LEGISLATIVE SERVICES AGENCY

Serving the Iowa Legislature

LEGISLATIVE TERMINOLOGY

ACT
A bill which has been passed by both the Senate and House, enrolled, certified, approved by the Governor or passed over the Governor's veto, and published.

ACTS
A book published after each regular session of the Iowa Legislature containing all of the bills and joint resolutions approved during that session. Also known as the Iowa Acts or the Session Laws.

ADJOURNMENT
Ending of a meeting or legislative session. Adjournment of the House or Senate takes place at the close of each legislative day, with the hour and day of the next meeting set before adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT SINE DIE
Ending of the Legislature for the year, taking place on the last day of a session. No future meeting date is set except as provided in the Iowa Constitution.

ADOPTION
Approval or acceptance; usually applied to bills, amendments, resolutions, and motions.

ALLOCATION
Appropriated state moneys or designated personnel that are dedicated for a particular function, program, or activity.

AMENDMENT
A change proposed or made to a bill or motion. Amendments may be offered by committees or individual legislators.

APPROPRIATION
State moneys authorized by the Legislature for use by departments and agencies of state government for a particular purpose.

APPROVED BY THE GOVERNOR
Acceptance by the Governor of a bill passed by the Legislature as indicated by the Governor's signature on the enrolled bill.

AT EASE
Describes the condition of the Senate or House when it temporarily stops its floor debate for some other specific activity.

BIENNIUM
The two-year period of time commencing with the convening on the second Monday in January of a new General Assembly with members elected at the previous November general election, and ending with the convening of the next General Assembly two years hence.

BILL
A legislative proposal sponsored by a legislator or a committee and introduced in the Senate or House. A bill must be approved by both the Senate and House and then by the Governor in order to become law. Unless they are study bills (bills assigned to committee only), all bills are designated as a Senate File or House File, depending on the house in which they are introduced.

CALENDAR
The daily agenda of possible legislative business in a chamber.

CALENDAR DAYS
The days listed on a normal seven-day-per-week calendar, as distinguished from legislative days, which are those days on which the Legislature is in session.

CALL OF THE HOUSE (SENATE)
A procedure used to compel attendance of members for consideration of any specific single item of legislative business.

CAPITAL APPROPRIATION
An appropriation for long-term additions to, or betterment of, state property, such as land, buildings, or equipment.

CARRYOVER LEGISLATION
Legislation held over in the same General Assembly from one regular annual session to the next. It has the same standing as it did at the end of the previous session.

CAUCUS
A meeting of the members of a political party. Also refers collectively to all the members of a political party in a chamber. Each chamber has a majority party caucus and a minority party caucus. (See MAJORITY PARTY and MINORITY PARTY)

CAUCUS STAFF
The employees working for the legislative members of a political party. In each chamber there is a majority party caucus staff and a minority party caucus staff. The caucus staffs help legislators research legislative issues and serve constituents.

CHAIR
As a short form of "chairperson," chair refers to the head of a committee. (See COMMITTEE CHAIR)

CHAMBER
The official meeting room of the Senate or House of Representatives that accommodates all members. Also refers to either house acting as a legislative body.

CHIEF CLERK
A nonmember officer of the House of Representatives elected by the House to direct the parliamentary and clerical functions of the House.

CLIP SHEETS
The daily printed compilations of all amendments and fiscal notes filed in a chamber the previous day. The amendments are designed to be cut out and placed with the appropriate bills within a paper billbook. House clip sheets are printed on yellow paper; Senate clip sheets are printed on blue paper.

CODE OF IOWA OR IOWA CODE
The official collection of Iowa's permanent laws. The Code is published electronically after the completion of the legislative session each year and in bound volumes after the completion of each two-year general assembly.

COMMITTEE
A group of legislators chosen to consider and make recommendations on bills and amendments in a particular subject area.

