

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

A

ACT

A public law enacted by the Texas Legislature. A bill that has been passed by both houses of the legislature and presented to the governor becomes law if it is signed by the governor or if it is not signed by the governor within a specified period of time or if the governor vetoes the bill and the veto is overridden by a two-thirds vote in each house.

ACTION

A description of a step that a bill undergoes as it moves through the legislative process.

ADJOURNMENT

The termination of a meeting. Adjournment occurs at the close of each legislative day upon completion of business, with the hour and day of the next meeting set before adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT SINE DIE

Final adjournment of a legislative session. Literally, the phrase means adjournment “without a day” specified to reconvene.

ADOPTION

Approval or acceptance; usually applied to amendments or resolutions.

ADVICE AND CONSENT

Procedure by which the senate gives approval or confirms appointments made by the governor to state offices.

AMENDMENT

Any proposed alteration to a bill or resolution as it moves through the legislative process. Amendments to a measure may be proposed by members in their assigned committees or by any member of a chamber during that chamber’s second reading or third reading consideration of the measure.

APPORTIONMENT

The proportionate distribution of elected representatives, either among the states in the case of U.S. Congress or within the state in the case of the state legislature. The division of the state into congressional and state senate and house districts of equal population for purposes of representation.

APPROPRIATION

An authorization by the legislature for the expenditure of money for a public purpose. In most instances, money cannot be withdrawn from the state treasury except through a specific appropriation.

AUTHOR

The legislator who files a bill and guides it through the legislative process.

B

BICAMERAL

A legislature consisting of two houses, such as the house of representatives and the senate.

BIENNIAL

Occurring every two years; a term applied to the scheduled regular session of the legislature.

BILL

A type of legislative measure that requires passage by both chambers of the legislature and action by the governor. A bill is the primary means used to create and change the laws of the state. The Legislative Information System also uses the term “bill” generically to refer to the various types of legislative measures that may be introduced during a legislative session. Bill types include: senate and house bills, senate and house joint resolutions, senate and house concurrent resolutions, and senate and house resolutions.

BILL ANALYSIS

A document prepared for all bills reported out of committee that explains in nonlegal language what a bill will do. A bill analysis may include background information on the measure, a statement of purpose, and a section-by-section analysis.

BIPARTISAN

A term used to refer to an effort endorsed by both political parties or a group composed of members of both political parties.

C

CALENDAR

A list of bills or resolutions that is scheduled or eligible to be taken up for consideration on a specified date by the members of a chamber.

CALENDAR DAY

A day of the year on which the legislature may be in session.

CALLED SESSION

See SESSION in this glossary.

CAPTION

A statement that gives the legislature and public reasonable notice of the subject of a bill or resolution. For bills and joint resolutions, the first sentence of the text that summarizes the contents of the bill or resolution. For other types of resolutions, a brief description of the contents of the resolution.

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY (continued)

CHAIR

A legislator appointed to preside over a legislative committee. A traditional designation for the member currently presiding over a house of the legislature or one of its committees. The place in which the senate or house of representatives meet. Also a generic way to refer to a house of the legislature.

CHIEF CLERK

The chief clerical officer of the house of representatives. The chief clerk is the custodian of all bills and resolutions in the possession of the house and is responsible for keeping a complete record of their introduction and all subsequent house actions taken on them throughout the legislative process.

COAUTHOR

A legislator authorized by the primary author to join in the authorship of a bill or resolution. A coauthor must be a member of the chamber in which the bill was filed.

COMMITTEE

A group of legislators, appointed by the presiding officer of the house or the senate, to which proposed legislation is referred or a specific task is assigned.

COMMITTEE REPORT

The text of a bill or resolution and its required attachments that is prepared when the measure is reported from a committee for further consideration by the members of the chamber. The committee report includes the recommendations of the committee regarding action on the measure by the full house or senate and is generally necessary before a measure can proceed through the legislative process.

