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The Senate's Calendar of Business

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The Senate's *Calendar of Business* lists bills, resolutions, and other items of legislative business that are eligible for floor consideration. When a Senate committee reports a bill, it is said to be placed "on the calendar." It is not in order for the majority leader or any other Senator to move that the Senate proceed to the consideration of a measure that is not on the calendar, though the majority leader could ask unanimous consent to do so. A Senate measure that is not on the calendar either has been referred to a committee and is awaiting committee action, or it is being "held at the desk" by unanimous consent. Being held at the desk means it is awaiting a decision to refer it to committee, to place it on the calendar, or to bring it directly to the floor for consideration by unanimous consent.

The Senate's other calendar, the *Executive Calendar*, lists treaties and nominations—which constitute the Senate's executive business—that are available for floor action. Both of these documents are published each day the Senate is in session and distributed to Senators' personal offices and to all committee and subcommittee offices. There are no cumulative issues of the *Calendar of Business*; each issue documents the status of the Senate's legislative business as of its publication. Links to current and past issues of the *Calendar of Business* are available on the Legislative Information System website at <http://www.congress.gov/senate.php>.

The following is a summary of the contents of the *Calendar of Business*.

General Orders

When Senators speak of the calendar, they usually are referring to a list printed in the *Calendar of Business* called "General Orders, under Rule VIII." This is a list made up of all measures that committees have reported to the Senate and any bills and joint resolutions that, under the provisions of Rule XIV, Senators have had placed directly on the calendar without having been referred to committee. Each measure on this list is given an "order number" that reflects the chronological order in which it was placed on the calendar during the two-year Congress. Following the order number are columns displaying: the number of the measure (e.g., S. 1 or H.R. 2); its sponsor, if it is a Senate measure; its title; and the date and manner in which it was placed on the calendar. This last column shows whether the measure was placed directly on the calendar without being referred to committee, whether the measure is an original bill drafted in committee, or whether the measure was reported from committee with or without amendment. The column also shows whether the measure is accompanied by a written committee report and whether that report contains additional or minority views.

Other Contents

The front cover of the *Calendar of Business* gives the dates on which each session of the current Congress convened and adjourned *sine die* and the number of days the Senate actually has met during each session. It also shows the date and time at which the Senate is next scheduled to convene. Also, the calendar lists any unfinished business or business that is pending before the Senate and any unanimous consent agreements that continue to apply to legislative business that the Senate is considering.

On the back cover is a convenient chart that shows the history of legislative action on, and the current status of, appropriations bills during the current session of Congress.

Also included in the *Calendar of Business* are the following:

- calendars for the current month and year, showing the days on which the Senate met and the anticipated dates of future non-legislative periods;
- a list of Senators and the year in which each Senator's term will expire;
- Senate committee membership and Senate members of joint committees;
- a cross index of order numbers and measure numbers for the bills and resolutions listed under "General Orders";
- a page where Senators may record a notice of intent to object. This section of the calendar was established pursuant to Section 515 of P.L. 110-81, and a standing order agreed to in the 112th Congress (S.Res. 28) also affects its content. It was created to discourage Senators from only privately indicating their opposition to a matter and thereby delaying or preventing its consideration, a practice known as placing a "secret hold."¹
- a list of any "resolutions and motions over, under the rule." The list includes any simple and concurrent Senate resolutions that have been placed directly on the calendar instead of being referred to committee. This happens when there is objection to the immediate consideration of a simple or concurrent resolution that a Senator has just submitted. The resolution must lie *over* one legislative day, *under* paragraph 6 of Rule XIV, before it is eligible for consideration on the floor;
- "bills and joint resolutions read the first time" and awaiting the start of the next legislative day when they will read by title for a second time; after this second reading, each such measure probably will be placed directly on the calendar under the provisions of Rule XIV instead of being referred to committee;
- a list of "subjects on the table" but still eligible for consideration; there are rarely, if ever, any subjects listed here;
- motions for reconsideration that Senators have entered for later Senate action; occasionally, a Senator will enter such a motion instead of making it for the Senate to consider immediately; and
- a list of bills that have been sent to conference, including, for each, the names of the House and Senate conferees and the dates on which the House or Senate agreed to the conference report.

¹ For more on this topic, please see CRS Report R43563, "*Holds*" in the Senate, by Mark J. Oleszek.

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This report was written by Stanley Bach, formerly a Senior Specialist in the Legislative Process at CRS. The listed coordinator updated the report and is available to answer questions concerning its contents.