COMMITTEE CHAIR
The legislator appointed to preside over a standing or special committee as it conducts its business.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
A process by which a chamber meets as a committee to consider legislation informally. Ordinary chamber rules of procedure generally apply to a committee of the whole. Also a process by which a committee meets and initially considers legislation in lieu of a subcommittee's consideration of legislation.

COMMITTEE REPORT
The official release of a bill or resolution from a committee to the chamber as a whole. A committee report may be issued with or without recommendation for passage.

COMPANION BILL
A House bill identical to one introduced in the Senate (or vice versa).

CONCURRENCE
Agreement by one chamber to a proposal or action taken by the other chamber.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
A resolution acted on by both chambers requiring the approval of a majority of those present and voting. Concurrent resolutions express the sentiment of the chambers or relate to temporary legislative matters other than lawmaking actions.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
A group of legislators appointed by the Senate and House to resolve differences between the two chambers on a bill.

CONFIRMATION
Approval by the Senate of an executive branch appointment, usually requiring that two-thirds (34 out of 50) of the members approve the appointment.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The existence of a personal interest of a legislator that affects the ability of that legislator to vote impartially or participate in committee work.

CONSTITUENT
An individual who lives in the legislative district represented by a legislator.

CONSTITUTIONAL MAJORITY
A majority of all members elected to each house in the Iowa General Assembly: usually 26 votes in the Senate and 51 votes in the House of Representatives.

DEAPPROPRIATION
A decrease in the amount of a previously enacted appropriation for a fiscal year.

DIVISION
A recorded vote tally that does not include the names of members voting yes or no but only the vote totals.

EFFECTIVE DATE
The date on which a law becomes binding.

ENACTING CLAUSE
The phrase, "Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa," required by the Constitution at the beginning of every bill.

ENGROSSED BILL
The version of a bill incorporating all amendments adopted in their proper place and all approved technical corrections existing at the time the bill was ordered engrossed.

ENROLLED BILL
The version of a bill as finally passed by the Senate and House, signed by the officers of both chambers, and sent to the Governor for signing. The enrolled bill is officially filed with the Secretary of State. If the bill is vetoed, the bill is sent to the Secretary of State with its veto message attached.

FISCAL NOTE
A note prepared and attached to a bill or amendment that states the estimated financial impact of the legislation.

FISCAL YEAR (FY)
The 12-month financial period used for record keeping, budgeting, appropriating, and revenue collecting. Iowa's fiscal year begins July 1 and ends June 30.

FLOOR
The portion of the Senate or House chamber used to conduct the business of the chamber.

FLOOR MANAGER
The legislator who opens and closes debate on a bill and guides the debate in support of the bill.

FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE)
A budgeting and monitoring unit for determining employment numbers that takes into account full-time employee positions, part-time employee positions, and vacancy and turnover factors in a given state department or agency. One full-time equivalent position represents 2,080 working hours, the regular number of hours one full-time employee works in a fiscal year.

FUNNEL DATES
The deadlines for certain legislative action set each session by the Senate and House in joint and chamber rules.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The official name of the Iowa Legislature.

GENERAL FUND
The depository for state moneys that are not earmarked for specific purposes. The moneys credited to the general fund to support the general functions of state government.

GERMANENESS
The relevance or appropriateness of an amendment to a bill. If an amendment is ruled not germane to the bill, it cannot be considered without a suspension of the rules.

GRANDFATHER CLAUSE
A portion of a bill ensuring that new requirements or standards do not apply to those covered by the previous law.

IMPEACHMENT
The procedure used by the Iowa Legislature to remove public officials from office who have been accused of misconduct.

INSIST
A motion made by a chamber to indicate that it prefers the bill as amended to those amendments adopted in the other chamber. When a chamber insists, the bill being considered is sent to conference committee unless the other chamber recedes from its own amendments.

INTERIM
The time interval between regular annual sessions of the General Assembly.

INTERIM COMMITTEE
A committee created to study or investigate certain matters during the time the Legislature is not in session.

INTRODUCTION
The formal presentation and numbering of a bill after it has been prepared.

