



GLOSSARY OF LEGISLATIVE TERMS

ACT Legislation enacted into law. A bill has passed both chambers of the Legislature, been enrolled and ratified.

ADJOURNMENT A legislative chamber ends its business day by recessing until a stated time on another day or until the time fixed by its rules for reconvening. Constitutionally either chamber may, of its own motion, adjourn for a period not in excess of three days. Sine die (“without day”) adjournment is the final action of a legislative session.

ADOPTED Simple resolutions, amendments, and committee substitutes are “adopted;” joint resolutions and bills are “passed.” Adopt means to consent to or accept; pass means to enact by the requisite number of votes.

AMENDMENT Changes in any bill (or other proposed legislation) may be offered either by a committee or an individual legislator in the form of an amendment to a specific portion of the pending measure.

APPEAL Any member may appeal from the ruling of the Chair on questions of order; on such an appeal no member may speak more than once, unless by permission of the chamber.

APPORTIONMENT The legislative act, performed every tenth year following a federal census, of drawing district boundaries so as to provide representation for the people in the Senate and House of Representatives.

APPROPRIATIONS BILL This is a bill authorizing the spending of public money.

BILL A bill is a proposed law sponsored by a legislator.

BILL HISTORY A chronological listing of all versions of a bill, with amendments and/or committee substitutes and votes kept in the Principal Clerk's office and the library.

BUDGET In the legislative process, a budget is a plan created by the legislature or the Governor that outlines how much money the government expects to collect (revenue) and how much it plans to spend (expenditures) over a specific period—usually one fiscal year.

CALENDAR The calendar is a schedule for what will occur in each chamber of the General Assembly on a given legislative day, including committee meetings, full session meetings, and the legislation and/or other items that will be considered at these meetings.

CAUCUS A private meeting of legislators with common interests. The caucus may be members of a political party or members from a geographical area, e.g. the Women's Caucus or the Wayne County delegation. Legislative officers are designated and nominated within the political parties at caucuses. Party positions on pending legislation may be determined in caucuses.

CENSURE A resolution adopted by a chamber of the legislature condemning the conduct of one of its members or of some other public official -- a step short of either expulsion or impeachment.

CHAIR The Chair is used to describe the presiding officer as, for example, a member inquires, "How did the Chair rule on the gentleman's point of order?" or, responding, "The Chair rules the amendment out of order."

CHAMBER Official Hall for the meeting of a legislative body.

CHAPLAIN When a clergyman is designated by the presiding officer to serve for the duration of a legislative session, he is known as the chaplain.

COMMITTEE A committee is a group of people chosen to perform specific functions. Legislators utilize a number of committees. The most familiar are standing committees, which are those with a continuing responsibility in a general field of legislative activity, for example, appropriations. There are also "select" committees, whose members are "selected" to do a particular job, for example, to study alcoholic beverage laws. Often a select committee will be an interim committee, meaning that it will do its work between regular sessions of the legislature.

COMMITTEE REPORT All House bills and resolutions shall be reported from the committee to which referred with such recommendations as the committee may desire to make (except in the case where the principal introducer requests, in writing to the Chairman of the committee, that the bill not be considered). Bills may be reported "favorable," "favorable as amended," or "unfavorable as to bill, favorable as to committee substitute bill." The latter means that the original bill was killed, and the committee wrote a new bill, about the same subject, with the same name.

COMPANION BILL Identical bill introduced in both houses.

CONCURRENCE When one house agrees to an amendment/committee substitute adopted by the other house, the action is known as concurrence.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE A conference committee is actually two committees, one from each house, meeting together to attempt to work out language acceptable to the Senate and House on some measure upon which agreement could not be reached through amendments. A majority of the members of the committee from each house must agree before the conference committee report may be submitted to the Senate and House. Neither house is obligated to accept the report but usually they do since the alternative could be the failure of the legislation for that session.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST A member may request that s/he be excused from voting if s/he feels the legislation being considered may directly affect him or her professionally or personally.

CONSTITUENT A citizen residing within the district of a legislator.

CO-SPONSOR The legislator introducing a bill is known as the primary sponsor and his name appears first on the jacket and in the journal. Other members who sign the bill are co-sponsors.

CROSSOVER The point in a legislative session when a bill must pass out of the chamber where it was introduced (either the House or the Senate) and move to the other chamber to remain eligible for consideration during that session.

DEBATE A formal statement of the reasons for (or against) some proposed action. A legislator desiring to debate first must gain recognition from the presiding officer, who possesses inherent discretion in extending this privilege. In other

words, when two legislators arise at approximately the same moment, the presiding officer decides who shall speak first.

DELEGATION Legislators from the same voting constituency.

DISTRICT The area from which a Senator or Representative is elected. The boundaries of districts are drawn in the decennial reapportionments.

EFFECTIVE DATE A law becomes binding upon the date specified in the law itself.

ELECTRONIC VOTING The device by which legislators record their presence and votes from their desk on the floors of the House and Senate. Red and green lights beside their names on panels show how legislators voted by automatically totaling the results.

