

# LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

## **Act**

An act is the term for legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by the President, or passed over his veto.

## **Amendment**

A member of Congress proposes an amendment to alter the wording of a bill under consideration by a subcommittee, committee or on the House or Senate floor. Amendments also can be offered to add or delete entire sections of a bill. Amendments are voted on in the same manner as a bill.

## **Appropriations Bill**

An Appropriations bill provides the legal authority needed to spend or obligate U.S. Treasury funds. There are 13 annual appropriations bills that together fund the entire federal government. Those bills must be enacted prior to the start of a new fiscal year, designated as Oct. 1. Failure to meet that deadline causes the need for temporary short-term funding or results in a shutdown. Appropriations bills originate in the House.

## **Authorization Bill**

An Authorization bill provides the authority for a program or agency to exist and determines its policy. Authorizations may be annual, multi-year or permanent. Expiring programs require re-authorization. House and Senate rules require that authorizations be in place before final funding decisions are made for programs or agencies.

## **Bill**

A bill is a proposed law introduced by a member(s) of Congress. Bills are designated H.R. for the House and S. for the Senate.

## **Budget Resolution**

The Budget Resolution is the annual decision made by Congress to set spending and revenue levels. It provides a voluntary framework within which Congress agrees to limit subsequent spending bills. Congress may fail to agree to a budget resolution, the appropriations process would then continue without these binding limits on spending.

## **Congressional Budget Office (CBO)**

CBO conducts non-partisan economic analysis and research. They also evaluate proposed bills and amendments, assessing their potential cost.

## **Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP)**

The Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) is a funding opportunity outlet located within the Department of Defense. The office of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) manages Congressional Special Interest Medical Research Programs (CSI) encompassing breast, prostate and ovarian cancers, neurofibromatosis, military health and other specified areas.

### **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)**

CMS, or the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, is the name for the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that oversees Medicare and Medicaid. CMS was formerly known as the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA).

### **Committee**

A committee is a division of the House or Senate that examines legislation. Most standing committees are divided into subcommittees. Only the full committee can report legislation to the House or Senate floor.

### **Committee Report/Report Language**

A Committee Report is prepared by a House or Senate Committee to explain the content of a bill being reported. Committee reports are optional in the Senate but mandatory in the House. They contain views of committee members, a cost impact analysis, and compare the bill to current law. Report language to the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill has referenced the importance of PKD research for 19 years.

### **Companion Bill**

A companion bill is a bill that is similar to or identical to a bill that was introduced in another chamber.

### **Conference**

Conference refers to a series of formal meetings between House and Senate members. The purpose of a conference is to reconcile the differences between the two chambers' versions of a bill. Bills that are passed by both houses with minor differences need not be sent to conference.

### **Congressional District**

A Congressional district is the geographical area in a state represented by a House member, with about 600,000 citizens. Members have one or more district offices depending on the size of the area they represent.

### **Continuing Resolution (CR)**

A Continuing Resolution is a type of appropriations resolution used by Congress to fund government agencies if a formal appropriations bill has not been signed into law by the end of the Congressional fiscal year. The legislation takes the form of a joint resolution and provides funding for existing federal programs at current or reduced levels.

### **Co-sponsor**

A Co-sponsor is a member of Congress who formally adds his/her name as a supporter to another member's bill. An initial or original co-sponsor is one who was listed at the time of the bill's introduction, not added on later.

### **Entitlement**

An entitlement is a federal program that guarantees a certain level of benefits to persons who meet requirements set by law, such as Social Security and Medicaid. Congress and the President generally have very little discretion over spending by these programs.

**Entitlement Spending**

Entitlement spending refers to funds for programs such as Medicare/Medicaid, Social Security, and veterans' benefits. Funding levels are automatically set by the number of eligible recipients, not at the discretion of Congress. Each person eligible for benefits by law receives them unless Congress changes the eligibility criteria. Entitlement payments represent the largest portion of the federal budget.

**Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**

The FDA is the federal agency that approves and regulates the sale and manufacturing of pharmaceuticals and other medical devices.

