



# A GLOSSARY OF LEGISLATIVE TERMS

PREPARED BY  
THE NEW JERSEY  
OFFICE OF  
LEGISLATIVE SERVICES



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**TABLE** To defer action on legislation.

**TALLY** The final number of votes for and against a bill or amendment.

**“THE OTHER SIDE OF THE AISLE”** During debate, a legislator’s way of referring to members of the “other” political party. The phrase pertains to the custom of seating all Democrats in one area of the legislative chamber and Republicans in another, separated by the center.

**UNICAMERAL** A legislature composed of one House, e.g. the Nebraska Legislature.

**VETO** An official action of the Governor to nullify legislative action. Forms include absolute veto, conditional veto, line item veto, and pocket veto.

**VETO MESSAGE** The Governor’s comments explaining reasons for vetoing a bill and setting conditions for reconsideration.

**VOICE VOTE** A method of voting in which individual votes are not recorded, but instead the members respond orally, in unison, to vote yes or no.

**WHIP** A legislator who assists the party floor leader in maintaining party discipline and ensuring attendance at legislative sessions and committee meetings.



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[www.njleg.state.nj.us](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us)

**ABSOLUTE VETO** The Governor’s rejection of a proposed law passed by the Legislature. A bill vetoed in this manner cannot become law unless the Legislature overrides the veto by a vote of at least two-thirds of the members of each house.

(27 votes in the Senate; 54 votes in the General Assembly)

**ABSTAIN** To refrain from voting either for or against a bill.

**AD HOC STUDY COMMITTEE OR COMMISSION** A temporary committee or commission established by law, resolution, or order of the presiding officer to investigate special issues and make recommendations for legislative or executive agency action.

**ADJOURNMENT SINE DIE** Literally, adjournment “without a day,” it is an adjournment without definitely fixing a day for reconvening. Since 1970 in New Jersey, it is the final adjournment of the two-year legislative session and the end of all legislative business.

**ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE** A committee that deals with the internal housekeeping functions of the Senate or General Assembly.

**ADMINISTRATIVE RULES** Rules and regulations issued by State executive branch agencies.

**ADOPT** To vote official approval or acceptance.

**ADVANCE LAW** Advance copy of each law published and distributed prior to printing of the annual volumes.

**ADVICE AND CONSENT** The power vested in the Senate by the State Constitution to review and approve or reject the Governor’s nominations for judges, cabinet officers, and other officials. Appointments are confirmed by an absolute majority vote. (21 votes in the Senate)

**STANDING REFERENCE COMMITTEES** Committees established by each House to consider bills and resolutions referred by the presiding officer and to review activities of State agencies.

**STATE HOUSE** New Jersey’s capitol building, located on State Street in the City of Trenton, which is the official location of the State government. It houses both the Executive (Governor’s offices) and Legislative Branches (Senate and General Assembly chambers and offices).

**STATE HOUSE ANNEX** The building adjacent to the State House. It houses the Office of Legislative Services, legislative offices, and committee rooms.

**STATE HOUSE PRESS CORPS** Media representatives of daily and weekly New Jersey newspapers, national news wire services, and area radio and television stations who cover legislative news. Most have offices in the State House complex. Regular capitol reporters are known as “legislative correspondents.”

**STATUTES** The laws created by acts of the Legislature. (See LAW)

**“STOPPING THE CLOCK”** An infrequently used strategy on the morning of the end of the annual legislative session, which occurs at noon on the second Tuesday in January of each even-numbered year, whereby the proceedings continue past noon but the journal indicates occurrence of the action on the final legislative day. Also, occasionally used with respect to passing the appropriations act of the end (June 30) of the State fiscal year.

**SUBSTITUTE BILL (FLOOR)** During a voting session, a bill is substituted by an identical bill from the other House which is further along in the legislative process, allowing for speedier final passage.

