

LEGISLATIVE VOCABULARY

Act: A law enacted by means of a bill that is approved by both houses of the legislature and signed by the governor. Bills passed by the legislature may also become law without the governor's signature if the governor fails to take action on them within set time limits or they are passed by the legislature over the governor's veto.

Adoption: Final action taken on all amendments and conference committee reports. Each house may "adopt" or "refuse to adopt" an amendment or report.

Amendment: A proposal to change a bill, joint resolution, or resolution by adding, deleting, or substituting language. (See also simple amendment and substitute amendment.)

Appropriation: The setting aside of public revenues for a specific use or program.

Author(s): The legislator or legislative committee that introduces a bill or resolution. Additional members of the same house who sign the bill are referred to as "coauthors", while cosigners from the other house are called "cosponsors".

Bill: A proposal, drafted in legal language, to change current law by adding new language or deleting or amending existing language.

Committee: A group of legislators appointed to review proposals and policies within a certain subject area. Committees typically hold public hearings on bills referred to them and report their recommendations for further consideration of the proposals on the floor of the house. (See also conference committee, special committee and standing committee.)

Concurrence: The action of the second house in agreeing to a measure that has passed the house of origin. The second house may "concur" or "nonconcur" in the measure.

Conference Committee: A committee whose members are appointed by both houses when the two have passed different versions of some proposal and cannot agree on identical wording.

Constituents: People who live in a given senate or assembly district.

Engross: A motion to incorporate all adopted amendments into a proposal in the house of origin and end the second reading. Occasionally, a proposal may be "printed engrossed". This requires printing a revised version of the proposal that incorporates all amendments and corrections before consideration in the second house.

Enroll: The action after a bill has passed both houses that consolidates its amendments and any chief clerk's corrections into one text to be presented to the governor for action.

Executive Session: A committee meeting in which committee members vote on the disposition of a bill or other proposal. Only committee members may speak in an executive session, but members of the public may attend and listen. "Executive" is often shortened to "exec" and used

as an adjective or a verb; e.g. the committee may hold an exec session or decide to exec a bill immediately.

First Reading: The formal announcement on the floor of the legislature that a bill or other proposal is being offered for consideration.

Fiscal Estimate: An estimate of a bill's anticipated change in appropriation authority or the fiscal liability or revenues of the state or general local government.

Floor Debate: Discussion of a proposal in the senate or assembly chambers. A bill under debate is referred to as being "on the floor".

Floor periods: Times set aside by the session schedule during which legislators consider and debate measures in the senate and assembly chambers.

Joint Resolution: A proposal acted upon by both houses that makes a request, affects operations of both houses, pays tribute to public figures, or proposes a constitutional amendment. In Wisconsin, joint resolutions do not require approval by the governor.

Joint Standing Committee: A permanent committee, created by statute, which is composed of members from both houses of the legislature.

Lobbyist: A person who is paid to represent an interest group before the legislature.

Override: The action of the legislature in passing a measure over the governor's veto by a vote of at least two-thirds of the members present in both houses.

Parliamentary Procedure: The rules, rulings, and customs under which legislatures conduct their business.

Partial Veto: The action of the Wisconsin governor in disapproving a part of an appropriation bill. The "part" may be a single word and is thus smaller than the "item" that is susceptible to veto in some states.

Promulgation: The formal process by which state agencies officially create administrative rules.

Proposal: A resolution, joint resolution, or bill introduced in the legislature for consideration.

Public Hearing: A meeting held by a committee at which members of the public, lobbyists, legislators, and state agency representatives may speak or register their views about proposals or policies under committee consideration.

Relating Clause: The part of the title of a bill or other proposal that identifies the general subject matter of the proposal.

Resolution: A proposal that makes a request or affects the operations of one house, including amending its rules, and that requires no action by the other house or the governor.

Roll Call Vote: A vote in which members' votes on a particular question are recorded with their names.

Rules: The detailed code of parliamentary procedure officially adopted by each house. Rules prescribe the way in which the legislature does business and provide methods for settling disputes. In addition to the rules of each house, there are also joint rules, which both houses agree to follow. In Wisconsin, rules carry forward from one legislature to the next until superseded by later action.

Second Reading: The stage at which amendments to proposals are considered on the floor.

Section: A part of the statutes, a bill or an act. A section of the statutes is the primary division of a statute chapter, e.g., Section 13.10 is section 10 of statutory chapter 13. Bills and their resulting acts are also divided into numbered sections for easier reference.

Select Committee: See special committee definition.

Session: The entire 2-year period that begins with the swearing in of a new legislature in January of the odd-numbered year and ends with the swearing in of the next legislature.

Session Laws: The acts of the legislature compiled and published for each biennial session. The acts of the 2003 Legislature will be known as the 2003 session laws, officially published as the *2003 Laws of Wisconsin*.

Session Schedule: A schedule adopted by the legislature through passage of a joint resolution at the beginning of each session, setting the dates for floor periods and committee work periods.

Simple Amendment: A proposal to change some portion of a bill or other proposal by adding, deleting, or substituting language.

Special Committee: A committee appointed to examine a particular topic. Sometimes called a "select committee", it automatically ceases to exist when its task is finished or when the session ends.

Standing Committee: A committee established by the rules of a house to examine legislation, hold hearings, and make recommendations on legislative measures. Standing committees may be abolished or created only by changing the rules. Click on <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/assembly/asmco.html> to see the standing committees of the Assembly and <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/senate/senco.html> to see the standing committees of the Senate.

Statutes: The general laws of the state that codify certain preceding legislative actions in numerically organized sections. The Wisconsin Statutes are printed every 2 years to incorporate the statutory changes made by the session laws enacted by the most recent legislature.

Substitute Amendment: A proposal to replace a bill or other proposal. A substitute amendment may be a complete revision of a proposal.

Sustain: Legislative action to uphold the governor's veto or partial veto of a bill through refusal by more than one-third of the members in one house to vote to override the veto.

Table: A motion to temporarily set aside a measure and attend to other business.

Third Reading: The stage at which bills and certain other proposals come up for final discussion and possible passage. No amendments may be offered at this point.

Veto: The action taken by the governor to reject an entire bill passed by the legislature. (See also "partial veto")

Veto Message: A constitutionally required explanation of the reasons for a veto or partial veto of a bill. The governor must submit the message in writing to the bill's house of origin.