

Legislative



Training

Manual

Congress



The Legislative Process

Anyone may draft a bill; however, only members of Congress can introduce legislation, and by doing so become the sponsor(s). There are four basic types of legislation: bills, joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and simple resolutions. The official legislative process begins when a bill or resolution is numbered - H.R. signifies a House bill and S. a Senate bill - referred to a committee and printed by the Government Printing Office.

Step 1. Referral to Committee

With few exceptions, bills are referred to standing committees in the House or Senate according to carefully delineated rules of procedure.

Step 2. Committee Action

When a bill reaches a committee it is placed on the committee's calendar. A bill can be referred to a subcommittee or considered by the committee as a whole. It is at this point that a bill is examined carefully and its chances for passage are determined. If the committee does not act on a bill, it is the equivalent of killing it.

Step 3. Subcommittee Review

Often, bills are referred to a subcommittee for study and hearings. Hearings provide the opportunity to put on the record the views of the executive branch, experts, other public officials, supporters and opponents of the legislation. Testimony can be given in person or submitted as a written statement.

Step 4. Mark Up

When the hearings are completed, the subcommittee may meet to "mark up" the bill, that is, make changes and amendments prior to recommending the bill to the full committee. If a subcommittee votes not to report legislation to the full committee, the bill dies.

Step 5. Committee Action to Report A Bill

After receiving a subcommittee's report on a bill, the full committee can conduct further study and hearings, or it can vote on the subcommittee's recommendations and any proposed amendments. The full committee then votes on its recommendation to the House or Senate. This procedure is called "ordering a bill reported."

Step 6. Publication of a Written Report

After a committee votes to have a bill reported, the committee chairman instructs staff to prepare a written report on the bill. This report describes the intent and scope of the legislation, impact on existing laws and programs, position of the executive branch, and views of dissenting members of the committee.

Step 7. Scheduling Floor Action

After a bill is reported back to the chamber where it originated, it is placed in chronological order on the calendar. In the House there are several different legislative calendars, and the Speaker and majority leader largely determine if, when, and in what order bills come up. In the Senate there is only one legislative calendar.

Step 8. Debate

When a bill reaches the floor of the House or Senate, there are rules or procedures governing the debate on legislation. These rules determine the conditions and amount of time allocated for general debate.

Step 9. Voting

After the debate and the approval of any amendments, the bill is passed or defeated by the members voting.

Step 10. Referral to Other Chamber

When a bill is passed by the House or the Senate it is referred to the other chamber where it usually follows the same route through committee and floor action. This chamber may approve the bill as received, reject it, ignore it, or change it.

Step 11. Conference Committee Action

If only minor changes are made to a bill by the other chamber, it is common for the legislation to go back to the first chamber for concurrence. However, when the actions of the other chamber significantly alter the bill, a conference committee is formed to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions. If the conferees are unable to reach agreement, the legislation dies. If agreement is reached, a conference report is prepared describing the committee members recommendations for changes. Both the House and the Senate must approve of the conference report.

Step 12. Final Actions

After a bill has been approved by both the House and Senate in identical form, it is sent to the President. If the President approves of the legislation he signs it and it becomes law. Or, the President can take no action for ten days, while Congress is in session, and it automatically becomes law. If the President opposes the bill he can veto it; or, if he takes no action after the Congress has adjourned its second session, it is a "pocket veto" and the legislation dies.

Step 13. Overriding a Veto

If the President vetoes a bill, Congress may attempt to "override the veto." This requires a two thirds roll call vote of the members who are present in sufficient numbers for a quorum.

How To Find



Copies of Bills

You can read the full text of recent bills on the Web, you can order printed copies from the Senate or House Document Rooms, or you can find them in a library. Senate bills are also usually printed in the Congressional Record.

You need a bill or public law number to check the status or request a copy of legislation Active Legislation¹ is one of several resources that will help you find bill numbers²

Web Access

THOMAS³ provides the full text of bills from the 101st Congress (1989) to the present.

GPO Access⁴ provides the full text of bills from the 103rd Congress (1993) to the present.

Document Rooms

Senate Document Services⁵ may be able to provide you with a copy of a bill or resolution from the current Congress. Check with them for availability.