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

A complete, new bill or resolution recommended by a committee in lieu of the original measure. A committee will report a committee substitute rather than a large number of individual amendments when the committee wishes to make a substantial number of changes to the original measure. The committee substitute must contain the same subject matter as the original measure.

COMPANION BILL

A bill filed in one chamber that is identical or very similar to a bill filed in the opposite chamber. Companion bills are used to expedite passage as they provide a means for committee consideration of a measure to occur in both houses simultaneously. A companion bill that has passed one house can then be substituted for the companion bill in the second house.

CONCURRENCE

When the originating chamber votes to accept, or concur in, the amendments made by the opposite chamber.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

A type of legislative measure that requires passage by both chambers of the legislature and generally requires action by the governor. A concurrent resolution is used to convey the sentiment of the legislature and may offer a commendation, a memorial, a statement of congratulations, a welcome, or a request for action by another governmental entity. (Concurrent resolutions are also used for administrative matters that require the concurrence of both chambers such as providing for adjournment or a joint session. These types of concurrent resolutions do not require action by the governor.)

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

A committee composed of five members from each house appointed by the respective presiding officers to resolve the differences between the house and senate versions of a measure when the originating chamber refuses to concur in the changes made by the opposite chamber. Upon reaching an agreement, the conferees issue a report that is then considered for approval by both houses.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT

The text of a bill and its required attachments that is issued when a conference committee has completed its work in resolving the differences between the house and senate versions of a measure.

CONGRATULATORY AND MEMORIAL CALENDAR

A list of congratulatory and memorial resolutions scheduled by the House Committee on Rules and Resolutions for consideration by the house that must be distributed to the members 24 hours before the house convenes.

CONSTITUENT

A citizen residing within the district of an elected representative.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

A change to the state constitution. A constitutional amendment may be proposed by the legislature in the form of a joint resolution that must be adopted by both houses of the legislature by a two-thirds vote and be approved by a majority of the voters to become effective.

CONVENE

To assemble or call to order the members of a legislative body.

COSPONSOR

A legislator who joins with the primary sponsor to guide a bill or resolution through the legislative process in the opposite chamber. A cosponsor must be a member of the opposite chamber from the one in which the bill was filed.

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY (continued)**COUNCIL DOCUMENT NUMBER**

The unique number assigned to a bill or resolution draft prepared by the Texas Legislative Council. If a filed bill or resolution has been prepared by the council, the number will appear in the lower left-hand corner of the document.

D**DAILY HOUSE CALENDAR**

A list of new bills and resolutions scheduled by the House Committee on Calendars for consideration by the house that must be distributed to the members 36 hours before the house convenes during regular sessions and 24 hours before the house convenes during special or called sessions.

DISTRICT

A geographic division of the state made on the basis of population and in accordance with conditions dictated by state law and the state constitution.

DUPLICATE BILL

A bill that is identical to a bill filed in the same chamber.

E**ELECTION**

The process of choosing government officials by a vote of the citizens.

EMERGENCY CLAUSE

Normally the last paragraph of a bill. Neither house of the legislature can suspend the constitutional rule requiring a bill to be read on three separate days if a bill does not have an emergency clause. The specific language of the emergency clause also determines whether a bill that receives a two-thirds record vote in both houses can take effect immediately after the governor signs the bill or files it without a signature.

ENACT

To pass a law.

ENACTING CLAUSE

A clause required by the Texas Constitution to precede the body of each bill. The enacting clause follows the caption and must read as follows: "Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas:".

ENGROSSED

The stage in a bill's legislative progress when it has been passed by the chamber in which it was filed and all amendments to the bill have been incorporated into the text of the bill, which is then forwarded to the second house for consideration.

ENROLLED

The stage in a bill's legislative progress when it has been passed by both chambers of the legislature in identical form and is prepared for signature by the presiding officers of both houses. If the bill is not passed in identical form by both houses, any changes made by the opposite chamber must be accepted by the originating chamber or a conference committee report must be adopted by both chambers before the bill may be enrolled.

