

What does that legislative term mean?

ADJOURNMENT: To terminate a session of a legislative body. Adjournment sine die means to end the session without definitely fixing a day to reconvene and is typically used to end a two-year session cycle of the General Assembly.

AMENDMENT: An action of a legislative body to delete, alter or revise the language of a bill or an Act. A bill may be amended by either the House or Senate (or both) and there is no limit on the number of amendments that can be considered. Amendments to a bill are voted on separately. Most laws enacted into law by the Illinois General Assembly are, in fact, amendments to existing laws.

APPROPRIATION BILL: The legislative grant of money for a specific agency or purpose. A supplemental appropriation is when the legislature authorizes additional funds when the regular appropriation bill has been enacted.

CALENDAR: The agenda or list of the bills and resolutions that are currently pending in the chamber. Bills do not have to be considered simply because they are on the calendar and bills do not need to be taken up in the listed order. Decisions as to which bills will be debated and voted on are made by the Speaker of the House or the President of the Senate.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE: A special joint committee appointed to reconcile differences when a bill has been changed by one chamber in a manner unacceptable to the other chamber. Efforts are made to secure a compromise version, which is drafted as a Conference Committee Report to be voted on by both chambers.

CONSENT CALENDAR: A separate calendar that allows non-controversial bills to be considered as a package. There is no debate on these bills but members are allowed to vote against a measure on this special order. No bill regarding revenue or appropriations or a bill needing more than a simple majority vote can be placed on the consent calendar.

DEBATE: Bills under rules adopted by the House of Representatives can be designated on the calendar by debate status. Short Debate is limited to a 2-minute presentation by the principal sponsor or his/her designee, a 2-minute presentation by a member in response and one minute for the principle sponsor to close debate. Standard Debate is limited to a 5-minute presentation by the principal sponsor, 3 members in response and 3 minutes for the principal sponsor to close debate. Extended Debate is limited to a 5-minute presentation by the principal sponsor, debate by each of 4 proponents of the measure and 5 members in response and 5 minutes for the principal sponsor to close debate. Unlimited Debate shall consist of a 10-minute presentation by the principal sponsor, debate by each proponent and member seeking recognition and 5 minutes for the principal sponsor to close debate. Under the rules of the Illinois State Senate, no Senator may speak more than 5 minutes on the same question without the consent of the Senate or more than twice on that question. No Senator shall speak more than once until every Senator choosing to speak shall have spoken.

DISCHARGE RULE: A procedure that can be used to force a bill to the floor that has not been reported out of a committee. A vote to discharge a bill requires a three-fifths vote and is rarely used.

ENGROSSED BILL: After a bill has passed one chamber it is known as an engrossed bill. If any amendments are adopted to the bill by the first chamber the bill is rewritten to reflect those changes and it is introduced in to the second chamber in its revised form.

ENROLLED BILL: After a bill has been passed by both chambers it is sent to the Governor for his consideration. An enrolled bill is the final version, rewritten to include amendments from the second chamber, and signed by the presiding officers of the House and the Senate.

HOME RULE: Power vested in a local unit of government, usually a municipality, to manage its affairs. The Illinois Constitution automatically grants home rule to all municipalities over 25,000 in population and to Cook County. However, any municipality may vote to establish or to abolish home rule via a referendum and a county that adopts the county executive form of government may also vote on home rule status.

PERFUNCTORY SESSION: A session that is generally restricted to the First Reading of bills. Attendance by members is not required nor recorded.

POSTPONED CONSIDERATION: A motion to postpone consideration on a legislative measure is granted as a matter of privilege if a legislative measure fails to receive the requisite number of votes to pass but does receive a vote of fewer than two-fifths of the members elected. The initial roll call is dumped and the bill is put on the order of "Postponed Consideration" to allow another roll call to be taken at a later date.

PREVIOUS QUESTION: A motion in a legislative body to end debate and force a vote on a pending measure. This motion cannot be debated and requires approval of the majority of those elected.

QUORUM: The minimum number of members of a legislative chamber who must be present in order to transact business. The Illinois Constitution specifies that a majority of members elected to each chamber constitutes a quorum.

READINGS: Each bill must have three readings in each house. All bills introduced during a two-year session are designated HB in the House and SB in the Senate (in the U.S. Congress the terms are HR and S). Bills are introduced by verbal announcement in to the official record of each chamber-this is First Reading. Bills are sent to the Rules Committee of each chamber to determine if they will be considered in that year. If the Rules Committee so deems a bill is advanced to the appropriate committee for discussion and debate. Following the substantive committee action the bill is sent to either the House or Senate floor and placed on the order of Second Reading. It is at this stage that amendments to bills are considered. In fact, the merits of the bill are not debated at this stage of the legislative process, only any amendments to the bill. Should there be no amendments, the bill is advanced without debate to Third Reading. The bill can be advanced from Second to Third without a recorded roll call vote if there is no objection. Third Reading is the stage for final debate and consideration of the

bill. All third reading votes must be a recorded roll call vote. Most bills require a majority vote (60 votes in the House and 30 votes in the Senate) but there are specific bills or actions that require a three-fifths vote of each chamber, such as constitutional amendments or an appealing of a ruling by the presiding officer where 71 votes are required in the House and 36 votes in the Senate.

RULES COMMITTEE: A permanent committee, in addition to the standing committees of each chamber that controls the flow of bills considered in a session. Both the House and Senate Rules Committees consist of five members; three appointed by the Presiding Officer two appointed by the Minority Leader.

SPECIAL SESSION: The Governor or the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate may convene a special session of the General Assembly. This type of session is limited to discussion of a particular issue or legislation. No other unrelated legislative business can be conducted.

SHELL BILL: A bill introduced without any substantive provisions attached. This procedure allows the legislature flexibility to consider issues that may arise during a legislative session that are later attached as an amendment to the specific section of the statutes that need to be addressed. This ensures that the “single subject” rule required by the Illinois Constitution is followed. The term “vehicle bill” is also used.

STANDING COMMITTEES: A regular committee of the legislature that considers bills within its subject area. The Illinois House of Representatives has 32 standing committees and the Illinois State Senate has 17. The presiding officers of each chamber also have the authority to establish additional special committees.

VERIFICATION OF A ROLL CALL: Any member may request that a roll call vote be verified. In verifying a record vote, the presiding officer instructs either the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate to call the names of those members whose votes are being verified. If a member does not answer, his or her vote is stricken. The vote can be restored if the member’s presence is recognized before the final result of the verification is announced.



DISCLAIMER: The definitions provided in this document are courtesy of the Illinois Association of REALTORS® Director of Government Affairs, Greg St. Aubin and Assistant Government Affairs Director Julie Sullivan.