Libraries

Bills and resolutions may be available in a federal depository library. The federal depository library program is made up of over 1,300 libraries that collect government documents and make them available to the public for borrowing or reading. A list of depository libraries is available on GPO's Web site. Most depository libraries are within a university or state library, so sometimes borrowing privileges are restricted.

Congressional Record

Many Senate bills are printed in the Congressional Record⁶ generally on the day they are introduced. Quite often, a Senator gives a statement of introduction, which is helpful in understanding the provisions of the bill. The text of House measures are rarely printed, and there are usually no statements of introduction.

¹ http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/b_three_sections_with_tasers/active_leg_page.htm

² http://www.senate.gov/reference/common/faq/how_to_numbers.htm

³ <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.html>

⁴ <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/bills/index.html>

⁵ http://www.senate.gov/legislative/common/generic/Doc_Room.htm

⁶ http://www.senate.gov/reference/common/faq/how_to_congressional_record.htm

Committee Hearings

Published hearing transcripts contain all witness testimony, the question-and-answer portion of the hearing, and any other material requested of the witness by the committee. It takes several months, or even years, for a hearing to be published. Unlike most other congressional documents, hearings are **not** available from the Senate or House Document Rooms. You may be able to locate a hearing from the Government Printing Office, from a committee Web site, or from a federal depository library.

Web Access

Many committees post witness testimony on their Web sites shortly after a hearing takes place. However, the transcripts are generally the prepared statements submitted by each witness, so they will not contain the question-and-answer portion. You can find committee Web pages through the main Senate¹ and House² Web sites and on THOMAS³. Most committees organize their hearing transcripts by date, and sometimes by subcommittee. Generally, testimony is only available for witnesses who submitted their statements electronically. A limited number of published hearings since 1997 are available in full text on the Government Printing Office⁴ (GPO) Web site.

Libraries

Published hearings may be available in a federal depository library. The federal depository library program is made up of over 1,300 libraries that collect government documents and make them available to the public for borrowing or reading. A list of depository libraries is on the GPO Web site. Most depository libraries are within a university or state library, so sometimes borrowing privileges are restricted.

Purchasing from GPO

Published hearings may be available for sale from the Government Printing Office (GPO), although it is often difficult to locate them in GPO's *Catalog of U.S. Government Publications*. More information is available from GPO by calling 202-512-1800 or writing to the Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954.

¹ http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/committees/d_three_sections_with_teasers/committees_home.htm

² <http://www.house.gov/house/CommitteeWWW.html>

³ <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.html>

⁴ <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/chearings/index.html>

Committee Reports and Conference Reports

Reports are published very quickly after they are written. The easiest

way to access a committee or conference report is by its number. You can find out if a committee report or conference report has been issued by looking in the "Bill Status and Summary" section of THOMAS.

You can read the full text of recent committee and conference reports on the Web, or you may be able to order them from the Senate or House Document Rooms, find copies of them in a library, or purchase them from the Government Printing Office. In addition, you can read the full text of a conference report in the *Congressional Record*.

Web Access

The full text of more recent reports are on the GPO Access¹ and THOMAS² Web sites:

GPO Access provides the full text of committee and conference reports from the 104th Congress (1995-1996) to the current Congress. You can find reports by doing a fielded search on the subject or bill number. You can also pull up a list of all congressional reports currently available on GPO Access by doing any fielded search and then clicking on the first hit in the results list.

THOMAS provides the full text of committee and conference reports from the 104th Congress (1995-96) to the current Congress. Click on the "Committee Reports" link on the main THOMAS page. Although you will be linking to the full text of the report on GPO Access, the THOMAS page is easier to search than the GPO Access page.

Document Rooms

The Senate and House Document Rooms³ may be able to provide you with a copy of a committee or conference report. Check with them for availability.

Libraries

Committee and conference reports may be available in a federal depository library. The federal depository library program is made up of over 1,300 libraries that collect government documents. A list of depository libraries is available on GPO's Web site. Most depository libraries are within a university or state library, so sometimes borrowing privileges are restricted.