**SENATE PRESIDENT** (See PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE)

**SENATE SECRETARY** (See SECRETARY OF THE SENATE)

**SENATORIAL COURTESY** Describes the custom in the advice and consent process whereby the Senator from a nominee's county must approve of the nominee before the nomination will be considered by the Senate.

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS** A member of the session day staff under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Senate or Clerk of the General Assembly who assists in maintaining the security and decorum of the House.

**SESSION** (See LEGISLATIVE SESSION)

**SESSION DAY STAFF** Part-time personnel, including sergeants-at-arms, clerks, supervisors of bills, and pages, who perform functions related to the conduct of a session.

**SESSION YEAR** New Jersey's session year begins on the second Tuesday of each January. All business conducted during the first year of the two-year legislative session may be continued into the second year, but unfinished business expires at the end of the second year.

**SPEAKER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY** A member of the General Assembly who is elected by the members of the House to serve as the chief presiding officer during sessions, who appoints committee chairs and members of committees and commissions, refers bills and resolutions to reference committees, sets the agenda for session days, and supervises the administration of the day-to-day business of the General Assembly.

**SPONSOR** A legislator who introduces a bill or resolution.

**AMENDMENT** Any modification made or proposed in a bill, resolution, or motion by adding, substituting, or deleting language.

**AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION** A change in the State Constitution proposed by the Legislature and presented to the voters as a public question on the general election ballot. If rejected by the voters, the proposal or a similar one may not be resubmitted to the public for three years.

**APPORTIONMENT** The allocation of legislative seats among the legislative districts according to district population.

**APPROPRIATION** A legislative enactment authorizing the expenditure of public funds for a specific governmental purpose.

**ASSEMBLY** (See GENERAL ASSEMBLY)

**ASSEMBLY CLERK**  
(See CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY)

**ASSEMBLY MINUTES** The official record of the actions of the New Jersey General Assembly. This record is published in an annual volume.

**ASSEMBLY SPEAKER**  
(See SPEAKER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY)

**BICAMERAL** A legislature composed of two Houses. The New Jersey Houses are the Senate and the General Assembly.

**BIENNIAL SESSION** A two-year meeting period of a legislative body.

**BILL** A proposal to establish a new law or to change or repeal an existing law.

**BILL DRAFTING** The writing of bills and resolutions according to a prescribed form.

**“BILL GUIDE”** A publication produced by the Office of Legislative Services’ Data Management Unit containing a cumulative listing of bills by subject, by sponsor, and in numerical order, passed into law and vetoed. It also includes a list of chapter laws organized by subject matter, leadership, and committee assignments.

**BILL STATEMENT** A brief statement printed at the end of a bill or resolution that describes its provision or purpose. It is also called a “sponsor’s statement.”

**BIPARTISAN** An indication that a committee or group is composed of members of both major political parties, or that an action or idea has support from members of both parties.

**BUDGET** A document of proposed governmental expenditures for a given fiscal year and the proposed means of financing those expenditures.

**BUDGET MESSAGE** A general description of the proposed annual budget presented, in writing and orally, by the Governor before the Legislature.

**CAUCUS** (See PARTY CONFERENCE)

**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION** A formal statement by which a house honors an individual or organization or pays tribute to the memory of a deceased citizen. Ceremonial resolutions are not subject to the same strict rules of form and procedure as are other resolutions.

**CHAMBER** The official room or location for meetings of a legislative body.

**REVENUE** Income to the State from taxes, fees, fines, federal grants, and other sources.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** The recording of each member’s vote, usually electronically. Roll call votes are also known as recorded or machine votes.

**ROUTINE BUSINESS** An unofficial term referring to the administrative work performed during a session by the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the General Assembly, at the conclusion of voting activity.

**RULES OF THE HOUSES** Rules established independently by each House to regulate its internal organization, operation, and procedures. Houses also adopt joint rules to govern matters of mutual interest.

**SECRETARY OF THE SENATE** A person, not a member of the Legislature, who is elected by the Senate to serve as its chief administrative officer. The Secretary’s duties include reading all bills and resolutions on first, second, and third reading; recording the vote on all bills and resolutions; and providing general supervision over certain employees of the House.

