

What is BDS?

The Bill Drafting System (BDS) is a web-enabled application used by the Virginia Division of Legislative Services to receive legislative draft requests from Members of the General Assembly and agencies eligible to request legislative drafts.

In BDS, DLS management assigns requests to the appropriate legal drafting teams who prepare the drafts and move them through the editing and approval processes. The final product is available to Members for introduction in the Senate and House of Delegates and available to agencies to transfer to Members for introduction.

Preparation of a bill that amends the Code of Virginia includes inserting Code text directly from the Virginia Law Portal and using a proprietary application with Microsoft Word 2010 to create and modify text that is stored in BDS with the legislative draft request. Autotext is inserted to facilitate using standard language when appropriate. Word's track changes feature records strikethrough/deletions and underlining of proposed new text and records the user and date and time of the modification.

Editors use BDS to make corrections to spelling, punctuation, and grammar when appropriate and leave editor's comments when needed. After review by two editors, the drafter considers comments and finalizes the draft. Collaboration between members of drafting teams occurs throughout this process as needed.

After a manager gives final approval, a Member of the General Assembly can submit the legislative draft to the Clerk of the House or Senate and an agency can transfer the legislative draft through the system to a Member of the General Assembly for introduction.

BDS also provides a platform for drafting substitutes, conference reports, and Governor's Notes and Governor's Amendments and for updating summaries of legislation as a bill or resolution moves through the General Assembly. DLS Managers have tools to monitor the work of preparing approximately 6,000 documents for each General Assembly session.

BDS is integrated into the Legislative Information System that provides electronic access to the public of all bills and resolutions introduced and allows the public to monitor their progress in the legislative process.

Members of the General Assembly have access to their Patron Status Reports (and Other Requesters to their Legislative Request Reports) to submit requests electronically, agree to co-patron bills and resolutions, transfer a legislative draft to a colleague, and monitor the progress of their legislative requests. Agencies use the system to request legislative drafts and then transfer those drafts to Members of the General Assembly for introduction.