opportunity for meeting your representatives.

- Hold a congressional breakfast for UTU members. It is simple to arrange and afford, and it gives your legislator a chance to meet many people.

To make the most of your efforts, make publicity arrangements to announce in advance your meeting with legislators or gatherings attended by them. You should prepare a press release for the local media and arrange to have photographs taken. This type of publicity will help both the legislator and the public image of the UTU.

Why you need UTU PAC, and why it needs you	.1
What is UTU PAC?	.1
How does UTU PAC operate?	.1
How are UTU PAC funds distributed?	.2
How can I contribute to UTU PAC?	.3
The legislative process – How laws are made	.6
Party leadership	.7
How a bill becomes a law	.9
The bill is introduced	.9
Committee action	.9
The bill is debated	.11
The bill is forwarded	.12
The President acts on the bill	.12
The Congressional budget process	.13
Authorization	.13
Appropriation	.14
Budget resolutions	.14
Reconciliation	.15
Getting your message across – Contacting your representatives	.17
Communicating with Congress	.17
How to write letters	.18
Sample letter	.20
Letters to the editor	.21
APPENDIX I Your Legislators	.23
APPENDIX II UTU Legislative Directory	.24
APPENDIX III House Standing Committee	.25
APPENDIX IV Senate Standing Committees	.26

GETTING A MESSAGE TO CONGRESS

Date

Honorable John O. Jones
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Jones:

As a voter and constituent represented by you in the (House of Representatives/United States Senate), I am writing to urge you to (support/oppose) (S. _____/H.R. _____), a bill to _____ . This _____ (or on the floor of the House/Senate).

(Passage/defeat) of this legislation is important to me as a (active/retired) member (or spouse of a member) of the United Transportation Union because _____ (in your own words, state reasons) _____ .

When this bill comes up for consideration, I urge you to vote (for/against) it for these reasons.

I would appreciate your support of this position, and would like to know your views on the issue and how you intend to vote on this bill.

Thank you for taking time to consider my views.

Sincerely,

Sam Smith
123 Main St.
Anytown, ST 45678
(010) 555-9400

Why you need UTU PAC, and why it needs you

Here is how to address your letter:

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Senator (full name)
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Mr. President:
The Honorable (full name)
Secretary of Labor
Washington, DC 20210
Dear Secretary _____:

Dear Senator _____:
The Honorable (full name)
Governor of _____
(State capitol and ZIP)
Dear Governor _____:

Honorable (full name)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Dear Mr. (or Mrs.) _____:
or
Dear Representative _____:

On the following page is a sample for a letter you might write to your representative or senators. Note how it follows the guidelines outlined on pages 18 and 19.



What is UTU PAC?

The United Transportation Union formed the Transportation Political Education League (TPEL) because Federal law prohibits unions from using membership dues or assessments for political activities. In 2004, for many reasons, the name TPEL was changed to UTU PAC. As we all know, legislation on the state and national levels drastically affects us and our jobs. Therefore, we must work for and help those people who we feel are capable, knowledgeable and who recognize the problems that affect railroad, bus, airline and transit workers.

Political campaigns and publicity programs cost money, and they are one of the few ways that candidates can let the public know of their record and their desire for election or re-election to public office. Candidates running for office must have assistance in advising UTU members and other voters of their opinions and positions on legislation and other matters of interest. Voluntary contributions to UTU PAC provide these funds.

How does UTU PAC operate?

UTU PAC is governed through by-laws established for its operation in conformance with state and Federal laws and in the best interest of the UTU membership. UTU PAC by-laws control composition, leadership, operation, financing and general disbursement of funds for political and legislative activities.

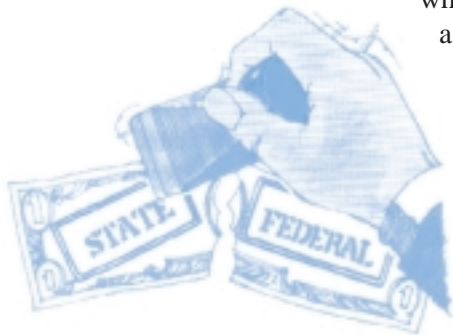
UTU PAC is governed by a national committee composed of a chairperson, vice chairperson and a secretary/treasurer. UTU PAC national chairperson is the UTU International president, national vice chairperson is the UTU national legislative director and the national secretary/treasurer is the UTU general secretary and treasurer. The state UTU PAC committees have a chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary at the state level. All UTU PAC officers serve on a voluntary basis, and no TPEL funds are used for salaries or record keeping.