EX OFFICIO

A member of a governmental body who holds his or her position as the result of holding another governmental position.

F**FILED**

The stage in a bill's legislative progress when it is given a bill number and introduced into the legislative process. Members of the house of representatives file bills with the chief clerk of the house. Senators file bills with the secretary of the senate.

FIRST READING

See READING.

FISCAL NOTE

An estimate, prepared by the Legislative Budget Board, of the probable costs that will be incurred as an effect of a bill or joint resolution.

FISCAL YEAR

A 12-month period at the end of which accounts are reconciled. The fiscal year for state agencies in Texas begins on September 1 of each year and ends on August 31 of the following year.

FLOOR

A traditional term for the meeting chamber of either house.

FLOOR ACTION

Action taken by either house on a bill reported by a committee. Subject to rules adopted by the respective house, its members may propose amendments, enter debate, seek to promote or prevent a bill's passage, and vote on its final passage in that house.

FORMAL MEETING

A meeting of a house committee or subcommittee during which formal action may be taken on any measure or matter before the committee or subcommittee. Public testimony cannot be heard during a formal meeting.

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY (continued)

G

GERRYMANDER

To divide a state, county, or other political subdivision into election districts in an unnatural manner to give a political party or ethnic group advantage over its opponents.

H

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The lower house of the Texas Legislature, consisting of 150 members elected from districts of roughly equal population, all of whom are elected every two years for two-year terms.

I

IMPACT STATEMENT

An estimate, prepared by the Legislative Budget Board, of probable costs incurred when proposed legislation impacts the following areas: public retirement system, criminal justice, public school financing, higher education, open government, taxes/fees, or water development.

INTENT CALENDAR

A list of bills and resolutions for which senators have filed with the secretary of the senate written notice to suspend the regular order of business for consideration. Normally, a bill may not be brought up for consideration by the full senate unless it is listed on the Intent Calendar.

INTERIM

The period between regular legislative sessions.

INTERIM COMMITTEE

A group of legislators, appointed by the presiding officer of the house or senate when the legislature is not in session, to study a particular issue or group of issues for the purpose of making recommendations to the next legislature.

INTRODUCED

The version of a bill or resolution as it was filed in the house or the senate.

J

JOINT COMMITTEE

A committee composed of members from each house appointed by the respective presiding officers. Joint committees are normally created by special proclamation issued by the speaker and lieutenant governor for the purpose of studying a particular issue or group of issues when the legislature is not in session. Joint committees are rarely, if ever, created during a session, and house and senate rules do not permit bills and resolutions to be referred to a joint committee.

JOINT RESOLUTION

A type of legislative measure that requires passage by both chambers of the legislature, but does not require action by the governor. A joint resolution is used to propose amendments to the Texas Constitution, to ratify amendments to the U.S. Constitution, or to request a convention to propose amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Before becoming effective, the provisions of joint resolutions proposing amendments to the Texas Constitution must be approved by the voters of Texas.

JOURNAL

The official publication that records the legislative proceedings of each chamber, including record vote information. The journal of each house is printed daily in pamphlet form and subsequently compiled and indexed for publication in bound volumes after the conclusion of a regular or special session of the legislature.

L

LAME DUCK

An elected official who has been defeated for re-election or who has chosen not to run for re-election but whose current term has not yet expired.

LAST ACTION

The description of the most recent step a bill has gone through in the legislative process.

LEGISLATIVE DAY

That period from convening after an adjournment until the next adjournment. The house or the senate may convene for a daily session in the morning, recess for lunch, and adjourn that same evening, completing a legislative day on the same calendar day. However, if a chamber recesses at the end of the day, that particular legislative day continues until the next time the chamber adjourns.

LEGISLATURE

The lawmaking body of the State of Texas. It consists of two chambers, the house of representatives and the senate. The Texas Legislature convenes in regular session at noon on the second Tuesday in January of each odd-numbered year for no more than 140 days.

