Forms of Congressional Action

Under the US Constitution, Congress initiates legislation. Legislation passed by Congress must be signed by the President to become law.

Congressional action is usually undertaken in one of four major forms: a bill, a joint resolution, a concurrent resolution, and a simple resolution.

The Bill: A bill is designated H.R. ____. The vast majority of legislative proposals are in the form of a bill. To become law, a bill must be passed in identical form by both chambers and signed by the President. Although a bill generally may be introduced in either the House or Senate, the Constitution states that measures that raise revenue, such as tax bills, must originate in the House. By tradition, spending (appropriations) bills also generally originate in the House, although more recently, some have originated in the Senate.

Each chamber can pass a bill on the same subject which be different in content. Upon passage by both chambers by simple majority vote, a bill is usually sent to a joint House-Senate Conference Committee where differences in the House and Senate-passed measures are resolved. Both the House and Senate must approve the compromise measure, called a Conference Report. The bill is then sent to the President who may sign the measure into law, take no action, or veto the bill. A bill becomes law only if (1) the President signs the measure; (2) the President does not sign the bill, but allows it to automatically become law by waiting ten days from the date of final passage while Congress is in session; or (3) both the House and Senate override a presidential veto by a two-thirds majority vote in each chamber.

Joint Resolution: A joint resolution is designated H.J.Res. ____. There is little practical difference between a bill and joint resolution, as both require the President's signature to become law. Joint resolutions are not used as frequently as bills, however. Often they are used for a matter which requires quick action, for a specific purpose, or for a single appropriation bill, e.g., an Omnibus Appropriation bill.

Like a bill, a joint resolution may originate in either chamber, or in both chambers simultaneously. For example, a joint resolution disapproving an arms sale can be introduced in both the House and Senate separately. Only one, however, will eventually be sent to the President, depending on which chamber acts first on the resolution. If the House acts first, it will refer its resolution to the Senate and vice-versa.

Concurrent Resolution: A concurrent resolution is designated H.Con.Res. ____ or S.Con.Res. ____ according to the chamber in which it originates. It must be passed by both chambers, but is not presented to the President for signature into law. Therefore, concurrent resolutions do not have the force of law. The term "concurrent" means that both chambers have passed the measure.

A concurrent resolution has two major purposes: (1) for matters affecting the operations of both legislative bodies, such as adjournment, recesses and administrative rules, e.g., the concurrent budget resolution governs the legislative process for the budget but has no binding effect on the Executive branch; and (2) to express the sentiment of the House or Senate.

Simple Resolution: A simple resolution is designated H.Res. ____ or S.Res ____ depending on the chamber in which it originates. It becomes effective upon passage by the chamber in which it originated. It is not passed by both chambers nor is it presented to the President for signature into law. Simple resolutions are usually limited to matters of the operations of the chamber in which it is passed or to express the sentiment of that chamber, e.g., sense of the House of sense of the Senate.

Key Steps in the Legislative Process

Introduction of Legislation: Bills may be introduced in either the House or the Senate by individual members. Other members who support the legislation will sign on as co-sponsors. If the Administration want to initiate legislation, it will ask a member to sponsor its proposal. In most instances the chairman of the committee of jurisdiction will introduce the legislation "by request" as a courtesy to the Administration.

Referral to Committee: Upon introduction in either the House or Senate, the bill is referred to the committee of jurisdiction. A bill can be referred to more than one committee depending on the issue it addresses. For example, in the House, sanctions legislation is usually referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and also to Ways and Means and/or Financial Services. In the Senate the bill would be referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Banking and/or the Finance Committee.

Public Hearings: For most major pieces of legislation the full committee or in some cases the subcommittee of jurisdiction, will hold public hearing with Administration witnesses or with private witnesses. Most hearings are public and web-cast, except when the topic of discussion is classified.

