

LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

KEY TERMS:

ACT. A bill which has passed both houses of the legislature, been enrolled, certified, approved by the governor or passed over the governor's veto, or otherwise becomes law..

ADJOURN SINE DIE. Final termination of a regular, special or organizational session.

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.

AMENDMENT. An alteration made, or proposed to be made, to a bill or resolution by adding, changing, substituting or omitting language.

APPROVAL BY THE GOVERNOR. Signature of the governor on a bill passed by the legislature, whereupon the bill becomes an act (law). (Constitutional amendments do not require the governor's signature).

BILL. A proposed law presented to the legislature for consideration. If the bill is passed by both houses and signed by the governor (or otherwise has become law), it becomes an act (law).

BIR. Abbreviation for Budget Isolation Resolution. A BIR is attached to every House and Senate bill approved in committee. They must be adopted before the respective bill can be debated. Consideration of BIRs discontinue when both state budgets have passed the legislature and have been transmitted to the governor.

CALENDAR. A list of bills by title, printed each legislative day, which have been reported out of committee and are ready for the third reading. Bills not disposed of on that legislative day are carried over in the same order to the next day's calendar. (See Regular Order Calendar, Special Order Calendar and Consent Calendar).

- **REGULAR ORDER CALENDAR.** A list of bills in the order that they were reported out of committees for third reading. It reflects the order for considering bills absent a special order calendar.
- **SPECIAL ORDER CALENDAR.** A list of bills, in resolution form, from the regular order calendar that are reported out of the Rules Committee for priority treatment.
- **CONSENT CALENDAR.** A listing of non-controversial bills which have been through the consent calendar process in the House Rules Committee and are to be considered before the regular order calendar on each legislative day.

CARRIED OVER. Term used to describe a motion on which action has been postponed on a legislative matter.

CLOTURE. A parliamentary action in the Senate to cease debate on a bill and vote immediately on its advancement. In the House, this action is known as a motion on the previous question.

LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT. Any alteration made (or proposed to be made) to a bill or resolution that is reported by a legislative committee.

COMMITTEE CHAIR. A member selected by the proper appointing authority to preside over the proceedings and actions of a specific committee.

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE. A bill reported 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.

COMMITTEES (INTERIM). Joint legislative committees appointed to study a specific problem between sessions, to report to the legislature before a certain date with recommendations. Such committees are usually created by joint resolution.

COMMITTEES (STANDING). Groups of senators or representatives appointed by the presiding officers or Senate president pro tem to act on bills in a certain area of interest. The committees last for the entire length of a legislative term (4 years).

COMPANION BILL. A bill in one house that is identical to a bill in the other house.

CONCUR. Agreement by one house to an amendment added by the other house, the governor or a conference committee.

CONFEREES. Members appointed to a conference committee.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE. Committee composed of 3 members (conferees) of each house appointed by the presiding officer in the House and the Committee on Assignments in the Senate to resolve differences between the two houses on an amended instrument. Said committee reports amendments back to the legislature for further action.

CONFERENCE REPORT. Amendments agreed upon by at least 4 members, two from the House and two from the Senate, which are designed to resolve differences between the two houses.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. A bill that amends the Constitution of Alabama. After legislative enactment, it must be accepted or rejected by the people in a statewide election. However, local constitutional amendments may only be voted on in the affected county.

CONSTITUTIONAL MAJORITY. The number of votes required to amend the Constitution. In the House, a constitutional majority is 63, in the Senate, it is 21.

DIED IN COMMITTEE. The defeat of a bill or resolution by a standing committee.

ENGROSSMENT. The incorporation of amendments into a bill or resolution before it is sent to the second house.

ENROLLMENT. The final processing of a bill or resolution, incorporating all amendments, after passing

LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

both houses. This is the document that is signed by both presiding officers and the governor. Constitutional amendments do not require the governor's signature.

FAVORABLE REPORT. The recommendation of a standing committee that a bill be passed, either in its original form or with amendments or a substitute.

FILIBUSTER. An action by which members can control the floor through "extended debate" on a measure for the purpose of delaying passage. A senator may speak for two one-hour periods on any debatable measure before the Senate. House members may speak for two 10-minute periods.

FISCAL NOTE. An estimate of the expected financial impact of a measure to state and/or local government. Fiscal notes are prepared by the Legislative Fiscal Office.

FLOOR AMENDMENT/SUBSTITUTE. Any alteration offered to a legislative document that is presented by a legislator while that document is being discussed on the floor of the chamber.

GENERAL BILL. A bill of general statewide interest or whose provisions apply to the entire state.

GERMANE. Relating directly to the content of a bill.

HOUSE OF ORIGIN. The house in which a measure is introduced.

INDEFINITELY POSTPONE. To postpone without setting a definite time for consideration. Often synonymous with killing a measure.

LAY ON TABLE. A motion to defeat or postpone an amendment or motion.

