



# Glossary of Legislative Terms

## A

### **Act**

A bill that has passed both houses of the legislature. See Law.

### **Adjournment**

The recess of a legislative house until a later stated time or until the time fixed by its rules for reconvening. *Sine die* adjournment is the final adjournment of a legislative session. Each house recesses after its daily session and adjourns sine die at the end of each session.

### **Adoption**

The agreement by vote of an amendment, motion, resolution, or memorial.

### **Agenda**

The list of business (including proposed legislation) to be considered at a committee meeting or during a hearing.

### **Amendment**

A proposal to change a procedural motion or proposed legislation.

### **Analysis**

Sometimes called a bill analysis or staff analysis, it is prepared by the staff of each committee of reference. It summarizes the bill and explains the current law affected by the bill, the likely impact of the bill, any constitutional issues raised by the bill, and committee amendments, if any, are summarized.

### **Appropriations Bill**

This is the major each legislative session and the only bill required by the state constitution. Put together by the Senate and the House Committees on Appropriations and usually assembled in a conference committee, the General Appropriations bill distributes the money for financing the agencies of State government. Some of the money is derived from earmarked sources, highway funds, for example, but virtually all disbursements are included so legislators and others may have reasonably complete overview of state spending.

## **B**

### **Bill (SB, HB)**

**A proposed law filed in either house of the legislature. Types and versions of bills include:**

### **Bill draft**

**A proposal that has been drafted, at the request of a legislator or a legislative committee, by the bill drafting office of the Senate or House of Representatives.**

### **Bill history**

**A chronological listing of all actions that occur on a bill from its introduction to its final disposition.**

### **Bill number**

**The identifying number given each bill filed for introduction. Since 1990, Senate bills have received even numbers and House bills have received odd numbers. Bill numbers do not carry over from session to session or from a regular session to a special session.**

### **Budget**

**The totality of appropriations measures passed by the legislature. The detailed spending plan submitted by the Governor to the legislature which recommends monetary allocations for each of the departments of the state for the next fiscal year is also known as a “budget.” Using recommendations from the Governor and individual departments, each house prepares its own version of the budget.**

## **C**

### **Calendars**

**Important tools in the legislative process which serve as official notification of bills to be considered, sessions, and committee meetings and hearings.**

### **Caucus**

**A caucus may be composed of members of a political party, members from a geographical area, or members allied for some temporary purpose. Legislative officers and leaders are designated and nominated within the**

political parties at caucus. A party's position on pending legislation is often discussed at caucus meetings.

**Chair**

A term used to refer to the presiding officer in a floor session or in a legislative committee meeting.

**Chamber**

The large rooms in which the Senate and the House meet. The Senate and the House chambers are located on the fourth floor of the Capitol.

**Clerk of the House of Representatives**

The person elected by the House of Representatives to assist the members of the House in the detailed processes of enacting laws and recording that history.

*Clerk's Manual, The*

Published biennially by the Clerk of the House of Representatives, this book contains biographical information on members of the legislature and other information.

**Committee**

A panel of legislators chosen by the respective presiding officers to perform specific functions.

**Constituent**

A resident in an elected official's district.

**Constitution**

The written instrument embodying the fundamental principles of the state which establishes power and duties of the government and guarantees certain rights to the people.

**Constitutional amendment**

A joint resolution that proposes an amendment to or revision of, the State Constitution. After final passage and filing with the Secretary of State, a proposed constitutional amendment is presented to the voters at the next regular general election pursuant to section 5 of Article XI of the State Constitution.

## D

**Debate**

Discussion by legislators during a committee meeting or while a house is meeting supporting or opposing an issue.

**Delegation, Legislative**

A group of legislators who represent parts of the same county or geographical area.

**District**

The area from which a state senator, representative, or Congressman is elected. The boundaries of state legislative and congressional districts are drawn in the decennial process known as apportionment and redistricting.