Markups: Following the hearing, or series of hearings, the Committee meets to mark up the legislation, i.e., make changes by amending the original text. Mark up is the first step in the legislative process in which the legislation is likely to undergo major changes. During markup members express their views, and proposal and vote on amendments. Once the bill is approved, the Committee refers the bill to the House or Senate floor for further action,

Reporting the Bill: If the committee votes to "report" the bill, a written report describing the scope and purpose of the bill will accompany it. The report also frequently includes instructions and requests of the Administration that are not specifically included in the legislation, and therefore do not have the force of law. The Administration, however, usually follows report language closely because it represents the view of the members.

Rules Committee Consideration: In the House nearly all major pieces of legislation reported out of committee are sent to the Rules Committee where they are granted a rule for floor consideration. The rule is in the form of a simple resolution an may set time limits for debate and limit the type and number of amendments that can offered, or not allow any amendments at all. The bill and simple resolution embodying the rules for debate are sent to the House floor. Before proceeding to consideration of the bill, the House must first pass the simple resolution containing the rules for consideration. If the rule is defeated, consideration of the accompanying bill cannot occur. A new rule must be granted by the Rules Committee and again submitted for passage.

Even non-controversial legislation, usually considered under "suspension of the rules" goes before the Rules Committee, but this procedure is more one of scheduling and no resolution guiding debate is necessary. Passage of non-controversial legislation under Suspension requires a two-thirds majority vote and debate is limited to 40 minutes and no amendments are allowed.

The Rules Committee is controlled by the Speaker of the House and is a primary tool of the majority party in controlling legislative action in the House.

It should be noted the Senate does not have a Rules Committee to control legislation. Legislation is brought to the Senate floor upon agreement by the Majority and Minority Leader. However, any one Senate can object to consideration of the bill, in which case the legislation could be delayed for a short time or indefinitely.

Floor Consideration: Once a bill reaches the House or Senate floor it is subject to debate and amendments according to the rules of the chamber. Passage of almost all legislation – with the exception of constitutional amendments, ratification of treaties and attempts to override a Presidential veto, require a simple majority vote. (Veto overrides, treaty ratification, and constitutional amendments always require a two-thirds majority vote. In the Senate, sixty votes are required to invoke "cloture", which limits debate on the bill or pending amendments.

Joint Conference Committee: After passage by both the House and Senate a bill is usually sent to a Joint House-Senate conference committee where differences in the House and Senate-passed versions are resolved. Conference Committee members are usually composed of the senior members of the committees that originally considered the legislation. Conferees are appointed by the House and Senate leadership.

Floor Consideration: Upon completion of the joint conference committee the final version of the bill as reconciled by the two chamber is sent to the House and Senate floor for a straight up or down vote. No amendments are allowed and the Conference Report must be approved by majority vote by both chambers before it can be sent to the President for signature into law.

Presidential Action: Upon receipt of the bill or Conference Report the President may: (1) sign the bill into law; (2) not sign the bill, but allow it to automatically become law by waiting 10 days from the date of final passage while Congress is in session; or (3) veto the measure and return the unsigned bill with his objections to Congress. If Congress adjourns before the 10-day period expires, the President does not have to formally veto the bill but may just let it "die". This method of killing a bill is called a "pocket veto".

Veto Override: Congress may attempt to override the President's veto. This action requires a two-thirds vote by both chambers. If Congress passes the bill by this margin, the measure becomes law despite the objections of the President. If Congress is unable to override the President's veto, it has the option of passing a new version of the bill amending the measure in such a way that the President would no longer veto the bill.

For a full Glossary of Terms, see below:

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Act – A bill passed in identical Form by both houses of Congress and signed into law by the President or enacted over his veto. Also called a Public Law.

Amendment – A proposal by a senator or representative (in committee or floor session of his/her respective chamber) to alter the language or provisions of a bill or act. It is voted on in the same manner as a bill. An amendment may strike out part of a text, insert new text, or strike out and replace the entire text with substitute language. This last type is called an Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute, or a Substitute Amendment.

Appropriation – A formal approval to draw funds from the US Treasury for specific purposes. May occur through an annual appropriations act, an emergency or supplemental appropriations act, a continuing resolution, an omnibus appropriation, or on a permanent basis. The term is also used to refer to the specific amount of money made available by such language.

