

adjourn - A motion to adjourn in the Senate (or a committee) ends that day's session.

adjournment to a day and time certain - An adjournment of the Senate that fixes the day and time for its next session.

amendment - A proposal to alter the text of a pending bill or other measure by striking out some of it, by inserting new language, or both. Before an amendment becomes part of the measure, the Senate must agree to it.

amendment in the nature of a substitute - An amendment that would strike out the entire text of a bill or other measure and insert a different full text.

appeal - When the Chair rules on a point of order, any Senator may appeal the ruling, in which case the full Senate makes a final decision on the point of order by voting whether to sustain or reverse the ruling.

bill - The principal vehicle employed by lawmakers for introducing their proposals (enacting or repealing laws, for example) in the Senate. Bills are designated S. 1, S. 2, and so on depending on the order in which they are introduced. They address either matters of general interest ("public bills") or narrow interest ("private bills"), such as immigration cases and individual claims against the Federal government.

"christmas tree" bill - Informal nomenclature for a bill on the Senate floor that attracts many, often unrelated, floor amendments. The amendments which adorn the bill may provide special benefits to various groups or interests.

clean bill - Generally, after a committee has amended legislation, the chairman may be authorized by the panel to assemble the changes and what remains unchanged from the original bill and then reintroduce everything as a clean bill. A clean bill may expedite Senate action by avoiding separate floor consideration of each committee amendment.

cloture - The only procedure by which the Senate can vote to place a time limit on consideration of a bill or other matter, and thereby overcome a filibuster. Under the cloture rule (Rule XXII), the Senate may limit consideration of a pending matter to 30 additional hours, but only by vote of three-fifths of the full Senate, normally 60 votes.

committee amendment - An amendment recommended by a committee in reporting a bill or other measure.

committee jurisdiction - The subjects and functions assigned to a committee by rule, resolution, precedent, or practice, including legislative matters, oversight and investigations, and nominations of executive officers.

committee substitute - Short for committee amendment in the nature of a substitute.

consideration - To "call up" or "lay down" a bill or other measure on the Senate floor is to place it before the full Senate for consideration, including debate, amendment, and voting. Measures normally come before the Senate for consideration by the Majority Leader requesting unanimous consent that the Senate take it up.

controlled time - When a unanimous consent agreement limits the time for debate on a bill or other measure and places it under the control of bill floor managers, the time is said to be controlled. Each manager then allows any Senator to participate in debate by yielding a specified amount of time to the Senator.

floor - Action "on the floor" is that which occurs as part of a formal session of the full Senate. An action "from the floor" is one taken by a Senator during a session of the Senate. A Senator who has been recognized to speak by the Chair is said to "have the floor."

floor amendment - An amendment offered by an individual Senator from the floor during consideration of a bill or other measure, in contrast to a committee amendment.

floor leaders - The Majority Leader and Minority Leader are elected by their respective party conferences to serve as the chief Senate spokesmen for their parties and to manage and schedule the legislative and executive business of the Senate. By custom, the Presiding Officer gives the floor leaders priority in obtaining recognition to speak on the floor of the Senate.

floor manager - Senators designated to lead and organize consideration of a bill or other measure on the floor. They usually are the chairman and ranking minority member of the reporting committee or their designees.

germane - On the subject of the pending bill or other business; a strict standard of relevance.

hold - An informal practice by which a Senator informs his or her floor leader that he or she does not wish a particular bill or other measure to reach the floor for consideration. The Majority Leader need not follow the Senator's wishes, but is on notice that the opposing Senator may filibuster any motion to proceed to consider the measure.

markup - The process by which congressional committees and subcommittees debate, amend, and rewrite proposed legislation.

morning business - Routine business that is supposed to occur during the first two hours of a new legislative day. This business includes receiving messages from the President and from the House of Representatives, reports from executive branch officials, petitions from citizens, memorials from States, and committee reports, and the introduction of bills and submission of resolutions. In practice, the Senate often does this business instead by unanimous consent at other convenient points in the day.

motion to proceed to consider - A motion, usually offered by the Majority Leader to bring a bill or other measure up for consideration. The usual way of bringing a measure to the floor when unanimous consent to do so cannot be obtained. For legislative business, the motion is debatable under most circumstances, and therefore may be subject to filibuster.

nongermane amendment - An amendment that would add new and different subject matter to, or may be irrelevant to, the bill or other measure it seeks to amend. Senate rules permit nongermane amendments in all but a few specific circumstances.

parliamentary inquiry - A question from the floor to the Presiding Officer by a Senator requesting a clarification of the procedural situation on the floor. Responses to parliamentary inquiries are not rulings of the Presiding Officer, but may lead the Senator posing the inquiry or another to raise a point of order.

point of order - A claim made by a Senator from the floor that a rule of the Senate is being violated. If the Chair sustains the point of order, the action in violation of the rule is not permitted.