¹ <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/creports/index.html>

² <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.html>

³ <http://www.senate.gov/>

Purchasing from GPO

Congressional reports may be available for sale from GPO; you will need to check GPO's *Catalog of U.S. Government Publications*.¹ More information is available from GPO by calling 202-512-1800 or writing to the Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954.

Congressional Record

All conference reports are printed in the *Congressional Record*² three calendar days before floor consideration, unless waived by unanimous consent or by a special rule.

¹ <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cgp/index.html>

² http://www.senate.gov/reference/common/faq/how_to_congressional_record.htm

Subcommittee Membership Rosters

Due to the high volume and complexity of its work, Congress divides its tasks

among approximately 250 committees and subcommittees. Most subcommittees are created to hold hearings, mark up legislation, and report measures to their full committees for further action. Subcommittees work within guidelines established by their parent committee, so the number and autonomy of subcommittees varies. You can find subcommittee membership rosters from recent Congresses in the *Congressional Directory*, available both in print and on the Web. Subcommittee membership rosters have been published in the *Congressional Directory* since the 93rd Congress (1973-1974). Since the 80th Congress in 1947, the *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News*, a publication of West Publishing, has included subcommittee membership rosters in its committee lists. More recent subcommittee information is also available in a number of standard reference books, including *Congressional Staff Directory*, *Congressional Yellow Book*, *Carroll's Federal Directory*, and *Washington Information Directory*.

Web Access

GPO Access¹ provides links to the *Congressional Directory* from the 104th Congress (1995-1996) onward. Select the *Directory* you would like to search and enter the word "subcommittees" as the search term. You will find links to "Standing Committees of the Senate" and "Standing Committees of the House." Within those documents, members of each committee and subcommittee are listed. A list is available of Senate committee and subcommittee assignments for the current (108th) Congress².

Libraries

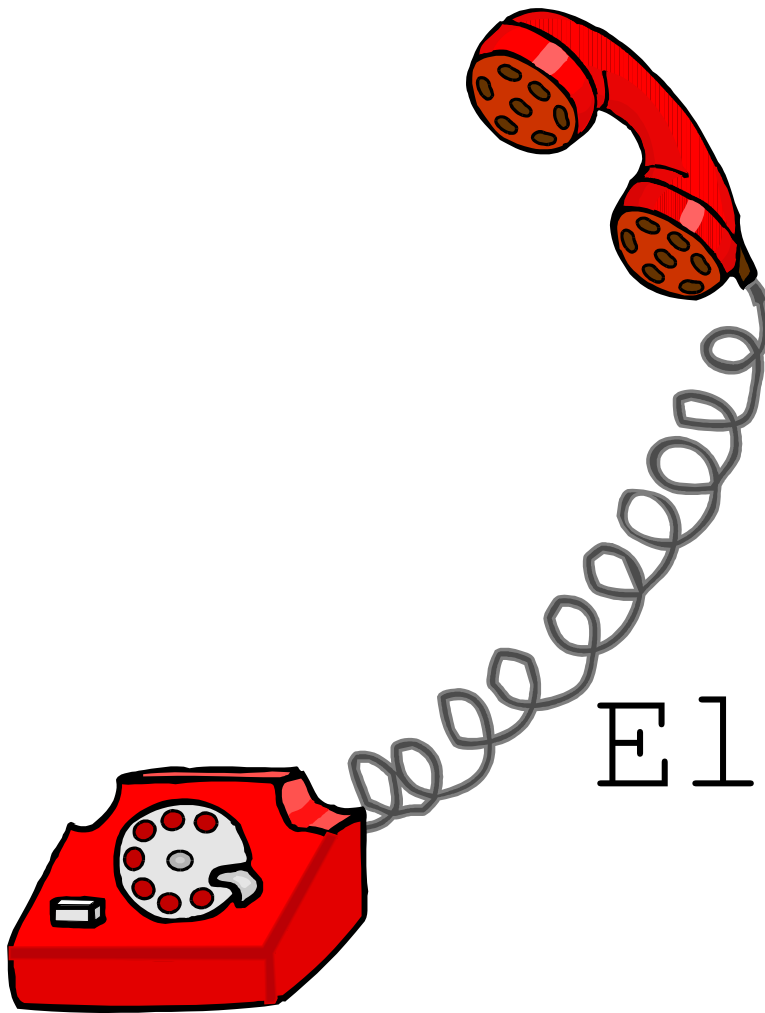
The *Congressional Directory* may be available in a federal depository library. The federal depository library program is made up of over 1,300 libraries that collect government documents and make them available to the public for borrowing or reading. A list of depository libraries is available on the Government Printing Office (GPO) Web site. Most depository libraries are within a university or state library, so sometimes borrowing privileges are restricted.

