

# The Legislative Process in California and the Development of Mental Health Legislation

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## Understanding the Structure of the California Legislature<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

One of the ways to help individuals with psychiatric disabilities is to use the legislative process to make laws and to bring about positive change on behalf of the community. This fact sheet will provide information about how the legislative process works (including how a mental health bill moves through that process), and provide helpful information about how you can impact the process.

The Legislative Branch of the California State Government makes the laws of the state. The State Legislature has two parts, often called two houses. The Senate has 40 members; each Senator is elected to serve a four-year term. The Assembly has 80 members; each elected member serves a two-year term.

People elected to the Legislature for the first time in 2012 or later may serve a total of twelve years in either house, or a combination of the two houses, if re-elected. For example, a person may serve all twelve years in either the Assembly

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<sup>1</sup> For more information see: <http://senate.ca.gov/legislativeprocess>.

or the Senate, or the combination of the two houses. Each member represents a district of the state.

Each Legislator has an office in Sacramento and at least one office in the district they represent. Legislators have staff members who work in each office, and those staff members want to hear from people who live in the district.

A legislative session lasts two years. It begins January 1 and ends on September 30. The legislative session begins in an odd numbered year and ends in an even numbered year. For example, 2014 is the second year of a two year session. Bills have to go through the legislative process and make it to the Governor's desk before the end of the two year period, otherwise the bill is considered "dead"; it will need to be introduced again in the next session, and it will start at the beginning of the process. On average, the Legislature will work on about 6,000 bills in a two-year period.

## The California Legislative Process and Mental Health Bills

### **Finding an Author: Advocating Ideas for a Bill**

Legislation is written for many reasons and starts with an idea because:

- A problem needs a solution
- Something new needs regulations; meaning rules
- Someone has an idea to make something better
- A budget item; meaning some of the money used to run the state

It is usually an individual, an organization, or a Legislator that has an idea for legislation.

### **Bill Ideas That Come From Informational Hearings**

Sometimes the idea for legislation comes out of an informational hearing that the Legislature decides to hold to gather more information on a particular topic. For example, the Senate has the Select Committee on Mental Health. This committee is set up to identify the best methods and current trends in mental health treatment. The Select Committee also looks at access to treatment,

stigma, and discrimination and how those factors and other issues affect the finances of the State of California and its local governments.<sup>2</sup>

The Assembly also has a Select Committee on Disabilities. This Committee's mission is to ensure the rights and dignity of all people with disabilities. This Committee advocates on behalf of people with disabilities by holding informational hearings, researching current topics and serving as a resource for the Assembly and others.<sup>3</sup> The Select Committees often hold hearings to discuss related issues and these hearings may be the basis for legislation.<sup>4</sup>

Once a bill idea is presented and agreed to by a Legislator, the Legislator becomes the bill "author" and introduces the bill. The bill is assigned a number and it starts going through the Legislature. It starts in the house of the Legislator; also known as the house of origin.<sup>5</sup> Then it is assigned by the rules committee to one or more policy committees.<sup>6</sup> Once assigned to a policy committee, the bill can be set for hearing.

## **The Committee Process**

Committees and committee hearings are important parts of the legislative process. Every bill must go through the committee process where bills get analyzed and presented.

The Senate and Assembly have many policy committees and one fiscal (money-related) committee. Each policy committee covers a particular area, such as health, natural resources, jobs or human services. Legislators who are interested in a particular topic area are on the committee. A new bill will usually go to one or two policy committees which match the subject of the bill.

A bill related to mental health will likely be assigned to the health committee because it deals with health-related issues. Sometimes a mental health bill will

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<sup>2</sup> <http://mentalhealthcomm.senate.ca.gov/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://disabilities.assembly.ca.gov/missionvision>

<sup>4</sup> <http://mentalhealthcomm.senate.ca.gov/informationalhearings>

<sup>5</sup> If an Assembly person is the author it starts in the Assembly; if a senator is the author it starts in the Senate.

<sup>6</sup> The Assembly and Senate each have a rules committee that assigns bills based on topic area when the bill is in that house.

be assigned to more than one policy committee (i.e., be double referred) if there are areas of multiple jurisdiction, meaning that the topic of the bill impacts more than one area. For example, a bill that deals with involuntary medication would be referred to the health committee. It would also likely be referred to the judiciary committee because it deals with restricting fundamental individual rights, such as the right to refuse medication/treatment.

Each house also has a fiscal committee called the Appropriations Committee. Any bill, including a mental health bill, will go to the Appropriations Committees for a hearing, if the bill will cost the state money. Each appropriations committee has a dollar threshold for the cost of bills. If the cost implementing a bill is determined to exceed the threshold set by the committee, the bill will not move and will be “held” in appropriations. The dollar threshold for the Senate Appropriations Committee in recent years has been \$50,000. The dollar amount for the Assembly Appropriations Committee in recent years has been \$100,000.

