



Reading Recovery
Community

ADVOCACY GUIDE

Revised February 2022

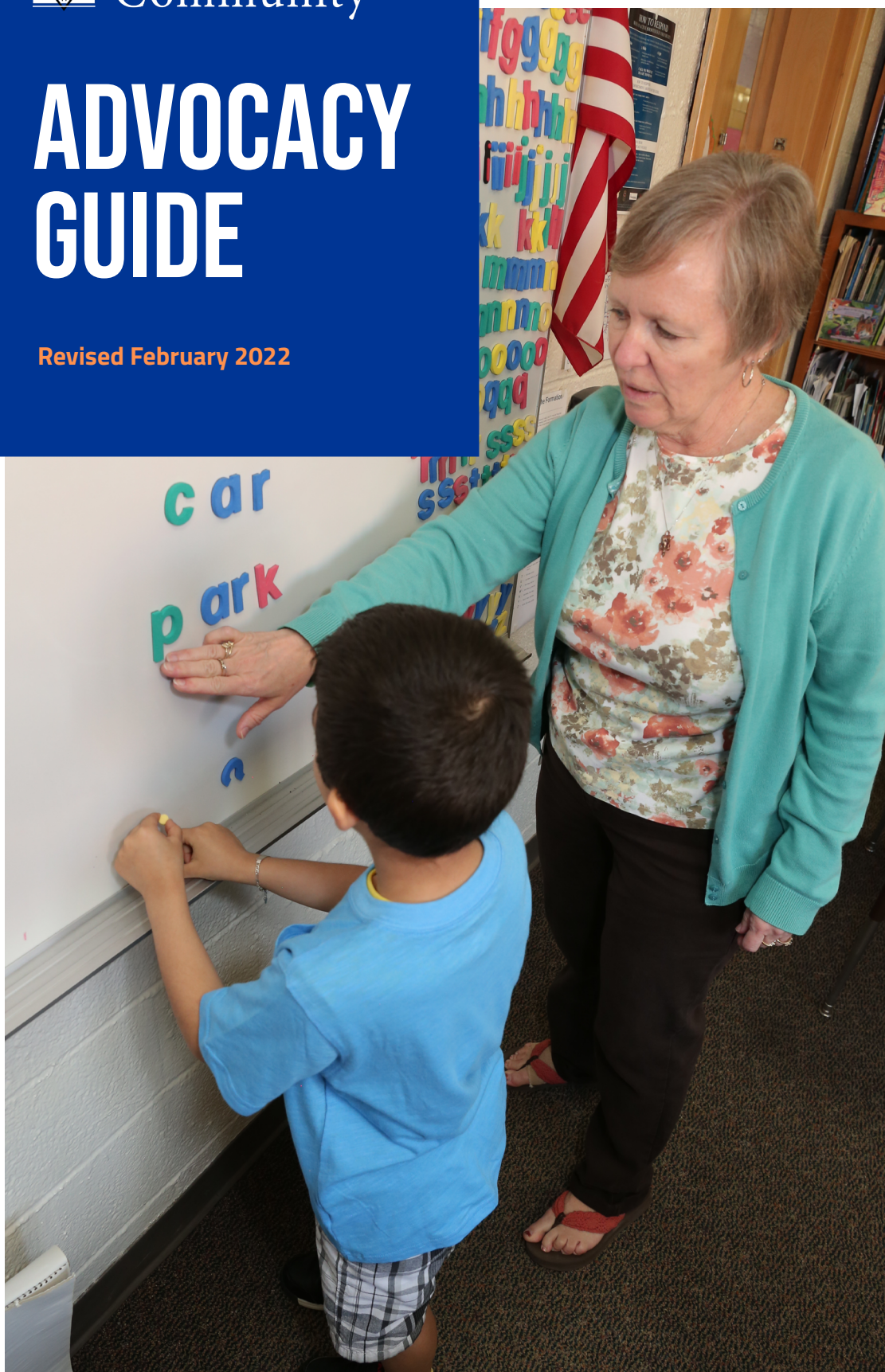


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WHAT IS ADVOCACY?



Advocacy is organized activism in support of an idea or cause. As an advocate for Reading Recovery, you can help ensure that this proven reading and writing intervention remains available to the children who need it.

Advocacy consists of constituents contacting their elected officials about issues that are important to them and establishing relationships with these legislators. These relationships are then leveraged to influence public policy decisions. By establishing relationships and champions, you encourage public officials to make a commitment to you and to Reading Recovery.