Appropriation Bill – A bill that provides the actual funding for any government program and empowers a US agency or department to obligate, or spend, a certain amount of money for a particular US Government program over a 12-month period. There are thirteen (13) annual appropriations bills that provide funding for the US Government. Appropriations measures almost always originate in the House and normally follow authorization bill. Appropriations are the responsibility of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, each which has 13 subcommittees, each of which has jurisdiction over one appropriations bill. State Department appropriations and foreign assistance appropriations are handed by the State, Foreign Operations Subcommittees.

Authorization – A statutory provision that establishes or continues a US Government agency, activity, or program for a fixed or indefinite period of time. It may also establish policies and restrictions as well as authorize appropriations.

Authorization Bill – Legally establishes a particular program or set of programs, for one or more years, and outlines policy guidelines for the use of funds. Authorization bills may set a ceiling or a floor on the amount of appropriations authorized for each fiscal year. The authorizing committees for foreign assistance are the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Authorization bills or amendments to multi-year authorizations ordinarily precede appropriations legislation. The basis authorizing bill for foreign assistance is the "Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended" (FAA).

Bilateral Assistance: Economic and military assistance provided by one country directly to another country. This category includes Development Assistance (DA), Economic Support Funds (ESF), P.L. 480 (Food for Peace) programs, Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), and other smaller assistance programs.

Bilateral Programs – Bilateral programs are the grants and loans made by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) directly to individual developing countries as distinguished from other USAID programs which provide support to universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations involved in training, technical assistance, or research on a global or regional basis.

Bill – Formally introduced legislation. Most legislative proposals are in the firm of bills and are designed as H.R. (House of Representatives) or S. (Senate), depending on the chamber in which the bill was introduced.

Budget – (or the President's Budget Request) The President's annual proposal to Congress, submitted in January or February of each year, outlining Executive Bach plans for the US Government expenditures and revenue for the coming fiscal year. The Budget Request is subject to substantial revision and amendment as part of its consideration by Congress. During the year, the Executive Branch may revise the original request and may also submit supplemental requests for the fiscal year in progress.

Budget Act – The common name for the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act, which established the basic procedure for the current congressional budget process. The Act attempted to exert greater discipline over congressional spending by creating a budget process that would account for all US Government spending. It requires (among other things), that annual ceilings be established for each budget function not only in terms of new budget authority (BA) but also in terms of actual outlays (O) from the US Treasury.

Budget Authority (BA) – The authority for US Government agencies to obligate money. BA usually results in budget outlays over several fiscal years.

Budget Function – The US Government budget is divided into 20 functions or accounts. Function 150, the "International Affairs" function of the budget, includes the budgets for foreign economic and military assistance (bilateral and multilateral), Food for Peace program, the Export-Import Bank, the Department of State, and other smaller international programs.

Budget Outlays (O) – The money that is actually spent by the US Treasury in a fiscal year. In the budget under consideration by Congress each year, the outlay figure represents the estimated expenditures needed to cover obligations incurred in prior fiscal years as well as the current fiscal year. In contrast, Budget Authority includes funds to be spent in the current and future years.

Budget Resolution: Each year Congress much pass a concurrent resolution on the overall US Government budget. The Concurrent Resolution on the Budget recommends general guidelines for spending and revenues and indicates the corresponding budget deficit or surplus. It also sets target spending ceilings for the Appropriations Committees. Ordinarily, no legislation can be passed which would exceed the ceilings set by the Budget Resolution. (**Note**: The Concurrent Resolution on the Budget is designed solely to be a disciplinary mechanism for Congress. A concurrent resolution is not signed by the President and does not have the force of law.)

Budget Year – The year for which congressional appropriations are under consideration. At the beginning of calendar year 2016, for example, Congress will begin consideration of the budget for fiscal year 2017. (Meanwhile, AID is obligation funds from its 2016 operating year budget (OYB) for and is beginning budget preparations for fiscal year 2017.