Many public and academic libraries subscribe to one or more of the print or Web versions of the *Congressional Staff Directory*, *Congressional Yellow Book*, *Carroll's Federal Directory*, and *Washington Information Directory*. Check with libraries in your area for access to these publications.

¹ <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cdirectory/index.html>

² http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_cong_pub&docid=f:sp005.pdf

Communicating



With

Your

Elected

Officials

Tips On Writing Congress

The letter is the most popular choice of communication with a congressional office. If you decide to write a letter, this list of helpful suggestions will improve the effectiveness of the letter:

1. Your purpose for writing should be stated in the first paragraph of the letter. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g., House bill: H. R. ____, Senate bill: S. ____.
2. Be courteous, to the point, and include key information, using examples to support your position.
3. Address only one issue in each letter; and, if possible, keep the letter to one page.

Addressing Correspondence

To a Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
__(Rm.#)__(name of)Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

To a Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
__(Rm.#)__(name of)House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

Note: When writing to the Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as:

Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman:

or Dear Mr. Speaker:

By E-Mail

Generally, use the same guidelines as with writing letters to Congress. You may find and email your senators and representative directly from www.congress.org.

By Telephone

To find your senators' and representative's phone numbers, you may use our searchable online congressional directory¹ or call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202)224-3121 and ask for your senators' and/or representative's office.

Remember that telephone calls are usually taken by a staff member, not the member of Congress. Ask to speak with the aide who handles the issue about which you wish to comment.

After identifying yourself, tell the aide you would like to leave a brief message, such as: "Please tell Senator/Representative (Name) that I support/oppose (S. ___/ H.R. ___)."

You will also want to state reasons for your support or opposition to the bill. Ask for your senators' or representative's position on the bill. You may also request a written response to your telephone call.

¹ <http://congress.org/congressorg/issues/basics/?style=comm>

Visiting Capitol Hill

Meeting with a member of Congress or congressional staff is a very effective way to convey a message about a specific legislative issue. Below are some suggestions to consider when planning a visit to a congressional office.

Plan Your Visit Carefully

Be clear about what it is you want to achieve; determine in advance which member or committee staff you need to meet with to achieve your purpose.

Make an Appointment

When attempting to meet with a member, contact the Appointment Secretary/Scheduler. Explain your purpose and who you represent. It is easier for congressional staff to arrange a meeting if they know what you wish to discuss and your relationship to the area or interests represented by the member.

Be Prompt and Patient

When it is time to meet with a member, be punctual and be patient. It is not uncommon for a Congressman or Congresswoman to be late, or to have a meeting interrupted, due to the member's crowded schedule. If interruptions do occur, be flexible. When the opportunity presents itself, continue your meeting with a member's staff.

Be Prepared

Whenever possible, bring to the meeting information and materials supporting your position. Members are required to take positions on many different issues. In some instances, a member may lack important details about the pros and cons of a particular matter. It is therefore helpful to share with the member information and examples that demonstrate clearly the impact or benefits associated with a particular issue or piece of legislation.

Be Political

Members of Congress want to represent the best interests of their district or state. Wherever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the member's constituency. If possible, describe for the member how you or your group can be of assistance to him/her. Where it is appropriate, remember to ask for a commitment.

Be Responsive

Be prepared to answer questions or provide additional information, in the event the member expresses interest or asks questions. Follow up the meeting with a thank you letter that outlines the different points covered during the meeting, and send along any additional information and materials requested.

Congressional Staff Roles

Each member of Congress has staff to assist him/her during a term in office. To be most effective in communicating with Congress, it is helpful to know the titles and principal functions of key staff.