The International in Cleveland maintains the records and files the nec-

essary reports for UTU PAC. Federal law prohibits the union from using dues assessments for political purposes, but it does not prohibit using the UTU facilities for accounting and filing. The complete record – from the important pledge you sign indicating the amount of your voluntary donation and collection of it, to the cancelled checks and records of income and disbursement – is maintained in the International offices. The law also requires UTU PAC to make regular reports to state and Federal agencies. These records are available for your inspection at any time at the International offices, your state chairperson's office, or at the secretary of state's office in individual state capitals.

How are UTU PAC funds distributed?

UTU PAC funds are split on a 50/50 basis, with one half being guaranteed for use within the state where the member's local is headquartered, the other half being used at the national level. State funds are used for assisting candidates for offices which are statewide in nature, such as governor, attorney general, public utility commissioner, treasurer or state legislators. National funds are used in Federal elections for national offices such as President, senator or member of Congress.



UTU PAC funds do not go to just one political party. Candidates from both political

parties receive UTU PAC assistance on the basis of their past record and attitude or position on subjects or goals which are vitally important to UTU members, rather than their political affiliation. Republican and Democratic parties have both good and bad representatives as far as the interests of UTU members are concerned.

To determine support, the candidate's record is first examined to see if he or she has done a good job in the past. If so, the person deserves sup-

effective letter, here are some basic guidelines:

- Keep your letter down to one page or less, and to the point. State your complaint or support in the first paragraph, mentioning the bill number if available. Give clear reasons why and how the legislation could affect you, your family and your community;
- Use the correct name, title, address, city, state and ZIP code. Sign your name and address legibly at the end of your message;
- Avoid sending letters to Washington about state issues unless the issues involve Federal legislation;
- Avoid copying from newspapers or what someone else has said. Lawmakers can spot key phrases and paragraphs as originating from special interest groups, so use your own words. Your personal experiences are the best supporting evidence. Don't send mass-produced form letters;
- If you need to contact more than one lawmaker (your own representative and the head of a special committee, for example) write to each personally rather than sending a copy;
- If you have met the representative personally or have some other connection, draw attention to it in your letter;
- Ask that your representatives state their position on the issue by replying to you;
- Don't just write when you have a complaint. You can write to express your opinion, to congratulate and thank a representative for a particular vote, or to express polite disapproval;
- Write as soon as possible. Try to write your position on a bill while it is in committee. Your representative can usually be more responsive to your appeal at that time.

Again, don't forget to include your name and address.

E-mail/Websites

Another way to send a message is via email. Your correspondence should include your name and address also. Many members also use a web form on their website. This form enables the member to record your name, address and subject in a database for future correspondence.

Personal Visit

When scheduling a meeting, be sure to state the subject of the meeting in advance. Before the meeting, review the subject so you have a thorough knowledge of the subject. During the meeting, be concise, speak clearly and present the pros and cons of the matter, as well as your reasons for your point of view. At the end of the meeting, don't forget to thank the member for their time

Town Hall Meetings

Be on the alert for "town hall" meetings. This is when Congress and legislators hold meetings to hear what is on their constituents' minds.

No matter what form your communication takes – always stay positive! Being hostile is never productive.

How to Write Letters

Many people believe their letters to Congress aren't even read and this simply isn't true. Your letter will be read by the legislator or an aide and it will most likely be answered.

"I read every letter written to me by a constituent. On several occasions I can testify that a single, thoughtful, factual, persuasive letter did change my mind or cause me to initiate a review of a previous judgment," said former Congressman Morris Udall (D-Ariz.).