Cloture – A parliamentary mechanism used in the Senate by which debate on a particular measure can be limited. The Senate otherwise has a tradition of unlimited debate. A vote by at least sixty (60) Senators is required to invoke cloture. (See Filibuster)

Colloquy – A formal conversational exchange between members during floor proceedings. The parliamentary mechanism is often used to obtain information or to put mutual understandings about the intent of a measure into the *Congressional Record*, thereby establishing legislative history for the guidance of Executive Branch officials and the courts. Legislative history colloquies are usually prepared and agreed to in advance by the members involved.

Committee – Subsidiary organizations of both the House and the Senate established for the purpose of considering legislation, conducting investigations, or carrying out other assignments as instructed by the House or the Senate. Most committees are standing committees (permanent organizations within each body with legislative jurisdiction over specific areas). There are also joint committees, which include members from both the House and Senate. Joint committees are usually established with a narrow jurisdiction and normally lack legislative authority. Select or special committees are usually established for a limited time period to perform a particular function and are usually without legislative authority or have an extremely limited legislative jurisdiction. Special committees may be organized by either the House or the Senate to conduct an investigation or to study a particular problem. (See Conference Committee)

Committee Report – A document submitted by a committee to "report" a measure to the floor for consideration by the full House or Senate. Reports explain the purpose of the legislation and express the views of the committee. Reports are designated S.Rept. in the Senate and H. Rept. in the House.

Concurrent Resolution -- A resolution (designated as H.Con.Res. or S.Con.Res) that requires approval by both chambers but is not sent to the President for his signature, and therefore cannot have the force of law. In general, it is passed to express the sentiment of Congress on a particular event or issue or to make or amend rules applicable to either chambers, or setting the date for adjournment for Congress. However, there is one important concurrent resolution passed each year: the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget.

Conference Committee – An ad hoc committee composed of Members of both the House and the Senate who are appointed for the specific purpose of reconciling similar bills that have passed the House and Senate in different form. The Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate appoint the members of the Conference Committee. Usually conferees are chosen from committees with jurisdiction over the bill in question. The conferees must reach agreement on a compromise version of the bill, which is ten sent to both Chambers for debate and final approval in the form of a Conference Report (see below).

Conference Report - A document submitted to both chambers that contains conference committee's agreements for resolving their differences on a bill. Amendments cannot be made on the floor (House or Senate) to a conference report, but appropriations items reported out of the Conference Committee in technical or substantive disagreement can be subject to a floor vote in either chamber. Conference reports are accompanied by a Statement of Managers, which is similar to the Committee Reports that accompany bills.

Congressional Presentation Documents (CPD) – Detailed country-by-country descriptions of all proposed foreign assistance programs. USAID prepares the descriptions of all proposed economic assistance programs and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) prepares detailed descriptions of all security assistance programs for a given year. The administration sends these documents, referred to as CPDs, to Congress in February of each year (in theory, although often the submissions are later) as required under the Foreign Assistance Act.

Congressional Record – The daily, printed, and substantially verbatim account of proceedings in both the House and Senate chambers. Although the reporters take down every word spoken, members are permitted to edit their remarks before they are printed. Also, articles and other material not actually spoken on the floor may be inserted into the *Record.*

Continuing Resolution – A joint resolution that provides funds to continue the operation of US Government agencies and programs at the beginning of a new fiscal year if their annual appropriation bills have not yet been enacted. (Also referred to as continuing appropriations). When Congress has not enacted all the appropriations bills before the beginning of the fiscal year (October 1 of each year), it must pass a Continuing Resolution (CR), which both authorizes and appropriates spending for US government programs and agencies so that they may continue normal operations. The spending levels are normally set at the previous year's levels or the Presidential Request levels, whichever are lower, and expire once the regular appropriations bill is enacted.

Earmarking – In any authorization or appropriations bill, Congress may set funding floor or ceilings within a particular program or functional account for a specified use. In recent years, Congress has moved away from earmarking expect for a few specific cases. If the "earmarking" appears in the language of the bill, the executive agency is obligated to spend "not less than" (a floor) or "no more than" (a ceiling) the amount designated by the bill for a particular purpose. If the earmarking appears in the committee report language, it is not binding.