**District staff**

Personnel employed by a legislator to work in the legislator's district office.

## F

### **Fiscal Year**

The period used for budgeting and accounting. In Florida state government, this is the period from July 1 of one calendar year to June 30 of the next calendar year.

### *Florida Constitution*

The document that outlines the basic framework of Florida's system of government. Revised in 1968 and subsequently amended.

### *Florida Statutes*

An edited compilation of general laws of the state.

## G

### **Gallery**

The seating area on the floor above the Senate or House chamber where the public may observe a house in session.

## I

### **Initiative**

An amendment to the State Constitution proposed by a number of electors. An initiative is accomplished by filing with the Secretary of State a petition containing a copy of the amendment proposed which has been signed by a specified number of electors.

### **Interim**

The period between the adjournment of a regular session sine die and the convening of the next regular session.

### **Introduction**

The reading of a bill (including a committee substitute) the first time in a house of the legislature. Publication of the title of the bill in the journal of a house constitutes its first reading in that house.

# L

## Law

An act becomes a law when the Governor either approves it or fails to sign within the period specified in the State Constitution. An act can also become a law when a subsequent legislature overrides a veto by the Governor. While the legislature is in session, the constitution allows a 7-day period following presentation of a bill to the Governor within which to sign or veto the bill. If the legislature adjourns *sine die* before an act is presented to the Governor or while an act is in the Governor's possession, the Governor has 15 days following the date of presentation in which to take action.

## Legislature, The Florida

Florida's bicameral legislature composed of the 40-member Senate and the 120-member House of Representatives. Each house is the sole judge of the qualifications and elections of its members and has the power to choose its own officers and establish its own rules of procedure. Either house may initiate legislation on any subject. Senators serve 4-year, staggered terms and representatives serve 2-year terms. No legislator may seek reelection "if, by the end of the current term of office, the person will have served . . . in that office for eight consecutive years." See Section 4 of Article VI of the State Constitution.

## Lobbyist

One who encourages, directly or indirectly, the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation.

# M

## Majority Leader

A legislator from the majority party designated by the presiding officer of each house to be the leader of the majority party members in that house.

## Majority party

The political party having the most members in a house.

## Minority Leader

The legislator elected by minority party caucus in each house to be the leader of the minority party members in that house.

## Minority party

The political party that has less than a majority of members in a house.

## Motion

A formal request made by a legislator on the floor or in a committee meeting to take some procedural action. The rules of each house determine the importance of a motion, whether it may be debated, and the vote required for adoption of the motion.

## O

### **Oversight**

**Analysis of how the agencies of the executive department go about the performance of their duties is an important responsibility of committees.**

## P

### **Passage**

**Favorable floor action on a bill.**

### **President of the Senate**

**The presiding officer of the Senate, having been designated by the majority party in caucus and then elected by the full membership of the Senate for a term of two years at the organization session.**

### **President Pro Tempore of the Senate**

**A senator who is chosen by the President and elected by the full membership of the Senate for a term of two years at the organization session.**

### **Proviso**

**In a general appropriations bill, language used to qualify or restrict a specific appropriation.**

### **Public records law**

**A law providing that public records that are not exempt from public disclosure may be inspected at reasonable times, under reasonable conditions, and under the supervision of the person who has custody of the records.**

## Q

### **Quorum**

**A majority. The State Constitution requires a majority of the members elected to a house to be present for the transacting of legislative business.**

### **Quorum call**

**A call made by the presiding officer to establish the presence of a majority for the lawful transacting of business.**

# R

## **Reading**

**Each bill or proposed constitutional amendment must receive three readings on three separate days in each legislative house before it can be passed (unless waived by a two-thirds vote of the members for readings on the same day). These readings are:**

**First Reading.** The bill is introduced and its title is published in the journal; sometimes first reading takes place during a chamber session.

**Second Reading.** After favorable reports by all committees of reference, the bill is available for placement on the calendar. When it is considered on the floor, it is read a second time. Debate occurs and amendments may be considered. If amendments are adopted, the bill is engrossed.

