

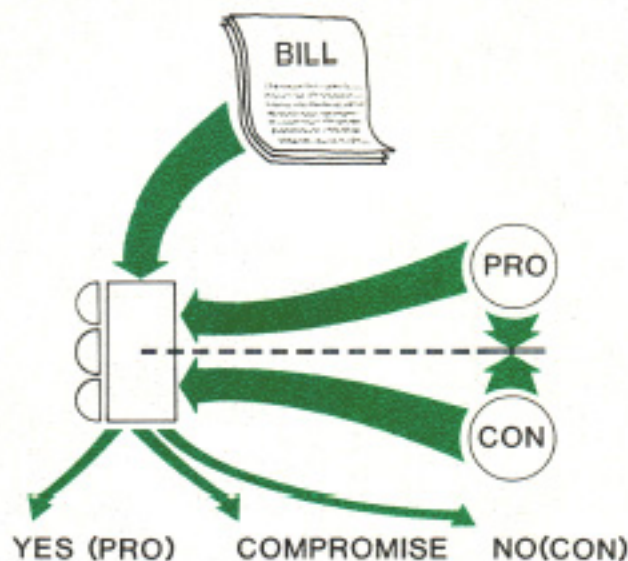
In December, the House passed the wetlands bill. Because the House and Senate versions of SB-3 differed "as amended," it went to a conference committee composed of key legislators from both chambers to negotiate acceptable compromises. By late December, both chambers gave final approval to the wetlands protection bill and it was sent to the governor, who signed it on the last possible day before it would automatically become law. On January 3, 1980, SB-3 became Public Act 203 of 1979. The governor did praise the bill in press releases, saying it was:

a forward-looking and workable wetlands control bill. While it is not the perfect solution, it represents a major step forward in protecting Michigan's resources and native beauty. It also will allow the state to take over from the (federal) Environmental Protection Agency and the Corps of Engineers a number of wetlands use permit programs — giving us greater control over our own destiny.[7]

RESTRICTIONS ON WETLANDS PRESERVATION

Some opposing legislators still claim that they in truth won the wetlands fight by "gutting" the legislation with the provision that it immediately apply only to counties of 100,000 or more population (temporarily exempting 66 of Michigan's 83 counties)* and specifying that it will not affect the rest of the state until a statewide inventory of wetlands is completed.

ADVOCACY LEGISLATION



*The 17 counties immediately affected by the Wetlands Protection Act do contain 80 percent of Michigan's population, but less than 20 percent of the state's land area.

ADVOCACY AND CONSENSUS APPROACHES

The Wetlands Protection Act is an excellent example of a long, hard fight. Its history should bring some reality to citizens hoping to quickly influence legislation. The length of the wetlands fight, however, was due mostly to the way it was developed in its very early stages. A good idea was specified in bill form, introduced and legislators quickly lined up on opposing sides to debate its many details. Eventually, after twelve years, a passable compromise was reached. We call this the "advocacy approach." It always takes time, since it is far easier to kill an idea than it is to hammer out an acceptable compromise in a hostile setting.

Some bills, in contrast, are real "quickies." Such a bill may be introduced, referred to committee (where it is hardly touched before being reported out favorably), and passed in floor debate with many legislators standing up simply to praise the bill. Then it whisks through the other chamber with the same speed and lack of amendments. This kind of bill is a recent development in the governmental process and is a product of everybody and anybody concerned with the idea joining a "task force" to study the question before the bill is drafted. Sometimes legislators, university professors, and lobbyists for industries, the environment, and consumers get together to hammer out the intent of a bill and then develop its exact wording. Next, they all agree not to fight the bill they helped prepare while it travels through the legislative mill. Consequently, it races through like lightning. We call this the "consensus approach" to legislative change.

The land inventory bill (SB-443 of the 1979-80 session) is an example of the consensus approach. It proposed to inventory existing and potential land use throughout the state. The wetlands bill, you will recall, defined wetlands and established measures for their protection; the land inventory bill would apply the definition by mapping the land-use patterns and establishing boundaries for each of the wetlands areas (as well as 300+ other land uses). Since, for most of the state, the

CONSENSUS LEGISLATION

