



Debate and Motions on the House Floor: Allocation of Time

Judy Schneider
Specialist on the Congress

June 29, 2009

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

www.crs.gov

98-827

About TheCapitol.Net

We help you understand Washington and Congress.™

For more than 35 years, TheCapitol.Net and its predecessor, Congressional Quarterly Executive Conferences, have been training professionals from government, military, business, and NGOs on the dynamics and operations of the legislative and executive branches and how to work with them.

Our training and publications include congressional operations, legislative and budget process, communication and advocacy, media and public relations, research, testifying before Congress, legislative drafting, critical thinking and writing, and more.

TheCapitol.Net encompasses a dynamic team of more than 150 faculty members and authors, all of whom are independent subject matter experts and veterans in their fields. Faculty and authors include senior government executives, former members of Congress, Hill and agency staff, editors and journalists, lobbyists, lawyers, nonprofit executives, and scholars.

We have worked with hundreds of clients across the country to develop and produce a wide variety of custom, on-site training programs.

All courses, seminars, and workshops can be tailored to align with your organization's educational objectives and presented on-site at your location.

TheCapitol.Net is on the GSA Schedule, 874-4, for custom on-site training:
GSA Contract GS02F0192X.

TheCapitol.Net has more than 2,000 clients representing congressional offices, federal and state agencies, military branches, corporations, associations, news media, and NGOs nationwide.

TheCapitol.Net is a non-partisan firm.

Our blog: [Hobnob Blog](#)—hit or miss ... give or take ... this or that ...

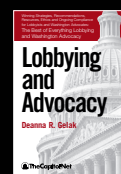


Non-partisan training and publications that show how Washington works.™

PO Box 25706, Alexandria, VA 22313-5706
202-678-1600 • www.thecapitol.net



TheCapitol.Net is on the
GSA Schedule, 874-4,
for custom on-site training.
GSA Contract GS02F0192X



Summary

One of the most defining aspects of consideration of measures in the House and Committee of the Whole is that time is always controlled. There is virtually no circumstance under which a Member speaks on the floor without first knowing in advance how long has been allocated. Ranging from one minute or less to 60 minutes, debate limitations exist on all aspects of floor consideration.

This report, one of a series on legislative process, addresses time limitations associated with selected House floor procedures. Actions that are not debatable, such as the motion to adjourn, the motion to table, and the motion to rise, are not included.

One of the most defining aspects of consideration of measures in the House and Committee of the Whole is that time is always controlled. There is virtually no circumstance under which a Member speaks on the floor without first knowing in advance how long has been allocated. Ranging from one minute or less to 60 minutes, debate limitations exist on all aspects of floor consideration.

This report, one of a series on legislative process, addresses time limitations associated with selected House floor procedures. Actions that are not debatable, such as the motion to adjourn, the motion to table, and the motion to rise, are not included.

Table I. Debate Limitations in the House and Committee of the Whole

Parliamentary Situation	Time Allocated	Comments
Suspension of the rules	40 minutes maximum, equally divided between majority and minority Members	If ranking committee Member supports the measure, another Member who opposes it can claim control of half time
Special rule	60 minutes maximum, unless previous question not ordered	30 minutes customarily yielded to minority floor manager for debate only
Motion to discharge a measure	20 minutes, equally divided between proponent and opponent	
Conference report	60 minutes, equally divided between proponent and opponent	If minority floor manager supports the report, another Member may claim time, dividing it 20 minutes each for those two and the majority floor manager
Motion to instruct conferees	60 minutes, equally divided between proponent and opponent	Prerogative of minority party Member; if committee chair and ranking member support the motion, another Member may control one-third of time
Motion to recommit	10 minutes, unless majority floor manager asks that time be extended to one hour	Time equally divided between proponent and opponent
Amendments offered in Committee of the Whole (including pro forma amendments)	5 minutes, unless special rule allocates differently	Time cannot be reserved
Questions of personal privilege	60 minutes	
Questions of privileges of the House	60 minutes, equally divided between proponent and opponent	
Special orders	5 minutes until midnight; 60 minutes until midnight on Tuesday, or midnight (whichever comes first) on other days	Total time limited to 2 hours for majority and minority
Morning Hour debate	30 minutes per side; each Member reserves up to 5 minutes	
Point of order/Parliamentary inquiry	Members may be heard at discretion of, and time controlled by, presiding officer	May be made in House or Committee of the Whole

Author Contact Information

Judy Schneider
Specialist on the Congress
jschneider@crs.loc.gov, 7-8664

Learn how Capitol Hill really works

All of our programs and any combination of their topics can be tailored for on-site training for your organization.

For more than 35 years, TheCapitol.Net and its predecessor, Congressional Quarterly Executive Conferences, have been teaching professionals from government, military, business, and NGOs about the dynamics and operations of the legislative and executive branches and how to work with them.

Our custom, on-site training and publications include congressional operations, legislative and budget process, communication and advocacy, media and public relations, research, testifying before Congress, legislative drafting, critical thinking and writing, and more.

- **Diverse Client Base**—We have tailored hundreds of custom on-site training programs for Congress, numerous agencies in all federal departments, the military, law firms, lobbying firms, unions, think tanks and NGOs, foreign delegations, associations and corporations, delivering exceptional insight into how Washington works.™
- **Experienced Program Design and Delivery**—We have designed and delivered hundreds of custom programs covering congressional/legislative operations, budget process, media training, writing skills, legislative drafting, advocacy, research, testifying before Congress, grassroots, and more.
- **Professional Materials**—We provide training materials and publications that show how Washington works. Our publications are designed both as course materials and as invaluable reference tools.
- **Large Team of Experienced Faculty**—More than 150 faculty members provide independent subject matter expertise. Each program is designed using the best faculty member for each session.
- **Non-Partisan**—TheCapitol.Net is non-partisan.
- **GSA Schedule**—TheCapitol.Net is on the GSA Schedule, 874-4, for custom on-site training: GSA Contract GS02F0192X.

Please see our Capability Statement on our web site at TCNCS.com.

Custom training programs are designed to meet your educational and training goals, each led by independent subject-matter experts best qualified to help you reach your educational objectives and align with your audience.

As part of your custom program, we can also provide classroom space, breaks and meals, receptions, tours, and online registration and individual attendee billing services.

For more information about custom on-site training for your organization, please see our web site: TCNCustom.com or call us: 202-678-1600, ext 115.



TheCapitol.Net

Non-partisan training and publications that show how Washington works.™

PO Box 25706, Alexandria, VA 22313-5706
202-678-1600 • www.thecapitol.net



TheCapitol.Net is on the
GSA Schedule, 874-4,
for custom on-site training.
GSA Contract GS02F0192X