**Third Reading.** Debate on final passage occurs; a two-thirds vote is required to amend at this stage.

## **Recess**

**The period within a legislative day during which a legislative body is not in session after having been convened for that particular day.**

## **Redistricting**

**Legislative action required following each decennial census, fixing the size of each house of the Florida Legislature and drawing legislative and congressional district boundaries to provide representation in the Florida Legislature and the U.S. Congress for the people of the state.**

## **Repeal**

**The removal of an entire section, subsection, or paragraph of law from the *Florida Statutes* by the legislature. The repeal of a statute or statutes is accomplished by the insertion of a repealer clause in a bill that becomes a law.**

## **Roll call**

**The calling of names of members of the Senate or the House, either to determine the presence of a quorum or to act upon a matter before that house. In the chamber, the roll is recorded by an electronic voting machine.**

## **Rules**

**Each house determines its own process for conducting its business and adopts rules at the beginning of each legislative term.**

## **Ruling by the chair**

**A decision by the committee chair or the presiding officer concerning a question of order or procedure.**

# S

## **Session**

The term is used to refer both to a particular day's meeting of the Senate or the House and to the entire period for which the legislature has been convened. Types of sessions include:

**Regular Session.** This is the name given to the annual session that begins on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March of each odd-numbered year, and on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March, or such other date as may be fixed by law, of each even-numbered year, for a period not to exceed 60 consecutive days.

**Special Session.** Special sessions may be called by Proclamation of the Governor or by Joint Proclamation of the Senate President and the House Speaker for the purpose of considering specific legislation, and shall not exceed 20 consecutive days unless extended by a three-fifths vote of each house.

## **Sine die**

Latin for *without day*. The motion to "adjourn sine die" is the last action of a session of the legislature. Each house may adjourn on its own motion.

## **Speaker of the House of Representatives**

The presiding officer of the House of Representatives, designated by the majority party in caucus and then elected by the body for a term of two years at the organization session.

## **Speaker Pro Tempore of the House of Representatives**

A member of the House of Representatives who is designated by the majority party in caucus and then elected by the body. The Speaker pro tempore presides over the House of Representatives at the request of the Speaker or in the absence of the Speaker.

## **Sponsor**

A term used interchangeably with introducer.

## **Summary**

The brief explanation of the contents of a House or Senate bill which is prepared by the Office of Senate Legal Research and Drafting Services and which appears at the end of each House or Senate bill filed for introduction.

## T

### **Temporarily postponed**

"Temporarily postponed," "temporarily passed," "temporarily deferred," or "TP'd" refer to the postponing of consideration of an agendaed bill or other legislative matter.

### **Term limits**

Section 4 of Article VI of the State Constitution provides that specified elected officials may not seek reelection "if, by the end of the current term of office, the person will have served . . . in that office for eight consecutive years."

## U

### **Unicameral legislature**

A legislature that has only one house. Nebraska is the only state having a unicameral legislature.

## V

### **Veto**

Objection by the Governor to an act passed by the legislature, which objection kills the act unless it is reenacted later by a two-thirds vote of both houses.

### **Veto, Line item**

Power of the Governor to selectively veto items in a general appropriations act or any specific appropriation in a substantive act containing an appropriation.

### **Veto override**

Action by the legislature to set aside the Governor's objections to an act. It takes two-thirds of the members voting in each house to override a veto.

### **Vote**

The Constitution requires the recorded yeas and nays on final passage of legislation.

# W

**Waive the rules**

**The process, requiring a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting, of setting aside certain rules in order to take certain action.**

**Withdraw**

**To remove a bill, amendment, or other legislative matter from a committee or from further consideration by the body.**

**Without objection**

**A phrase used by the presiding officer to indicate that he or she is disposing of a matter without taking a roll call vote of the members, assuming that the action taken is approved unanimously.**