People often ask how advocacy is different from lobbying. Lobbying is an effort to influence the thinking of legislators or other public officials for or against a specific cause or a specific piece of proposed legislation. Advocacy is the promotion of a cause, idea, or policy. In other words, your active support of Reading Recovery is considered advocacy.

The most-effective advocates believe in what they are advocating. Reading Recovery professionals who share their passion for Reading Recovery with legislators and policymakers can influence decisions to make a difference in the literacy lives of children.

ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LAWMAKERS

If you have not met your lawmakers, you should designate your first meeting as a get-acquainted occasion. Some opportunities include:



TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Attend a town hall meeting held by your lawmakers and introduce yourself as a local constituent and teacher.



CIVIC ACTIVITIES

Public or official functions in which you are involved—such as a ribbon-cutting ceremony, an open house, or an award ceremony—are great ways to get acquainted with your lawmakers by inviting them to attend.



STATE AND LOCAL AFFILIATES

You may have opportunities to meet your lawmakers through state and local associations.



OBSERVING A READING RECOVERY LESSON

Hosting lawmakers to observe a behind-the-glass or lesson allows them to see firsthand the power of Reading Recovery.



MEET-AND-GREET RECEPTIONS

Hosting a meet-and-greet reception is a good way for groups of constituents to meet and chat with lawmakers one-on-one.



CONGRESSIONAL VISITS

Contact your lawmaker's Washington, DC, or district office to schedule a personal meeting. Visiting with your elected officials in their home office is an excellent, yet often overlooked, opportunity to establish a relationship.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR CONGRESSIONAL VISITS

Top 10 things to remember when conducting successful legislative meetings

Meeting in person with lawmakers is the most-effective means of advocacy. Here are some tips to help you prepare:

#1 Always schedule an appointment in advance.

Time is valuable in legislative offices. Contact the office in advance to arrange a meeting—do not drop by and expect to meet with someone. It is best to email your meeting request and to follow up with a phone call. Due to legislators' busy schedules, meetings are often rescheduled or reassigned to staff.

#2 Prepare thoroughly for your meeting.

Do your homework before meeting with your legislators. Visit their websites to find out about their policy interests and voting records. Particularly, find out how they have voted in the past on literacy and education issues, be aware of their party leadership's stance on these issues, and know committee assignments. If you are going with others, organize with them in advance and designate a spokesperson. For greatest impact, know what each person is going to say, rehearse it, and stay with the topic. The more people involved, the shorter each presentation must be. Prepare information that you think will be helpful to your legislator or the staff person. Some examples include: articles in local newspapers about Reading Recovery, statistics or school/site reports about Reading Recovery, facts sheets about your program or about the bill you are discussing, and outreach materials prepared by RRCNA.

#3 Be on time.

#4 Have a "Message" and stick to it.

Successful legislative meetings are always narrow in scope. Stick to a few main points of support for your issue and make a specific request for action.

#5 Bring it home.

Always connect your issue to your institution or community. Legislators value your thoughts as a constituent. They rely on local stories and sources for the work they do.

#6**Make a specific request.**

The purpose of your meeting is to gain support for your issue. Legislators expect you to make requests. It is important to make the request specific and direct, preferably tied to current legislative activity.

#7**Do not characterize your issue in partisan terms. Stick to the facts.**

Keep the discussion on policy not politics. Remember you want legislators, regardless of their political affiliation, to support your position.

#8**Build relationships with staff.**

Staff can be very influential in getting your requests honored by your elected officials. You should make every effort to establish relationships with staff and encourage them to use you as a resource on issues related to literacy.

#9**Follow up.**

Email or fax a thank you after your meeting to express your appreciation and to reinforce any commitments made during the meeting. Remember to provide any additional information you offered or the legislator or staff member requested during the meeting. You want to remain a reliable source. Also, make sure you contact RRCNA to inform them of any outcomes of your visit--this will help in formulating the overall legislative strategy for the organization.

#10**Develop an ongoing relationship with the legislator or staff person.**

Continue to make contacts after your first visit, starting with your thank you note. Send relevant articles or call periodically with updates. You can offer your assistance in thinking through solutions that could lead to more-effective early literacy solutions. One of the best opportunities to inform your legislators is by inviting them to observe a Reading Recovery lesson.



HOW TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH LAWMAKERS

While standard letters are still used on Capitol Hill, email has become a much more readily used form of communication. This is due in part to the extensive screening process that standard mail must undergo. For that reason, it is best to email, fax, or call. This section includes helpful hints for communicating via email, letters, faxes, and phone.

