

C Glossary of Legislative Terms

ADOPTION Approval or acceptance of amendments, resolutions, or laws.

AMENDMENT Proposal to change the language of a bill or a law and offered in committee or on the floor of the House or Senate.

APPROPRIATION Allows spending for specified purposes.

APPROPRIATIONS CONTINUING Stop-gap measures that fund programs and agencies between the beginning of the fiscal year (July 1 for Illinois state government and Oct. 1 for the federal government) and the date on which the governor or president signs the regular appropriations bill into law. In the absence of continuing appropriations, the government would shut down because there would be no authority to spend money without a funding bill in place.

APPROPRIATIONS REGULAR Measures that fund agencies or programs for a full year.

APPROPRIATIONS SUPPLEMENTAL Spending that is approved outside the normal annual appropriations process either to pay for unanticipated or extraordinary expenditures or to fund activities authorized too late for normal budgetary deadlines. Supplemental appropriations bills are usually considered mid-year, after the approval of the regular appropriations bills.

AUTHORIZATION Provision in law that establishes an agency or program and allows for spending for that agency or program.

BALANCED BUDGET A budget in which revenues equal spending.

BILL The main vehicle employed by members of the General Assembly or Congress for introducing their proposals.

BUDGET DEFICIT The amount by which spending exceeds revenues.

CAUCUS A closed meeting of legislators of one party; or any group of legislators who meet formally because of their interest in specific issues.

CHAIR Designation of the current presiding officer.

CHAMBER The House or Senate chamber where sessions are held.

COLA Cost-of-living adjustment.

COMMITTEE A subdivision of the House or Senate that considers legislation. Committees also undertake investigations within their areas of expertise. Most committees are divided into specialized subcommittees. Committees and subcommittees hold hearings and debate legislation. Most amendments to legislation occur at this level.

CONFEREES Senate or House members appointed to serve on conference committees. Conferees are often appointed from the committee or committees that reported the legislation and they are expected to try to uphold the Senate or House position on measures when they negotiate with conferees from the other body.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE A temporary, ad hoc panel composed of House and Senate members who work out differences in legislation that has passed both chambers.

CONFERENCE REPORT The compromise product negotiated by the conference committee. The conference report is submitted to the House and Senate for approval.

DISTRICT The area of the state represented by a legislator.

FISCAL YEAR Any accounting period of 12 months. The fiscal year for Illinois state government begins July 1 and ends June 30. The federal fiscal year begins October 1 and ends September 30.

HEARING Committee session, usually open to the public, to take testimony to gather information and opinions on a proposed program or legislation.

LOBBYIST An individual who seeks to influence the outcome of legislation or administrative decisions. The law requires some lobbyists to formally register.

MINORITY LEADER The highest ranking minority party post; chief policy and political strategist for the minority party.

MOTION A formal request for action made by a legislator during a committee hearing or floor session.

READING Presentation of a bill in the Illinois General Assembly. A bill is either in first, second, or third reading until it is passed by both houses.

REAPPORTIONMENT The redrawing of election-district boundaries.

RECESS An official pause of any length in a committee hearing or floor session that halts the proceedings for a period of time but does not have the finality of adjournment. At the federal level, a recess may be used to refer to a break of a number of days in a legislative session.

REFERENDUM The method by which a measure adopted by the legislature may be submitted to the electorate for a vote.

RESOLUTION An opinion expressed by one or both houses that does not have the force of law.

RULES Those ideas that govern the operation of either or both houses.

SENATE PRESIDENT The highest-ranking, presiding officer of the majority party in either the U.S. or Illinois Senate.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE The highest-ranking, presiding officer of the majority party in either the U.S. or Illinois House.

SURPLUS The amount by which revenues exceed spending.

UNFUNDED MANDATES Any provision in legislation, statute, or regulation that imposes a responsibility on a state or local government, for which adequate funding to carry out the responsibility is not appropriated.

VETO The procedure by which a governor or president rejects a bill.