

Committee Descriptions and Functions

Committee on Armed Services:

The Committee on Armed Services handles legislation concerning and has jurisdiction over issues related to: Aeronautical and space activities peculiar to or primarily associated with the development of weapons systems or military operations; the common defense; the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, the Department of the Navy, and the Department of the Air Force, generally; maintenance and operation of the Panama Canal, including administration, sanitation, and government of the Canal Zone; military research and development; national security aspects of nuclear energy; naval petroleum reserves, except those in Alaska; pay, promotion, retirement, and other benefits and privileges of members of the Armed Forces, including overseas education of civilian and military dependents; selective service system; and strategic and critical materials necessary for the common defense.

The Committee also conducts comprehensive study and review of matters relating to the common defense policy of the United States.

Environment and Public Works:

The Committee on Environment and Public Works handles legislation concerning and has jurisdiction over issues related to: Air pollution; Construction and maintenance of highways; Environmental aspects of Outer Continental Shelf lands; Environmental effects of toxic substances, other than pesticides; Environmental policy; Environmental research and development; Fisheries and wildlife; Flood control and improvements of rivers and harbors, including environmental aspects of deepwater ports; Noise pollution; Nonmilitary environmental regulation and control of nuclear energy; Ocean dumping; Public buildings and improved grounds of the United States generally, including Federal buildings in the District of Columbia; Public works, bridges, and dams; Regional economic development; Solid waste disposal and recycling; Water pollution; Water resources.

The Committee also studies and reviews, on a comprehensive basis, matters relating to environmental protection and resource utilization and conservation, and reports thereon from time to time.

Foreign Relations:

The Committee on Foreign Relations handles legislation concerning and has jurisdiction over issues related to: Acquisition of land and buildings for embassies and legations in foreign countries; Boundaries of the United States; Diplomatic service; Foreign economic, military, technical, and humanitarian assistance; Foreign loans; International activities of the American National Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross; International aspects of nuclear energy, including nuclear transfer policy; International conferences and congresses; International law as it relates to foreign policy; Intervention abroad and declarations of war; Measures to foster commercial intercourse with foreign nations and to safeguard American business interests abroad; National security and international aspects of trusteeships of the United States; Oceans and international environmental and scientific affairs as they relate to foreign policy; Protection of United States citizens abroad and expatriation; Relations of the

United States with foreign nations generally; Treaties and executive agreements; United Nations and its affiliated organizations; World Bank group, the regional development banks, and other international organizations established primarily for development assistance purposes.

The Committee also studies and reviews, on a comprehensive basis, matters relating to the national security policy, foreign policy, and international economic policy as it relates to foreign policy of the United States, and matters relating to food, hunger, and nutrition in foreign countries, and reports thereon from time to time.

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions handles legislation concerning and has jurisdiction over issues related to: Measures relating to education, labor, health, and public welfare; Aging; Agricultural colleges; Arts and humanities; Biomedical research and development; Child labor; Convict labor and the entry of goods made by convicts into interstate commerce; Domestic activities of the American National Red Cross; Equal employment opportunity; Individuals with disabilities; Labor standards and labor statistics; Mediation and arbitration of labor disputes; Occupational safety and health, including the welfare of miners; Private pension plans; Public health; Railway labor and retirement; Regulation of foreign laborers; Student loans; Wages and hours of labor.

The Committee also studies and reviews, on a comprehensive basis, matters relating to health, education and training, and public welfare, and reports thereon from time to time.

Judiciary:

The Committee on the Judiciary handles legislation concerning and has jurisdiction over issues related to: Bankruptcy, mutiny, espionage, and counterfeiting; Civil liberties; Constitutional amendments; Federal courts and judges; Government information; Holidays and celebrations; Immigration and naturalization; Interstate compacts generally; Judicial proceedings, civil and criminal, generally; Local courts in the territories and possessions; Measures relating to claims against the United States; National penitentiaries; Patent Office; Patents, copyrights, and trademarks; Protection of trade and commerce against unlawful restraints and monopolies; Revision and codification of the statutes of the United States; State and territorial boundary lines.

Committee Procedures

The Chair of each committee has already been selected on the basis of role portrayal.

Bills should be read and ranked in order of priority, and that ranking should be followed for discussion.

As bills are discussed, revised and amended, they must be reported out of committee either favorably or unfavorably. An unfavorable report kills the bill, and it will not appear on the calendar. Bills, in the form they are to be introduced, are to be filed with the Clerk. The majority and minority leaders and the Clerk will then place each bill on the agenda for the Senate session.

The use of committee witnesses is an important facet of committee procedure. Experts in

various fields will appear to testify on proposed legislation. Question them carefully and completely; they have been selected for their knowledge in the committee's area.

It is suggested that for efficiency and effectiveness the committee agree to use Senate Rules of Procedure throughout their meetings. However, that decision is solely the Chair's and his decision is final.