TIPS FOR EMAIL

- **Always put your name and address at the top of your message.** (Unless there is a web form that provides for it elsewhere.) The most important thing is to establish yourself as a constituent because non-constituent email rarely gets a response.
- **Be brief.** While one or two pages are acceptable for a letter, you should use only a few paragraphs by email to make your strongest points.
- **State your position clearly.** Make a concrete request, such as asking for a yes or no vote or asking them to cosponsor legislation.
- **Send no attachments.** Do not attach files or images to your email.
- **Do not copy others on the email.** Do not send a copy to everyone. Legislators want to know that you are sincere in appealing to them specifically.
- **Remember to proofread before sending.** This is essential.

TIPS FOR PHONE CALLS

- **Prepare ahead of time.** It is imperative that you plan for your phone conversation. If you do not have talking points prepared, jot down a few notes before making the call. Be prepared to leave a message, as lawmakers and their aides often have busy schedules and do not answer calls.
- **Contact the right person.** When calling a lawmaker's office, ask to speak with the aide responsible for education issues. If this person is not available, leave your name and contact information, the issue you are calling about, and the specific action you want the legislator to take.
- **Follow up.** Always follow up with a letter or email thanking the legislator and the staff for their time. Also use this opportunity to reiterate your position and provide any additional materials.

TIPS FOR LETTERS AND FAXES

- **Identify yourself as a constituent.** Put your name and complete address on both the envelope and the letter. Legislators will feel obligated to respond to constituent mail only, so it's important to establish a district connection.
- **Use proper forms of address.** Remember to address your lawmaker as "The Honorable." Be sure to get his or her title correct, such as Senator, Representative, or Assemblyman. Use "The Honorable" in the address and the office title in the salutation (Dear Representative Doe).
- **Be brief and clear.** Make sure your letter is no more than two pages, preferably one page. Make your request in the first paragraph. While you should specify the bill number or name, you do not need to explain the legislation in your letter.
- **State and repeat your position.** Make your position or request clear in the opening and closing of your letter. Be specific.
- **Personalize your message.** A personal letter is much more effective than a form letter. Though forms, postcards, and petitions are read and counted, they do not have the same impact as a personalized, individualized letter. If a sample letter is provided, incorporate your own words and personal perspective into the text.
- **Be polite.** Everyone responds better to kindness and professionalism.
- **Do not send enclosures.** These extras are rarely read or filed.
- **Ask for a response.** How will the member vote? What additional information is needed? Is there something you can do to get that information?
- **Make your message timely.** Do not procrastinate. Be aware of where the legislation is in the process. Is it up for a vote tomorrow in committee? Or, on the floor? Time your letter accordingly. Communications are more effective at critical times in the legislative process.
- **Send a copy of your letter to RRCNA.** It is important to notify RRCNA when you've contacted a legislator as it helps the government relations staff to coordinate legislative strategy and additional advocacy efforts. Please send RRCNA a copy of any response you receive.



HOW DO I FIND MY MEMBER OF CONGRESS?

Find your representative's contact information, including phone and fax numbers, by visiting www.house.gov and enter your ZIP code plus 4

OR

Find your senator's information by visiting www.senate.gov

OR

By calling the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and asking for your representative or senator.

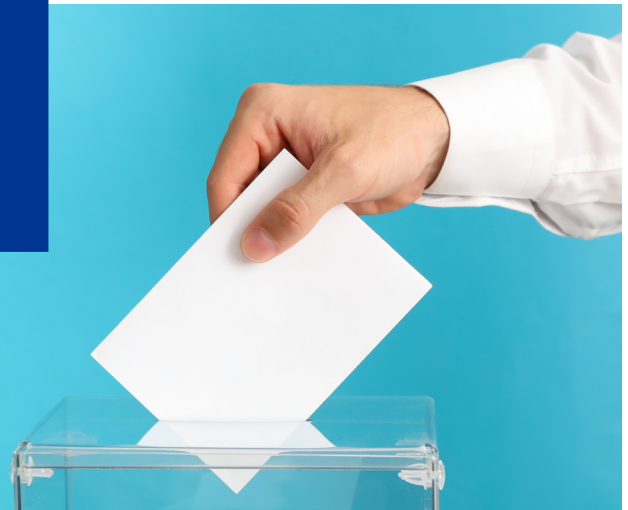
OR

Search by ZIP code on the RRCNA Advocacy Page: www.readingrecovery.org/act-now



MODIFIED FROM THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION AND NSTA WEBSITES.