Writing a letter to your representative is a rather simple task. Your letters merely need to be clear, accurate and brief. To help you write an

port; if not, the person is denied assistance, particularly if his or her actions have been detrimental to UTU families and goals. In cases of new candidates for office where there is no past record for evaluation, the candidate is interviewed and screened on his or her attitudes and positions on matters of importance to labor in general and UTU members in particular.

Of course, you can't be sure what decisions a political candidate will make in the future. However, a study of his or her past voting record will usually show a pattern that the person will follow in the future. We look for a dependable legislator who supports our positions, or at least an open-minded individual who will listen to us and make a fair judgment. The established records and the current positions of all candidates are weighed, and the decision for or against UTU PAC support is made.

A complete accounting is made of all UTU PAC disbursements, so you know where the money goes. Both national and state expenditures are listed on the UTU PAC financial report which is sent regularly to every state UTU PAC chairperson. Any UTU officer or member can examine the UTU PAC accounting of all disbursements by contacting his or her state chairperson.

How can I contribute to UTU PAC?

Contributions to UTU PAC are voluntary and can be started anytime, the sooner the better. Get a UTU PAC pledge card from a local union officer or the International, fill it out and sign it, keep a copy for yourself, and give the form to your local treasurer or send it to the International. Your pledge will be entered in the records and the contribution will appear on your dues receipt each month.

A UTU PAC member may increase or decrease his or her pledge at any time by filling out and sending a revised UTU PAC pledge form to the local treasurer or the International indicating the change in the amount of the contribution. After processing, the new amount will appear on your dues receipt and in records at the International.

You may stop your contributions at any time. If you decide to with-

draw your pledge, notify your local treasurer or the International of your decision and the voluntary UTU PAC contribution will be stopped. No questions will be asked; it is your decision alone.

It is also possible to make a one-time direct contribution by mailing it to the International, or giving it to any local or International officer. You will receive an acknowledgement from the International President as a receipt.

The union awards different UTU PAC lapel emblems, membership cards and baseball-style caps to those members who contribute \$25 or more annually. Persons who contribute at least \$100 a year are enrolled in the Gold Club. Those individuals who contribute at least \$300 annually become members of the Diamond Club. Those persons who contribute at least \$365 a year are enrolled in the Dollar-A-Day Club. Diamond Plus Club membership is awarded to those individuals who contribute at least \$400 per year to UTU PAC, Double Diamond Club membership to those who contribute \$600 or more annually, and Platinum Club membership to those individuals who generously contribute at least \$1,200 per year.



UTU PAC



Diamond Club



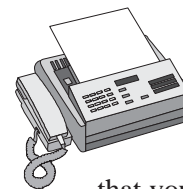
Gold Club

Getting your message across – Contacting your representatives

Communicating With Congress

Of course, the best method of communicating with Congress is face to face with a member on an issue. Since that rarely happens, sending a one-page fax would be the best method. Given security methods on Capitol Hill, sending mail to members of Congress is not a practical method.

Faxes



Sending a one-page fax is the best method of sending your message to Members of Congress. Begin your message with either thanks for something the legislator has done in the past or with your specific request. Include your mailing address in the fax, so they know that you are a constituent.

Phone calls

If you don't have access to a fax machine or your Representative or Senators do not publish their fax number, call their office. If you don't know the name of the relevant staff person, tell the person answering the phone the subject and you will be told which staff person handles it.

If you talk to a "live" person, offer to follow up with a fax with more information. If you get their voice mail, leave a substantive message, leaving your name, phone number and address (so they know that you are a constituent). The staff person may not have time to actually return your call, but they will get the message.



Mail



If you must use regular mail, send it to the district office, not the Washington, D.C. office. Due to security measures, regular mail takes a very long time to reach Capitol Hill.

referred to the Budget Committees, which combine them into a single “omnibus” or overall reconciliation bill in each house, and report them out to the full houses. When passed and signed by the President, the reconciliation measure becomes law. The authorization and appropriations committees are then required to spend within the Second Budget Resolution’s limits.



All UTU PAC members also receive a personal thank-you letter from the UTU PAC National Chairperson.

