



## Advocacy Glossary

The barrage of government and procedural jargon is often confusing and off-putting for new advocates. This glossary is designed to help you learn some of the more commonly-used terms in the lawmaking process.

### Advocacy

Speaking out on issues of concern. This can mean something as formal as sitting down and talking to your legislator, as intensive as engaging in efforts to enact a change in laws or policies, or as simple as telling your neighbor about the impact of a law.

### Amendment

A change to a bill or motion, sometimes replacing the entire bill (called a "substitution"). An amendment is debated and voted on in the same manner as a bill.

### Appropriations

Legislation to provide specific funding for an authorized program; another word for "budget." An appropriations committee will craft a bill that lays out how the government's money should be spent for a given time period, which is then voted on by the legislature and signed into law by the president or governor.

### Authorization

Legislation that formally establishes a program or activity and sets its funding limit. Authorizations are often for a limited time, and programs must be periodically re-authorized, sometimes with changes.

### Bill

A proposed law. Bills usually must be formally filed with the legislature's clerk and given an identifying number (H.R. 10, for example, is the tenth bill filed in the House of Representatives in this session).

### Chairperson

Member of the majority party who presides over the work of a committee or subcommittee.

### Committee

A group of legislators that develops legislation on specific topics (veterans' affairs, for example), and has jurisdiction over all legislation that deals with this topic. Generally, legislation must pass in a committee before the entire legislative body can vote on it.

### Congress

Refers to the 2-year cycle of activities of the legislative branch. For example, elections for the 112th Congress were held in November of 2010, and the Congress began January 3, 2011. It included 2011 and 2012 sessions. Proposed legislation introduced during a 2-year Congress may be taken up at any time during that period, but once the Congress has ended, pending measures are no longer viable and must be introduced anew in the next Congress in order to be considered. For 2013-2014, we are in the 113th Congress.

### **Congressional District**

The geographic area from which a member of the US House of Representatives or state legislature is elected. There are 435 Congressional districts in the country. Each state has a set number of districts based on population determined by the United States Census.

### **Congressional Record**

The official transcript of federal House and Senate proceedings.

### **Continuing Resolution**

Legislation passed by both the House and the Senate permitting executive branch agencies to continue operating in the absence of a budget. Also called a "CR" for short.

### **Co-sponsor**

When a legislator supports a bill, but is not the primary sponsor, they may sign their name on the bill as a co-sponsor to show their support.

### **Executive Order**

An action by the President or Governor that has the legal authority of a law, often dealing with regulations or the workings of agencies.

### **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**

An agency of the United States Department of Health and Human Services that is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the regulation and supervision of food safety, dietary supplements, prescription and over-the-counter pharmaceutical medications, vaccines, biopharmaceuticals, medical devices, and other products.

### **Filibuster**

Delaying tactic used in the US Senate by the minority in an effort to prevent the passage of a bill or amendment. The Senate's rules allow for unlimited debate in some situations, unless a 2/3 vote to end debate passes. A filibuster results when one or more Senators continue "debating" for as long as possible. This can sometimes last for days.

### **Grassroots Lobbying**

Stating a position on a specific legislative proposal to the public, then asking the public to urge their legislator to support that stated position.

### **Hearing**

A meeting in which evidence to support particular points of view can be presented to a committee. Usually in conjunction with the consideration of a specific bill and can include experts on a specific topic, or members of the public who would be affected by the bill or issue at hand.

### **Hopper**

A wooden box on the House floor into which measures are dropped for formal introduction.

## **House of Representatives**

The lower body of the Congress, and most state legislators. House members are elected to represent a geographic district. The US House of Representatives, with 435 voting members and five nonvoting delegates, is much larger than the Senate, with 100 voting members. Members of the US House of Representatives are elected for two-year terms.

## **Lobbying**

Communication with elected officials or their staff, which expresses a position on a pending piece of legislation.

