

ABRIDGED PARLIAMENTARY DICTIONARY

Amendments (Types of) – A proposal of a Member of Congress to alter the text of a bill or another amendment. An amendment usually is voted on in the same manner as a bill.

Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute – An amendment which seeks to replace the entire text of an underlying bill. The adoption of such an amendment precludes any further amendment to that bill under the regular process (Also, see Substitute Amendment).

Pro Forma Amendment – A motion whereby a Member secures five minutes to speak on an amendment under debate in the Committee of the Whole. The Member gains recognition from the chair by moving to “strike the last word.” The motion requires no vote, does not change the amendment under debate, and is deemed automatically withdrawn at the expiration of the five minutes of debate.

Substitute Amendment – An amendment which replaces the entire text of a pending amendment. (Also see “Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute”).

Calendar – An agenda or list of business awaiting possible action by the House or Senate. The House has five calendars (the Corrections Calendar, the Discharge Calendar, the House Calendar, the Private Calendar and the Union Calendar).

Committee of the Whole – A committee composed of all House Members created to expedite the consideration of bills, other measures and amendments on the floor of the House. In the Committee of the Whole, a quorum is 100 Members (as compared to 218 in the House) and debate on amendments is conducted under the five-minute rule (as compared to the hour rule in the House). In addition, certain motions allowed in the House are prohibited in the Committee of the Whole including, but not limited to, motions for the previous question, to table, to adjourn, to reconsider a vote, and to refer or recommit.

Expedited Procedures – Procedures which provide a special process for the accelerated Congressional consideration of legislation. This accelerated process usually includes consideration in committee and on the Floor of the House and Senate. Furthermore, these procedures often involve a departure from the regular order of the House. Expedited procedures are provided by law, as opposed to by a special rule.

Five Minute Rule – (1) A debate-limiting rule of the House used when the House sits as the Committee of the Whole. (2) A

Member offering an amendment is allowed to speak for five minutes in support of each amendment and an opponent is allowed to speak for five minutes in opposition. (3) Other Members may rise to “strike the last word” and receive five minutes to speak in favor or opposition. (4) Additional time for speaking can be obtained through a unanimous consent request.

Germaneness – A rule requiring that debate and amendments pertain to the same subject as the matter under consideration. Questions of germaneness both in committee and on the House floor are determined by the Chair and/or the Speaker subject to appeal to the House or the Committee.

Marking Up a Bill – The process by which a committee or subcommittee moves through the contents of a measure, debating and voting on amendments to its provisions by revising, adding or subtracting language prior to ordering the measure reported.

Motion to Recommit – A motion made on the floor after the engrossment and third reading of a bill or resolution, but prior to the Chair’s putting the question on final passage. Preference is given to a Member who is opposed to the bill, and is reserved by tradition to the Minority party. The Speaker usually gives priority recognition to the bill’s Minority floor manager. The motion to recommit may be without instructions which is non-debatable and has the effect of killing the bill), or with instructions (subject to 10 minutes or sometimes an hour of debate split between a proponent and opponent, and usually directs the reporting committee to amend “forewith” (immediately) or rewrite the bill in a specified way). The motion to recommit does not apply to simple resolutions or concurrent resolutions, but may apply to conference reports where the House acts first.

Office of the Parliamentarian – An office managed, supervised and administered by a non-partisan Parliamentarian appointed by the Speaker. This office is responsible for advising the presiding officer, members and staff on the rules and procedures of the House as well as for compiling and preparing the precedents of the House. All consultation with this office is confidential (if requested).

Point of Order – An objection that the pending proposal (bill, amendment, motion, etc.) is in violation of a rule of the House. The validity of points of order is determined by the presiding officer, and if held valid, the offending bill, amendment or provision is ineligible for consideration. Points of order may be waived by special rules.

Privilege – A status relating to the rights of the House and its members and the priority of motions and actions on the floor of the House. “Privileged questions” relate to the order of legisla-

tive business while “questions of privilege” relate to matters affecting the safety, dignity or integrity of the House, or the rights, reputation or conduct of a member acting as a representative.

Previous Question – A motion offered to end debate and preclude further amendments from being offered. In effect it asks, “are we ready to vote on the issue before us?” If the previous question is ordered in the House, all debate ends and usually the House immediately votes on the pending bill or amendment. If the previous question is defeated, control of debate shifts to the leading opposition member (usually the Minority floor manager) who then manages an hour of debate and may offer a germane amendment to the pending business. The effect of defeating the previous question is to turn over control of the floor to the Minority or opposition.

Quorum – The number of Members whose presence is required for the House to conduct business. A quorum in the House is a Majority of the Members (218). A quorum in the Committee of the Whole is 100 Members. A quorum is presumed to be present until its absence is demonstrated. Under certain circumstances, a point of order can be made that a quorum is not present, at which time the Speaker (or Chair) counts for a quorum. If a quorum is not present, Members may be summoned to the floor. If a quorum fails to respond to the call, the only business in order is a motion to adjourn or a motion to direct the sergeant-at-arms to request the attendance of absentees.

Rules (Types of) – There are two specific types of Rules.

Standing Rules – These are the standing Rules governing the normal order of business in the House or in a committee. These Rules are adopted by the full House and by each committee at the beginning of each Congress. These Rules generally govern such matters as the duties of officers, the code of conduct, the order of business, admission to the floor, parliamentary procedures on handling amendments and voting, and jurisdictions of committees.

Special Rules – (1) Special rules involve a departure from the standing rules of the House for the consideration of specific bill. (2) They are usually resolutions reported by the Rules Committee which govern the handling of a particular bill on the House floor.

Suspension – A time-saving method used to consider legislation. By suspending the rules and passing the measure, this procedure has the effect of preventing any points of order from being raised against a measure for violation of a rule. Under this procedure, the bill is unamendable (except for one amendment by the floor manager if offered as part of the motion) and

debate on the motion and the measure is limited to forty minutes equally divided between a proponent and an opponent. A favorable vote of two-thirds of those present is necessary for passage. This procedure is in order every Monday and Tuesday and is intended to be reserved for relatively noncontroversial bills. The rules of the House Republican Conference prohibit the consideration of a bill under suspension which costs more than \$100 million, but this prohibition can be waived.

Unanimous Consent – A method used to expedite consideration of non-controversial measures on the House floor. Proceedings of the House or actions on legislation often take place by unanimous consent of the House (i.e., without objection by any Member), whether or not a rule of the House is being violated.

Yielding – Once a Member has been recognized by the Speaker (or Chair) to speak, he controls the floor; in general, no other Member may speak without being granted permission to do so by the Member recognized. Another Member who wishes to speak will ask the recognized Member to yield by saying, “Will the gentleman yield to me?”

Source: [Floor Procedures in the House of Representatives](#)