**Fiscal Year (FY)**

The fiscal year for the federal government begins on October 1 and ends on September 30. For example, fiscal year 1998, or "FY '98" began on Oct. 1, 1997 and ended on Sept. 30, 1998.

**Government Accountability Office (GAO)**

GAO stands for the Government Accountability Office. It audits federal agencies and programs for Congress to ensure accountability to the public.

**H.R.**

H.R. stands for House of Representatives and designates a measure as a House bill (e.g. H.R. 1100).

**Hearings**

A hearing refers to a committee meeting where testimony is taken from witnesses representing government agencies, private sector organizations and the general public. Hearings may be held in local communities, as well as in Washington D.C.

**Law**

A law is an act of Congress that has been signed by the President or that Congress has passed over the President's veto.

**Legislative Assistant**

The Legislative Assistant or "LA" is the staff person who advises a member of Congress on legislative issues.

**Mark-Up**

A mark-up refers to the process of going through the contents of a piece of legislation, in either committee or subcommittee, before reporting it out of the committee/subcommittee.

Committee/subcommittee members offer and vote on proposed changes in the bill's language, known as amendments.

**Medicaid**

Medicaid is the federal entitlement health insurance program established in 1965 through Title XIX of the Social Security Act. Medicaid pays for health services for low-income Americans under 65 and nursing home care for impoverished older adults over 65. It is financed through federal and state funds.

**Medicare**

Medicare is the federal health insurance program established in 1965 through Title XVIII of the Social Security Act for Americans who are over 65, disabled, or diagnosed with end-stage renal disease.

**National Institutes of Health (NIH)**

The NIH is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that serves as the nation's premier center for biomedical and health research.

**National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)**

NIDDK is the primary institute within the NIH that conducts and supports research in PKD and other kidney diseases. The Institute supports basic and clinical research through investigator-initiated grants, program project and center grants, and career development and training awards. They also support large-scale clinical trials through contracts.

**Office of Management and Budget (OMB)**

OMB prepares the president's budget submission to Congress and provides him with economic forecasts.

**Omnibus Bill**

An omnibus bill packages together several measures into one or combines diverse subjects into a single bill. Examples are reconciliation bills, combined appropriations bills, and private relief and claims bills.

**Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP)**

The PRMRP was established in 1999 and funds research of clear scientific merit with direct relevance to the health of the military and the American public. Research funding has totaled more than \$340 million through FY 2006 for 247 projects in more than 60 topic areas. To be considered, a disease must be listed by the Senate each year.

**Ranking Member**

The ranking member refers to the second highest rank on a committee on the majority side, after the chairman.

**S.**

S. stands for Senate and designates a measure introduced in the Senate as a bill (e.g. S. 910).

**Sponsor**

A sponsor is the member who introduces a bill and is its chief advocate.

**Subcommittee**

Subcommittees prepare legislation, hold hearings and report bills with or without amendments to the full committee. Only the full committee can report legislation to the House or Senate floor.

**Supplemental Appropriations**

A supplemental appropriations bill provides funds in addition to regular appropriations. Supplemental bills often arise when an emergency, e.g. disaster relief, requires immediate funding.

**Unfunded Mandate**

An unfunded mandate is a requirement imposed by Congress on state or local governments without providing federal funding to pay for a program. House rules permit a point of order to be made against a provision creating a new unfunded mandate.

**Veto**

The veto is the President's formal disapproval of legislation passed by Congress. When Congress is in session, the President must veto a bill within 10 days after receiving it from Congress, otherwise it becomes law without his approval. A bill can become law after a Presidential veto if two-thirds of Congress vote to override the veto.

*Note: The legislative and political terms above specifically relate to the U.S. Congress and federal legislation.*

*Sources include the C-Span Congressional Glossary, the Alzheimer's Association's "Glossary of Congressional Terms," Families USA's "Glossary of Health Care Terms," the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services website, the United States Army Medical Research and Material Command website, Wikipedia, the HCBS Clearinghouse for the Community Living Exchange Collaborative's glossary and Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process by Walter J. Oleszek.*