WHY LEGISLATORS VOTE THE WAY THEY DO



Legislators are individuals who try to be responsive to their constituencies. They also want to get re-elected. Many factors have an impact on the legislator's position – constituents, personal inclinations, political philosophy, party dictates, promises made, and other factors.

There are many influences at work, including:

- ☑ **Constituency interest as determined by letters, phone calls, surveys, and polls.**
- ☑ **Opinions of other legislators.**
- ☑ **The stance of the party caucus.**
- ☑ **The administration's stance (Governor or President).**
- ☑ **Lobbyists and special interest groups.**
- ☑ **Campaign workers and contributors.**

You are less likely to make assumptions if you recognize these points. If a legislator opposes your position this time, that same legislator may support a later effort of yours. Be tenacious, but be respectful and understanding of the influences at work in every position or vote taken.

ARRANGING VISITS TO OBSERVE READING RECOVERY

The most effective thing you can do to educate legislators and their staff is to arrange for them to visit your site and to observe a Reading Recovery lesson. Legislators need to understand what you are doing, where, why, and with whom. You may wish to invite an individual legislator or several legislators. A breakfast reception at a Reading Recovery site or a more formal publicized reception to honor specific legislators may be variations on the kind of visit described in the following paragraphs.

PREPARATION

- Call or write the legislators and ask them to accompany you on a tour of your location at their convenience. Send details, time, location, map, etc. The tour should be scheduled at a time when a Reading Recovery lesson or a behind-the-glass session can occur.
- Provide background materials about Reading Recovery.
- Offer to provide transportation to and from the visit.
- Provide refreshments (breakfast, lunch, coffee and cookies), if possible.
- Follow up a letter of invitation with a telephone call.
- Set the date, time, and place, and begin planning.
- Decide who will participate to represent Reading Recovery: Reading Recovery teacher, student, and parents; teacher leader and site coordinator; classroom teacher, school principal, administrator; and others. Choose carefully so as to provide the focus you wish for the visit. Be sure to indicate that the people present are constituents of the visiting legislator.
- Notify the selected participants of the date, time, and location of the visit.
- Specify the purpose of the visit and the agenda — who will say what and when.
- Prepare written materials and share with all participants in advance, if possible. Include information on the number of children served, the number of children whose lessons have been discontinued, and follow-up information about the children's progress beyond first grade. Also include the names, titles, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, and email addresses for all participants. Provide written materials, as appropriate.

- Obtain permission from the student's parents for their child's participation.
- Arrange transportation for the parents and children as needed.
- Reconfirm all the arrangements with all participants, including the legislator, no later than 48 hours prior to the visit.

DURING THE VISIT

- Provide name tags for the legislator's convenience.
- Review the agenda and provide background information about Reading Recovery.
- Observe the lesson.
- Discuss the lesson, including the legislator's questions about the lesson and about the intervention as a whole.
- Provide time for the legislator to talk with the student and the parents about their experiences in Reading Recovery, the changes it has made in their lives, and their support (hopefully) for the expansion of the intervention to be available to every child who needs its support.
- Explain how Reading Recovery fits into the school's overall educational plan for early literacy, how Reading Recovery is an early intervention safety net to catch students before they fail, how Reading Recovery fits with the school's response to intervention approach, and how Reading Recovery compliments the classroom teacher's efforts on behalf of children who need extra support.
- Prepare teachers and other participants to think proactively about issues and questions they want to address when interacting with the legislator.
- Respond to any questions the legislator may have. These may include how many children are served, how much Reading Recovery costs in your school, how retention and referrals to special education have been impacted, how teachers view the intervention, and similar questions.
- Keep the schedule as agreed upon in advance with the legislator unless the legislator specifically indicates that additional time and discussion are desired.
- Take photographs during the visit and submit a short article concerning the visit to the local newspaper.
- Thank the legislator for participating in the visit.

FOLLOWING THE VISIT

- Write a thank you letter to the legislator and to everyone who participated in the visit.
- Provide any follow-up information requested.
- Issue an open invitation for the legislator to return for another visit and to consider you as a resource on Reading Recovery and early literacy intervention.

OVERVIEW OF CONGRESS

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ARTICLE I, SECTION 1, OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION, PROVIDES THAT:

All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a **Senate** and **House of Representatives**.