- **Administrative Assistant or Chief of Staff**
The Administrative Assistant reports directly to the member of Congress. He/she usually has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcome of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. The Administrative Assistant is usually the person in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the supervision of key staff.
- **Legislative Director, Senior Legislative Assistant, or Legislative Coordinator**
The Legislative Director is usually the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of particular issues. In some congressional offices there are several Legislative Assistants and responsibilities are assigned to staff with particular expertise in specific areas. For example, depending on the responsibilities and interests of the member, an office may include a different Legislative Assistant for health issues, environmental matters, taxes, etc.
- **Press Secretary or Communications Director**
The Press Secretary's responsibility is to build and maintain open and effective lines of communication between the member, his/her constituency, and the general public. The Press Secretary is expected to know the benefits, demands, and special requirements of both print and electronic media, and how to most effectively promote the member's views or position on specific issues.
- **Appointment Secretary, Personal Secretary, or Scheduler**
The Appointment Secretary is usually responsible for allocating a member's time among the many demands that arise from congressional responsibilities, staff requirements, and constituent requests. The Appointment Secretary may also be responsible for making necessary travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates, visits to the district, etc.
- **Caseworker:**
The Caseworker is the staff member usually assigned to help with constituent requests by preparing replies for the member's signature. The Caseworker's responsibilities may also include helping resolve problems constituents present in relation to federal agencies, e.g., Social Security and Medicare issues, veteran's benefits, passports, etc. There are often several Caseworkers in a congressional office.

Other Staff Titles

Other titles used in a congressional office may include: Executive Assistant, Legislative Correspondent, Executive Secretary, Office Manager, and Receptionist

Resources



Glossary of Terms

act - Legislation (a bill or joint resolution, see below) which has passed both chambers of Congress in identical form, been signed into law by the President, or passed over his veto, thus becoming law. Technically, this term also refers to a bill that has been passed by one house and engrossed (prepared as an official copy).

advice and consent - Under the Constitution, presidential nominations for executive and judicial posts take effect only when confirmed by the Senate, and international treaties become effective only when the Senate approves them by a two-thirds vote.

amendment - A proposal to alter the text of a pending bill or other measure by striking out some of it, by inserting new language, or both. Before an amendment becomes part of the measure, the Senate must agree to it.

appeal - When the Chair rules on a point of order, any Senator may appeal the ruling, in which case the full Senate makes a final decision on the point of order by voting whether to sustain or reverse the ruling.

appropriation - Provision of law that provides authority for Federal agencies to obligate funds and to make payments out of the Treasury for specified purposes. Appropriations for the Federal government are provided both in annual appropriations acts and in permanent provisions of law.

authorization - Statutory provision in an authorizations act that authorizes appropriations for a program or an agency. An authorization may be effective for one year, a fixed number of years, or for an indefinite period. An authorization may be for a definite amount of money or for "such sums as may be necessary."

authorizations act - A law that establishes or continues one or more Federal agencies or programs, establishes the terms and conditions under which they operate, authorizes the enactment of appropriations, and specifies how appropriated funds are to be used. Authorizations acts sometimes provide permanent appropriations.

balanced budget - A budget in which receipts equal outlays.

bill - The principal vehicle employed by lawmakers for introducing their proposals (enacting or repealing laws, for example) in the Senate. Bills are designated S. 1, S. 2, and so on depending on the order in which they are introduced. They address either matters of general interest ("public bills") or narrow interest ("private bills"), such as immigration cases and individual claims against the Federal government.

budget authority - Authority provided by law to enter into obligations that will result in outlays of Federal funds. Budget authority may be classified by the period of availability (one-year, multiyear, no-year), by the timing of congressional action (current or permanent), or by the manner of determining the amount available (definite or indefinite).

budget resolution - Legislation in the form of a concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget. The budget resolution establishes various budget totals, divides spending totals into functional categories (e.g., transportation), and may include reconciliation instructions to designated House or Senate committees.

caucus - From the Algonquian Indian language, a caucus meant "to meet together." An informal organization of Members of the House or the Senate, or both, that exists to discuss issues of mutual concern and possibly to perform legislative research and policy planning for its members. There are regional, political or ideological, ethnic, and economic-based caucuses.

chairman - The presiding officer of a committee or subcommittee. In the Senate, chairmanship is based on seniority of committee tenure, but a Senator may not chair more than one standing committee.