**SELECT COMMITTEE** A legislative committee established for a limited period that may be created by either House and may include members of one or both Houses to study a specific subject area.

**SENATE** In New Jersey, one of the two Houses that comprises the State Legislature. The Senate has 40 members - one elected from each legislative district - and is presided over by the President of the Senate.

**SENATE JOURNAL** The official record of the actions of the New Jersey Senate.

Legislature who must be present for the House to conduct business. (21 members in the Senate; 41 members in the General Assembly)

**QUORUM CALL** A roll call to determine whether a quorum of that House is present.

**READING** The reading of a bill's number, sponsor(s), and title in open session by the Senate Secretary or Assembly Clerk. A bill must be read three times before it can be passed. A bill is given first reading upon introduction, second reading when reported by a committee (or may be sent directly to second reading without committee reference), and third reading when posted for a final vote.

**REAPPORTIONMENT** The redrawing of the State legislative districts by an Apportionment Commission to maintain an equal population in each district. New Jersey's districts are reapportioned every ten years following the federal census.

**RECESS** A temporary break during a floor session or a period when no legislative sessions are held.

**REDISTRICTING** The redrawing of congressional districts, usually following a new population census, to maintain an equal population in each district. (See REAPPORTIONMENT)

**REPUBLICAN** A member of the Republican Party, one of the two major political parties in the U.S., which was originally organized by Thomas Jefferson, and reorganized in 1854.

**RESCIND** To annul or undo a previously taken action.

**RESOLUTION** An action of the Legislature that expresses the policies, sentiment, opinions, or direction of one or both Houses. Types include joint, concurrent, ceremonial, and one-house resolutions.

**CHAPTER LAW** Each act passed by the Legislature and approved by the Governor. Chapter laws are organized numerically in order of the Governor's approval and compiled annually.

**CITATION** A certificate issued by a legislator to mark a notable achievement by an individual or an organization or to offer a memorial tribute. (See IN-MEMORIAM CERTIFICATE)

**CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY** A person, not a member of the Legislature, who is elected by the General Assembly to serve as its chief administrative officer. The Clerk's duties include reading all bills and resolutions on first, second, and third reading; recording the vote on all bills and resolutions; and providing general supervision over certain employees of the House.

**CODIFICATION OF LAWS** The systematic arrangement of laws. In New Jersey, chapter laws are codified according to subject matter.

**COMMITTEE AIDE** A professional legislative staff member provided by the nonpartisan Office of Legislative Services and partisan offices, to assist each committee in administrative, technical, and research capacities.

**COMMITTEE CHAIR** Committee chairs are chosen by the presiding officers of the respective Houses and are primarily responsible for overseeing committee consideration of pending bills. A chair may also direct a review of activity in any State agency.

**COMMITTEE, COMMISSION** A group established by law, resolution, or order of the presiding officer to investigate a particular issue or area and make recommendations for legislative or administrative action. Committees or commissions are frequently comprised of legislators of one or both Houses, subject area experts, or public members appointed because of the positions they hold in State agencies and private organizations.

**COMMITTEE REPORT** Report issued by a committee after a meeting indicating all official action taken.

**COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE** When a standing reference committee combines several bills that are related in subject, to broaden or unify the legislation's intent.

**CONCUR** To agree.

**CONCURRENT RESOLUTION** A resolution adopted by both the Senate and General Assembly to express the policy or opinions of the Legislature; often used to petition Congress to take certain actions; to establish study commissions composed entirely of legislators or appointees of the presiding officer; to adopt joint rules; and to propose amendments to the State Constitution. Requires no action by the Governor.

**CONDITIONAL VETO** A veto in which the Governor objects to parts of a bill and proposes amendments that would make it acceptable. If the Legislature re-enacts the bill (by a simple majority) with the recommended amendments, it is presented again to the Governor for signature.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST** A situation occurring when an official's private interests may benefit from his or her public actions.

**CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT** One of 13 districts in New Jersey from which a congressional representative is elected. The districts are established by State law and are redrawn following a decennial census to maintain equal population in each.

**CONSENT LIST** A list of bills which, by prearrangement of the majority and minority parties, are passed by the House without objection or debate.

**PRE-FILING OF BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS** The process whereby members and members-elect of the Legislature may file bills and resolutions for introduction in the new annual legislative session before that session begins. The pre-filing period runs from November 15 to the first Tuesday in January, according to the Joint Rules of the Senate and General Assembly. Bills and resolutions filed in this way are numbered, printed, and available for distribution prior to the start of the new session. Formal introduction occurs after the session is commenced, at either the first or second meeting of the House.

**PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE** A legislator, elected by members of the Senate to serve as the chief presiding officer during sessions, who appoints committee chairs and members of committees and commissions, refers bills and resolutions to reference committees, sets the agenda for session days, and supervises the administration of the day-to-day business of the Senate.

**PRESIDENT OR SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE (PRO TEM)** A member of the Senate or General Assembly who is elected to serve as that House's presiding officer in the absence of the President or Speaker, literally "for the time being."

**PRESIDING OFFICERS** The highest-ranking legislative leadership and administrative positions in the two Houses. The Senate elects a President, and the General Assembly a Speaker.

**PRIME SPONSOR** The legislator whose name appears first among the sponsors of a bill or resolution. The prime sponsor has the right to select co-sponsors and may exercise a number of other prerogatives in regard to the proposed legislation. The co-prime sponsor is the second sponsor and enjoys some of the rights with respect to the bill.

**QUORUM** The minimum number of members of a House of the

**ONE-HOUSE RESOLUTION** A resolution adopted by one House to express policy or opinions, regulate its internal organization or procedures, or establish a study committee under its sole jurisdiction.

**ORGANIZATION DAY** The second Tuesday in January marks the official beginning of each annual legislative session.

**PAMPHLET LAWS** The official name of the collection of New Jersey's chapter laws. (See CHAPTER LAWS)

**PARLIAMENTARIAN** A person skilled in parliamentary rules, practice, and/or debate, who advises House members as to the proper procedures for the conduct of legislative business.

**PARTISAN STAFF** Staff members who serve under the direction of the majority and minority leadership to provide research, policy, public relations, and administrative services to their respective party leaders and legislators.

**PARTY CONFERENCE** A meeting of the members of one political party from one House of the Legislature to discuss legislative business. Also called a caucus.

**PERSONAL PRIVILEGE** The parliamentary procedure whereby members of both houses have the opportunity to express their feelings regarding the "safety, dignity, and integrity" of the proceedings or the "rights, reputation, and conduct of members" by gaining recognition from the presiding officer.

**POCKET VETO** The only type of veto in which the Governor does not return the bill to the Legislature for a possible vote to override. This veto applies only to bills passed within the last 10 days of a two-year legislative session. The Governor, in essence, "pockets" the bill.

**CONSTITUENT** A resident of a legislator's district.

**CONSTITUTION** A written instrument defining and limiting the duties and powers of a government and guaranteeing certain rights to the people who are subject to that government's laws. New Jersey's first constitution was adopted in 1776, its present one in 1947.

**CO-SPONSOR(S)** The sponsor(s) of a bill or resolution in addition to the prime sponsor(s).

**DEBATE** The formal discussion and comment/controversy of a matter by the members of the Senate and General Assembly during a session. Precise limitations on debate in the New Jersey Legislature have been set by the rules of each House.

**DEMOCRAT** A member of the Democratic Party, one of the two major political parties in the U.S., which emerged in the late 1820s.

**DISTRICT** (See LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT)

**DISTRICT OFFICES** The offices maintained by legislators in their respective districts for the purpose of serving their constituents.