Economic Support Funds (ESF) – ESF is a form of economic assistance allocated to countries where the US has special political or security interests. It is far less rigidly programmed than Development Assistance (DA) and can be spent more quickly and in a more flexible manner. The largest recipients of ESF by far have been Israel and Egypt; however in recent years, ESF to Israel has been reduced in order to increase its military assistance.

Excess Defense Articles (EDA) – A program established in 1987 to allow the Administration to give certain countries excess US defense equipment.

Fast-track Trade Negotiating Authority – The authority for the President to negotiate trade agreements that can only be approved or rejected by Congress but not amended. The Trade Act of 2002 renewed this authority, which had lapsed in 1994, although the authority has again lapsed.

Filibuster – The use of obstructive and time-consuming parliamentary tactics by one senator or a minority of senators to delay, modify, or defeat proposed legislation. Under the rules of the Senate and as a matter of tradition, debate on any measure is generally unlimited. The filibuster allows the minority to frustrate the will of the majority in the Senate as long as the majority is unable to muster 60 votes to close debate, i.e., a cloture vote.

Fiscal Year – US Government financial operations are carried out in a 12-month fiscal year beginning on October 1 and ending on September 30. The fiscal year carries the date of the calendar year in which it ends; thus, fiscal year (FY) 2016 began on October 1, 2015 and ends September 30, 2016.

Foreign Military Financing (FMF) – The FMF program was created in 1989 when Congress combined the two older military aid programs, the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program and the Military Assistance Program (MAP). Under the FMF program, recipient countries are given a line of credit administered by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) of the US Department of Defense. FMF sales are funded through direct credit from American financial institutions through the Federal Financing Bank (FFB). The bulk of FMF assistance is given in the form of grants although some FMS is loans. All FMF funding for Egypt, Israel and Jordan is provided as grants.

Germane – Something is considered germane if it is on the same subject as the subject matter or under consideration. A House rule requires that all floor amendments be germane, however, a non-germane amendment can be adopted if no member objects. The Senate rules have no requirements that a matter be germane.

Hearing – A meeting or session of committee of Congress (usually open to the public, but not always, to obtain information and opinions on proposed legislation; to conduct an investigation; to oversee a program; or to explore an issue. Witnesses often include members of Congress, experts, Executive Branch officials, and spokespersons for interested groups.

Hold – (1) A senator's request that his or her party leaders delay consideration of certain legislation or presidential nominees. (2) A hold also can be placed on notifications to Congress by the House and Senate Congressional committees with jurisdiction over the issue. The notification process allows Congressional Committees to influence the details of policy, programs, and funding levels without actually spelling out those details in law. For example, current law requires that many proposed changes in foreign assistance programs be notified to the appropriate congressional committees. The hold process is a "gentleman's agreement" developed over time allowing Congress to place a "hold" on the implementation of any notification until Congress and the Executive Branch have a chance to work out differences of opinion as to how the program should be implemented. The notification itself is a legal requirement. The use of the "hold" is an informal means of accommodation between the Executive and Legislative Branches, allowing them to work out differences.

International Military Education and Training (IMET) – The foreign assistance program whereby foreign military personnel are provided US training. (See Security Assistance).

Joint Resolution – Just as in the case of a bill, a joint resolution (designated S.J.Res. or H.J.Res.) requires the approval of both chambers of Congress and must be signed into law by the President. There is no clear distinction between a bill and a joint resolution, but broadly speaking, a joint resolution usually deals with a specific matter such as a single appropriation, for a particular purpose, requiring prompt attention. A joint resolution is also used to propose amendments to the US Constitution. In this case, it does not require the President's signature and becomes a part of the Constitution when three-fourths of the states have ratified it.

Lame Duck Session – A session of Congress meeting after elections have been held in November but before the newly elected Congress is convened the following January. Members who have not been re-elected are considered "lame ducks" because they have no electoral mandate; therefore, their influence or credibility is considered diminished. Usually, Lame Duck session are only convened in extraordinary circumstances, but more recently these session have become common place since Congress rarely finishes its work before the end of the session.

