

## What is a Proceeding?

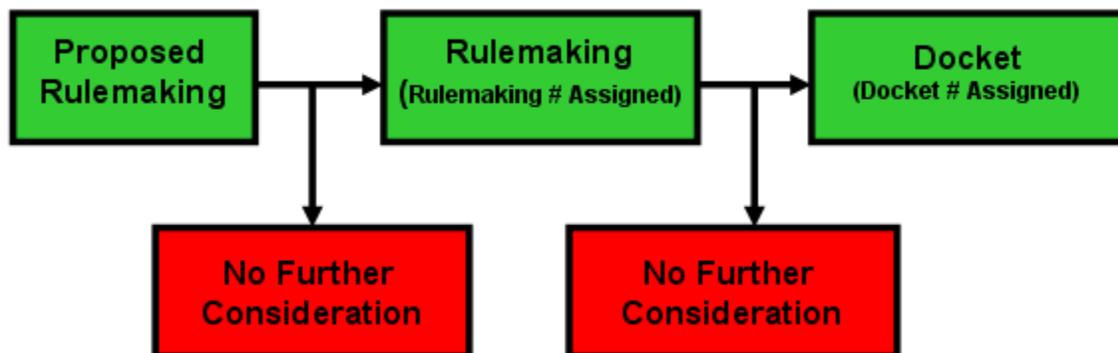
While you don't need to fully understand the FCC rulemaking process to submit a filing, it may help to get a general understanding of some of the terms we use for ECFS. For a discussion of the entire life cycle of a proceeding, please see CGB's fact sheet on ["How to Comment"](#).

A Proposed Rulemaking is begun when someone (usually from outside the FCC) submits a Petition for Rulemaking recommending a change to a current rule. Say this is applying for a call sign to begin a radio station after doing some field research. FCC may decide to gather more information so it releases a Proposed Rulemaking to the public for a comment period. This allows FCC to gather more information from multiple sources to determine whether this Proposed Rulemaking merits more consideration. During the comment period, the public can submit comments through ECFS.

If FCC determines that it does merit more consideration, a Rulemaking will be released on the same item with another round of commenting from the public. This would provide anyone else the opportunity to review this data, compare it to their own, and even consider joining the petition or beginning one of their own. Comment periods normally last 60 days, during which anyone can submit their comments through ECFS.

If after the Rulemaking period FCC determines that it wants to pursue the Rulemaking further, the Rulemaking can be assigned a Docket number. (see [What is Docket Consolidation?](#)) A docket number is another way that FCC and the public can track the item, and as a docket the item can be more formally researched. Assigning a docket number to a proceeding doesn't mean that it will lead to a rule change; however, it usually does mean the proceeding will merit further (and more serious) consideration.

Anything can be assigned a docket number at any time; however, dockets can often follow the standard workflow as follows:



## How do I know which number I have?

- Dockets: Dockets have a two-digit year, a hyphen, and then a unique number (e.g. 96-45). You may sometimes see docket number written

with a two-letter bureau code such as "CC Docket No. 96-45". However, ECFS only recognizes docket numbers (i.e. 96-45).

- Rulemaking: Numbers start with "RM-" followed by a unique number (e.g. "RM-12345").
- Proposed Rulemaking: Numbers start with "PRM", then a two-digit year, then a two-letter code for the relevant bureau (Ex. PRM09MB. The "09" means 2009, and "MB" means Media Bureau).

## How do I find the right proceeding?

Here are some tips to help you find the information you need quicker:

- Start with the [Proceeding Search](#). Enter as much information as you know. You'll be able to tailor the results.
- Click the Has Activity in the Last 30 Days radio button. If you don't have much information, clicking this radio button and searching will bring up the proceedings with the most recent activity on them. If it's a popular item, it should be high on this list.
- Tailor Your Results. If you only know a few things about the proceeding, customize your columns to focus on what you know. You can also sort by column (ascending and descending), or change the number of results per page to help your scroll through the results in the way that best suits your needs.

## What is consolidation?

When the FCC decides that it wishes to further pursue a Rulemaking, the Rulemaking proceeding in ECFS is closed and **consolidated** to a docket. From then on, any searches for filings in the Docket will also return the filings from the Rulemaking(s) that were consolidated into the Docket.

The [proceeding home page](#) for a Docket will list any rulemakings that were consolidated into it. Likewise, the home page for a Rulemaking that has been consolidated will show the Docket it was consolidated into.