**DRAFT** The copy of a preliminary bill, not yet officially introduced.

**"DROP IN THE HOPPER"** Deliver bill to House for introduction.

**EMERGENCY RESOLUTION** A motion used to expedite the passage of legislation by advancing a bill from second and third reading on the same day. Requires an affirmative vote of three-fourths of House membership. (30 votes in the Senate; 60 votes in the General Assembly)

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH** One of the three branches of government, it is headed by the Governor and includes the following principal

departments: Agriculture; Banking and Insurance; Community Affairs; Corrections; Education; Environmental Protection; Health and Senior Services; Human Services; Labor; Law and Public Safety; Military and Veterans' Affairs; Personnel; State; Transportation; and Treasury.

**EX-OFFICIO** Membership on a committee or board by virtue of a particular office or position held.

**EXPENDITURE** Charges incurred, whether paid or unpaid.

**FIRST REPRINT (SECOND, THIRD, ETC.)** The designation that indicates the number of times that a bill or resolution has been reprinted after being amended either by committee or floor action.

**FISCAL NOTE** A statement that indicates the anticipated financial impact of proposed legislation on State or local government.

**FISCAL YEAR** An accounting period of 12 months. In New Jersey State government, this period runs from July 1 to June 30.

**FLOOR** The area of the legislative chamber occupied by the members and staff of the House. A legislator "has the floor" when he or she has been granted permission by the presiding officer to address the house.

**GALLERY** The area of the legislative chamber from which proceedings may be viewed by visitors.

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY** In New Jersey, one of the two Houses that comprises the State Legislature. The General Assembly has 80 members - two elected from each legislative district - and is presided over by the Speaker of the General Assembly.

**GERRYMANDERING** The act of drawing legislative district boundaries to gain partisan or factional political advantages.

**LOBBYIST** A person who communicates with the Legislature and the Governor to support or oppose legislation. Officially, a lobbyist is called a legislative agent.

**MAJORITY, MINORITY** These terms refer to the political party having the most (majority) or fewest (minority) representatives in either House.

**MAJORITY LEADER** The floor leader of the majority party in each House, elected by the members of the majority party.

**MINORITY LEADER** The floor leader of the minority party in each House, elected by the members of the minority party.

**MOTION** A proposal calling for specific action.

**"NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE DIGEST"** A publication produced by the Office of Legislative Services, Legislative Information and Bill Room (LIBR), the day after each session of either House providing up-to-date information of legislative activity. The publication contains various categories of bill status including bills introduced, bills passed, and bills signed into law since the last session. Single copies are available free of charge through the LIBR office.

**NONPARTISAN** Without political affiliation.

**OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES** An agency of the Legislature established by law to provide professional, non-partisan staff services to the Legislature and its officers, members, commissions, and committees. These services include general, legal, and fiscal research and analysis, bill drafting committee staffing and computer data base management. In addition, the office provides information about the Legislature to the public.

**LEGISLATIVE LIAISON** A person who represents an executive department before the Legislature and who assists the Legislature with technical expertise and information about the department.

**LEGISLATIVE MANUAL** A private publication (commonly referred to as the Fitzgerald's Manual or Red Book) that serves as an almanac of information about the State of New Jersey and its government, including biographies of present and former governors, legislators, and cabinet officials.

**LEGISLATIVE SERVICES COMMISSION** A bipartisan panel, comprised of eight members from each House, that oversees the non-partisan Office of Legislative Services and coordinates other services for the Legislature, including legislative facilities, computer services, legislative printing, the district office program, and personnel policies.

**LEGISLATIVE SESSION** The formal two-year term for each New Jersey Legislature. The term is divided into two annual sessions. (See SESSION YEAR) Scheduled voting meetings of either House are also called legislative sessions. Voting sessions (meeting days) of the New Jersey Legislature are usually held on Mondays and/or Thursdays.

**LEGISLATURE** The elected, representative branch of State government formed by the Constitution to make and revise laws, appropriate State funds, approve certain executive nominations, and propose constitutional changes.