Major Non-NATO Allies: Current US law designates fourteen (14) countries as major non-NATO allies: Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Philippines, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Korea, and Thailand. Under certain programs, particularly defense cooperation programs, major mon-NATO allies may be allowed special benefits.

Markup – A committee meeting during which members "mark up" a measure by offering, debating and voting on amendments to the measure. The same procedure may occur at the subcommittee level, before the bill is marked up by the full committee.

Military Assistance – Usually refers to Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training programs. (See Security Assistance).

Multilateral Assistance – Assistance provided by the US to the international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF and to the various programs and entities of the United Nations.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) – Private organizations often engaged in lobbying for or implementing US foreign assistance programs. They are similar to Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) but are not necessarily non-profit or tax exempt.

Obligation – A binding agreement by a US Government agency to pay for goods, products, services, etc., either immediately or in the future. The obligation of funds to a particular program leads to the actual expenditure of those funds over time. Money that has been obligated but not set expended is considered "in the pipeline". (See Pipeline).

Operational Year – The fiscal year in progress.

Operational Year Budget (OYB) – The budget under which programs in the current fiscal year operate. USAID uses such a budget to guide its administration of foreign assistance funds. The OYB is prepared following the passage of the foreign assistance appropriations bill. It is during this process that the administration makes its allocation of unearmarked funds.

Pipeline – (1) In economic assistance programs, the numerical difference between obligations and expenditures. Essentially, the money obligated but not yet expended is called the "pipeline." Funds that have been obligated may be expended over several years. Because of the time frame needed to implement project-tied assistance programs, USAID has usually had a substantial pipeline of unexpended funds worldwide. A well-managed project pipeline usually spends out over four or five years. Frequently, implementation difficulties lead to greater accumulation of funding which has been a source of concern to Congress. (2) In military assistance programs using cash flow financing, the "pipeline" usually refers to the out-year commitments of funding for major systems procured over several years.

P.L.480 (Food for Peace) – A bilateral commodity credit program whereby the US provides concessional credits and grants to developing countries and to private voluntary organizations (PVOs) for the purchase of US agricultural commodities.

Pocket Veto – The indirect veto of a bill as a result of the President withholding approval of it until after Congress has adjourned *"sine die"*. A bill the President does not sign, but does not formally veto while Congress is in session, automatically becomes law after ten days. However, if Congress adjourns its annual session during that ten-day period, the measure dies even if the President does not formally veto it. (See *Sine Die)*

Point of Order – A parliamentary term used in committee and on the House or Senate floor to object to an alleged violation of a rule and demand that the chair enforce the rule.

Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) – Non-profit, tax exempt, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) established and governed by private citizens, whose purpose is to engage in voluntary, charitable, and development assistance activities overseas.

Quorum – The number of members necessary to conduct official business. A quorum on the floor is a majority of the total membership (218 in the House, and 51 in the Senate when there are no vacancies). In practice, both chambers usually assume a quorum is present even if it is not and much of each chamber's business is transacted when only a few members are present. A Quorum Call, which is a procedure for determining a quorum exists, can be a parliamentary maneuver for advantage or (in the Senate) simply a pause in the legislative action.

Ranking Minority Member – The most senior minority member on a congressional Committee, or subcommittee. The ranking minority member nominally serves as the focus of minority legislative actions and usually will have staff and legislative responsibilities to support a minority legislative agenda.

Recess – A period during a congressional session when one or both chambers of Congress is not in session. (Because of its limited work schedule, the House designates recesses as “District Work Periods” to avoid the image of having too much vacation time.) During the year, Congress recesses bout five times for periods of up to several weeks: usually in February, April, late May, early July and the entire month of August. In addition, Congress may go out of session as early as October and stay in recess through mid-January, depending on the legislative work load and whether or not it is an election year. Most members devote these recesses to their constituents in the home state and congressional districts.

Reconciliation – Legislation cutting spending authorities and raising revenue authorities in order to reconcile actual spending with the spending projected in the budget.

