

GLOSSARY OF LEGISLATIVE TERMS

Absent - Not present at a session.

Act - An enforceable law of the State. A bill that has passed both houses of the General Assembly becomes an Act through the Governor's approval, inaction, or a veto procedure.

Adhere - A step in parliamentary procedure whereby one house of the legislature votes to stand by its previous action in response to some conflicting action by the other chamber.

Adjournment - Termination of a legislative day upon the completion of business, with the hour and day of the next meeting being set prior to adjournment.

Administrative Rule - Any agency directive, standard, regulation or statement of general applicability that implements, interprets or prescribes law or policy, or describes the procedure or practice requirements of any agency.

Adjournment Sine Die - The final adjournment of a legislative session. The Latin translation is "without a day; an indefinite period".

Adoption - Approval or acceptance; usually applied to amendments, resolutions, and motions.

Amendatory Veto - The Governor returns the bill to the legislature with specific recommendations for change. The legislature may do nothing and the bill dies, the legislature may override the veto, or the legislature may accept the Governor's proposed changes and the bill becomes law.

Amendment - Formal proposal to change the language of a bill or resolution after it has been introduced.

Amendment, Committee - An amendment adopted by a committee when a bill is before that committee.

Amendment, Floor - An amendment adopted by the full house when the bill is on the order of second reading.

Appeal - A parliamentary procedure for testing (and possibly changing) the decision of a presiding officer.

Apportionment - Establishment of the legislative districts from which members are elected.

Appropriation - Funds allocated for various departments of government set aside by formal action for specific use. Allows money to be spent; is not actual expenditure record.

Approval by the Governor - Signature of the Governor on a bill passed by the General Assembly, whereupon the bill becomes an Act.

At-Large Election - An election in which candidates are chosen on an individual basis rather than as representatives of a geographically defined, single-member district. At-large elections can be held at the legislative and presidential levels. In the United States of America, some states hold at-large elections for congressional seats, when, for instance, a state's entire population warrants only one representative.

Author - The person (usually a legislator) who presents a bill or resolution for consideration; may be joined by others, who are known as coauthors.

Bicameral Legislature - A legislature consisting of 2 houses.

Biennium - A 2-year term of legislative activity by a legislature.

Bill - Legislation drafted in the form of an Act for introduction into a House of the legislature and identified with a bill number. If the bill is passed by both houses and signed by the Governor or otherwise becomes law, it becomes an Act.

Bipartisan - Having an affiliation or association with (or representatives of) both political parties or caucuses in a two party system.

Budget - (1) The suggested allocation of state moneys presented to the legislature for consideration; (2) a formal document that reflects the authorized expenditures of the state.

Calendar - The daily printed agenda of business for each house of the General Assembly. The calendar also contains scheduled committee hearings.

Call of the Senate or House - Procedure used to compel the attendance of members who are missing from the chamber and to compel those members already in attendance to remain in the chamber.

Capital - Refers to the capital city of the state.

Capitol - The Statehouse or Capitol building.

Carry-over Legislation - Legislation that is held over from the first year of a legislative biennium to the second year.

Caucus - An informal meeting of a group of legislators, most often called on the basis of party affiliation or regional representation.

Censure - An action by a legislative body to officially reprimand an elected official for inappropriate or illegal actions committed by that official while in office.

Chair - A designation of the presiding officer.

Chamber - Official hall for the meeting of a legislative body.

Clerk of the House or Senate - A non-legislator officer who is appointed or elected by the members of the House of Representatives or Senate to perform and direct the parliamentary and clerical functions of the chamber. Also may be titled "chief clerk" or "principal clerk."

Cloture – Process by which debate (or filibuster) can be limited in the US Senate, other than by unanimous consent. Under cloture, each Senator is limited to one hour of debate.

Committee - A body of members appointed by the presiding officer (or another authority specified by the chamber) to consider and make recommendations concerning disposition of bills, resolutions and other related matters.

Committee of the Whole - Either house of the legislature sitting in its entirety as a committee to consider bills or issues.

