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. References to selected CRS products are also provided, as well as a listing of selected titles for supplementary reading. Information is offered on the CRS legislative institutes. This report will be updated as new information is available.
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Understanding legislative procedure and processes is essential for congressional staff. The publications and websites listed here are key resources that congressional staff should be familiar with in order to understand basic legislative procedure in the House and Senate.

House/Senate Sources


Available 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 111th Congress as H.Doc. 110-162. It includes the text of the Constitution; the rules of the House and portions of _Jefferson’s Manual of Parliamentary Practice_ currently pertinent to House procedure, each with commentary summarizing applicable precedents; a portion of the Congressional Budget Act; and other statutory provisions that operate as procedural rules. Copies are automatically distributed to House offices.

_House Practice: A Guide to the Rules, Precedents, and Procedures of the House_.

http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/pagedetails.action?granuleId=&packageId=GPO-HPRACTICE-108&fromBrowse=true

This one-volume publication prepared by William Holmes Brown and updated by Charles W. Johnson, both past 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 108th Congress. This is sometimes referred to as _Brown’s_. The Office of the House Parliamentarian (5-7373) 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 automatically distributed to Senate offices. 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&leafLevelBrowse=false&ycord=239

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. 99-95) 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. This publication is not available on the Internet, but congressional offices can obtain copies from CRS (7-5700). Lists of cloture votes from the 66th Congress (1919-1920) forward are also available on the Senate website’s “Cloture” page at http://www.senate.gov/reference/reference_index_subjects/Cloture_vrd.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. Its appendixes contain a glossary of legislative terms and a selective bibliography. Copies of each new edition are automatically 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 revised version contains the text of the Constitution, its amendments, and a useful index to the Constitution and amendments.


http://thomas.loc.gov/home/enactment/enactlawtoc.html
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 THOMAS, the Library of Congress public website and on the Senate website.


http://thomas.loc.gov/home/lawsmade.toc.html

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 automatically 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 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 98-175, 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 98-309, House Legislative Procedures: Published Sources of Information, by Betsy Palmer.


CRS Report 98-459, Introducing a Senate Bill or Resolution, by Betsy Palmer.
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 “Legislative Concepts” class 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 Reading


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 Reading” section may be purchased from bookstores or publishers.
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