

Glossary of Legislative Terms~

Amendment

Formal proposal to change the language of a bill after it has been introduced.

Appropriation

The amount of money set aside for a specific purpose and designated from a specific source such as the General Fund, Environmental License Plate Fund, etc.

Approved by the Governor

Signature of the Governor on a bill passed by the Legislature.

Assembly

The lower house of the California Legislature, consisting of 80 members, elected from districts apportioned on the basis of population, who serve two-year terms.

Bill

A proposed law introduced in the Assembly or Senate and identified with a number.

Bill Analysis

A document that must be prepared by committee staff prior to hearing the bill in committee. It explains how a bill would change current law and sometimes mentions support and opposition from major interest groups.

Chamber

The Assembly or Senate chamber where Floor Sessions are held.

Chapter

After a bill has been signed by the Governor, the Secretary of State assigns the bill a Chapter Number, such as Chapter 1235, Statutes of 1993, which is subsequently used to refer to the measure rather than the bill number.

Coauthor

Any member of either house, with the agreement of the author of a bill, may add his or her name on that member's bill as coauthor, usually indicating support for the proposal.

Codes

Bound volumes of law organized by subject matter. The code to be changed by a bill is referred to at the top of the bill.

Concurrence

One house approving a bill as amended in the other house. If the author is unwilling to move the bill as amended by the other house, the author requests nonconcurrence in the bill and asks for the information of a conference committee.

Concurrent Resolution

A measure introduced in one house which, if approved, must be sent to the other house for approval. The Governor's signature is not required. These measures usually involve the business of the Legislature.

Conference Committee

Usually composed of three legislators (two from the majority party; one from the minority party) from each house who meet in public session to forge one version of similar Senate and Assembly bills. The final conference committee version must be approved by both Assembly and Senate. Assembly conferences are

chosen by the Speaker; Senate conferences are chosen by the Senate Rules Committee.

Consent Calendar

A group of noncontroversial bills passed by a committee or the full Assembly or Senate on one vote.

Constituent

Citizen residing within the district of a legislator.

Constitutional Amendment

A resolution affecting the Constitution, adopted by the Legislature or presented by initiative, requiring an affirmative vote of the electorate to become effective.

Daily File

Publication produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively for each day those houses are in session. The publication provides information about bills to be considered at upcoming committee hearings and bills eligible for consideration during the next scheduled Floor Session. Pursuant to Jt. Rule 62(a), any bill to be heard in committee must be noticed in the Daily file for four days, including weekend days. The Daily File also contains useful information about committee assignments and the legislative calendar.

Daily History

Produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively the day after each house has met. The History lists specific actions taken on legislation. Any measure acted upon in that house the previous day is listed in numerical order.

Daily Journal

Produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively the day after a Floor Session. Contains roll call votes on bills heard in policy committees and bills considered on the floor and other official action taken by the body. Any official messages from the Governor are also included. A Member may seek approval to publish a letter in the Journal on a specific legislative matter.

Do Pass

The affirmative recommendation made by a committee in sending a bill to the floor for final vote; do pass as amended - passage recommended providing certain changes are made.

Enacting Clause

By statutory provision, each proposed law must be preceded by the phrase the People of the State of California do enact as follows.

Enrolled Bill

Whenever a bill passes both houses of the Legislature, it is ordered enrolled. In enrollment, the bill is again proofread for accuracy and then delivered to the Governor. The enrolled bill contains the complete text of the bill with the dates of passage certified by the Secretary of State and the Chief Clerk of the Assembly.

Extraordinary Session

A special legislative session called by the Governor to address only those issues specified in the proclamation. Measures introduced in these sessions are numbered chronologically with a lower case x after the number (i.e., 28x); they take effect immediately upon being signed by the Governor.

First Reading

Each bill introduced must be read three times before the final passage. The first reading of a bill occurs when the measure is introduced.

Fiscal Committee

The Ways and Means Committee in the Assembly and the Appropriations Committee in the Senate to which all fiscal bills are referred if they are approved by policy committees. If the fiscal committee approves a bill, it then moves to the floor.

Floor

The Assembly or Senate chambers.

Hearing

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

Inactive File

The portion of the Daily File containing legislation that is ready for floor consideration, but, for a variety of reasons, is dead or dormant. An author may move a bill to the inactive file and subsequently move it off the inactive file at a later date. During the final weeks of the legislative session, measures may be moved there by the leadership as a method of encouraging authors to take up their bills promptly.

