Legislative Procedure in Congress: Basic Sources for Congressional Staff

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Summary

Written for congressional staff, this report identifies and provides details on how to obtain official government sources of information on the legislative process and the rules and procedure of the House and Senate. The report provides references to selected CRS products and offers information on the CRS legislative institutes. A listing of selected supplementary materials is also provided.

This report will be updated as new information is available.
Contents

House and Senate Sources ............................................................................................................... 1
House Rules and Procedure ............................................................................................................. 1
Senate Rules and Procedure ............................................................................................................. 2
Primers on the Legislative Process and Related Documents ........................................................... 3
CRS Sources .................................................................................................................................... 4
  CRS Website .................................................................................................................................. 4
  Selected CRS Reports ................................................................................................................... 4
  CRS Legislative Procedure Classes ........................................................................................... 5
Supplementary Materials ................................................................................................................. 6
Where to Get These Publications ..................................................................................................... 7

Contacts

Author Contact Information ............................................................................................................. 7
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... 7
Understanding legislative procedure and processes is essential for congressional staff. Gaining familiarity with the key publications and websites listed in this report will assist congressional staff in obtaining a basic understanding of legislative procedure and processes in the House and Senate.

House and Senate Sources


Reference sources on the rules and procedure of the House and Senate are listed below.

House Rules and Procedure


This publication, often referred to as House Rules and Manual, is prepared for each Congress by the House Parliamentarian and is issued as a House document, most recently for the 113th Congress as H.Doc. 112-161. It includes the text of the Constitution; the rules of the House and currently relevant portions of Jefferson’s Manual of Parliamentary Practice; a portion of the Congressional Budget Act; and other statutory provisions that operate as procedural rules. Copies are distributed to House offices and are also available from the House Legislative Resource Center.


This one-volume publication prepared by William Holmes Brown and updated by Charles W. Johnson and John V. Sullivan, past and present House Parliamentarians, provides more current summary information on House rules and selected precedents than Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives (see next entry). Organized alphabetically by topic, it reflects changes in the House rules and procedure adopted as of the 112th Congress. This is sometimes referred to as Brown’s. The Office of the House Parliamentarian has a limited number of copies to distribute to House offices upon request.


Frequently referred to as Deschler’s Procedure, after a former Parliamentarian of the House, this one-volume work summarizes House procedure and provides a cumulated, condensed version of

### Senate Rules and Procedure


This manual, usually prepared during the second session of each Congress by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, contains the standing rules, orders, laws, and resolutions affecting the Senate, as well as copies of historical U.S. documents and selected statistics on the Senate and other government entities. Issued as S.Doc. 1, copies are distributed to Senate offices and are available from the Senate document room. A current edition of just the Standing Rules of the Senate is available on the committee’s website at http://rules.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=RulesOfSenateHome.


http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=GPO&browsePath=Riddick%27s+Senate+Procedure&isCollapsed=false

This publication was revised and updated in 1992 by the Parliamentarian of the Senate and published as S.Doc. 101-28. Organized alphabetically by topic, it contains currently applicable rulings by the presiding officer and practices related to Senate procedure. An appendix has suggested forms for various procedures, for example, offering motions or filing conference reports.


This committee print (S.Prt.112-31) was prepared for the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). It includes lists of selected filibusters, tables of cloture votes, a legislative history of the cloture rule, and a bibliography. CRS has a limited number of copies available for distribution to offices upon request. Lists of cloture motions and votes from the 66th Congress (1919-1920) forward are also available on the Senate website at http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/reference/cloture_motions/clotureCounts.htm.
Primers on the Legislative Process and Related Documents


This revised version of the popular introductory guide is written in a question-and-answer format that covers a broad range of topics dealing with the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of our government. The appendixes contain a glossary of legislative terms and a selective bibliography. Copies of each new edition are distributed to congressional offices. Members of Congress can also obtain printed copies of the current edition from the House Legislative Resource Center and the Senate Document Room.