Committee Report - Official release of a bill or resolution from committee with (or without) a specific recommendation, such as "pass", "pass as amended" or "do not pass."

Committee Substitute - A bill offered by a committee in lieu of another bill that was originally referred to the committee for consideration; technically, the committee substitute is an amendment to the original bill.

Companion Bill – a bill which is identical to a bill having been introduced in the opposite house.

Concurrence - Agreement by one house of the legislature to an amendment added by the other house.

Conference committee - A committee composed of members from the two houses specifically appointed to reconcile the differences between House and Senate versions of a bill or bills.

Conflict of Interest - Untenable position that threatens the ability of a legislator to vote impartially due to some personal interest in a legislative issue.

Consent Calendar - A listing of non-controversial bills and resolutions. No debate is in order for any item on the consent calendar.

Constituent - A citizen residing within the district of a legislator.

Constitution - A written instrument embodying the fundamental principles of the State that guarantees powers and duties of the government and certain rights to the people.

Constitutional Majority - One more than half of the members of a deliberative body; actual number may be defined in the state constitution.

Co-sponsor –a sponsor of a bill or resolution who is not the principal sponsor.

Convene - To meet in formal legislative session.

Debate - To argue the merits of a legislative measure, pro and con.

Decorum - Proper order, etiquette, and conduct of members during a floor session.

Died in Committee - The defeat of a bill by the decision of a committee not to return the bill to the full house for consideration or vote.

Dilatory - Deliberate use of parliamentary procedure to delay.

Dissent - Difference of opinion; to cast a negative vote.

District - That division of the State represented by a legislator, determined on the basis of population.

Division - A method of voting; a request that members stand or raise hands to be counted when the outcome of a voice vote is unclear or in dispute.

Division of a Question - Procedure to separate a matter to be voted upon into two or more questions.

Doorkeeper - An official elected by the legislative house whose duties include controlling access to the floor of the chamber.

Do Pass - The affirmative recommendation made by a committee in sending a bill to the full house for final vote.

Do Pass as Amended - Passage recommended providing certain changes are made.

Effective Date - Date on which a Public Act takes effect. The effective date of a law is the date it becomes generally enforceable.

Emergency Clause - A statement in a bill that indicates the act shall take immediate effect.

Enacting Clause - The initial language in a bill saying "Be it enacted" A successful motion to strike the enacting clause from legislation kills the bill.

En Bloc Voting – To consider several questions in a single vote or to vote as a unit on a particular question when all legislators are present and presumed to vote “yes” en bloc on consent bills

Engrossment - The incorporation of amendments into a bill (or joint resolution) when a bill passes the house of origin and is sent to the second house. If not amended, the introduced version of the bill becomes the engrossed bill.

Enrollment - The processing of a bill (or joint resolution), incorporating all amendments, if any, when a bill passes both houses of the legislature. The enrolled bill is the document that is signed by both presiding officers and is then sent to the Governor.

Excused -- Absent with the permission of the body or the presiding officer.

Executive Order - Action by the Governor in implementing his or her authority under the law.

Ex Officio - The holding of an office or the assumption of a duty by reason of holding another office. For example, "the president sat on the committee ex officio."

Expunge - An action that directs the removal of specific portions from the journal. This is applicable in situations where objectionable, inflammatory or incorrect matter has been included in the journal.

Filibuster - The prolonged discussion of a bill to delay legislative action.

Fiscal Note - A statement attached to a bill giving the estimated amount of increase or decrease in revenue or expenditures and the present and future fiscal implications of a bill.

Fiscal Year - A 12-month accounting period. For many states the Fiscal Year is July 1 to June 30.

Floor - That portion of a legislative chamber reserved for legislators, staff, and other persons granted access during Session.

Gallery - The balcony of a legislative chamber from which visitors may view proceedings.

General Assembly – The name of the legislative branch of many State governments responsible for enacting laws.

Germane - Relevant or appropriate. An amendment must be germane to the bill that it amends.