Initiative

A method of legislating that requires a vote of the people instead of a vote of the legislature for a measure to become law.

To qualify for a statewide ballot, statutory initiatives must receive 384,974 signatures and constitutional amendment initiatives must receive 615,958 signatures.

Interim

The period of time between the end of the legislative year and the beginning of the next legislative year. The legislative year ends on August 31 in even-numbered years and September 15 in odd-numbered years.

Item Veto

The Governor's refusal to approve a portion or item of a bill; however, the remainder of the bill is approved.

Joint Resolution

Expresses an opinion about an issue pertaining to the federal government; forwarded to Congress for its information. Requires the approval of both Assembly and Senate but does not require the signature of the Governor to take effect.

Law

Rule of conduct determined by the people through their elected representatives, or by direct vote.

Legislative Counsel's Digest

The digest is a brief summary of the changes the proposed bill would make to current law. The digest is found on the front of each printed bill.

On File

A bill on the second or third reading file of the Assembly or Senate Daily File.

Policy Committee

Each house of the legislature has a number of committees referred to as "policy" committees. As bills are introduced in each house the Rules committee assigns each to a policy committee. The policy committee sets up public hearings on the bills, conducts hearings and following such testimony, votes on whether or not to recommend passage of the bill to the floor of the respective house. Other actions a policy committee may take include amending a bill and re-referring it to the same or another committee for additional hearings.

President of the Senate

The State Constitution designates the Lieutenant Governor as President of the Senate, allowing him to preside over the Senate and cast a vote only in the event of a 20-20 tie. The Lt.

Governor's role is largely ceremonial because he has not cast a tie breaking vote since 1975 and, in practice, does not preside over the Senate.

Reading

Presentation of a bill before either house by the reading of the title thereof; a stage in the enactment of a measure. A bill, until passed, is either in process of first, second or third reading, no matter how many times it has actually been read.

Resolution

An opinion expressed by one or both houses which does not have the force of law. Concurrent resolutions are voted on by both houses but do not require the Governor's signature; joint resolutions are voted on by both houses.

Roll Call

A vote of a committee or the full Assembly or Senate. Committee roll calls are conducted by the committee secretary who calls each member's name in alphabetical order with the Chair's name last. Assembly roll calls are conducted electronically with each member pushing a button from his/her assigned seat. Senate roll calls are conducted by the Reading Clerk who reads each Senator's name in alphabetical order.

Second Reading

Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. Second reading occurs after a bill has been reported from committee.

Section

Portion of the codes, cited in each bill which proposes to amend, create, or replace same.

Senate

The upper house of the California Legislature, consisting of 40 members elected from districts apportioned on the basis of population, one-half of whom are elected or re-elected every two years for four-year terms.

Session

Period during which the Legislature meets: Regular - the biennial session at which all classes of legislation may be considered; Extraordinary - special session, called by, and limited to matters specified by the Governor; Daily - each day's meeting; Joint - meeting of the two houses together.

Speaker

Highest ranking member of the Assembly; elected by all Assembly members at the beginning of each two-year legislative session.

Statutes

Compilation of all enacted bills, chaptered by the Secretary of State in the order in which they became law, and prepared in book form by the State Printer.

Third Reading

Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. Third reading occurs when the measure is about to be taken up on the floor of either house for final passage.

Third Reading Analysis

A summary of a measure ready for floor consideration. Contains most recent amendments and information regarding how members voted on the measure when it was heard in committees. Senate floor analyses also list support or opposition information on interest groups and government agencies.

Title

A brief italicized paragraph, identifying the subject matter and preceding the contents of a measure.

Unfinished Business

That portion of the Daily File that contains measures awaiting Senate or Assembly concurrence in amendments taken in the other house. Also contains measures vetoed by the Governor for a 60-day period after the veto. The house where the vetoed bill originated has 60 days to attempt to override.

Urgency Clause

A bill which contains an urgency clause takes effect upon the Governor's signature. A vote on the urgency clause must precede a vote on the bill and requires a 2/3 vote for passage.

Veto

The Governor's refusal to approve a measure sent to him by the Legislature.

Vote

There are two categories of votes: majority and two-thirds.

Majority Vote: A vote of more than half of the legislative body considering a measure. The full Assembly requires a majority vote of 41 and the full Senate requires 21, based on their memberships of 80 and 40 respectively.

Two-Thirds (2/3): A vote of at least 2/3 of the legislative body considering a measure. The full Assembly requires a 2/3 vote of 54 and the full Senate requires 27, based on their memberships of 80 and 40 respectively.