"christmas tree" bill - Informal nomenclature for a bill on the Senate floor that attracts many, often unrelated, floor amendments. The amendments which adorn the bill may provide special benefits to various groups or interests.

classes of senators - Senators are elected to six-year terms, and the terms of one-third of the Senators expire every two years. A class is the approximately one-third of the Senate elected in the same general election.

clean bill - Generally, after a committee has amended legislation, the chairman may be authorized by the panel to assemble the changes and what remains unchanged from the original bill and then reintroduce everything as a clean bill. A clean bill may expedite Senate action by avoiding separate floor consideration of each committee amendment.

cloture - The only procedure by which the Senate can vote to place a time limit on consideration of a bill or other matter, and thereby overcome a filibuster. Under the cloture rule (Rule XXII), the Senate may limit consideration of a pending matter to 30 additional hours, but only by vote of three-fifths of the full Senate, normally 60 votes.

committee - Subsidiary organization of the Senate established for the purpose of considering legislation, conducting hearings and investigations, or carrying out other assignments as instructed by the parent chamber.

committee amendment - An amendment recommended by a committee in reporting a bill or other measure.

committee membership - Senators are assigned to specific committees by their party conference. Seniority, regional balance, and political philosophy are the most prominent factors in the committee assignment process.

committee on committees - Committees formed in each party conference and responsible for nominating the party's Senators to committee membership and committee leadership positions. Nominations are subject to approval by the full party conference and to a formal vote of the Senate.

conference committee - A temporary, ad hoc panel composed of House and Senate conferees which is formed for the purpose of reconciling differences in legislation that has passed both chambers. Conference committees are usually convened to resolve bicameral differences on major and controversial legislation.

conference report - The compromise product negotiated by the conference committee. The "conference report," which is printed and available to Senators, is submitted to each chamber for its consideration, such as approval or disapproval.

deficit (surplus) - The amount by which outlays exceed receipts in a given fiscal period. (A surplus would be the amount by which receipts exceed outlays.)

enacted - Once legislation has passed both chambers of Congress in identical form, been signed into law by the President, become law without his signature, or passed over his veto, the legislation is enacted.

filibuster - Informal term for any attempt to block or delay Senate action on a bill or other matter by debating it at length, by offering numerous procedural motions, or by any other delaying or obstructive actions.

fiscal year - The fiscal year for the Federal Government begins on October 1 and ends on September 30. The fiscal year is designated by the calendar year in which it ends; for example, fiscal year 2003 begins on October 1, 2002 and ends on September 30, 2003.

floor - Action "on the floor" is that which occurs as part of a formal session of the full Senate. An action "from the floor" is one taken by a Senator during a session of the Senate. A Senator who has been recognized to speak by the Chair is said to "have the floor."

floor amendment - An amendment offered by an individual Senator from the floor during consideration of a bill or other measure, in contrast to a committee amendment.

floor leaders - The Majority Leader and Minority Leader are elected by their respective party conferences to serve as the chief Senate spokesmen for their parties and to manage and schedule the legislative and executive business of the Senate. By custom, the Presiding Officer gives the floor leaders priority in obtaining recognition to speak on the floor of the Senate.

hearing - A meeting of a committee or subcommittee -- generally open to the public -- to take testimony in order to gather information and opinions on proposed legislation, to conduct an investigation, or review the operation or other aspects of a Federal agency or program.

item veto - Authority to veto part rather than all of an appropriations act. The President does not now have item-veto authority. He must sign or veto the entire appropriations act. The item veto sometimes is referred to as a line-item veto.

joint committee - Committees including membership from both houses of Congress. Joint committees are usually established with narrow jurisdictions and normally lack authority to report legislation. Chairmanship usually alternates between the House and Senate members from Congress to Congress.

joint meeting - An occasion, often ceremonial, when the House and Senate meet together to hear an address by various dignitaries, such as foreign leaders.

joint resolution - A legislative measure, designated "S. J. Res." and numbered consecutively upon introduction, which requires the approval of both chambers and, with one exception, is submitted (just as a bill) to the President for possible signature into law. The one exception is that joint resolutions (and not bills) are used to propose constitutional amendments. These resolutions require a two-thirds affirmative vote in each house but are not submitted to the President; they become effective when ratified by three-quarters of the States.

joint session - When the House and Senate meet together to conduct formal business or to hear an address by the President of the United States.