Grandfather Clause – Exemption from regulation for certain persons having engaged in the regulated activity for a specified period of time prior to the effective date of the regulatory legislation.

Gut and Stuff - A slang term which refers to removing the text of a measure and inserting entirely new language which, while it may change the nature of the bill completely.

Hearing - A committee meeting convened for the purpose of gathering information on a specific subject or considering specific legislative measures.

Hopper – Colloquial name given the repository for bills awaiting introduction

Impeachment - Procedure to remove from office a public official accused of misconduct.

Incumbent - Incumbent refers to a sitting member of the legislature running for reelection.

Indefinite Postponement - A form of adverse disposition of a proposal for that session of the legislature.

Inexpedient to legislate – A vote indicating that the bill is dead.

Interim - The interval between regular sessions of the legislature.

Interim committee - A committee established to study or investigate certain matters between annual or biennial legislative sessions and to report to the next regular session.

Introducer - The person (usually a legislator) who presents a bill or resolution for consideration; may be joined by others, who are known as co-introducer

Introduction - The formal presentation of a proposal after it has been drafted.

Item Veto - An action taken by the governor to prevent the enactment of an item of an appropriation bill; also may be called line item veto.

Joint Committee - A committee composed of members from both chambers.

Lame Duck - An elected official who has been defeated for re-election or who has chosen not to run for re-election but whose current term has not yet expired.

Law without signature –a Governor’s way to make a personal statement of rejection of a bill without actually vetoing the bill.

Legislation - A document that proposes to create or change law.

Legislative Assistant (LA) – The professional staff member in a legislator’s office in charge of a particular issue or issue area.

Legislative Council – non-partisan research staff that serves the legislature and staffs committee meetings

Legislative Intent - The purpose for which a bill is introduced or passed.

Legislative Liaison - A person designated by an agency to represent the agency during the legislative process and assist members of the legislature in understanding programs or obtaining information relative to the agency.

Legislative Measure - Any matter brought before a house of the legislature for consideration, such as a bill, resolution, amendment, conference committee report, motion, or message.

Legislator - A member of the legislature.

Legislature – The branch of government that makes, amends, and repeals laws.

Lien Item - Numeric line in an appropriation or budget bill.

Lobbyist - A person who represents a particular interest or group of interests before the General Assembly.

Lockout - The temporary disabling of the voting machine of any legislature who does not answer a quorum call before a record vote.

Majority Leader - In both the houses of the legislature, the member who is the second-ranking official. The Majority Leader is appointed by the Speaker or the President and is the key advisor to the Speaker or the President and the majority Caucus.

Majority Party - The political party having the greater number of members in a house of the legislature.

Member Elect - Member who has been elected, but who has not yet taken the oath of office or who is not yet officially serving.

Memorial - The method by which the legislature addresses or petitions Congress and other governments or governmental agencies; method by which the legislature congratulates or honors groups or individuals.

Minority Leader - In both the houses of the legislature, the Minority Leader is selected by the minority party and is formally elected by all members. The Minority Leader's responsibilities include appointing members to serve on committees, selecting assistant leaders and staff, and serving as spokesperson for the minority party.

Minority Party - The political party having the fewer number of members in a house of the legislature.

Minutes - Accurate record of the proceedings of a meeting in chronological order.

Moot- A term indicating that a motion is not timely because it can no longer affect an action or event.

Motion - A formal suggestion, usually oral, made by a legislator to a presiding officer calling for specific action by a house of the legislature, such as a motion to adopt an amendment or a motion to adjourn. After a motion is officially received by the presiding officer, it is acted upon by a vote of the house.

Municipality - A city, village, or incorporated town.

Non-concurrence - Situation where the other house has voted in a manner inconsistent with the house in which the matter now lies.

Non-partisan - Having no association or affiliation with a political party or caucus.

Nuclear Option - a method by which changes can be made to the standard parliamentary procedure of the United States Senate by a simple majority vote, contrary to the requirements of the written rules.

