

Navigating the Legislature: Vocabulary!

Amendment:

A change proposed or made to a bill or resolution. Amendments to bills and resolutions may be offered in a standing committee, in a conference committee, or on second reading during consideration by the Committee of the Whole.

Appropriation:

Legislative authority for expenditure of state money to a state agency for a specific purpose.

Blast motion:

A vote on the floor of the House or Senate to bring a bill that's tabled or stuck in committee to the floor for a vote of the whole chamber.

Cat and dog bill:

A bill that makes a specific appropriation for a specific purpose that is not included in the general appropriations bill.

Concurrence:

Agreement by one house to a proposal or action of the other house.

Conference committee:

A group of legislators appointed by the presiding officer in each house to resolve differences between the houses on a bill.

Died / tabled in committee:

The defeat of a bill by not returning it from committee to the house for further action.

First reading:

The first presentation of a bill or its title for consideration. In some states, the first reading is done at the time of introduction.

Second reading:

The first vote on a bill on the floor of the house or senate.

Third reading:

The point in the legislative process when legislators in each chamber take a final vote on a bill.

Fiscal note:

A brief document that contains an analysis of a bill's dollar impact on state or local revenue, expenditures, or fiscal liability.

Interim:

The period of time between regular legislative sessions. *(In Montana, from May of odd-numbered years through December of even-numbered years, ie. May 2021-Dec. 2022.)*

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Rules:

Regulating principles or methods of legislative procedure. (*Montana uses Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure.*)

Reconsideration:

A parliamentary process by which a motion or question that has been acted on may be brought back before the body.

Referendum:

The submission of a proposed or enacted piece of legislation to the people for approval or rejection. The referendum may be initiated by the Legislature or by voters through a petition process.

Sine die:

The end of the legislative session. Literally, "without day;" final adjournment.

Special session:

A meeting of the Legislature convened at the request of either the Governor or a majority of the members of the Legislature. A special session is limited to matters specified in the call of the special session.

Sponsor:

The legislator who introduces a bill or resolution and guides it through the legislative process.

Sunset:

Expiration date of a bill or measure.

Transmittal:

The act of sending a bill to the second chamber for consideration after it has been passed by the first chamber. Different types of bills have different transmittal deadlines in the legislative rules.

Veto:

Action by the governor to disapprove a bill or measure. (*The opposite of signing a bill into law.*)