

CHILDREN'S CARDIOMYOPATHY FOUNDATION

Advocacy Glossary and Terms

A

Advocacy

The support or defense of a cause and the act of pleading on behalf of another person.

Amendment

A proposal to change or an actual change to a piece of legislation.

Appropriations Bill

Provides the legal authority needed to spend or obligate U.S. Treasury funds. There are up to 12 annual appropriations bills, which together fund the entire federal government and must all be enacted prior to the start of a new fiscal year, designated as October 1. Failure to meet this deadline results in the need for a temporary short-term funding measure (known as a "continuing resolution") or there may be a shut-down of governmental agencies and offices.

At-Large Representative

Representatives from states with a population size qualifying for one or less House seat (e.g., Wyoming).

Authorization Bill

Provides the authority for a program or agency to exist and determines its policy. It also can recommend spending levels to carry out the defined policy, but these levels are not binding. Authorizations may be annual, multi-year, or permanent. Expiring programs require re-authorizations. House and Senate rules require that authorization be in place before final funding decisions are made.

B

The Beltway

An interstate highway encircling Washington, DC, and passing through Maryland and Virginia suburbs. "Inside The Beltway" asserts that an issue only is of interest or relevant to Washington, DC, residents and workers.

Bill

A legislative proposal that becomes law if it passes both the House and Senate in identical fashion and receives Presidential approval. Bills are introduced as "HR" in the House, and "S" in the Senate with consecutive numbering in each respective chamber. Besides bills, joint resolutions are the only other type of legislation which become law [HJRes. or SJRes.].

Budget Resolution

The annual decision made by Congress to set spending and revenue levels, providing a voluntary framework within which Congress agrees to limit subsequent funding bills. It may also instruct committees to change current law in order to save money.

C

Capitol Hill	The area encompassing the U.S. Capitol and the House and Senate office buildings.
Casework	Intermediary work performed by Members of Congress for constituents who may have problems, or "cases," with the federal government (e.g., Medicare, Social Security).
Caucus	An informal group of members sharing an interest in the same policy issues. (e.g., the House Cancer Caucus).
Chairman	The presiding officer of a committee and/or a subcommittee - a member of the majority party in the chamber.
Cloture	The formal procedure used to end a filibuster. It can take up to three days and requires 60 votes. If cloture wins, 30 additional hours of debate are allowed prior to voting, but they are rarely used. If cloture fails, debate would continue without limits. Instead, the bill is usually set aside.
Colloquy	A pre-scripted floor dialogue between the chairman of a committee and another Member of Congress.
Committee of the Whole	The entire House meeting in the form of a committee.
Committee Report	A formal report prepared by a House or Senate Committee to explain the content of a bill being reported. Committee Reports are optional in the Senate, but mandatory in the House. They contain views of Committee members, a cost impact analysis, and compare the bill to current law.
Companion Bill	A companion bill is similar or may be identical to one introduced in the other house of Congress.
Concurrent Resolution	Used to take action or express opinion on behalf of both the House and Senate, it does not make or become law. Used to fix Congressional adjournment dates and set the annual Congressional budget.
Conferee	A Member of Congress named to represent his/her chamber in negotiations with the other house. Formally known as "managers," the conferees meet in conference committee to negotiate a compromise between the House and Senate versions of a bill.
Conference	A formal meeting, or series of meetings, between House and Senate Members to reconcile differences between House and Senate passed measures. A Conference is held by a Conference Committee consisting of both Democrats and Republicans (referred to as "conferees" or "managers") who sit on the committees with jurisdiction over the legislation that needs to be reconciled into a single uniform measure.

Conference Committee	A temporary panel of House and Senate negotiators. A conference committee is created to resolve differences between versions of similar House and Senate bills.
Conference Report	Refers to the final compromise version of a bill proposed by House and Senate conferees. It also contains the "statement of managers," a section-by-section explanation of the final agreement.
Congressional Budget Office (CBO)	The agency that, at the request of Congress, conducts non-partisan economic analysis and research and evaluates proposed bills and amendments, assessing their potential cost.
Congressional District	A geographical area within a state from which a member of the House of Representatives is elected and s/he represents in Congress. There are 435 Congressional districts. Each district has approximately 600,000 people.
Congressional Record	A daily account of House and Senate floor debate, votes, and members' remarks. Available free online at http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/
Congressional Research Service (CRS)	The Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress. CRS responds to requests for general information and issue analysis only from Members, Committees, or Congressional staff.
Consideration	The process by which the Senate or House explores the legislation including debate, amendment, and voting.
Cosponsor	A member who formally adds his/her name as a supporter to another member's bill. An "original" or "initial" cosponsor is one who was listed at the time of the bill's introduction, not added on later.
Constituent Service	The assistance given constituents by Members of Congress in non-legislative areas. Most requests are for help in obtaining action from federal agencies on individual problems and cases (e.g., Medicare, Social Security). Other services include obtaining government agency tours, commendation letters information and publications, flags flown over the capitol, and military academy appointments.
Constituents	The people who live in the Member's Congressional district or state.
Continuing Resolution	A short-term or long-term funding bill that funds the federal government after September 30 until a permanent appropriations measure is passed.

