Brief Summary of the Wisconsin Legislative Process

1. When a legislator has an idea for a bill, whether they crafted the idea or it was suggested by a constituent or stakeholder, the legislator will request a draft of a proposal that implements the idea in relation to existing statutes. A nonpartisan attorney at the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) will prepare the draft. The legislator will also typically try to find a member of the other chamber to co-lead this effort.
2. Once the legislator or legislators are satisfied that the draft meets their intent, they will circulate that draft among their colleagues to seek co-sponsors for the proposal. Prior to the formal introduction of a bill, these proposals will be referred to as a LRB draft followed by four numbers (e.g. LRB-4516).
3. After the co-sponsorship circulation period has finished, the proposal will be sent to the Senate President and Assembly Speaker by the authors in those chambers. The leaders are required to introduce the bill and refer it to a committee with jurisdiction over the matters proposed in the bill. This step is when the bill will first be referred to by a Senate Bill number and Assembly Bill number instead of the four-digit LRB number (e.g. Senate Bill 15, or SB 15, and Assembly Bill 15, or AB 15).
    - If the proposal has an author in both chambers, these bills are referred to as companion bills. As proposals in both chambers are introduced sequentially starting with 1 in the order they're received, companion bills will typically not have the same bill number in both chambers.
4. The committees in each chamber, at the discretion of the chair, may choose to hold a public hearing on the proposal, and will schedule items they would like to hear with no less than a 24-hour notice. Along with testimony from the authors, any member of the public may speak on the proposal either in-favor, against, or for information only (commonly seen as neutral). Registrations to testify become part of the bill's record and are published by the committee clerk on the Legislature's website.
    - Following a hearing is the most likely time for authors to work with LRB to draft and introduce an amendment to a bill based on feedback received during the hearing from committee members and the public, though amendments may be introduced at nearly any point in this process.
5. After a public hearing, at the discretion of the committee chairs, an executive session may be scheduled where present members of the committee, though no less than a quorum, may vote to recommend a bill and an amendment to a bill, if one is available, for passage. They may also vote to recommend against passage. The committee clerk enters the vote into the record and sends the proposal back to the Senate President or Assembly Speaker, depending on the chamber of that committee, for further consideration.
6. If the bill is available to be voted on in the Senate, known as available for scheduling, the Senate Rules Committee will vote no less than 24 hours prior to the next floor period to schedule the proposal. If the bill is available for scheduling in the Assembly, then the Assembly Rules Committee will follow a similar process. This step is also at the discretion of these committees, particularly the committee chairs. These chairs will decide whether or not a bill is added for the proposed calendar for the committee vote, and the full committee will vote on finalizing the calendar for the next Senate or Assembly floor agenda.
7. Once a proposal is calendared for the floor, the full Senate or Assembly will have an opportunity to vote on amendments, if any are introduced, and the bill, but only after debate on the floor has concluded.
8. After the same bill has been approved by committees and the full bodies in the Senate and Assembly, including passing identical amendments on the floors of both chambers if amendments have been introduced, the bill will be sent to the Governor where he may sign the bill into law or veto the bill. If a bill has a funding component (i.e. an appropriation) included, the bill may be partially vetoed, where some aspects of the bill are removed and the remaining aspects become law. Vetoes, including partial vetoes, may be overruled by the Legislature, but only with a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers.
9. If a bill is signed into law, it receives its third and final number. The bill is now an act, making it a law. The policy will now be referred to by its act number (e.g. 2025 Act 1). Act numbers are ordered by the date and time they are signed. The act number does not correlate to either chamber's bill number.

10. Typically, bills will take effect on the day after it's signed into law and published. However, authors may choose to delay implementation and write a different effective date in a bill. Typically, delayed effective dates will be written as six months after the bill is signed into law or at the start of the next calendar year after the bill's signature, though different dates may be chosen by the bill's authors.