ITEM VETO
An action taken by the Governor to prevent enactment of an item in an appropriation bill.

JOINT RESOLUTION
A resolution acted on by both chambers and requiring the approval of a majority of each chamber's members, and, in some cases, the Governor. Joint resolutions may appropriate moneys, enact temporary laws, propose amendments to the Iowa Constitution, ratify amendments to the U.S. Constitution, or make requests to Congress.

JOINT SESSION
A combined meeting of the House and Senate (usually taking place in the House Chamber). Examples of joint sessions are the sessions during which the Governor and Chief Justice present their state addresses.

JOURNAL
The official chronological record of a chamber's proceedings, prepared daily in pamphlet form. The journals are indexed and bound at the close of each session.

LEGALIZING ACT
A bill to ratify an action by a local government board or council that was contrary to existing law.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
A bipartisan group of Senate and House members that serves as the Legislature's executive committee. During the interim between regular annual sessions, the Legislative Council makes decisions affecting the Legislature, its facilities, personnel, and operations.

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
The geographic area of Iowa represented by a legislator. District boundary lines are determined on the basis of population. Each district is known by a number. A Senate district consists of two nested House districts.

LEGISLATIVE SERVICES AGENCY
A nonpartisan legislative agency that provides bill drafting, legal and fiscal research services, computer services, and assists the Legislature in the budgeting and appropriations process.

LEGISLATOR
An elected member of the General Assembly, either a Senator or a Representative.

LEGISLATURE
The Senate and House of Representatives collectively. The informal name by which the General Assembly is known.

LINE-ITEM
A term used to describe moneys requested or appropriated on a detailed or itemized basis, such as personal services, travel, equipment, or other items.
LOBBYIST
An individual who encourages the passage, defeat, or modification of proposed legislation.
MAJORITY LEADER
The member of the majority party in a chamber selected to be the party's leader.
MAJORITY PARTY
The political party having the most members in a chamber.
MESSAGE FROM GOVERNOR
Official communication from the Governor printed in the journal.
MESSAGE FROM SENATE (HOUSE)
An official communication from the opposite chamber included in the receiving chamber's journal.
MINORITY LEADER
The member of the minority party in a chamber selected to be the party's leader.
MINORITY PARTY
The political party having less than a majority of the members in a chamber.
MINUTES
A record of the actions taken at a meeting that serves as the official record of the meeting.
MOTION
A formal proposal offered by a member.
MOTION TO RECONSIDER
A motion which, if approved, allows a second vote on a previous action.
OPINION
A formal expression of legal reasons and principles in response to an inquiry.
PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY
A question posed to the presiding officer of a chamber or chair of a committee for clarification of a procedural point.
PER DIEM
The daily payment a legislator receives for attending official legislative sessions and meetings or for conducting official legislative business.
POINT OF ORDER
An action of a member that calls attention to a perceived breach of a chamber's rules.
POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE
A procedure that allows a member to make personal comments on any subject while a chamber is in session.
PRECEDENT
The body of parliamentary law that has evolved apart from the written rules. The individual precedents generally are interpretations of rulings by presiding officers on specific rules.
PREFILED BILL
A bill that a legislator requests to be drafted during the interim between legislative sessions. The bill may be introduced and given a number on the first day of the next legislative session.
PRESIDING OFFICER
The person elected to direct the activities of a chamber and to preside over the chamber during debate of legislative actions.
PREVIOUS QUESTION
A motion to close debate and bring the pending question to an immediate vote.
PRO TEMPORE
A member of the House or Senate who acts in the absence of the regular presiding officer.
PUBLIC HEARING
A discussion where members of the public may express their views to legislators for the purpose of gathering information and ideas on a legislative proposal.