LOCAL BILL. A bill that applies to one county or one city. Local bills must be advertised for four consecutive weeks in the local newspaper before introduction.

PUBLIC HEARING. Committee meeting open to the public, on a specific bill, with interested parties invited to testify.

QUORUM. The minimum number of members required to transact business. Fifty-three members constitute a quorum in the House and 18 members constitute a quorum in the Senate. A majority of a quorum can pass any bill except a constitutional amendment which requires 63 votes in the House and 21 votes in the Senate. If a quorum is not present, the only business that is in order is either a motion to adjourn or a motion to request the attendance of the absentees.

READING, FIRST. The reading of a bill by title upon introduction, after which the presiding officer refers same to an appropriate standing committee for study.

READING, SECOND. The reading of a bill when it is reported out of committee, along with announcement of committee action. The presiding officer then orders said bill placed on the calendar for the next legislative day.

LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

READING, THIRD. The reading of a bill when it comes up for consideration on the calendar. It is at this point that amendments are considered and the bill is passed or defeated. If it is passed, it is then transmitted to the other house.

REFERENDUM. An election on legislation referred by the legislature to the voters for their rejection or enactment.

REGULAR SESSION. In Alabama, the annual convening of the legislature is for 30 legislative days within a span of 105 calendar days. In the first year of an administration, the session begins on the first Tuesday in March to allow the new governor time to prepare the proposed budget. In the second and third years the session begins on the first Tuesday of February. The fourth year, being an election year, the legislature convenes on the second Tuesday in January.

ROLLING RESERVE ACT. Act that limits appropriations from the Education Trust Fund to the average growth for the previous 15 years.

RULES COMMITTEE. Committees in each house responsible for setting the daily calendars of the House and the Senate.

SINE DIE. Adjournment "without day", that is, without designating a day to which the legislature adjourns; final adjournment of a session.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE. The presiding officer of the House, elected from its membership by the House at each organizational session. The highest ranking officer of the House of Representatives.

SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE. Speaker "for a time", or vice-speaker, also elected from its membership by the House at each Organizational Session.

SPECIAL OR EXTRAORDINARY SESSION. A session, limited to 12 legislative days within 30 calendar days, called by the governor for a specific purpose set out in his/her proclamation. Any measures not included in his/her call require a 2/3 majority for passage.

SUBCOMMITTEE. Selected members of a committee designed to study a special area of concern and then report to the whole committee their findings and recommendations.

SUBSTITUTE. An amendment in the form of an entire bill. When adopted, a substitute becomes the bill.

SUBSTITUTING HOUSE BILL FOR SENATE BILL. When a Senate bill is in position for final passage, an identical House bill listed on the Senate calendar may be substituted by a majority vote.

SUBSTITUTING SENATE BILL FOR HOUSE BILL. When a House bill is in position for final passage, an identical Senate bill listed on the House calendar may be substituted by a majority vote.

SUSPEND THE RULES. To temporarily set aside the rule involved in an action for the sake of expediency.

LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

TABLE. A motion to postpone.

TEMPORARILY CARRIED OVER. Term used to describe a motion on which action has been temporarily postponed on a legislative matter.

VETO. The action of the governor in disapproving a measure. On its return to the legislature, each house either sustains the veto or overrides it.

VETO OVERRIDE. Vote by the legislature to pass a bill over a governor's veto.

VETO SUSTAINED. House refused to pass bill over veto of governor.

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 prevails.

WITHDRAW. To remove a bill, amendment or other legislative matter from further consideration.

YEA, NAYS, ABSTAINS. A vote which indicates which legislator voted in favor (Yea), against (Nay) or abstains from voting (Abstains) on an issue

YIELD. To relinquish the floor to another member to speak or ask a question.

OTHER IMPORTANT TERMS:

ADOPTION. Approval of motions, amendments, substitutes or resolutions.

BILL STATUS. The progression and current stage of a legislative instrument from its introduction to becoming law.

BUDGETS. Suggested allocation of state money presented by the governor in each regular session of the legislature by the second legislative day. The Education Budget appropriates funds to public schools, colleges, universities and other education-related agencies. The General Fund Budget appropriates funds to non-education agencies, such as Corrections and Medicaid.

CAUCUS. An informal meeting of a group of the members; most commonly based on political party affiliation, but may have other bases, such as gender, race, geographic location or specific issue.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE. A non-legislator officer elected by the members of the House of Representatives to record the official actions of the House. The clerk also serves as the chief administrative officer and the House parliamentarian.

CODE OF ALABAMA. A compilation of laws and their revisions according to subject matter (usually arranged by title, chapter and section); the official publication of the statutes.

LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

CONTESTED BILL. Disputed. One member can prevent a local bill from being considered in the regular order of business by filing a written contest with the clerk in the House or the secretary in the Senate.

CONVENE. To meet in session.

COSPONSOR. Any member, other than the sponsor, who signs their name on a bill or resolution.

