

## **GLOSSARY OF STATE LEGISLATIVE TERMS**

### **Appropriation Bills**

State legislator's appropriate funds (designate an amount to be spent) for the operation of executive agencies and for various purposes. Under most state constitutions, appropriations measures must originate in the House of Representatives. In most state legislatures, there is an Appropriations Committee for each chamber. These committees are usually divided into subcommittees which consider that appropriations for various areas such as agriculture, education, judicial matters, or transportation. Each subcommittee holds hearings and work sessions and prepares a proposed appropriation for the agencies and programs in its jurisdiction. These proposals are then reported to the full Appropriations Committee, which considers them and reports its final version of the appropriation to the House or Senate for a vote. Appropriations are usually grouped by executive department with specific amounts designated for specific programs in some cases, and funds lumped together within the agency appropriations in other cases. When funds are specifically designated for a program it is called a "line item." A program must be authorized (see authorization bills) before funds are authorized for the program.

### **Authorization Bills**

A legislature passes legislation authorizing (creating) new programs or extending (enabling) the authorization for old programs, usually for a specific number of years. It may authorize the expenditure of a specific amount of money for a program or it may call for the expenditure of "such sums as are necessary." Many programs are authorized but funds may never be appropriated.

### **Bills**

A bill is a proposed law. Bills proposed by legislators are numbered in the order in which they are introduced, preceded by some designation such as HB (House Bill) or HR (House Resolution) and preceded by some other designation such as SB

(Senate Bill) or SR (Senate Resolution) for bills introduced by a senator. Numbering usually begins a new each session because bills are not carried forward from one legislative session to the next. A bill is a public document.

### **Calendar**

Legislation being considered for action is taken up according to a time sequence determined by legislative body leaders as dictated by established rules. The docket or “calendar” for the sequence of all legislative action is subject to change only by adopted rules of that body. Effective use of the calendar during the session can determine the success of a bill by controlling the amount of time allocated to consider the legislation.

### **Conference Committee**

When the House and Senate pass different versions of the same bill, or pass two differing bills dealing with the same issue, a conference committee made up of representatives from the House and Senate who work together to resolve the differences between the two measures. A conference report, outlining the compromise which has been reached, is presented to the House and to the Senate for approval. Each House votes to accept or reject the conference report. Only when both accept the report does a bill go forward to the Governor for his/her action. This usually happens when the opposite parties control legislative chambers.

### **Continuing Appropriations**

When the legislature fails to complete action on an appropriations measure before the beginning of a new fiscal year, a “continuing appropriation” is enacted. This permits programs to continue at the same level of spending for a designated period of time until an appropriations measure for the new fiscal year is enacted and signed by the Governor.

### **Draft Legislation**

Pre-bill legislative language committed to print with the prospect of becoming law but has not been formally introduced is typically called a draft bill or draft legislation. While it is given serious consideration by other legislators and reviewers, it is not an official public document and the originating legislator(s) control access to it. Most legislative bodies have an internal unit that is responsible for converting draft legislation into official bill language. The primary purpose is to give potential supporters opportunity for input.

## **Hearings**

When a legislative committee considers legislation, it usually holds one or more public hearings at which interested parties are invited to comment, or testify, on the legislation. Hearings outside the capital city are called “field hearings.” This stage of the legislative process is intended to maximize official public input that will shape the bill and influence its success.

## **Legislative Proposals**

The earliest stages of ideas intended to become draft legislation, bills and eventually law. These proposals usually take the form of a white paper study that lays out issues and alternative proposed remedies. Many of these paper never become even draft legislation. Their primary purpose is to determine support to draft legislation.

## **Mark-Up**

After holding hearings on proposed legislation, a committee may go into mark-up session. In mark-up, the committee goes through the proposed legislation line by line, sometimes writing a completely new bill. A committee does not always go into mark-up session after hearings on a measure are completed. It may decide to postpone further action on the bill indefinitely. This stage of the legislative process is typically “closed” to direct formal public input although most legislators will consult off the record with major supporters or opponents who share their views.

## **Override**

When the Governor vetoes a measure passed by the state legislature, the measure may still become law if the legislature votes to override the veto (legislative support that exceeds the power of a veto). In most states, two-thirds of each chamber must vote in favor of an override for the measure to become law.

## **Pocket Veto**

When a measure is passed by the legislature and sent to the Governor, the Governor is given a specific number of days to act on the bill. In most states, during the session, a measure becomes law automatically if the Governor fails to act within the specified number of days that are noted in the state constitution. When the legislature has adjourned, however, a bill dies and is, in effect, vetoed if the Governor does not sign it within the specified number of days.

## **Recommit a Bill**

Occasionally, the House or Senate may vote to recommit a bill to the committee that reported it, for further consideration. The bill may be recommitted with instructions to make certain changes or to report the bill out by a certain date. Often, however, recommittal means that no further action will be taken on the measure during that legislative session.

## **Referral**

Each bill that is introduced is referred to the committee which has jurisdiction over that area of legislation. The committee may consider the bill, hold hearings, make changes in the language and report the measure to the floor for vote, or it may choose not to consider the bill at all.

## **Report**

When a committee completes its consideration of legislation, it reports a bill to the full House or Senate for their consideration. The measure is usually accompanied by a committee report outlining in the provisions of the bill and describing the committee's thinking on the bill. Report language can influence judicial decisions regarding legislation that becomes law, but does not have the effect (weight) of law.

## **Session**

Each session of the state legislature lasts for a time specified in the state constitution. In some states it may be as short as 30 days, and in other states it may be for the entire calendar year. Effective use of the calendar during the session can determine the success of a bill by controlling the amount of time allocated to consider the legislation.

## **Supplemental Appropriations**

Supplemental appropriations are appropriations in addition to the regular yearly or session appropriations measures. Supplemental bills become necessary when new programs are authorized after the regular appropriation measures have been enacted or when additional funding for a program becomes necessary.

## **Veto**

The Governor doesn't like the legislation and refuses to sign it.