QUORUM
The minimum number of members required to be present in order for a legislative body to conduct business. A quorum is generally a majority (more than half) of the membership.
QUORUM CALL
The procedure used to determine if a quorum exists.
RATIFY
To approve and make valid.
READING
Presentation of a bill before either chamber by the reading of the bill's title.
REAPPORTIONMENT
Redrawing of the 435 U.S. Congressional districts to reflect various state changes in the nation's population.
RECEDE
The motion made by a chamber to agree with the other chamber and not to insist upon the amendments previously adopted by the chamber.
RECESS
A break in a daily legislative session.
RECORD VOTE
A recorded vote that includes the names of members voting yes or no.
REDISTRICTING
Redrawing the boundaries of U.S. Congressional districts and Iowa legislative districts to reflect changes in the state's population.
REGULAR SESSION
The period each year when the Legislature considers all areas of legislation. It begins on the second Monday in January and often ends around the time when per diem expenses are no longer reimbursed. Legislators are reimbursed for per diem expenses for up to 110 calendar days during the first regular session and for up to 100 calendar days during the second regular session of a General Assembly.
REPEAL
A method by which a previous legislative action is rescinded.
REPRINTED BILL
A version of a bill that has been amended and passed by a chamber with the amendments incorporated into the bill. Reprinted or engrossed bills are printed on pink paper.
RESOLUTION
A formal expression of opinion or decision.
RESOLUTION (HOUSE OR SENATE)
A resolution acted on by only one chamber, requiring the approval of a majority of those present and voting, and used for matters generally relating only to that chamber.
REVENUE ESTIMATING CONFERENCE (REC)
A group comprised of the Governor or designee, the director of the Legislative Services Agency or designee, and a third person agreed to by the other two members that estimates the General Fund revenue due the state for the current year and the next budget year. The REC meets quarterly, and the Governor and the Legislature are required to use the REC estimates in preparing the state budget.
REVERSION
Following the close of a fiscal year, all unencumbered or unobligated appropriation balances revert to the state treasury and to the credit of the fund from which the appropriation was made.
ROLL CALL VOTE
A method of recording votes by printing the names of members and their votes. Roll call votes are tabulated by voting machines in each chamber.
RULES
Regulations and principles governing procedures adopted by both chambers or each chamber for the duration of the session.

SECRETARY OF THE SENATE
A nonmember officer of the Senate appointed to direct the parliamentary and clerical functions of the Senate.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS
A nonmember officer of a chamber responsible for maintaining order, regulating access to the chamber, and carrying out the requests of the presiding officer or the members.

SESSION LAWS
A book published after each regular session of the Iowa Legislature containing all of the bills and joint resolutions approved during that session. Also known as the Acts or Iowa Acts.

SPEAKER
The presiding officer of the House of Representatives elected by its members.

SPECIAL SESSION
An extraordinary meeting of the Legislature called by the Governor or by petition of two-thirds of the legislators of each chamber.

SPONSOR
The legislator or committee that requests a bill to be drafted and presents the bill to the Legislature for consideration.

STANDING COMMITTEE
A committee appointed with a continuing responsibility in a specific area of lawmaking.

STANDING COMMITTEE LIMITED APPROPRIATION
An appropriation of a specific dollar amount established for a particular purpose in the Code of Iowa.

STANDING COMMITTEE UNLIMITED APPROPRIATION
An appropriation of a necessary but unspecified dollar amount for a particular purpose established in the Code of Iowa.

STATUTE
A permanent or general Act approved by the Legislature.

STRIKE THROUGH
The deletion of codified language (language appearing in the Iowa Code) in a bill.

STUDY BILL
A bill developed for committee consideration. Once a study bill is approved by committee, the bill is given a Senate File or House File number.

SUBCOMMITTEE
A group of members of a standing committee appointed by the chairperson to study and report on a specified subject or bill.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION
Additional moneys appropriated for the current fiscal year that are in addition to the original appropriation.

VETO
An action taken by the Governor to prevent the enactment of an entire bill. The Legislature may override the veto if two-thirds of the members of each chamber vote to pass the bill again.

WELL
The area of a chamber directly in fr*ont* of, and including, the presiding officer's bench.