EFFECTIVE DATE. The date upon which an act becomes effective. If a date is not specified in the bill, it becomes law upon signature of the governor. Constitutional amendments are effective on the date of ratification unless specified otherwise.

EXECUTIVE AMENDMENT. An amendment proposed by the governor to a bill that has been passed by the legislature. If the governor proposes an amendment to a bill, it is then returned to the legislature for further action.

HEARING. A legislative committee meeting at which witnesses present testimony on matters under consideration in the committee.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS. An order of business during which new bills are read into the record.

JOINT COMMITTEE. A committee composed of members from both houses.

JOINT SESSION. A combined meeting of the House and Senate in one chamber, usually in the House Chamber. The purpose is to receive special information, such as the Governor's State of the State Address, or to honor an infamous person.

JOURNAL. Official record of legislative proceedings in each house.

LEAVE OF HOUSE. Permission for a committee to meet while in session.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE SERVICE. The legislative agency which drafts bills and resolutions and conducts research at the request of members of the legislature.

LINE-ITEM VETO. The power of the governor to selectively veto items in a general appropriations act or any specific appropriation in a substantive act containing an appropriation.

LOCAL BILL. A bill that applies to one county or one city. Local bills must be advertised for four consecutive weeks in the local newspaper before introduction.

MAJORITY LEADER. The member chosen by each house's majority party caucus to manage the passage of those bills it favors.

MAJORITY VOTE. A vote of more than half of the legislative body considering a measure. The House requires a majority vote of 53 and the Senate requires 18 based on the membership of 105 and 35, respectively.

LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

MESSAGE. An official communication from one house to the other or from the governor to the legislature, usually transmitting bills or resolutions; they become part of the official journal.

MINORITY LEADER. The legislator elected by the minority party caucus to be the leader of the minority party members in the House or Senate.

MOTION. Formal suggestion offered by a member; it can be a motion to adopt, a motion to lay on the table, a motion to adjourn, etc., and when it is "put" (or officially received by the presiding officer), it is acted upon by voice vote or roll call.

NONCONCUR. A motion made when the House or Senate refuses to agree to an amendment by the other house, a governor's amendment or a conference committee.

ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION. A 10 calendar-day session held at the beginning of each quadrennium. The only business which may be transacted is as follows: swearing-in of members, canvassing of returns, appointment of committees, adoption of rules and adoption of resolutions.

OUT OF ORDER. Not being conducted under proper parliamentary rules and procedures.

PASSAGE. Favorable floor action on a bill upon its third reading.

POCKET VETO. Bills not signed by the governor and delivered to the secretary of state within ten days after adjournment sine die.

POINT OF ORDER. A question by a member to the presiding officer calling attention to a breach of order or of the rules.

POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE. A statement by a member not relevant to the pending business, such as a request to be recorded as voting "aye" or "nay" on a previous roll call, a protest against a newspaper article, or an invitation to a social gathering. There is a five minute limitation, by precedent, on such statement.

POSTPONE. To delay consideration of a measure until a certain legislative day or hour of the same day. (See Indefinitely Postpone).

PREFILE. To introduce a bill prior to a regular session; the bill is numbered and informally referred to a standing committee at this point, and on the first legislative day it is read and formally referred to the same committee.

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE. A senator elected by the Senate in the organizational session to discharge the duties of the presiding officer in the lieutenant governor's absence.

PREVIOUS QUESTION. A motion to close debate and bring the pending question or questions to an immediate vote in the House of Representatives. In the Senate, this action is known as cloture.

LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

READ AT LENGTH. The reading of an entire bill.

RECESS. A break within a sitting during which a legislative body is not conducting business. After a recess, a legislative body resumes business at the point where business halted when the recess was taken.

RECOMMIT. A procedure whereby a bill is referred back to a standing committee for further consideration. A bill may be recommitted at any time, usually on second or third reading.

RECONSIDERATION. A process whereby a measure previously adopted or defeated can be reopened (within a strict time span) and again acted upon.

RESOLUTION. A formal legislative document expressing opinion. Joint Rule 11 resolutions are sympathy, commendation or congratulations.

ROLL CALL. Record of how members voted on a particular issue or question.

RULING OF THE CHAIR. A decision by the presiding officer concerning a question of order or procedure.

SIMPLE MAJORITY. One more than half of those voting on a question.

SPONSOR. Member offering a bill, resolution, amendment or substitute.

STATUS OF BILL. The progress of a bill at any given time in the legislative process. It can be in committee, on the calendar, in the other house, etc. This can be determined by referring to the computer system which provides a constant update on all legislative action.

STATUTES. Individual laws which comprise the Code of Alabama.

SUNSET. A program of reviewing state agencies for continuation, termination, or modification.

TIE VOTE. An equal yea-nay vote (such as 17 yeas, 17 nays), which in the Senate can be broken by the lieutenant governor. A tie vote in the House of Representatives is a failure to pass.