Useful Definitions

Act: Legislation (a bill or joint resolution, see below) which has passed both chambers of Congress in identical form, been signed into law by the President, or passed over his veto, thus becoming law. Technically, this term also refers to a bill that has been passed by one house and engrossed (prepared as an official copy).

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

Adjournment Sine Die: The end of a legislative session "without day." These adjournments are used to indicate the final adjournment of an annual or the two-year session of a Congress.

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.

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.

Budget Authority: Authority provided by law to enter into obligations that will result in outlays of Federal funds. Budget authority may be classified by the period of availability (one-year, multiyear, no-year), by the timing of congressional action (current or permanent), or by the manner of determining the amount available (definite or indefinite).

Caucus: From the Algonquian Indian language, a caucus meant "to meet together." An informal organization of Members of the House or the Senate, or both, that exists to discuss issues of mutual concern and possibly to perform legislative research and policy planning for its members. There are regional, political or ideological, ethnic, and economic-based caucuses.

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.

Companion Bill or Measure: Similar or identical legislation which is introduced in the Senate

and House. House and Senate lawmakers who share similar views on legislation may introduce a companion bill in their respective chambers to promote simultaneous consideration of the measure.

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

Filibuster: Informal term for any attempt to block or delay Senate action on a bill or other matter by debating it at length, by offering numerous procedural motions, or by any other delaying or obstructive actions.

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.

Germane: On the subject of the pending bill or other business; a strict standard of relevance.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Rider: Informal term for a non-germane amendment to a bill or an amendment to an appropriation bill that changes the permanent law governing a program funded by the bill.

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.

Vice President: Under the Constitution, the Vice President serves as President of the Senate. He may vote in the Senate in the case of a tie, but is not required to. The President Pro Tempore (and others designated by him) usually perform these duties during the Vice President's frequent absences from the Senate.

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.

Standard Rules of the Model U.S. Senate

The following oath of affirmation required by the Constitution and prescribed by law shall be taken and subscribed to by each Senator in open Senate before entering upon his duties.

"I, ____, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter; so help me God."

A quorum shall consist of a majority of the Senators duly chosen and sworn in. If, at any time during the daily sessions, a question shall be raised by any Senator as to the presence of a quorum, the Presiding Officer shall direct the Secretary to call the roll and shall announce the result, and these proceedings shall be without debate.

The Presiding Officer having taken the chair, and a quorum being present, the Journal of the preceding day shall be read and any errors corrected. The proceedings of the Senate shall be briefly and accurately stated in the Journal, including messages from the President, titles of bills and resolutions, every vote, and a brief statement of the contents of each petition, memorial or paper presented to the Senate.

A question of order may be raised at any stage if no Senator has the floor, Senate not divided. Unless submitted to the Senate, the Presiding Officer shall decide all such questions without debate, subject to an appeal to the Senate. The Presiding Officer may submit any question of order for the decision of the Senate. An affirmative majority vote is required for passage.

The Presiding Officer shall enforce order whenever demonstration or confusion in the chamber or gallery calls for it. He may do so on his own initiative, without any point of order being made

by a Senator.

Cloture may be invoked upon any measure or matter by the presentation to the Clerk of the Senate of a motion with the signatures of 16 Senators. After a valid cloture petition has been filed, it must lay over for 15 minutes, after which the clerk will call the roll for a vote. An affirmative vote of 3/5 (three-fifths) of those Senators chosen and sworn is required for passage. If cloture has been agreed to, ten (10) minutes of debate time on the pending matter remain. All Senators who have not spoken on the question will be permitted one minute for debate.

To be recognized to speak, a Senator should stand and say "Mr. President." The chair will recognize the first senator to seek recognition, with the understanding that the Majority Leader will always be recognized first. No Senator shall interrupt another Senator without his/her consent.

Senator A: "Mr. President, will the Senator yield?"

Chair: "Will the Senator yield?"

Senator B: "Yes."

Senator A then proceeds to speak. If Senator B refuses to yield with an answer of "no," Senator A must return to his seat.

A Senator may avoid interruptions by telling the Presiding Officer that he/she will yield to questions after he/she is finished speaking.

Except for the Majority and Minority Leaders, no Senator shall speak twice upon any new question in debate on the same day, except by permission of the Senate which shall be determined without debate.

All motions or resolutions may be withdrawn or modified by the mover at any time before the decision, amendment, or ordering of the yeas and nays. This does not apply to a motion to reconsider, which shall not be withdrawn without leave.

No Senator shall refer offensively to any State of the Union.

No Senator in debate shall, directly or indirectly, speak of another Senator or his conduct in a manner unworthy or unbecoming a Senator.

Any Senator who, in the opinion of the Presiding Officer, transgresses the rules of the Senate shall be called to order by a motion of the Chair or another Senator. Any Senator called to order may appeal the ruling of the Chair, which shall be open to debate.