



CRS Report for Congress

The House Amendment Tree

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The House amendment “tree” is a chart that depicts the maximum number and types of amendments that may be offered to a measure before any amendment is voted upon. This diagram is outlined in various sources, including the 2003 summary compilation of House precedents, titled *House Practice: A Guide to the Rules, Precedents, and Procedures of the House*. The amendment tree generally indicates, for instance, the relationship of one amendment to another and the sequence of voting on amendments. For further detail about amendments, such as first degree or second degree, and the amending process in general, see CRS Report 98-613, *Amendments in the House: Types and Forms*, by Christopher M. Davis and CRS Report 98-439, *Amendment Process in the Committee of the Whole*, by Judy Schneider.

The amendment tree and its accompanying “limbs” grow from various parliamentary principles and precedents. House Rule XVI, clause 6, identifies the four amendments (or motions) that characterize the basic amendment tree; it is portrayed in the chart on the next page. Under Rule XVI, four amendments may be pending simultaneously to the text of a measure: (1) an amendment to the pending bill; (2) a perfecting amendment to that amendment; (3) a substitute amendment, which strikes all of amendment #1 and replaces it with different language; and (4) a perfecting amendment to the substitute.

Three other aspects of the amending process merit mention:

- The amendment to the original measure is offered first; thereafter, there is no rule that regulates what amendment is to come next. It could either be a perfecting amendment or a substitute amendment. The substitute, of course, must be proposed before an amendment to it is in order.
- As stated in Rule XVI, only one amendment to an amendment and one amendment to a substitute is in order at any one time. However, once an amendment to the original amendment or to the substitute is disposed of either by rejection or incorporation, both generally remain open to further perfecting amendments.
- Amendments are voted on in a definite order. Amendments to the original amendment are voted on first; amendments to the substitute are voted on next; then the substitute is voted on; and, finally, the original

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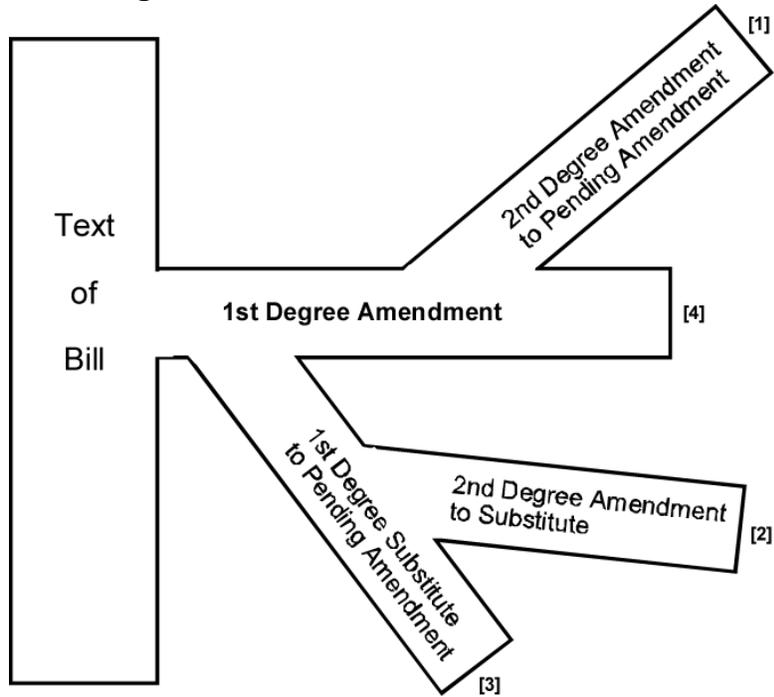
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amendment is voted on. If the substitute is agreed to, the last vote is on the amendment, as amended.

Figure 1. The Basic Amendment Tree



Note: Bracketed numbers indicate voting order.