SENATE

- The Senate is composed of 100 members, two from each state regardless of population or area.
- The Constitution requires the Senate to be divided into three classes for purposes of elections. Senators are elected to 6-year terms, and every 2 years the members of one class—approximately one-third of the Senate—face election or reelection.
- The senator from each state with the longest tenure is referred to as the “senior” senator; the other, the “junior” senator.
- The two senators from each state will never be up for re-election simultaneously; therefore each state’s senators are in different classes.
- The president of the Senate is the vice president of the United States. Their primary role is to cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie (50-50) vote on legislation.
- Senators deal with all issues affecting our nation, and particularly those issues their constituents care about. However, senators often play more integral roles on the issues that come before the committees on which they sit.
- For a complete list of senators, links to individual senators’ websites, and more, go to: www.senate.gov.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- The House of Representatives is composed of 435 members, plus six nonvoting delegates representing American Samoa; District of Columbia; Guam; Virgin Islands; the Commonwealth of the Northern and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.
- All members and delegates are elected every 2 years (with the exception of the resident commissioner from Puerto Rico).
- The number of representatives is determined by a state’s population. Therefore, more-populated states such as California and New York have 53 and 27 representatives respectively, while less-populated states such as Wyoming and Alaska each have one at-large representative, the minimum number allowed by the Constitution.
- Congressional districts are redrawn after every national census or every 10 years.
- For a complete list of representatives, links to individual representatives’ websites, and more, go to: www.house.gov.

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

To those who aren't familiar with federal policy, the drawing up of legislation and the creation of laws may seem complicated when, in fact, the process is relatively straightforward. Anyone may draft a bill; however, only members of Congress may introduce legislation, and by doing so become sponsor(s). There are four basic types of legislation: bills, joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and simple resolutions. The official legislative process begins when a bill or resolution is numbered (H.R. signifies a House bill and S. a Senate bill), referred to a committee, and printed by the Government Printing Office.

STEP 1

Referral to Committee

Bills are usually referred to standing committees in the House or Senate according to carefully delineated rules of procedure.

STEP 2

Committee Action

When a bill reaches a committee it is placed on the committee's calendar. A bill can be referred to a subcommittee or considered by the committee as a whole. It is at this point that a bill is examined carefully and its chances for passage are determined. If the committee does not act on a bill, it is the equivalent of "killing" it.

STEP 3

Subcommittee Review

Often, bills are referred to a subcommittee for study and hearings. Hearings provide the opportunity to put on the record the views of the executive branch, experts, other public officials, supporters, and opponents. Testimony can be in person or submitted in writing.

STEP 4

Mark Up

When the hearings are completed, the subcommittee may meet to "mark up" the bill, that is, to make changes and add amendments prior to recommending the bill to the full committee. If a subcommittee votes not to report legislation to the full committee, the bill dies.

STEP 5

Committee Action to Report a Bill

After receiving a subcommittee's report on a bill, the full committee can conduct further study and hearings, or it can vote on the subcommittee's recommendations and any proposed amendments. The full committee then votes on its recommendation to the House or Senate. This procedure is called "ordering a bill reported."

STEP 6**Publication of a Written Report**

After a committee votes to have a bill reported, the chairman instructs staff to prepare a report on the bill. This report describes the intent and scope of the legislation, impact on existing laws and programs, position of the executive branch, and views of dissenting members.

STEP 7**Scheduling Floor Action**

After a bill is reported back to the chamber where it originated, it is placed in chronological order on the calendar. In the House there are several different legislative calendars, and the speaker and majority leader largely determine if, when and in what order bills come up. In the Senate there is only one legislative calendar that is controlled by the party in control and the majority leader.

STEP 8**Debate**

When a bill reaches the floor of the House or Senate, there are rules and procedures governing the debate. These rules determine the conditions and amount of time allocated for debate.

STEP 9**Voting**

After the debate and the approval of any amendments, the bill is passed or defeated by the members voting.

STEP 10**Referral to Other Chamber**

When a bill is passed by the House or the Senate, it is referred to the other chamber where it usually follows the same route through committee and floor action. This chamber may approve the bill as received, reject it, ignore it, or change it.

STEP 11**Conference Committee Action**

If only minor changes are made to a bill by the other chamber, it is common for the legislation to go back to the first chamber for concurrence. However, when actions of the other chamber significantly alter the bill, a conference committee is formed to reconcile the differences. If the conferees are unable to reach agreement, the legislation dies. If agreement is reached, a conference report is prepared describing the committee members' recommendations for changes. Both the House and the Senate must approve of the conference report.

STEP 12**Final Actions**

After a bill has been approved by the House and Senate in identical form, it is sent to the President. If the President approves of the legislation, he signs it and it becomes law. Or, the President can take no action for 10 days, while Congress is in session, and it automatically becomes law. If the President opposes the bill he can veto it. A "pocket veto" occurs if the President takes no action and the Congress has adjourned its second session. As with a regular veto, a pocket veto kills the legislation.