Oath of Office - Oath taken by members-elect of the legislature prior to being seated and embarking upon official duties.

Ombudsman – An official, usually appointed, charged with the duty of receiving and investigating public complaints, and directing action thereon by the responsible agency.

Omnibus Bill - A bill regarding a single subject that combines many different aspects of that subject.

Order of Business - The defined routine of procedure in a house of the legislature each day.

Out of Order - A ruling that a motion, an amendment, or a question is improper under the rules of the house.

Page - A person who works on the chamber floors, and occasionally in committees, to distribute materials, open doors, pass notes, and generally facilitate the legislative work flow. Honorary pages are guests of members who serve as pages for a day.

Parliamentary Inquiry - A question posed to the presiding officer for clarification of a point in the proceedings.

Parliamentary Procedure - The rules and rulings under which legislatures conduct their business.

Partisan - Associated or affiliated with a single political party or caucus.

Passage - Approval of a bill by the vote of the full house.

Patron - The person (usually a legislator) who presents a bill or resolution for consideration; may be joined by others, who are known as copatrons.

Per Diem - Literally, per day; daily expense money paid to legislators.

Point of Order - A statement by a legislator calling attention to an alleged breach of order or parliamentary procedure, upon which the presiding officer must rule.

Postpone – To delay consideration of a bill or resolution until a specific legislative day or hour of the same day.

Postpone indefinitely –a motion to kill a bill.

Preamble - In a bill, a statement of purpose or explanation that is inserted between the title and the enacting clause. A preamble in a bill does not become part of an Act, but a court may use it as a tool of statutory construction in ascertaining legislative intent. In a resolution, one or more explanatory clauses beginning with "whereas".

Precedent - Interpretation of rulings by presiding officers on specific rules; unwritten rules that are established by custom.

Profile - To file a bill with a house of the legislature during a specified period of time before the opening day of a Regular Session. The bill is deemed automatically introduced on the opening day.

President - Usually, the title given to the person elected (or designated by constitution) as the presiding officer of the Senate.

Pro Tempore (Pro Tem) - The designated officer of the senate or house acting in the absence of the regular presiding officer.

Proviso - A clause in a bill that sets out specific exceptions to the general law.

Public Act - A bill that has been passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor (or otherwise has become law). After a bill has been signed by the Governor or otherwise becomes law, the Secretary of State assigns the bill a Public Act number, which is subsequently used to refer to the measure rather than the bill number.

Quorum - The required number of legislators present to transact business.

Ratify - To approve and make valid.

Reading - Presentation of a bill before either house of the Legislature by reading its title; a stage in the enactment of a law. In many states, each bill introduced must be read by title on 3 different days in each house before it is passed. The first reading introduces the bill. The second reading allows for floor amendments. A bill is voted on when called for third reading.

Reapportionment - Redrawing legislative district boundaries to provide equality of representation.

Recede - To undo action previously taken.

Recess - Intermission during a daily Session, usually for caucus or committee meetings.

Recommit – an action to send a measure to committee after it has been previously reported.

Reconsider (Motion to) - Action to retake a vote. The motion may be offered only by a legislator having voted previously on the prevailing side.

Re-enrollment - The final processing of a bill when the Governor has amendatorily vetoed the bill and the legislature accepts the Governor's proposed changes. Re-enrollment incorporates the Governor's proposed changes. The re-enrolled bill is presented to the Governor for certification.

Referral - The assignment of a legislative measure to a committee.

Referendum - The submission of a law, proposed by the legislature or already in effect, to a direct vote of the people.

Remonstrance - A protest by a legislator to a particular bill or measure.

Repeal - To delete and make of no effect.

Report - To communicate opinion or recommendations.

Resolution - Action, in the form of a formal legislative document, taken by one house alone or both houses jointly. A resolution does not change statutory or constitutional law and is not approved or otherwise acted upon by the Governor (and thus is not a law). The effect of a typical resolution is merely to express the opinion of one or both houses or to take some action short of enacting a law that is within the province of one or both houses. Also, a resolution is typically temporary in character.

