

Advocacy Glossary

It is suggested that the information be printed, saved and shared.

One of the most confusing things for new advocates to deal with is the jargon of government. This glossary contains definitions of terms commonly used in the lawmaking process and in advocacy.

Administrative Advocacy: An attempt to influence policies within the executive branch such as agency rulemakings, grant programs, or agency budgets. Also known as "regulatory advocacy."

Advocacy: Speaking out on issues of concern. This can mean something as formal as sitting down and talking to your legislator; as intensive as engaging in efforts to change a change in laws or policies; or as simple as telling your neighbor about the impact of a law.

Amendment: A change to a **bill** or motion, sometimes replacing the entire bill (called a "substitution"). An amendment is debated and voted on in the same manner as a bill.

Appropriations: Basically, a fancy word for budget. A legislature's appropriations committee will craft a bill that lays out how the government's money should be spent for a given time period (usually a fiscal year), which is then voted on by the legislature and signed into law by the president or governor. Often, these bills are huge, and contain many "**riders**"

Authorization: Legislation that formally establishes a program or activity and sets its funding limit. Authorizations are often for a limited time, and programs must be periodically "re-authorized," sometimes with changes.

Bill: Legislation drafted for consideration by the legislature. Bills usually must be formally filed with the legislature's clerk and given an identifying number (H.R. 7, for example, is the seventh bill filed in the House of Representatives this session).

Charity: A non-profit organization that is tax exempt under IRS code section 501(c)(3) which derives substantial support from the general public or is a religious, educational, medical or governmental or charitable support institution. Charities must apply for 501(c)(3) status with the IRS.

Committee: A group of legislators that develops legislation on specific topics (veterans' affairs, for example), and has jurisdiction over all legislation that deals with its topic. Generally, legislation must pass in a committee before the entire legislative body can vote on it. Committees often schedule public hearings to discuss legislative issues. Most action takes place at the **subcommittee** level.

Congressional Record: The official transcript of federal House and Senate proceedings. Often includes statements by members that are added directly into the record, and not fully read on the floor in the interest of time and staying awake.

Conference Committee: The House and Senate appoint members to a conference committee to resolve differences between versions of legislation passed by both bodies. Both chambers then vote the combined legislation, which is called a "conference report."

Continuing Resolution: Legislation passed by both the House and the Senate permitting executive branch agencies to continue operating in the absence of a budget. In past years, several continuing resolutions have been needed before a federal budget was finally passed.

Cosponsor: When a legislator supports a bill, but is not the primary **sponsor**, they may sign their name onto the bill as a cosponsor to show their support. Legislation can sometimes have hundreds of cosponsors.

Direct Lobbying: To present a case for or against a specific piece of legislation, and to ask a legislator to vote a certain way. While any citizen can lobby his or her legislators, nonprofits have limits on how much money they can spend on lobbying.

District: The geographic area from which a U.S House member or state legislator is elected.

Electoral activities: Activities that directly attempt to influence the outcome of an election. **Charities** are strictly prohibited from engaging in electoral activities, although other types or nonprofits are not.

Electoral Advocacy: Efforts to educate voters (such as legislative scorecards), or to register or encourage them to vote. These activities cannot include efforts specifically designed to influence the outcome of an election (see **Electoral Activities**).

Executive Order: An action by the President or a Governor that has the legal authority of a law, often dealing with regulations or the workings of agencies.

Filibuster: Delaying tactic used in the US Senate by the minority in an effort to prevent the passage of a bill or amendment. The Senate's rules allow for unlimited debate in some situations, unless a 2/3 vote to end debate passes. A filibuster results when one or more Senators continue "debating" for as long as possible (sometimes for days).

Grassroots Lobbying: Stating a position on a specific legislative proposal to the public, then asking the public to urge their legislator to support that stated position. Nonprofits are limited in the amount they can spend on grassroots lobbying.

Hearing: A meeting in which evidence to support particular points of view can be presented to a **committee**. Usually in conjunction with the consideration of a specific bill and can include experts on a specific topic, or members of the public who would be affected by the bill or issue at hand.

House: The lower body of the Congress, and most state legislatures. House members are elected to represent a geographic **district**. The US House (with 435 voting members and five nonvoting delegates) is much larger than the **Senate** (with 100 voting members) , as is the case in most states.

Information Advocacy: Activities to either provide, or ensure the provision of, information that can be used to shape policy.

Judicial Advocacy: Working for policy change through the legal system, either by lawsuits, friend of the court briefs, or providing information for legal cases. Also includes efforts to promote a more just and equitable legal system, which may also include **legislative advocacy**.

Legislative Advocacy: Efforts to change policy through the legislative branch. May include formal **lobbying** in support or opposition to a **bill**, the crafting of new legislative language, writing **amendments** to existing bills, or encouraging others to contact their legislators.

Lobbying: Communication with elected officials or their staff, which expresses a position on a pending piece of legislation.

Mark up: The process of amending a legislative proposal in a committee or subcommittee. Committee members can offer amendments, which if successful, are incorporated into language of a particular bill. Legislation may be drastically changed during mark up.

Majority Leader: The leader of the majority party in the Senate, elected by his or her peers. In the House, the Majority Leader is the second in command after the Speaker of the House and is also elected to that post by his/her peers.

Minority Leader: Leader of the minority party in the House and Senate, elected by members of his or her party.

Omnibus Bill: A bill related to a specific area that covers many issues or topics. Often, the federal budget is an omnibus bill that deals with many agencies' budgets at once.

Public Law: After a bill passes both the House and the Senate and is signed by the president, it becomes a public law.

Regulation: A rule or order that has the force of law that originates from the executive branch (usually from an agency), and deals with the specifics of a program. Congress, for example, may instruct EPA to reduce automotive emissions by 5%, but the EPA must develop regulations to reach this goal.

Rider: An amendment to an **appropriations** bill, which may not actually deal with the allocation of government funds.

Roll Call: A formal vote on a bill or amendment taken by each legislator announcing "yea" "no" or "present" as their name is read by the clerk.

Senate: The upper body of the Congress, and most state legislatures. Each state has two US Senators, elected at-large, to serve six-year terms, with one-third of the seats up for re-election every two years. In state legislatures, Senators usually represent larger geographic areas than House members.

Speaker of the House: The "leader" of the House of Representatives, elected by the majority party. The speaker controls the calendar and other aspects of the House's activities.

Sponsor: One or more legislators who are the primary writers of a bill. All bills must have at least one sponsor, but many have more than one primary sponsor, and a number of **cosponsors** as well.

Subcommittee: A part of a committee that deals with a specific issue within the committee's jurisdiction (such as the veterans' benefits subcommittee of the Veteran's Affairs committee). Most legislation is first developed and voted on at this level, as a full committee will usually not consider legislation until it has passed its subcommittee.

Voice Vote: Voting on a bill by acclamation, or asking those in favor to say "yea" and those opposed to say "no." Usually, only non-controversial legislation without any "no" votes is passed this way (such as renaming post offices), but a voice vote will sometimes be taken before a **roll call** vote.

Whip: Senator or Representative who serves as an internal lobbyist for the Republican or Democratic party to persuade legislators to support their party's position, and who counts votes for the leadership in advance of floor votes. While the whip is an official position, there may be other members who act as a whip for specific legislation or issues.

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