STEP 13**Overriding a Veto**

If the President vetoes a bill, Congress may attempt to "override the veto." This requires a two-thirds roll call vote of the members who are present in sufficient numbers in both Houses for a quorum.

HOW COMMITTEES WORK



Perhaps the most-important phase of the legislative process is the action by committees. The committees consider every possible aspect of a proposed measure and provide a forum for the public to be heard. A tremendous volume of work, often overlooked by the public, is done by the members in this phase. There are 20 permanent committees in the House of Representatives, and 21 in the Senate. In addition, there are four standing joint committees of the two Houses that have oversight responsibilities but no legislative jurisdiction.

Each committee's jurisdiction is divided into categories under the rules of the House and the Senate. All measures affecting a particular area of the law are referred to the committee with jurisdiction over the particular subject matter. The speaker of the house or the Senate majority leader may refer an introduced bill to multiple committees for consideration of those provisions of the bill within the jurisdiction of each committee concerned. The speaker or majority leader must designate a primary committee of jurisdiction on bills referred to multiple committees.

A member usually seeks selection to the committee that has jurisdiction over a field in which the member is most qualified and interested. Many members are nationally recognized experts in the specialty of their particular committee or subcommittee. For example, the Committee on the Judiciary is traditionally composed almost entirely of lawyers. Membership on the various committees is divided between the two major political parties. The proportion of Republicans and Democrats on a particular committee depends upon who holds the majority in that particular House of Congress. In the current session of Congress, the Republicans hold a majority in the House and Senate, therefore Republicans hold more seats on each committee. The one exception to this rule is the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, whose membership is always divided equally among the two major political parties.

- Members of the House of Representatives may serve only on two committees and four subcommittees, with limited exceptions.
- Except as otherwise noted, Senators may serve on no more than three committees, and five subcommittees (with the exception of the Committee on Appropriations). Members rank in seniority according to the date of their appointment to the full committee. Most often, it is the most senior member of the majority with the most continuous service to the committee that is elected chairman.
- Committee reports are written by the committee staff to describe the purpose and scope of a particular bill and the reasons for its recommended approval. Committee reports generally contain a section-by-section analysis explaining precisely what each section is intended to accomplish.

COMMITTEES OF INTEREST TO READING RECOVERY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



- * **Education and Workforce Committee**
- * **Appropriations Committee – Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies**
- * **Budget Committee**

SENATE



- * **Appropriations Committee - Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education**
- * **Budget Committee**
- * **Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee**

THE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

The budget request officially starts the appropriations process and is the President's suggested level of funding for every federal government program.

For more information on the budget request, visit www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget

Every year, Congress considers 12 "regular" appropriations bills plus additional "emergency" or "supplemental" appropriations bills. These measures provide funding for numerous activities, including education. These measures also fund general government operations such as the administration of federal agencies. Congress has developed certain rules and practices for the consideration of appropriations measures, referred to as the congressional appropriations process.

The real business begins when the House and Senate work on their respective budget resolutions. While this process involves arcane budget-speak and lots of talk of big-picture deficit and spending issues, the budget resolution is of critical importance to even the smallest of federal programs.

The vast majority of programs receive federal funding from the discretionary pot. It is important to keep in mind that while discretionary spending is a source of federal funding, it is not the largest area of federal spending—mandatory spending is.

At this point, it is best to think of discretionary spending as dividing a pie. Every federal program is fighting for as large of a piece of pie as it can get. The budget resolution determines how big the pie is—meaning the larger the number, the easier it is for programs to receive funding or, conversely, the smaller the pie, the tougher the fight for funding.



WHAT IS THE BUDGET RESOLUTION?

The federal government spends its money in three basic ways:

1. Paying the interest costs on the federal deficit (similar to paying off a mortgage, except on a much larger scale).
2. "Mandatory" spending – these are the things the federal government must spend money on regardless of cost. Typically, these are large social programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and subsidies on student loans.
3. "Discretionary" spending – this is everything else. Each year, Congress chooses which programs to fund and which not to fund. They are under no legal obligation to fund anything in particular.

Who decides how big the pie is? The process starts in the House and Senate Budget Committees. Through deliberations, controlled by the majority party, the Budget Committees decide how big the pie is. Amendments are considered in committee and on the House and Senate floor, and finally, the pie is set. From there, it is up to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to divide the pie accordingly, funding programs such as those that support Reading Recovery.