Ripper Bill – a colloquial term applied to legislation designed to harm a particular person or bill.

Roll Call - To determine a vote on a question by the taking of names of those in favor and those opposed.

Rules - A code of procedure adopted by each house of the legislature to govern its operations.

Ruling of the Chair - A decision by the presiding officer concerning a question of order or procedure.

Section - The basic segment of a bill, with each Section being assigned a sequential number. Existing statutory law is also referred to by Section number.

Senate President - The presiding officer of the Senate, elected by the Senate from its membership.

Seniority - Recognition of prior legislative service.

Sergeant-at-Arms - An official elected by the legislative house whose duties include controlling access to the floor of the chamber.

Session - The period of time during which the legislature meets. The regular session is the annual (or biennial) meeting of the legislature required by the state constitution. A special (or extraordinary) session is a special meeting of the legislature that is called by the governor (or the legislature itself) and limited to specific matters.

Simple Majority - One more than half of those voting on a question.

Sine Die (pronounced “sign-ey die” or “sign die”) - Literally, "without day;" usually, adjournment without a day being set for reconvening; final adjournment.

Skeleton Bill - A measure introduced with little or no substance. It will be amended at a later date to include substantive text.

Sponsor - The legislator who introduces a bill (or resolution). Other legislators may show their support by signing on as co-sponsors. The principal sponsor of a bill controls that bill.

Standing Committee - A committee appointed with continuing responsibility in a general issue area or field of legislative activity.

Status of Legislation - The progress of a bill or resolution at any given time in the legislative process.

Statutes - Individual laws that comprise the all the laws in a particular state.

Stop the Clock - The term used to describe the process of continuing business after a time deadline has passed.

Strike Out - The deletion of language from a bill or resolution.

Subcommittee - A subordinate committee composed of members appointed by the chair from the full committee. A subcommittee will consider a narrower range of topics than the full committee, and generally is authorized only to make recommendations to the full committee.

Sunrise Review - a systematic review of new or expanded regulation undertaken to ensure that the purpose of the regulation is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

Sunset Date - The expiration date of a law.

Suspension of Rules - Parliamentary procedure whereby an action can be taken that would otherwise be out of order.

Synopsis - A summary of the contents of a bill required to be attached to each bill upon introduction.

Tabling - Laying on the table or killing. Tabling removes a bill, resolution, or amendment from consideration.

Title of Bill - The caption of a bill that precedes the enacting clause and expresses the subject of the bill.

Transcript - A record of the actual floor debate that has taken place in one of the houses of the legislature on a legislative day, consisting of what is spoken by each legislator.

Unanimous Consent – A vote, by voice, expressing adoption of a bill without dissent or objection.

Unicameral - A legislature with only one chamber.

Verification - An action whereby a legislator requests that the results of a record vote be confirmed. The names of those legislators whose votes are to be verified are called, and if the legislator doesn't answer, his or her vote is stricken. However, the legislator's vote is restored to the roll if his or her presence is recognized before the presiding officer announces the final result of the verification.

Veto - The action of the Governor in disapproval of a bill sent to him or her by the legislature.

Veto Override - Vote by the legislature to pass a bill over a governor's veto.

Voice Vote - Oral expression of the members when a question is submitted for their determination. When asked by the presiding officers, members respond "aye" or "nay." The presiding officer then decides which side prevailed.

Vote - Formal expression of will or decision by a house of the legislature.

Vote Record - A roll call vote in which each legislator electronically votes "yea", "nay"

Whip - A term used at the federal level to refer to the deputy majority leader. It derives from the British fox-hunting term "whipper-in," which described the person responsible for keeping the foxhounds from leaving the pack.

Withdraw - To recall or remove a bill or question from consideration.

"Yea" and "Nays" – Positive or negative recorded vote of members on an issue.

Yield - The relinquishing of the floor by one legislator to another legislator to speak or ask a question during debate.