There are thousands of UTU members – many of them retired with fixed incomes – now participating in UTU PAC. Even though many retired members are on limited incomes, they gladly participate in UTU PAC and urge all working members to realize the importance of friends in Congress.

For proof, look at the legislative record of the UTU. The union, with its UTU PAC program, has made great legislative and political accomplishments in the last few years, and could increase these gains with assistance from you and other UTU PAC members. You joined your fellow workers for the fraternal benefits of membership in the UTU, so why not join them in the movement toward better laws and good government through UTU PAC?

We would be very proud to welcome you into the club. Make your pledge now by filling out a UTU PAC application form, signing it and taking it or sending it to your local treasurer or the International. You will help yourself to better government.



Double Diamond Club



Diamond Plus Club



Platinum Club

NOTE: Contributions or gifts to UTU PAC are not deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes.

The Legislative Process – How laws are made

If you want to successfully influence the legislative process, you must understand how it works.

The material presented here describes the highlights of the legislative process. First we'll look at the party leadership in the two houses of Congress, which directs the flow of legislation. Second, we'll follow a bill step-by-step as it progresses through Congress to become a law. Third, we'll take a brief look at the congressional budget process.

As you will see, Congress makes many decisions at different stages of the legislative process – as bills are introduced, examined by committees, scheduled for debate, and so forth. There are votes on amendments to bills, votes on allowing debate, votes by subcommittees and committees, and votes by the full House of Representatives or the Senate to approve the bill or not.

To successfully influence this legislative process, we must lobby and make our opinions known at every step. Our Legislative Department and many other concerned individuals and groups keep a close watch on these detailed workings of Congress. They realize each separate vote is crucial, so they may call for your support, in the form of letters or telegrams or phone calls, several times on the same piece of legislation as it moves through Congress.

Remember, the UTU fights for the rights of rail, airline, bus and transit workers in two areas – the collective bargaining area and the legislative area. In the collective bargaining area, the UTU negotiates an agreement and administers it through the grievance-arbitration procedure. It is the basis for many of our rights and benefits. Collective bargaining, however, cannot serve all our needs or protect all our interests.

The legislative area can be as effective as collective bargaining in affecting our futures. Many benefits enjoyed by UTU members, including the right to bargain collectively, were won by laws created in Congress. As you can see, we must protect what we have gained and fight harder to gain new rights for a better future.

You one letter, email, fax, phone call or personal contact can make a

negotiation and coordination with the other committees and the party leadership. It sets non-binding guidelines on spending limits for the other committees.

As the various committees and full houses consider and pass spending bills, the Budget Committees assemble approved spending amounts into a Second Budget Resolution. It can closely resemble the First Budget Resolution.

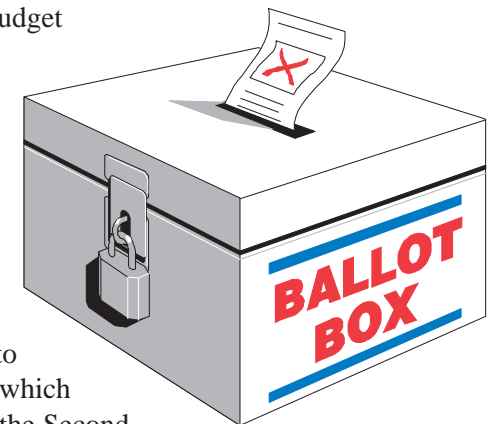
When complete, the Second Budget Resolution is reported out of the Budget Committees and considered by both houses. When passed by both, spending limits become binding, and the authorization and appropriations committees should not spend beyond them.

The Budget Act mandates that the Second Budget Resolution be passed by September 15, and Congress may not adjourn until it is passed.

Reconciliation

To enforce the budget process, the Budget Act provides for a procedure called reconciliation. Reconciliation is put into effect only when the Budget Committees believe that the authorizing and appropriations committees will not limit their spending to the levels set in the Second Budget Resolution.

To require the authorizing and appropriations committees to follow the Second Budget Resolution's spending limits, the Budget Committees attach reconciliation instructions to it. They require the committees to report out reconciliation bills which reconcile their spending with the Second Budget Resolution's limits. These bills are



- Finance Committee – taxation.