LIST OF ITEMS ELIGIBLE FOR CONSIDERATION

Prepared by the chief clerk of the house, upon request of the speaker, when the volume of legislation warrants (normally during the last few weeks of a regular session). The list must be distributed six hours before it may be considered and contains: (1) house bills with senate amendments eligible to be considered; (2) senate bills for which the senate has requested the appointment of a conference committee; and (3) conference committee reports eligible to be considered.

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY (continued)

LOBBY

The act of a person or group of persons (lobbyists) seeking to present their views on an issue to the members of the legislature and its committees and working for the passage or defeat of proposed legislation.

LOCAL AND UNCONTESTED CALENDAR

A list of local or noncontroversial bills scheduled by the Senate Committee on Administration for consideration by the senate that must be distributed to the senators by noon of the day preceding the day the calendar is to be considered.

LOCAL, CONSENT, AND RESOLUTIONS CALENDAR

A list of local or noncontroversial bills scheduled by the House Committee on Local and Consent Calendars for consideration by the house that must be distributed to the members 48 hours before the house convenes.

M

MAJORITY

A number of members that is greater than half of the total membership of a group and that has the power to make decisions binding on the whole. There are two types of majorities that may be required for legislative approval of bills and other actions--a simple majority and an absolute majority. A simple majority consists of more than half of those members present and voting. An absolute majority consists of more than half of those members entitled to vote, whether present or absent.

MOTION

A formal suggestion presented to a legislative body for action by one of its members while the body is meeting.

N

NONPARTISAN

Free from party domination.

O

OMNIBUS BILL

A bill regarding a single subject that combines many different aspects of that subject.

OVERRIDE

To set aside or annul, as to override a veto.

P

PAIRING

A procedure for voting whereby, under a formal agreement between two members, a member who will be present for a vote agrees with a member who will be absent for a vote that the member who is present will not vote but will be "present, not voting." When two members are paired, the journal reflects how each member would have voted.

Two members may be paired only if one would have voted "aye" and one would have voted "nay" on a particular measure or motion.

PASSAGE

Approval of a measure by the full body.

POINT OF ORDER

A motion calling attention to a breach of the procedural rules.

PREFILING

Filing of bills and other proposed legislation prior to the convening of a session of the legislature.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

The presiding officer of the senate. The state constitution provides that the lieutenant governor serves as the president of the senate.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Permission to view the proceedings from the floor of the chamber rather than from the public gallery.

PRO TEMPORE OR PRO TEM

Temporarily; literally, for the time. The term is used particularly to apply to a temporary presiding officer of either the house or the senate.

PUBLIC HEARING

A meeting of a house or senate committee or subcommittee during which public testimony may be heard and formal action may be taken on any measure or matter before the committee or subcommittee.

Q

QUORUM

The number of members required to conduct business. Two-thirds of the elected members constitute a quorum in each house. A majority of the appointed members of a committee forms a quorum for the purpose of conducting committee business.

R

READING

The presentation of a bill before either house by the recital of the caption of the bill. The Texas Constitution requires that every bill be read in each house on three separate days. Until a bill is finally passed, it will be in the process of a first, second, or third reading. The first reading of a bill is the point in the process when the bill is referred to committee by the appropriate presiding officer. The second reading of a bill is the first point in the process when the entire membership of a chamber has the opportunity to debate the bill and amend it by majority vote. The third reading of a bill is the next point in the process when the entire membership of a chamber may debate a bill and the final opportunity the members of a chamber have to offer amendments to the bill.

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY (continued)

RECESS

A temporary termination of a meeting. Recesses are called for short breaks (e.g., for lunch or dinner) or occasionally at the close of a daily session to allow the legislative day to continue into the next calendar day. (See ADJOURNMENT in this glossary.)

RECONSIDERATION

A procedure by which the house, senate, or one of its committees may, after approval by majority vote, repeat the vote on an action previously taken to either annul or reaffirm the action.