D

Dear Colleague

A letter sent by one or more Members to all fellow members. "Dear Colleague" letters can describe a new bill and ask for cosponsors, may ask for a Member's vote for or against a particular issue, or request fellow Members' support for another priority such as increasing funding for a specific cancer research program. Appropriations "Dear Colleague" letters usually request Members to show support by signing onto to a joint letter to Appropriations Committee leaders asking for a particular funding amount for a specific program of interest.

Delegate

A member of the House from Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, or Washington, D.C. The Constitution prohibits delegates from voting on the House floor, but permits them to vote in Committee.

Demonstration Project

A project funded by the federal government in order to test new technology or policies.

Discharge Petition

A petition that starts a process to force a bill out of committee. A successful petition requires the signatures of 218 members, a majority of the House.

Discretionary Spending

Refers to spending set by the annual appropriation levels and decided by Congress. This spending is optional. Funding for the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is considered discretionary spending and annual funding is determined in each appropriations cycle.

District Work Period

The time set for Members to work at home and during which the House is not in session.

E

Earmarks

Specific provisions detailing - or setting aside - funding for a specific program or purpose. Expenditures are earmarked in appropriations bills or the accompanying reports.

Entitlement Spending

Funds for programs like Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and veterans' benefits. Funding levels are automatically set by the number of eligible recipients, not at the discretion of Congress.

Executive Order

A Presidential directive with the force of law that does not need Congressional approval.

F

Filibuster

The term used for an extended debate in the Senate which has the effect of preventing a vote. Senate rules contain no motion to force a vote. A vote occurs only once debate ends.

Fiscal Year	The federal government's budget year begins on October 1st and ends on September 30th. For example, fiscal year 2006 began on October 1st, 2005 and ended on September 30th, 2006.
Free-Standing Bill	Refers to a coherent bill, dealing with a single issue.
<u>G</u>	
GAO	The Government Accountability Office, which audits federal agencies and programs for Congress.
Germane	The technical term for "relevant." Amendments are said to be germane or non-germane to a bill.
GOP	Stands for "Grand Old Party," used to refer to the Republican party.
GPO	The Government Printing Office, which prints laws, bills, committee reports, etc. GPO sells these documents to the public and distributes an allotted number of them free to members.
<u>H</u>	
Hearing	A formal meeting of a committee or subcommittee to review legislation or explore a topic. Hearings also may be called to investigate a matter or conduct oversight of existing programs. Witnesses are called to deliver testimony and answer questions in all three types of hearings.
<u>J</u>	
Joint Resolutions	Measures used to appropriate funding, pose constitutional amendments, or fix technical errors. Joint resolutions become public law if adopted by both the House and Senate and, where relevant, approved by the president. In terms of Constitutional amendments, they must be approved by three-fourths of the states.
<u>L</u>	
Lame Ducks	Members who will not return in the next Congress but who are finishing out their current term.
Lame Duck Session	The period of time, but before Congress adjourns, that Congress meets after an election, in which Members of Congress who have not been re-elected still cast votes.
Lay on the Table	To lay a bill, resolution, amendment, appeal, or motion on the table is to dispose of it permanently and adversely. Under congressional rules of procedure, tabling kills the underlying matter.
Legislative Day	Any day on which the House or Senate meets. It runs until the next recess or adjournment.

M

Majority Leader

The Majority Leader is elected by his/her party members in the House or Senate to lead them, to promote passage of the party's issue priorities, and to coordinate legislative efforts with the Minority Leader, the other chamber, and the White House.

Manager's Amendment

A package of numerous individual amendments agreed to by both sides in advance.

Mandatory Spending

The required funding that accounts for two-thirds of the federal budget. These funds are not controlled by annual decision of Congress but are automatically obliged by virtue of previously-enacted laws. For example, as Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, and social security are entitlement programs, funding for them all falls under mandatory spending.

Mark-up

Refers to the meeting of a Committee held to review the text of a bill before reporting it out to the full chamber for consideration. Committee members offer and vote on proposed changes (amendments) to the bill's language. Most mark-ups end with a vote to send the revised version of the bill forward to the floor (full Chamber) for final consideration and approval.

Minority Leader

The Minority Leader is elected by his/her party members in the House or Senate to lead them, to promote passage of the party's issue priorities, and to coordinate legislative efforts with the Majority Leader, the other chamber, and the White House.

Motion to Instruct Conferees

A motion to instruct conferees, if adopted, asks House or Senate conferees to take a certain negotiating position.

Motion to Proceed

A motion to proceed seeks to bring a bill to the Senate floor for debate and amendment.

Motion to Recommit

A motion to recommit returns a bill to committee, in effect killing it. However, a motion to recommit with instructions is a last opportunity to amend the bill.

Motion to Reconsider

A motion to reconsider, if adopted within two days of a vote in the House [or three days in the Senate], requires the original vote be held again.

Motion to Strike

A motion to strike is a type of amendment which seeks to delete language from a bill.

Motion to Table

A motion to table, if adopted, permanently kills the pending matter. It also ends any further debate.

Motion to Waive the Budget Act

If adopted, this motion temporarily sets aside a specific provision of the Congressional Budget Act. Without a waiver, the provision would cause the pending amendment to fall on a point of order (defined below). With a waiver, the amendment may be considered even though it violates the Congressional Budget Act. A minimum of 60 votes is required for adoption.

O

Off-Budget

Describes programs not counted toward budget limits due to provisions in current law. For example, Social Security trust funds and the United States Postal Service are off-budget programs.

OMB

The Office of Management and Budget is the federal agency that prepares the President's budget submission to Congress and develops associated economic forecasts.

Omnibus Bill

A large measure that packages together several bills into one or combines diverse subjects into a single bill. Examples are reconciliation bills and combined appropriations bills.

Override

The vote taken to pass a bill again, after it has been vetoed by the President. It takes a two-thirds vote in each chamber, or 290 in the House and 67 in the Senate, if all are present and voting. If the veto is overridden in both chambers, the bill becomes law despite the objection of the President.

Outlays

The actual payments made out of the federal treasury to fulfill obligations incurred earlier.

Oversight

The term used for Congressional review of federal agencies, government programs, and performance.

S

Second Degree

An amendment offered to change the text of another amendment – in other words, an amendment to an amendment.

Secretary of the Senate

A non-partisan employee who serves as the Chief Administrative Officer.

Sense of the House

Legislative language which offers the opinion of the House but does not make law.

Sense of the Senate

Legislative language which offers the opinion of the Senate but does not make law.

Sine Die Adjournment

The end of a Congressional session or an entire Congress.

Special Interest

Any group of people organized around a specific shared interest; e.g., oncology nursing advocates, senior citizens, environmentalists, a specific industry such as oil or tobacco, an ethnic community, an individual corporation, or a professional trade association, like trial lawyers or insurance agents.

Sponsor

Member or Members who propose and support legislation.

Senior Senator/Junior Senator

Senior Senator/Junior Senator describes the seniority relationship between two senators from the same state, with the Senior Senator serving in the Senate longer than the Junior Senator.

Standing Committee

A Standing Committee of the House or Senate has permanent status, whereas a Select Committee is temporary.

State of the Union

The president's State of the Union Speech defines his view of national priorities and needed legislation. The Constitution requires that the president report to Congress on the State of the Union "from time to time."

Suspension of the Rules

A special procedure used in the House to speed up action by setting aside the regular rules. Bills brought up under this process are debated for 40 minutes, may not be amended, and require a two-thirds vote for approval.

T

Tie Vote

A tie vote means the question loses. In the Senate, a tie may be broken by vote of the Vice President of the United States.

Time Agreement

A voluntary pact among senators to limit debate time on a bill or on an amendment.

U

Unanimous Consent

Unanimous consent means that all members on the floor agree, or consent, to a pending request.

Unfunded Mandate

A requirement imposed by Congress on state or local governments without the provision of associated funding to pay for it.

Up or Down Vote

A direct vote on the substance of an amendment or bill, sometimes referred to as a "clean vote" or "straight up or down." Members simply vote "yea" or "nay" on it.

V

Veto-Proof

Votes with a margin sufficient to override a Presidential veto, should it occur. Since a two-thirds vote is required to override, a veto-proof majority is 290 votes in the House and 67 votes in the Senate.

Voice Vote

During a voice vote members say "aye" aloud as a group, followed by the group saying "no." No names are recorded.

W

Whip

A member elected by his/her party to count potential votes and promote party unity in voting. The House Majority Whip is the third ranking leadership position in his/her party and the House Minority Whip ranks second. The Senate Majority and Minority Whip are the second ranking leadership position in their respective party.

Y

Yeas & Nays – House

A specific type of recorded vote. It requires a seconding of the motion by one-fifth of those present to take place. The vote, if ordered, places members' positions on record. It is usually held by electronic device.

Yeas & Nays – Senate

The term for a roll-call vote. Members call out “yea” or “nay” when their name is called, or signal the clerk with a “thumbs-up” or “thumbs-down.”