Therefore, if the pie isn't big enough, there is very little appropriators can do to prevent programs from being eliminated, let alone provide increases. This is how the budget resolution impacts programs at the Department of Education and all other federal agencies.

APPROPRIATIONS

Traditionally, once the budget resolution is completed, the House and Senate then set to work crafting appropriations legislation within the parameters set by the budget resolution. The appropriation enables an agency or department to 1) make spending commitments, and 2) spend money. Except in the case of entitlements, an appropriation is the key determinant of how much will be spent on a program.

Congress must pass appropriations bills to provide money to carry out government programs for every fiscal year. Appropriations bills are usually divided up by type of program and agency into 12 separate bills: Agriculture; Commerce/Justice/Science; Defense; Energy and Water; Financial Services; Homeland Security; Interior/Environment; Labor/Health and Human Services/Education; Legislative Branch; Military Construction/Veterans' Affairs; State/Foreign Operations; and Transportation/Housing and Urban Development/Judiciary.

The 10 subcommittees within the House Appropriations Committee and the 12 subcommittees within the Senate Appropriations Committee draft legislation to allocate funds to government agencies within their jurisdictions. These subcommittees are responsible for reviewing the President's budget request, hearing testimony from government officials and the public, and drafting the spending plans for the coming fiscal year.

Their work is passed on to the full House or Senate Appropriations Committees, which may review and modify the bills and forward them to the floor for consideration. Once the bills are passed by each chamber, they move to Conference where the conferees must agree on appropriations levels that fall within the range established by the already-passed House and Senate versions. The resulting Conference reports must be agreed to by both the House and the Senate before the bill can be sent to the President's desk for signature.

AUTHORIZATIONS

Authorizing legislation establishes the funding limits for programs. You will often hear members of Congress, their staff, lobbyists, and advocates say "funding for the program was authorized at \$100 million, but only \$12 million was appropriated." An authorized funding level does not indicate the amount of actual funds.

CAPITOL HILL GLOSSARY

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Many of these definitions are taken from *Congress at Your Fingertips*, edited by Capitol Advantage.

Act – Legislation that has passed both houses of Congress and become law.

Amendment – A change in a bill or document by adding, substituting, or omitting portions of it. Action on amendments can be taken at the subcommittee, at the full committee, or on the floor.

Appropriations Bill – Legislation that provides funds for authorized programs.

Authorization Bill – Legislation establishing a program and setting funding limits. You will often hear members of Congress, their staff, lobbyists, and advocates say “funding for the program was authorized at \$100 million, but only \$12 million was appropriated.” An authorized funding level does not indicate the amount of actual funds.

Block Grants – Lump sums given to the states by the federal government for loosely defined purposes, such as childcare or improving public safety.

Briefing – A session held by members of Congress to inform the public, the media, advocates, and others about an issue, legislation, or the status of legislation. Sometimes questions are taken by the members of Congress; other times it is purely an informational session with no time allotted for questions.

Caucus – Meeting of Republican or Democratic members of Congress to determine policy and/or choose leaders.

Cloak Rooms – Small rooms off the House and Senate floor where members can rest and hold informal conferences.

Cloture – Method of limiting debate or ending a filibuster in the Senate. At least 60 Senators must vote in favor before cloture can be invoked.

Colloquy – A formal conversation, often in written form, between members of Congress to provide clarification on a point or issue.

Concurrent Resolution – Legislative action used to express the position of the House or the Senate, but not having the force of law.

Continuing Resolution – Legislation that gives budget authority for specific ongoing activities used when Congress hasn’t yet passed all regular appropriations bills prior to the start of the fiscal year (October 1).

Committee – A working subdivision of the House or Senate that prepares legislation or conducts investigations; committees and their subcommittees have specific areas of concern.

Conference Committee – Meeting between representatives and senators to resolve differences when two versions of a similar bill have been passed by the House and Senate.

Congressional Record – Official transcript of the proceedings in Congress.

“Dear Colleague” Letter – A letter circulated to members asking for their participation. It often asks members to cosponsor a bill.

Engrossed Bill – Final copy of a bill passed by either the House or Senate with amendments. The bill is then delivered to the other chamber.

Enrolled Bill – Final copy of a bill that has passed both the House and Senate in identical form.

Extension of Remarks – When a member of Congress inserts material in the Congressional Record that is not directly related to the debate underway.

Filibuster – Tactic used in the Senate whereby a member of the minority party intentionally delays a vote.

Fiscal Year – Accounting year. For the federal government, the fiscal year (FY) is October 1 to September 30 of the following calendar year.