This document contains the text of the Constitution, its amendments, and a useful index to the Constitution and amendments. A related document, *The Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation* (popularly known as the *Constitution Annotated*) contains legal analysis and interpretation of each section of the United States Constitution and is updated regularly by CRS. It is available to congressional staff on the CRS website at http://crs.gov/analysis/Pages/constitutionannotated.aspx.


https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/Enactment+of+a+Law+-+Learn+About+the+Legislative+Process
http://www.senate.gov/legislative/common/briefing/Enactment_law.htm

Prepared by the Senate Parliamentarian in 1982, this primer on the legislative process traces procedures used in the Senate and the House of Representatives. No printed copies are available, but it was updated online in 1997. It is available on Congress.gov and on the Senate website.


https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/How+Our+Laws+Are+Made+-+Learn+About+the+Legislative+Process

This pamphlet outlines stages in the legislative process for the generalist and explains the uses of various publications, which track that process. It is prepared by the Parliamentarian of the House in consultation with the Parliamentarian of the Senate. This guide is updated periodically. Copies of new editions are distributed to congressional offices and can also be obtained from the House Legislative Resource Center and the Senate Document Room.
CRS Sources

CRS Website

CRS has a variety of resources and services available on legislative procedure. The CRS website is available to Members of Congress and their staff at http://www.crs.gov. Congressional staff may obtain useful CRS materials on “Legislative Reference Sources” page at http://www.crs.gov/resources/Pages/LegReference-Committees.aspx and legislative procedure from the “Congressional Operations” page on the CRS website at http://www.crs.gov/analysis/Pages/CongressionalOperations.aspx. The latter page includes short fact sheets on House and Senate procedure; materials on the budget process and on congressional oversight; and a legislative glossary, the American Congressional Dictionary.

Selected CRS Reports

CRS Report 98-812, Amendments Between the Houses: A Brief Overview, by Elizabeth Rybicki and James V. Saturno.


CRS Report 98-242, Committee Jurisdiction and Referral in the Senate, by Judy Schneider.

CRS Report RS20147, Committee of the Whole: An Introduction, by Judy Schneider.


CRS Report RS20200, General Debate in Committee of the Whole, by Judy Schneider.


CRS Report 98-339, House Committee Hearings: Scheduling and Notification, by Christopher M. Davis.

CRS Report 98-175, House Committee Jurisdiction and Referral: Rules and Practice, by Judy Schneider.

CRS Report RS20308, House Committee Markups: Commonly Used Motions and Requests, by Judy Schneider.


CRS Report 98-459, *Introducing a Senate Bill or Resolution*, by Mark J. Oleszek


CRS Report 98-337, *Senate Committee Hearings: Scheduling and Notification*, by Valerie Heitshusen

CRS Report 98-308, *Senate Legislative Procedures: Published Sources of Information*, by Christopher M. Davis.


**CRS Legislative Procedure Classes**

In addition to legislative procedure material, CRS offers several programs on legislative procedure for congressional staff. Legislative staff can attend *Congress: An Introduction to Resources and Procedure*, an introductory CRS program designed for and offered only to permanent, professional congressional staff who seek a foundation for understanding the legislative process and the resources available to monitor it. This CRS program is offered 10 or more times a year and is the first of the CRS Legislative Process Institutes, a three-part series providing training in the legislative process. The other parts are the *Advanced Legislative Process Institute* and the *Graduate Institute* (the “CRS Congress”). Attendance at *Congress: An Introduction to Resources and Procedure* is a prerequisite for the CRS Advanced Legislative
Process Institutes. More information on the three CRS institutes is available on the CRS website at http://www.crs.gov/programs/Pages/eventscal.aspx or by telephone at 7-7904.

CRS also offers a monthly introductory class, Legislative Concepts, to House staff and interns in the House Learning Center. Information is available on HouseNet (http://housenet.house.gov) under “House Learning Center.”

Legislative staff members are also invited to attend the CRS Budget Process Institutes. The introductory Overview of the Federal Budget Process is offered several times each year and provides an introduction to federal budgeting procedures, particularly procedures used in Congress. Three advanced institutes—Budget Resolutions and Reconciliation, Appropriations Process, and The President and the Budget—are offered during the year at times when they are most relevant to congressional staff. Event dates and registration forms for CRS programs and institutes can be found on the CRS website at http://www.crs.gov/programs/Pages/eventscal.aspx.

Supplementary Materials


Where to Get These Publications

Many of the works on legislative procedure listed in this report are produced by the Government Printing Office and may be purchased:

- by telephone, (202) 512-1800 or (866) 512-1800; or

Some publications are only available from congressional sources for congressional office use, while others listed in the “Supplementary Materials” section may be purchased from bookstores or publishers.

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