"lame duck" session - When Congress (or either chamber) reconvenes in an even-numbered year following the November general elections to consider various items of business. Some lawmakers who return for this session will not be in the next Congress. Hence, they are informally called "lame duck" Members participating in a "lame duck" session.

legislative session - That part of the Senate's daily session in which it considers legislative business (bills, resolutions, and actions related thereto).

majority leader - See Floor Leaders

majority whip - See Whips.

markup - The process by which congressional committees and subcommittees debate, amend, and rewrite proposed legislation.

measure - Term embracing bill, resolution and other matters on which the Senate takes action.

minority leader - See Floor Leaders.

minority whip - See Whips.

president of the senate - See Vice President.

president pro tempore - A constitutionally recognized officer of the Senate who presides over the chamber in the absence of the Vice President. The President Pro Tempore (or, "president for a time") is elected by the Senate and is, by custom, the Senator of the majority party with the longest record of continuous service.

public debt - Cumulative amounts borrowed by the Treasury Department or the Federal Financing Bank from the public or from another fund or account. The public debt does not include agency debt (amounts borrowed by other agencies of the Federal Government). The total public debt is subject to a statutory limit.

public law - A public bill or joint resolution that has passed both chambers and been enacted into law. Public laws have general applicability nationwide.

ranking minority member - The highest ranking (and usually longest serving) minority member of a committee or subcommittee. Senators may not serve as ranking minority member on more than one standing committee.

reconciliation bill - A bill containing changes in law recommended pursuant to reconciliation instructions in a budget resolution. If the instructions pertain to only one committee in a chamber, that committee reports the reconciliation bill. If the instructions pertain to more than one committee, the Budget Committee reports an omnibus reconciliation bill, but it may not make substantive changes in the recommendations of the other committees.

standing committee - Permanent committees established under the standing rules of the Senate and specializing in the consideration of particular subject areas. There are currently 16 standing committees.

supplemental appropriation - Budget authority provided in an appropriations act in addition to regular or continuing appropriations already provided. Supplemental appropriations generally are made to cover emergencies, such as disaster relief, or other needs deemed too urgent to be postponed until the enactment of next year's regular appropriations act.

table, motion to - A Senator may move to table any pending question. The motion is not debatable, and agreement to the motion is equivalent to defeating the question tabled. The motion is used to dispose quickly of questions the Senate does not wish to consider further.

veto - The procedure established under the Constitution by which the President refuses to approve a bill or joint resolution and thus prevents its enactment into law. A regular veto occurs when the President returns the legislation to the house in which it originated. The President usually returns a vetoed bill with a message indicating his reasons for rejecting the measure. The veto can be overridden only by a two-thirds vote in both the Senate and the House.

vice president - Under the Constitution, the Vice President serves as President of the Senate. He may vote in the Senate in the case of a tie, but is not required to. The President Pro Tempore (and others designated by him) usually perform these duties during the Vice President's frequent absences from the Senate.

vote - Unless rules specify otherwise, the Senate may agree to any question by a majority of Senators voting, if a quorum is present. The Chair puts each question by voice vote unless the "yeas and nays" are requested, in which case a roll call vote occurs.

whips - Assistants to the floor leaders who are also elected by their party conferences. The Majority and Minority Whips (and their assistants) are responsible for mobilizing votes within their parties on major issues. In the absence of a party floor leader, the whip often serves as acting floor leader.

Web Sites

- **Capitol** www.aoc.gov
- **Congress** www.congress.org
- **Department of Education** www.ed.gov
- **Health and Human Services** www.os.dhhs.gov
- **House of Representative** www.house.gov
- **Legislative Information** www.thomas.loc.gov
- **Senate** www.senate.gov
- **US Government's Official Web Page** www.firstgov.gov
- **White House** www.whitehouse.gov
 - Executive Branch** www.whitehouse.gov/government/exec.html
 - Judicial Branch** www.whitehouse.gov/government/judg.html
 - Legislative Branch** www.whitehouse.gov/government/legi.html