Guidance – Informal letters and guidance from the executive branch explaining its stance, but technically not binding under the law.

H.R. – Letters followed by a number that signify a bill that has originated in the House of Representatives.

Hearing – A committee session in which witnesses are called to testify about a particular issue. Hearings are usually conducted at the subcommittee level first in order to determine whether the issue or bill in question should be taken up in the full committee.

Joint Resolution – Legislation similar to a bill that has the force of law if passed by both houses and signed by the President, generally used for special circumstances. A joint resolution can originate in either the House or the Senate.

Lame Duck – Member of Congress (or the President) who has not been reelected but whose term has not yet expired. The expression can also describe a session of Congress during which the appropriations bills for that year are not passed before the next session of Congress begins.

Logrolling – Process whereby members help each other get particular legislation passed. One member will help another on one piece of legislation in return for similar help.

Motion to Table – Proposal to postpone consideration of a matter in the Senate.

Omnibus Bill – Bill regarding a single subject that combines many different aspects of that subject.

President Pro Tempore – Senator who presides over the Senate in the absence of the vice president of the United States. The President pro tempore is usually the longest-serving member of the majority party.

Pocket Veto – When the President does not sign or veto legislation submitted to him or her within ten days of Congress’ adjournment, the bill dies.

Point of Order – An objection that language, an amendment, or a bill is in violation of a rule. Also used to force a quorum call.

Quorum – The number of senators or representatives who must be present before a legislative body can conduct official business.

Quorum Call – In the Senate, a method of determining whether there is a quorum. Often used to suspend debate without adjourning.

Ranking Members – The members of the majority and minority party on a committee next in seniority after the chair.

Regulatory – Law-binding regulations issued by the executive branch to clarify and expand upon statutory law. An example would be the regulations issued by the Department of Education addressing the No Child Left Behind Act.

Sense of the House/Senate – Legislative language that offers the opinion of the House/Senate, but does not make law.

Simple Resolution – A measure considered only by the body in which it is introduced, a simple resolution that addresses a matter concerning the rules, the operation, or the opinion of either house alone.

S – Letter followed by a number that signifies a bill that has originated in the Senate.

Statutory – Enacted or authorized by statute. An example of statutory law is the No Child Left Behind Act.

Unanimous Consent – A procedure whereby a matter is considered agreed to if no member on the floor objects. Unanimous consent motions save time by eliminating the need for a vote.

Whip – Assistant leader for each party in each chamber who keeps other members of the party informed of the legislative agenda of the leader. The whip also monitors the sentiment among party members for certain legislation and tries

COMMON ACRONYMS

GAO – Government Accountability Office

GPO – General Printing Office

OMB – Office of Management and Budget

CBO – Congressional Budget Office

CRS – Congressional Research Service

HOB – House Office Building

SOB – Senate Office Building

NCLB – The No Child Left Behind Act

HEA – The Higher Education Act

IDEA – The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

WIA – The Workforce Investment Act

HELP – The Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in the Senate

LHHS – The House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittees

WEB RESOURCES

Congressional Budget Office

Analyzes budget proposals and provides economic forecasts.

<http://www.cbo.gov/>

Government Printing Office

The information provided on this site is the official, published version of products produced by the federal government.

<http://www.gpo.gov/>

House Appropriations Committee

Grants money to fund government agencies and programs.

<http://appropriations.house.gov/>

House Budget Committee

Introduces a budget resolution that, when approved, becomes the guidelines for appropriation process.

<http://budget.house.gov/>

House Education and Workforce Committee

Working to provide quality education for all Americans and ensure the welfare of American workers.

<http://edworkforce.house.gov/>

Senate Appropriations Committee

Grants money to fund government agencies and programs.

<http://appropriations.senate.gov/>

Senate Budget Committee

Introduces a budget resolution which, when approved, becomes the guidelines for appropriation process.

<http://www.budget.senate.gov/>

Senate HELP Committee

Deals with issues relating to health, education, labor, or pensions.

<http://help.senate.gov/>

Senate Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

Committee that focuses specifically on labor, health and human services, and education issues.

<https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/subcommittees/labor-health-and-human-services-education-and-related-agencies>

U.S. Department of Education

Federal agency that outlines the federal government's initiatives and priorities for education.

<http://www.ed.gov>

U.S. House of Representatives

Homepage for representatives of the 112th Congress.

<http://www.house.gov>

U.S. Senate

Homepage for senators of the 112th Congress.

<http://www.senate.gov>

White House Home Page

Provides direct access to federal services, including applications for federal student aid.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov>