## **Mark Up**

The process of amending a legislative proposal in a committee or subcommittee. Committee members can offer amendments, which, if successful, are incorporated into language of a particular bill. Legislation may be drastically changed during mark up.

## **Majority Leader**

The leader of the majority party. In the Senate, the Majority Leader is elected by his or her peers. In the House, he or she is the second in command after the Speaker of the House and is also elected to that post by his or her peers. For the 114th Congress, the Senate Majority Leader is Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY), and the House Majority Leader is Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA).

## **Majority Party**

The political party that holds a simple majority (more than 50% of the seats) in the Senate or House. This can shift with each election. During the 114th Congress, Republicans hold the majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

## **Minority Leader**

The leader of the minority party, elected by members of his or her party. For the 114th Congress, the Senate Minority Leader is Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV), and the House Minority Leader is Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA).

## **Minority Party**

The political party that does not hold a simple majority in the Senate or House. This can shift with each election. For the 114th Congress, the Democrats are the minority party in both the House and Senate.

## **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**

A biomedical research facility that is an agency of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary agency of the US government responsible for biomedical and health-related research. The NIH comprises 27 separate institutes and centers that conduct research in different disciplines of biomedical science, including the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), and the NIH Clinical Center.

## **Omnibus Bill**

A bill related to a specific area that covers many issues or topics. Often, the federal budget is an omnibus bill that deals with many agencies' budgets at once. The 21st Century Cures Act (H.R. 6) is another omnibus bill, which encompassed multiple pieces of healthcare legislation.

### **President of the Senate**

The Vice President of the United States officially presides over the Senate. Except during times of very important debate, a President pro tempore is elected.

### **Public Law**

After a bill passes both the House and the Senate and is signed by the president, it becomes a public law.

### **Quorum**

The number of Senators or Representatives who must be present in their respective chambers before business can be conducted.

### **Ranking Member**

Member of the majority party on a committee who ranks first in seniority after the chairperson.

### **Ranking Minority Member**

The minority party member with the most seniority on a committee.

### **Reauthorization**

Re-approves a previously approved program, usually with changes.

### **Regulation**

A rule or order that has the force of law that originates from the executive branch (usually from an agency), and deals with the specifics of a program. Congress, for example, may instruct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reduce automotive emissions by 5%, but the EPA must develop regulations to reach this goal.

### **Rider**

An amendment to an appropriations bill, which may not actually deal with the allocation of government funds.

### **Roll Call**

A formal vote on a bill or amendment taken by each legislator announcing "yea," "no," or "present" as their name is read by the clerk.

### **Senate**

The upper body of the Congress, and most state legislatures. Each state has two US Senators, elected at-large, to serve six-year terms. In state legislatures, Senators usually represent larger geographic areas than House members.

### **Speaker of the House**

The presiding officer in the House of Representatives, elected by the majority party. The Speaker controls the calendar and other aspects of the House's activities. For the 114th Congress, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives is Rep. John Boehner (R-OH).

### **Sponsor**

One or more legislators who are the primary writers of a bill. All bills must have at least one sponsor, but many have more than one primary sponsor, and a number of co-sponsors as well.

### **Subcommittee**

A part of a committee that deals with a specific issue within the committee's jurisdiction (such as the health subcommittee of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee). Most legislation is first developed and voted on at this level, as a full committee will usually not consider legislation until it has passed its subcommittee.

### **Voice Vote**

Voting on a bill by acclamation, or asking those in favor to say "yea" and those opposed to say "no." Usually, only non-controversial legislation without any "no" votes is passed this way (such as renaming post offices), but a voice vote will sometimes be taken before a roll call vote.

### **Whip**

A legislator who is chosen to be assistant to the leader of the party in the House or the Senate. The Whip serves as an internal lobbyist for their party to persuade legislators to support their party's position, and to counts votes for the leadership in advance of floor votes. While Minority and Majority Whips are official positions, there may be other members who act as a whip for specific legislation or issues.

*Sources: The US Congress, American Psychological Association, Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy*