

## **Glossary of Common Congressional Terms\***

### **Adjourn**

To postpone or suspend a meeting.

### **Amendment**

A proposal by a Member (in committee or floor session of the respective Chamber) to alter the language or provision of a bill or act. It is voted on in the same manner as a bill.

The Constitution of the United States, as provided in Article 5, may be amended when two-thirds of the members each house of Congress approve a proposed amendment and three-fourths of the States thereafter ratify it.

### **Bicameral**

The characteristic of having two branches, chambers, or houses, such as the United States Congress, which is composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

### **Bill**

Formally introduced legislation. A proposed law requiring the approval of both Houses and the signature of the President to enact. (see also "engrossed bill," "enrolled bill," "clean bill," and "private bill.")

### **Caucus**

A meeting of Democratic Party members in the House, which elects party leaders and makes decisions on legislative business.

### **Checks and Balances**

A system of limits imposed by the Constitution of the United States on all branches of a government by giving each branch the right to change or cancel the acts of another branch that fall within its jurisdiction.

### **Conference Committee**

A temporary joint committee formed for the purpose of resolving differences between the houses on a measure or, occasionally, several measures.

### **Constituent**

A citizen residing within the district of a legislator.

### **Delegate**

1. A person designated to act for or represent another or others; a deputy; representative, as in a political convention.

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

### **Democratic**

Characterized by the principle of political or social equality for all.

### **Joint Committee**

A committee composed of Members selected from each House. The functions of most joint committees involve investigation, research, or oversight of agencies closely related to Congress. Permanent joint committees, created by statute, are sometimes called standing joint committees.

**Joint Meeting**

A meeting of both Houses of Congress, in which each Chamber recesses to meet for an occasion or ceremony, usually in the House Chamber.

**Jurisdiction**

The subjects or areas covered by a committee. When a bill is proposed, the bill is sent to the committee with the jurisdiction over the topics covered in a bill. For example, bills about education go to the Committee on Education.

**Select Committee**

A committee established by a resolution in either house for a special purpose and, usually, for a limited time.

**Standing Committee**

Permanent House committees that consider bills and issues and recommend measures for consideration by the full House.

\*Referenced from the United States Clerk's Website