

Congressional Bill Glossary

Definitions of Types of Legislation

Bills

H.R. House Bill

S. Senate Bill

A bill is a legislative proposal before Congress. Bills from each house are assigned a number in the order in which they are introduced, starting at the beginning of each Congress (first and second sessions). Public bills pertain to matters that affect the general public or classes of citizens, while private bills pertain to individual matters that affect individuals and organizations, such as claims against the Government.

Joint Resolutions

H.J.Res House Joint
Resolution

S.J.Res. Senate Joint
Resolution

A joint resolution is a legislative proposal that requires the approval of both houses and the signature of the President, just as a bill does. Resolutions from each house are assigned a number in the order in which they are introduced, starting at the beginning of each Congress (first and second sessions). There is no real difference between a bill and a joint resolution. Joint resolutions generally are used for limited matters, such as a single appropriation for a specific purpose. They are also used to propose amendments to the Constitution. A joint resolution has the force of law, if approved. Joint resolutions become a part of the Constitution when three-quarters of the states have ratified them; they do not require the President's signature.

Concurrent Resolutions

H.Con.Res House Concurrent
Resolution

S.Con.Res. Senate Concurrent
Resolution

A concurrent resolution is a legislative proposal that requires the approval of both houses but does not require the signature of the President and does not have the force of law. Concurrent resolutions generally are used to make or amend rules that apply to both houses. They are also used to express the sentiments of both of the houses. For example, a concurrent resolution is used to set the time of Congress' adjournment. It may also be used by Congress to convey congratulations to another country on the anniversary of its independence.

Simple Resolutions

H.Res.	House Simple Resolution
S.Res.	Senate Simple Resolution

A simple resolution is a legislative proposal that addresses matters entirely within the prerogative of one house or the other. It requires neither the approval of the other house nor the signature of the President, and it does not have the force of law. Most simple resolutions concern the rules of one house. They are also used to express the sentiments of a single house. For example, a simple resolution may offer condolences to the family of a deceased member of Congress, or it may give "advice" on foreign policy or other executive business.

Reports

H.Rpt	House Report
S.Rpt.	Senate Report

A report is a document that presents a committee's explanation of its action regarding legislation that has been referred to it. Each House and Senate report is assigned a number that includes the number of the Congress during which it is published (e.g., "H.Rpt. 105-830" refers to a report created in the House during the 105th Congress). Conference reports are numbered and designated in the same way as regular House and Senate reports. Most reports favor a bill's passage, although a bill can be reported without recommendation. When a committee report is not unanimous, the dissenting committee members may file a statement of their views (minority views) in a minority report. A reported version of a bill references the applicable report number.

Definitions of Common Versions of Bills

(ath) Agreed to House

(ats) Agreed to Senate

This phrase describes concurrent or simple resolutions. These types of legislation are not "passed" in the manner of a regular bill; rather they are "agreed to" in the House or Senate.

(cdh) Committee Discharge House

(cds) Committee Discharge Senate

This phrase describes a motion to discharge a committee from considering a bill. The motion requires a majority vote from that committee.

(cph) Considered and Passed House

(cps) Considered and Passed Senate

This phrase indicates that, after being debated, a bill has been voted on and passed by one of the two houses.

(eah) Engrossed Amendment House

(eas) Engrossed Amendment Senate

This phrase accompanies the final copy of a bill that has been passed by one house and certified by the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate. It includes the amendments to the text from floor action.

(eh) Engrossed in House

(es) Engrossed in Senate

This phrase accompanies the final copy of a bill that has been passed by one house and certified by the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate.

(enr) Enrolled Bill

This phrase accompanies the final copy of a bill that has been passed in identical form by both houses. It must be certified by an officer of the house of origin (the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate) and then sent on for the signatures of the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, and the U.S. President. An enrolled bill is printed on parchment.

- (ih) Introduced in House
- (is) Introduced in Senate

This phrase indicates that a bill has been introduced in either the House or the Senate. In the Senate, any number of senators may introduce a single bill; in the House, a limit of 25 representatives may cosponsor a bill. Many bills are actually committee bills and therefore are introduced under the name of the (sub)committee's chairperson as a formality.

- (pch) Placed on Calendar House
- (pcs) Placed on Calendar Senate

This phrase accompanies a bill that is pending before committees of either house. The bill is assigned a calendar number, which determines when it will be considered by that house.

- (rah) Referred w/Amendments House
- (ras) Referred w/Amendments Senate

This phrase indicates that an engrossed bill has been passed from one house to the other, requesting concurrence.

- (rch) Reference Change House
- (rcs) Reference Change Senate

This phrase indicates a change in the referral of a bill, which requires the unanimous consent of the members of the house in question.

- (rdh) Received in House
- (rds) Received in Senate

This phrase indicates that a bill has been accepted for consideration in one house.

- (rfh) Referred in House
- (rfs) Referred in Senate

This phrase indicates that, after being introduced, a bill has been directed to the committees that have jurisdiction over the subject with which the bill is concerned. (Bills are referred by the Speaker in the House and the Presiding Officer in the Senate.)

- (rh) Reported in House
- (rs) Reported in Senate

This phrase accompanies a committee's report of its findings and recommendations to the parent house after it has examined a bill. The version of the bill as reported includes changes, if any, that have been recommended by the committee.