ENGROSSED BILL When a bill has been amended, it is rewritten to show the language as adopted. This rewriting is ordered by the house of origin (i.e. the House cannot order a Senate bill engrossed and the reverse is also true).

ENROLLED BILL The final copy of a bill passed by both the House and Senate.

FISCAL NOTE A fiscal note seeks to state in dollars the estimated amount of increase or decrease in revenue or expenditures and the present and future implications of a piece of pending legislation.

GERMANENESS The relevance or appropriateness of amendments or substitutes.

GERRYMANDERING Legislative district boundary lines drawn to obtain partisan or factional advantages.

GRANDFATHER CLAUSE Laws providing new or additional professional qualifications often contain a "grandfather clause" exempting persons presently practicing an affected profession from having to comply.

IMPEACHMENT Procedure to remove from office public officials accused of misconduct.

INDEFINITE POSTPONEMENT A motion to indefinitely postpone consideration of a bill is equivalent to removing it from consideration. Such a motion may, if carried, be reconsidered.

JOINT SESSION The House and Senate meet jointly in the House Chamber for the Governor's address, to confirm appointments and elect persons to various boards.

JOURNAL The official chronological record of the action taken and proceedings of the respective houses.

LAY ON THE TABLE To pause or stop discussion on a bill or motion, usually so the legislative body can focus on something more urgent. It's a way to temporarily set something aside—but sometimes, it can also be used to quietly kill a bill without voting it down directly.

LINE-ITEM An item which appears in a general appropriations bill on a separate line, apart from the overall funding of an agency.

LOBBY The act of persons who seek, directly or indirectly, to encourage the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation.

MAJORITY A quorum consists of a majority of the qualified members of the House, thus half of the membership plus one.

MESSAGE The House and Senate communicate with each other by messages. Each bill is transmitted from one chamber to the other by a document which tells what action has been taken.

NON-CONTROVERSIAL BILLS Generally a bill on which the explanation can be concluded in a brief period of time. Local bills are often considered non-controversial.

OFFICERS, NON-LEGISLATIVE The portion of the legislative staff elected by the membership, such as the Principal Clerk, Reading Clerk, and Sergeant-at-Arms.

OMNIBUS BILL A bill relating to a single subject but combining many aspects.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY Question posed to the Chair for clarification of a point in proceedings.

PERSONAL PRIVILEGE Upon recognition by the Speaker for that purpose, any member may speak to a question of privilege for a time not to exceed three minutes. Questions of privilege shall be: (1) those affecting the rights of the House collectively, its safety, dignity, and the integrity of its proceedings; (2) the rights, reputation, and conduct of members, individually, in their respective capacity.

POINT OF ORDER Calling attention to a breach of order or rules.

PREVIOUS QUESTION A motion to close debate and bring the pending question or questions to an immediate vote.

READINGS Presentations of a bill before either house by reading of the title; a stage in the enactment of a measure.

RECALL A motion which enables either house to recall a bill previously passed.

RECESS Intermission in a daily session.

RECONSIDERATION A motion which, when granted, gives rise to another vote annulling or reaffirming an action previously taken by the house.

REFERENDUM A method by which a measure adopted by the legislature may be submitted to popular vote by the electorate.

RESOLUTIONS do not have the effect of law, as bills do. They are used instead to express opinions of the house, to create study commissions, committees, or investigative committees; to honor deceased persons; and to adopt House rules on internal affairs. Joint resolutions pass through both houses. Simple resolutions are adopted by one house.

ROLL CALL The vote on an issue before the body; either by electronic voting or by voice vote, names of members being called in alphabetical order and recorded.

RULES The rules of each house determine how it shall go about its daily conduct of business.

SELECT COMMITTEE A special committee is created for the purpose of dealing with a specific and, generally, a rather narrow situation.

SESSION Period during which the legislature meets.

SINE DIE Adjournment "without a day" being set for reconvening. Final Adjournment.

SPECIAL ORDER Matter of business set for a special time and day designated.

SPONSOR Legislator who is the primary author of a bill or amendment.

STANDING COMMITTEE Regular committees of the legislature set up to perform certain legislative functions.

STATUTES Compilation of laws in bound form. Updated after each session.

STOPPING THE CLOCK The clock in the Chamber is literally stopped if the hour set for adjournment arrives without having completed the work for the session.

SUBCOMMITTEES are often appointed within a committee to handle a particular piece of legislation and report to the full committee. The full committee need not accept the recommendation but usually does.

TABLE A means of disposing of a bill or other matter without further debate, usually tabling is a final disposition but is possible to take from the table by a two-thirds vote.

TITLE A concise statement of the contents of a bill.

VETO The action of a governor in disapproval of a measure.

WALK, TAKING A Legislator who leaves the Chamber or a committee meeting so s/he will not have to record a vote is said to be “taking a walk.”

WITHOUT OBJECTION Much of the business of the Chamber is done “without objection.” This means the presiding officer has not put a motion to the body to dispose of a matter proposed by a member. “Without objection” is the same as saying “by unanimous consent.”

To learn more about American Heart Association *Heart Powered* contact:

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