House Committees

- Committee on Appropriations – Subcommittees on Transportation and on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education;
- Committee on Education and the Workforce – labor standards and statistics, mediation and arbitration;
- Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure – includes railroads, mass transit, rail labor and Railroad Retirement;
- Committee on Ways and Means – taxation.

Authorizing committees evaluate bills in terms of the value of the program proposed, and the needs of the agency affected. The committee also considers the cost of legislation and suggests, or authorizes, spending levels.

Appropriation

While an authorizing committee approves programs and authorizes dollar amounts to be spent, only the appropriations committees can actually assign government funds to authorized programs.

The appropriations committee in each house of Congress examines each item in an appropriations bill, and may raise or lower the dollar amounts authorized for programs as it sees fit. Appropriations bills pass through Congress in the usual manner described.

Budget Resolutions

The Budget Act of 1974 created a new budget process, so Congress now passes a unified budget, or budget resolution, that sets limits on total spending for the year.

Congress must pass a First Budget Resolution by May 15 of each year. This resolution is considered and approved by the Budget Committee in each house of Congress. It is formulated through a process of planning,

difference in how your representative or senators will act. There has been an increasing turnover in Congress in recent times. Today, less than one-half of elected representatives now serving in Congress have held office for more than three terms. As a result, members now are aware that re-election is not guaranteed, so they listen more closely when a constituent speaks his or her mind.

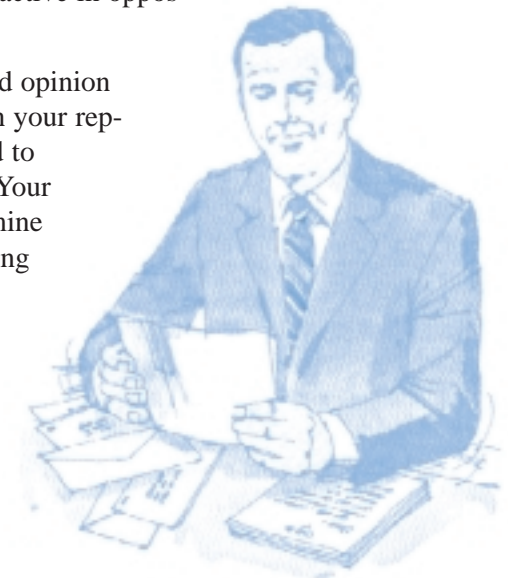
When a legislator is undecided on how to vote on an issue important to a UTU member, as few as twenty letters can make the difference in his or her decision. If a legislator is hostile to labor's view, expressing your view may not change the person's mind, but it may cause them to become less active in opposing our goals.

Remember, your informed opinion can provide the information your representative or senators need to make the correct decision. Your getting involved can determine how well the UTU's lobbying program works.

Party Leadership

The process of a bill becoming a law is supervised by the party leadership in each house of Congress. The party's leadership speaks for the party and coordinates its activities. Usually, the majority party is able to control the movement of legislation and decide which bills will be considered by individual committees.

In the House of Representatives, the Speaker of the House is the presiding officer. The Speaker is elected by the full House and so is a member of the majority party. As presiding officer, the Speaker may vote at his discretion.



The Vice President of the United States is the presiding officer in the Senate, also called the President of the Senate. The Vice President, as presiding officer, only votes to break a tie. Because the Vice President is often absent from Senate proceedings, the Senate elects from its ranks a President Pro-Tempore, who presides in the Vice President's absence. Elected by the full Senate, the President Pro-Tempore is a member of the majority party, usually the party member with the most seniority.

In both houses of Congress, the majority party elects a Majority Leader and Majority Whip, who direct the party's legislative strategy and serve as its leading spokespersons. The minority party in each house elects a Minority Leader and a Minority Whip, who perform similar duties for their party.

The chairmanship of committees in each house is controlled by the majority party, which also has a majority of members on each committee. Democrats in the House of Representatives are nominated to committees by the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, and the Democratic Caucus gives final approval. In the Senate, Democrats are nominated to committees by the Democratic Steering Committee and approved by the Democratic Conference. Republican members in each house of Congress are nominated to committees by the Republican Committee on Committees and approved by the Republican Conference.

