

# COMMON CAUSE RHODE ISLAND

## Glossary of legislative terminology

**Adjournment:** The end of the legislative day. Regular adjournments set the date for the next meeting. Adjournment sine die (without day) marks the end of the session, since it does not set a time for reconvening.

**Amend:** To formally modify by adding to or deleting from a measure.

**Appropriation:** Authorization for the expenditure of public funds for a stated purpose.

**Bill:** Form of legislation used to propose a law.

**Budget:** Legislation authorizing the allocation of state moneys.

**Calendar:** List of bills awaiting action by the House or Senate, entered in order reported.

**Caucus:** Meeting of legislators of the same political party to decide policy and course of action.

**Clerk of the House or the Senate:** A non-legislator officer who is appointed or elected by the members of the House or Senate to perform and direct the parliamentary and clerical functions of the chamber.

**Committee:** A body of members appointed by the presiding officer to consider and make recommendations concerning disposition of bills, resolutions and other related matters on a subset of topics.

**Constitution:** A written instrument embodying the fundamental principles of the state that guarantees powers and duties of the government and guarantees certain rights to the people.

**Debate:** Formal discussion on matter before the House or Senate or committees thereof.

**Floor:** The main level of the House and Senate chambers. Also used to describe the stage in the legislative process when legislation is before the full House or Senate.

**Gallery:** Balconies of the chamber from which visitors may view the proceedings of the legislature.

**General Assembly:** The name applied in Rhode Island to the branch of state government responsible for enacting laws.

**Hearing:** A formal meeting of a committee at which testimony is presented.

**Held for Further Study:** Action taken to indefinitely postpone legislation in committee. Legislation held for further study can be considered again by committee. One of the five motions allowed on legislation in committee.

**House:** One of two bodies of the General Assembly. Composed of 75 member elected from individual districts.

**Introduction:** The presentation of legislation.

**Journal:** Record of daily proceedings in the Senate and House.

**Legislation:** Matter before the General Assembly in the form of a bill or resolution.

**Lobbyist:** A person hired by others to influence the legislative process.

**Majority Leader:** A member of the majority political party designated to be a leader.

**Minority Leader:** A member of the minority political party designated to be leader.

**Motion:** Formal proposal offered by a member of a legislature on the floor or in committee.

**Point of Order:** A question raised by a legislator concerning the rules of procedure.

**President of the Senate:** Title given to the person elected by the Senate as the presiding officer.

**Rules:** Resolution governing the methods of legislative procedure.

**Quorum:** The number of members required for the conduct of business.

**Recommittal:** Sending legislation back to the committee that reported it out for consideration by the full House or Senate.

**Resolution:** Form of legislation used to express the will of the legislature or either chamber, or govern the business of the legislature or chamber. Generally, do not have the scope or authority of law.

**Senate:** One of two bodies of the General Assembly. Composed of 38 members elected from individual districts.

**Session:** The period during with the legislature meets and carries on its business.

**Speaker of the House:** Title given to the person elected by the House as the presiding officer.

**Travel:** Term used to describe course of legislation through the legislative process.

**Unanimous Consent:** Process of expediting proceedings when no objection is presented.

**Veto:** Action by the governor to disapprove legislation.

**Whips:** Assistants to the floor leaders who are also elected by their party conferences.

Adapted from:

Glossary of Legislative Terms (National Conference of State Legislatures) <http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/glossary-of-legislative-terms.aspx> (Accessed on January 26, 2017)

The General Assembly and its Term (State of Rhode Island General Assembly)

<http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/pages/generalterms.aspx> (Accessed on January 26, 2017)

Senate Glossary (U.S. Senate)

<https://www.senate.gov/reference/glossary.htm> (Accessed on January 26, 2017)