

Legislative Process Cheat Sheet

What is a Floor Leader? The Majority and Minority Leaders are elected by their respective parties to serve as the chief spokesmen for their parties. By custom, the Presiding Officer gives the floor leaders priority in obtaining recognition to speak on the floor.

What is a Whip? A Whip is an assistant to the party leaders who are also elected by their parties. The Majority and Minority Whips are responsible for getting votes within their parties on major issues. In the absence of a party floor leader, the whip often serves as acting floor leader.

What is a Presiding Officer? A majority-party Senator who presides over the Senate and is charged with maintaining order and decorum, recognizing Members to speak, and interpreting the Senate's rules, practices and precedents.

What is a Caucus? From the Algonquian Indian language, a caucus meant "to meet together." An informal organization of Members of the House or the Senate, or both, that exists to discuss issues of mutual concern and possibly to perform legislative research and policy planning for its members. There are many types of caucuses.

What is a Committee? If it were not for committees, the Legislature would probably be in session all year. It would take that long for the entire Senate and the entire House of Representatives to scrutinize and take public testimony on every bill. Fortunately, the workload in each house is divided among the standing committees. Their primary role in the legislative process is to thoroughly examine the bills assigned to them and recommend if these bills should become law.

What does a Committee do? The majority and minority leaders select committee members and the chair and vice-chair of each committee. Each committee makes an initial determination if the bill proposal should go forward in the legislature and, by vote, can suggest amendments to the bill, approve it for further action by the full Senate or House, or disapprove it (see below). First, the legislator sponsoring the bill or someone he or she designates presents the bill. This involves explaining the bill and the reason why it was introduced. Following that presentation, the committee generally takes public testimony on the bill. Proponents speak first, then opponents. The testimony comes from a variety of sources: lobbyists, or individuals hired to promote the views of a group, organization, or industry on measures considered by the Legislature, general public, and other legislators. Upon completion of the public testimony, members of the committee discuss the bill. Some committee members ask questions of those who have testified, express their opinions on the merit of the bill, or propose amendments to the bill. Next, the committee makes its recommendation on the bill.

What are Committee Recommendations?

- (1) **DO PASS**, which means the committee recommends the bill passes in its original form.
- (2) **DO PASS AMENDED**, which means the committee recommends the bill passes, not in its original form, but in an altered form set out by the committee.
- (3) **DO NOT PASS**, which means the committee feels it is important for the bill to be considered by the entire house, but does not recommend its passage.
- (4) **WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION**, which means the committee cannot come to a consensus or has no feelings on the bill one way or another, so feels the entire house should determine whether it should pass
- (5) **KILL A BILL**, by tabling it, which postpones further discussion on the bill until such time as a majority of members of the committee vote to have it brought up for discussion again. Secondly, a committee can kill a bill by postponing it to a date that falls after the legislative session adjourns.

Committees must take final action on every bill they are assigned, and that action must be reported to the entire house. All final actions taken on bills by standing committees require a majority vote of the members-elect. This means that a majority of the entire membership of the committee is needed, not just a majority of those present at that particular meeting.

What is an Amendment? It is a proposal to alter the text of a pending bill or other measure by striking out some of it, by inserting new language, or both. Before an amendment becomes part of the bill, the Senate must agree to it.

What is a Lobbyist? Lobbyists are typically very knowledgeable about the legislative process and know who the decision makers are relative to congressional staff and Members of Congress. Lobbyists assist in the preparation and presentation of information, arrange testimony for congressional hearings, and arrange and attend face-to-face meetings with congressional staff and/or Members of Congress or agency officials. The goal is to affect the legislative process. Lobbyists assist staff by communicating complicated issues and by breaking an issue down into relatively small and simple parts. The goal is to simplify the learning process of the Member yet provide them with accurate and timely information.