The congressional budget process

The congressional budget process is important because much legislation affecting UTU members comes out of this process, such as funding for Amtrak, mass transit, Railroad Retirement and safety inspectors. It is the center of intense political struggles and legislative maneuvering. The four steps of the process we will be looking at are: authorization, appropriation, budget resolutions and reconciliation.

Authorization

Legislation proposing particular programs or governmental activities, including the spending of funds for these programs and activities, is called authorization bills. These bills proceed through Congress in the manner described above in "How a bill becomes a law." They are considered by the proper authorizing committee, which deals with the particular subject matter of the bill in question.

For example, bills which most affect UTU members come before the following committees:

Senate Committees

- Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation & Related Agencies – Department of Transportation, Surface Transportation Board, National Transportation Safety Board;
- Committee on Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs – urban mass transit;
- Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation – interstate commerce, highway safety, regulation of interstate common carriers (including railroads and buses);
- Committee on Energy and Natural Resources – coal production, distribution and utilization;
- Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions – railway labor and retirement matters;



When the scheduled time arrives, the bill goes to the floor of the House or Senate for consideration by all members. The bill is debated, possibly amended, and voted up or down.

The bill is forwarded

If approved by one body (the House or Senate), the bill is sent to the other body where it again moves through the committee procedure. Should the second body pass the bill without changing it, it is sent to the President for his signature.

If the Senate and House pass different versions of a bill, they are sent to a Conference Committee. This committee is made up of members from both the House and Senate committees that first considered the bill. They meet to iron out the differences in the two bills, and, if they can agree on a compromise bill, it is sent back to the Senate and House for approval. No further amendments are accepted, and the bill must be voted up or down. If the Conference Committee fails to reach a compromise, the bill dies in the committee.

The President acts on the bill

When approved by both House and Senate, the bill is sent to the President, who has three choices. He may sign the bill, and then it becomes law. He may veto it and send it back for reconsideration to the House and Senate where the veto can be overridden only by a two-thirds vote of both houses. If the President does not sign or veto the bill within 10 days (Congress must be in session), then bill then automatically becomes law.

How a bill becomes a law

A bill must move through Congress in an orderly and definite series of steps to become a law. This section follows a bill from its introduction, through the Congress, to the President's desk and into the law books. Although these steps are specific to Congress, the principles set forth apply to other levels of government.

The bill is introduced

A bill may be introduced in either the House of Representatives or Senate by a respective member of that body. It may be the legislator's own bill, a bill introduced at the request of the Administration (the President or other officials), or the idea may have originated back home with a business or labor group.

A House member simply drops a bill into the "hopper," a box on the clerk's desk. A Senator will send the bill to the clerk or propose it on the floor of the Senate.

The bill is given a bill designation and bill number according to the house where it was introduced. For example, "H.R. 235" means that this bill was first introduced in the House of Representatives and was 235th in the order of bills introduced. A bill introduced in the Senate, for example, would be designated "S. 2718."

Committee Action

Once the bill is numbered and printed, it is sent to the committee that has jurisdiction over the subject of the bill.

The committee usually refers the bill to a subcommittee which studies the issue in depth and holds hearings in which concerned citizens, organizations and government agencies can provide facts and offer opinions on the bill. The subcommittee may also vote to amend the bill. When done, the subcommittee reports the bill with recommendations back to the full committee.

The full committee may consider the bill further, make additional

amendments, then vote it down, allow it to die by not taking any action, or report the bill favorably to the full House, usually accompanied with a report explaining the bill and the committee's decision.

The bill is debated

After a bill is reported out of committee, it is scheduled for debate by the full House or Senate. In the House a bill is scheduled by the Rules Committee, which determines when the bill will be debated, how much time will be allotted for debate, and whether or not amendments to the bill will be allowed from the House floor. If the bill is not scheduled, it dies in the Rules Committee.

In the Senate, bills go on the Senate calendar and are scheduled for debate by the majority leadership. There is no time limit on debate in the Senate unless agreed upon by unanimous consent.