**LINE-ITEM VETO** Applying only to bills containing an appropriation, this veto action allows the Governor to approve the bill but reduce or eliminate monies appropriated for specific items. (See VETO)

**GOVERNOR** The Governor is the chief executive officer of the State, and responsible for oversight of all Executive Branch functions.

**GRANDFATHER CLAUSE** A provision within a bill that allows activities, individuals, or groups involved prior to its enactment to be exempt from or included in a provision of that legislation.

**HEARING** A formal meeting, usually of a committee or commission, at which testimony on a question or issue is accepted from the general public and/or invited witnesses.

**HOUSE** This term can refer to the room or chamber in which a legislative body meets, but most often refers to the body itself. The Senate is one House and the General Assembly is the other.

**HOUSE UNDER CALL** A motion requiring all members of a House to remain in the legislative chamber during a voting session until the House concludes its business. This may be done to maintain a quorum, or during consideration of an important issue.

**IMMUNITY** The privileges afforded by the Constitution whereby legislators are exempt from arrest while attending a session or when traveling to and from a session (except in cases of treason or high misdemeanor, now classified as a crime of the third degree or greater); also, the exemption from questioning on remarks made in speech or debate during a session or committee meeting.

**IN-MEMORIAM CERTIFICATE** A certificate issued by legislators to offer a memorial tribute.

**INTRODUCTION** The presentation of a bill or resolution to the legislative body for its consideration. It is formally accomplished when the Secretary of the Senate or Clerk of the General Assembly, in open session, announces the bill's number and sponsor(s) and reads its title.

**JOINT RESOLUTION** A formal action adopted by both Houses and approved by the Governor. A joint resolution has the effect of a law and is often used instead of a bill when the purpose is of a temporary nature, or to establish a commission or express an opinion.

**JOINT SESSION** The combined meeting of the Senate and General Assembly for purposes such as receiving the Governor's annual "State of the State" and budget messages and other addresses by the Governor or distinguished visitors, and to hold special commemorative ceremonies. Also, the Constitution provides that the two Houses meet in joint session when appointing the State Auditor.

**JUDICIAL** One of the three branches of government, the Judicial Branch, under the direction of the Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, is responsible for the operation of the State's court system and the regulation of attorneys.

**JURAT** A certificate attached to a bill confirming its passage in one House before being delivered to the second House for consideration.

**LAW** All the official rules and codes that govern citizens' actions, including the Constitution, statutory laws enacted by the Legislature, case laws established by court decisions, and administrative law as set forth by Executive Branch agencies.

**LEADERSHIP** Officers and leaders are elected each legislative year by members of the two Houses and respective parties. The Senate elects a President and President Pro Tem and the General Assembly elects a Speaker and Speaker Pro Tem. Party members within each house elect a Majority or Minority Leader, Assistant Leaders, and Whips.

**LEGISLATIVE AIDES** Assistants employed by a legislator to

perform a variety of duties, including addressing concerns of constituents, researching and tracking legislation, and handling administrative functions.

**LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR** A free publication listing the date, time, and location for legislative sessions, committee and commission meetings, and public hearings.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL** The chief legal officer of the Legislature and adviser to the legislative leadership and to committees and commissions on matters of parliamentary procedure and legal matters affecting the Legislature, as well as issues pertaining to the Conflicts of Interest Law and the Legislative Code of Ethics.

**LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION** All the legislators representing one district or county.

#### **"LEGISLATIVE DIGEST"**

(See "NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE DIGEST")

**LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT** One of the forty areas in New Jersey from which one senator and two General Assembly members are elected. Districts, many of which cross county lines, are established by a special Apportionment Commission and are of equal population.

**"LEGISLATIVE INDEX"** A private publication that provides a cumulative listing of all bills and resolutions introduced in each House. Includes the action taken on and synopsis of each.

#### **LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION AND BILL ROOM (LIBR)**

A unit under the Director of Public Information of the Office of Legislative Services that supplies a variety of information about the Legislature to legislators and the public.