RECORD VOTE

A listing of the individual vote of each member of a committee or the full house or senate on a particular motion or measure.

REDISTRICTING

A geographical division of the state into congressional, state representative, senatorial, or other legislative districts on the basis of the relative distribution of the state's total population. District boundaries are redrawn every 10 years following the publication of the U.S. census to ensure an appropriate number of districts of approximately equal population.

REGULAR SESSION

See SESSION in this glossary.

RESOLUTION

A formal expression of opinion or decision, other than a proposed law, that may be offered for approval to one or both houses of the legislature by a member of the house or senate.

S

SECOND READING

See READING in this glossary.

SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

The chief administrative officer of the senate, responsible for the day-to-day operations of the senate and its departments.

SENATE

The upper house of the Texas Legislature, consisting of 31 members elected from districts of roughly equal population, one-half of whom are elected every two years for four-year terms.

SENATE AGENDA

The document prepared daily for the senators and the public that contains the following information: (1) the intent calendar; (2) a list of senate bills returned from the house with amendments; (3) the status of bills in conference committee; (4) the local and uncontested calendar; (5) gubernatorial appointments reported favorably from the Committee on Nominations and awaiting confirmation by the senate; (6) committee hearings scheduled, with a list of measures to be considered by the committees; (7) the

regular order of business, listing bills that have been reported favorably from committee; (8) senate floor action from the previous day; and (9) senate committee action from the previous day.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

An officer of the house or senate charged with maintaining order and carrying out the directives of the presiding officers and the members.

SESSION

The period during which the legislature meets. There are two types of sessions. The regular session convenes every two years and may last no more than 140 days. A called session, commonly referred to as a special session, is so designated because it must be called by the governor. A called or special session may last no more than 30 days.

SIMPLE RESOLUTION

The type of legislative measure that is considered only within the chamber in which it is filed. It can offer a commendation, a memorial, a statement of congratulations, a welcome, or another statement of legislative sentiment.

SINE DIE

"Without fixing a day for a future meeting": the last day of a legislative session.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

The presiding officer of the house of representatives elected from and by the membership of the house at the beginning of each regular session.

SPECIAL SESSION

See SESSION in this glossary.

SPONSOR

The legislator who guides the bill through the legislative process after the bill has passed the originating chamber. The sponsor must be a member of the opposite chamber of the one in which the bill was filed.

STANDING COMMITTEE

A committee created in the rules of either house that meets during the legislative session or an interim to consider and report on measures referred or tasks assigned to it by the respective presiding officers.

STATUTE

A codified law. (NOTE: "Codify" means "to arrange laws systematically.")

SUBCOMMITTEE

A group of committee members, appointed by the chair of a committee of the house or the senate, to which proposed legislation is referred or a specific task is assigned.

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY (continued)

SUPPLEMENTAL HOUSE CALENDAR

The primary agenda followed by the house during its deliberations. It is prepared by the House Committee on Calendars and is required to be distributed two hours before the house convenes. The Supplemental House Calendar contains: (1) measures passed to third reading on the previous day; (2) measures on the Daily House Calendar for a previous day that were not reached for consideration; (3) measures on the Daily House Calendar for the current day; and (4) postponed business from a previous day.

T

TABLE

Reference to stopping bills from further action in committees or on the floor: a bill is tabled by a vote, after a non-debatable motion from a member.

THIRD READING

See READING in this text.

W

WITNESS

A person who testifies before a legislative committee.

WORK SESSION

A meeting of a house committee or subcommittee during which the members may only discuss measures or matters before the committee or subcommittee. Public testimony cannot be heard and formal action cannot be taken during a work session.

V

VETO

The rejection of an enrolled bill by the governor.

VOICE VOTE

A vote during which the presiding officer will request the members who are voting in favor of a measure or motion to respond collectively by saying "aye" and those who are voting against the measure or motion to respond collectively by saying "nay."