president pro tempore - A constitutionally recognized officer of the Senate who presides over the chamber in the absence of the Vice President. The President Pro Tempore (or, "president for a time") is elected by the Senate and is, by custom, the Senator of the majority party with the longest record of continuous service.

presiding officer - A majority-party Senator who presides over the Senate and is charged with maintaining order and decorum, recognizing Members to speak, and interpreting the Senate's rules, practices and precedents.

private law - A private bill enacted into law. Private laws have restricted applicability, often addressing immigration and naturalization issues affecting individuals.

proxy voting - The practice of allowing a Senator to cast a vote in committee for an absent Senator. Senate Rule XXVI provides that proxies may not be voted when the absent Senator has not been informed of the matter on which he is being recorded and has not requested that he be so recorded.

quorum - The number of Senators that must be present for the Senate to do business. The Constitution requires a majority of Senators (51) for a quorum. Often, fewer Senators are actually present on the floor, but the Senate presumes that a quorum is present unless the contrary is shown by a roll call vote or quorum call.

quorum call - A call of the roll to establish whether a quorum is present. If any Senator "suggests the absence of a quorum," the Presiding Officer must direct the roll to be called. Often, a quorum call is terminated by unanimous consent before completion, which permits the Senate to use the quorum call to obtain a brief delay to work out some difficulty or await a Senator's arrival.

ranking minority member - The highest ranking (and usually longest serving) minority member of a committee or subcommittee. Senators may not serve as ranking minority member on more than one standing committee.

recess - A temporary interruption of the Senate's (or a committee's) business. Generally, the Senate recesses (rather than adjourns) at the end of each calendar day.

recognize - The Chair permits a Senator to speak by recognizing him or her; the Senator then "has the floor." When time is controlled, a Senator must have time yielded to him or her before he or she can be recognized.

reconsider - Senate rules permit one motion to reconsider any question decided by vote, if offered by a Senator who voted on the winning side. Normally a supporter of the outcome immediately moves to reconsider the vote, and the same Senator or another immediately moves to table this motion, thus securing the outcome of the vote.

relevant - Many unanimous consent agreements require amendments to a specific bill or other measure to be relevant to the measure.

riders - Informal term for a nongermane amendment to a bill or an amendment to an appropriation bill that changes the permanent law governing a program funded by the bill.

roll call vote - A vote in which each Senator votes "yea" or "nay" as his or her name is called by the Clerk, so that the names of Senators voting on each side are recorded. Under the Constitution, a roll call vote must be held if demanded by one-fifth of a quorum of Senators present, a minimum of 11.

table, motion to - A Senator may move to table any pending question. The motion is not debatable, and agreement to the motion is equivalent to defeating the question tabled. The motion is used to dispose quickly of questions the Senate does not wish to consider further.

unanimous consent - A Senator may request unanimous consent on the floor to set aside a specified rule of procedure so as to expedite proceedings. If no Senator objects, the Senate permits the action, but if any one Senator objects, the request is rejected. Unanimous consent requests with only immediate effects are routinely granted, but ones affecting the floor schedule, the conditions of considering a bill or other business, or the rights of other Senators, are normally not offered, or a floor leader will object to it, until all Senators concerned have had an opportunity to inform the leaders that they find it acceptable.

unanimous consent agreement - A unanimous consent request setting terms for the consideration of a specified bill or other measure. These agreements are usually proposed by the Majority Leader or floor manager of the measure, and reflect negotiations among Senators interested in the measure. Many are "time agreements," which limit the time available for debate and specify who will control that time. Many also permit only a list of specified amendments, or require amendments to be to the measure. Many also contain other provisions, such as empowering the Majority Leader to call up the measure at will or specifying when consideration will begin or end.

voice vote - A vote in which the Presiding Officer states the question, then asks those in favor and against to say "Yea" or "Nay," respectively, and announces the result according to his or her judgment. The names or numbers of Senators voting on each side are not recorded.

whips - Assistants to the floor leaders who are also elected by their party conferences. The Majority and Minority Whips (and their assistants) are responsible for mobilizing votes within their parties on major issues. In the absence of a party floor leader, the whip often serves as acting floor leader.

yeas and nays - A Senator who wants a roll call vote on a pending question asks for the "yeas and nays" on the question. The request will be granted if seconded by one-fifth of a quorum, but this action does not bring debate to an end; it only means that whenever debate does end, a roll call vote will occur.

yield - When a Senator who has been recognized to speak "yields" to another, he or she permits the other to speak while the first Senator retains the floor. Technically, a Senator may yield to another only for a question.

yield the floor - A Senator who has been recognized to speak yields the floor when he or she completes his or her remarks and terminates his or her recognition.

yield time - When the Senate has reached a unanimous consent agreement limiting the time for debate and placing it under the control of floor managers, a Senator may be recognized to speak only if a manager yields the Senator a specified amount of time to speak. The Chair then recognizes the Senator receiving the time, not the manager who yields the time, to hold the floor.