Referral – The assignment of a legislative measure when introduced to one or more committees for consideration.

Report Language – Committee and conference committee reports accompanying bills generally contain narratives explaining committee actions or expressing committee opinions. Such report language is also used to instruct the Executive agencies on how funds should be used. Report language does not have the force of law, but it indicates the intent of Congress. US Government agencies look to report language to clarify congressional intent.

Reprogramming – The shifting of appropriated funds from one activity to another after the beginning of a fiscal year. When the administration presents its budget request to Congress, it justifies that request with specific details regarding each program. The justification is usually contained in the Congressional Presentation Document (CPD). Increases or decreases in programs after the fiscal year has begun normally cannot be done unless Congress is notified 15 days in advance of the change. Although Congress does not have a formal procedure for prohibiting reprograming, the administration usually honors objections by the relevant Congressional committees. (See Hold above).

Rescission – The cancellation of previously appropriated Budget Authority.

Rule – Each chamber has a Rules Committee, but only the House Rules Committee seriously affects floor consideration of a measure by setting the terms and conditions of floor debate on a bill. (The Senate Rules Committee is an internal, administrative body). A “rule” is a simply resolution (H.Res.) issued by the House Rules Committee that outlines the methods and conditions for floor consideration of a legislative measure. The “rule” may set a time limit for debate, waive points of order against provisions within the bill, or limit amendments to the bill. The “rule” must first be adopted by the House before the House can move to consideration of the legislation in question. The House Rules Committee is tightly controlled by the Speaker of the House and the Majority Party and it the key tool for the House leadership in controlling the legislative agenda of the chamber.

Security Assistance – Security assistance includes funding for Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Economic Support Funds (ESF). FMF and IMET are administered by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) and are considered military assistance. ESF is administered by USAID under the policy guidance of the State Department and is considered economic assistance.

Simple Resolution – Designated H.Res. or S.Res, simple resolutions are approved by only the House or the Senate and are not sent to the President for his signature; they do not have the force of law. Simple resolutions are used most frequently to express the sense of the enacting legislative chamber on a particular issue or event.

Sine Die – Literally means "without fixing a day" for a future meeting. An adjournment *sine die* signifies the end of an annual or special session of Congress.

Sponsor – The principal proponent and introducer of a legislative measure or an amendment.

Supplemental Appropriation – A measure providing appropriations for use in the current fiscal year, in addition to those already provided in annual general appropriations bills. Supplemental appropriations are often for unforeseen emergencies requiring urgent expenditures. Under the budget Enforcement Act of 1990, supplemental appropriations must be designated "emergency" appropriations if they are to be exempt from the overall discretionary spending caps.

Suspension of the Rules – In the house, an expeditious procedure for passing relatively non-controversial or emergency measures. A two-thirds margin is required if the measure is to be passed under Suspension.

Unanimous Consent – Agreeing to consideration of a measure without objection by any member. A unanimous consent request asks permission to set aside one or more rules. Both the House and Senate and the committees use such requests to expedite their proceedings. It is usually connected with non-controversial matters.

Unanimous Consent Agreement – An agreement in the Senate, formulated by party leaders and other senators, to regulate consideration of legislation or other matters, such as imposing a time limitation or limiting amendments. A "unanimous consent agreement" in the Senate is the procedural equivalent of a "rule" in the House. It sets the terms and conditions for floor debate. The Senate, however, has no requirement for such an agreement nor a formal structure like the House Rules Committee to provide such an agreement. Because any one senator can object to such an agreement, protracted negotiations among party leaders and key senators are often necessary and are not always successful. Once approved, a unanimous consent agreement can only be altered by unanimous consent.

Veto – The president's disapproval of a legislative measure passed by Congress, thus preventing its enactment into law. The president returns the measure to the chamber in which it originated without his signature but with a veto message stating his objections to the measure. Congress can override the veto by a two-thirds vote in each chamber, thus enacting the measure into law. A pocket veto (see above) occurs when Congress has adjourned and the president does not sign or veto the bill.