The Policy and Appropriations Committee must pass—or approve—the bill for the bill to move through the legislative process. Each committee has staff who will describe the bill in great detail for the Legislators. The staff will tell the Legislators what letters or calls have been received about the bill and what the concerns or issues are that were raised in those letters or calls. Stakeholders (people affected by the bill) and constituents (people who live in the Legislator’s district that care about the bill or are affected by it), usually write letters and make calls to members of each committee considering a piece of legislation.

### **Amendments and the Committee Process**

Throughout the process, the author or committee may change something in the bill. The changes are called amendments. Sometimes the author changes the bill because of new information or because some other Legislators will support the bill if it is changed. Typically, discussions about amendments are done “behind the scenes” before a bill is presented in a public hearing as part of the committee process.

Amendments often involve discussions with staff and members of various stakeholder groups that have an interest in the bill. For measures that impact the mental health community, individuals and organizations that represent individuals with psychiatric disabilities are often part of the process negotiating and agreeing to amendments to preserve the rights of people with disabilities.

Other stakeholders that can be part of the process include departments of the state that represent the Governor’s Administration on issues related to mental

health. For example, representatives from the Department of State Hospitals may be involved in stakeholder discussions if the bill or amendments impact people with psychiatric disabilities that are currently in the state hospitals. The Department of Health Care Services may be involved in stakeholder discussions if the bill or amendments impact issues related to community based mental health. It is always important to involve departments that represent the administration early on and throughout the legislative process. It is important to make sure that they agree with proposed amendments and language in the bill. Such agreement will increase the chances that the legislation moves forward and that the Governor signs the bill.

### **Hearing and Public Comment**

The Committee hearing process is a public forum. In this forum, anybody can go to a committee hearing to hear the discussion of a bill and speak about the bill, often noting support or opposition for a particular measure, and having their voice heard. This is important because the input received becomes part of the public record of the bill which may be used in the future if there are issues or disputes raised about a law that was passed by the Legislature. The legislative history that is archived in the public record can provide a context for the rationale behind a measure or the reasons for adopting certain amendments in a bill.

### **The Floor Vote**

When a bill passes out of the appropriate committees of the house of origin, it then goes to the whole house (i.e., the entire membership—also called the floor of that house)—for a vote. To go forward, most bills must get 21 votes in the Senate or 41 votes in the Assembly—also called a simple majority.

### **Second House**

Once the bill has passed the first house (the house of origin), it will go through the same process described above, in the second house. If the second house changes the bill, the bill must go back to the first house where the members will vote on the amended bill.

### **The Final Step: On to the Governor's Office**

Once a bill is passed by both houses, it goes to the Governor. The Governor can either sign the bill or veto (say no to the bill). The Governor has 12 days to sign, approve without signing, or veto a bill. If the bill is signed or approved without a signature, it goes to the Secretary of State to be chaptered. If the governor

vetoed the bill, a two-thirds vote in each house is needed to override the veto. The Governor's office releases veto messages which explain the veto; these messages are available from the Governor's Office and on the internet.

Just like there are key staff members for each legislative committee that analyze bills for members of the Legislature, in the Governor's office; there are key staff that consider and analyze a bill for the Governor, based on the specific issue area of the bill. With a mental health bill, the Governor's staffer that analyzes health related legislation will be the staff person to analyze a mental health bill.

As an advocate, it is important to write letters to the Governor to note support or opposition for a particular bill. It is also important, if possible to meet with the Governor's staff analyzing the bill to discuss concerns, issues, or thoughts about a bill that is important to your constituency.

## Getting Help from Other People or Advocacy Organizations

Another way to help influence the outcome is to urge other people or advocacy organizations, like other disability rights organizations, to support your position on the bill. Ask them to write letters or go to hearings to support your position by testifying. Letters can be sent by mail, fax, or email. Other people and organizations might be able to help with visits to committee members and Legislators. They may also be able to help you bring more people to the committee to help influence the committee members.

## Being Part of the Process: Things to Remember

### **Timing**

Make sure you get involved early in the process—especially if you are asking for amendments. Letters to committees should be sent no later than one week before to the hearing to make the committee analysis.

### **Deadlines**

The Legislature has many deadlines. For more information about the deadlines see: <http://assembly.ca.gov/legislatedeadlines>. It is important to be aware of these deadlines because they are final and wait for no one.

### **Legislative Staff**

Legislative and committee staff members are the people that you will be working with most of the time. They are your liaison to the Legislator. They are usually experts in a particular area, and speaking with them ensures that your concerns will be communicated knowledgeably to the Legislator.

## Where to Find Legislative Information and How to Track Bills

### **How to sign up for automatic updates on specific legislation**

This service is available at no cost over the internet to enable the public to monitor the status of specific legislation. After "*subscribing*" to a bill you will receive notices in your email when anything happens or is about to happen with this bill (i.e., if it's set for committee hearing, or if an analysis has been done; if the bill has been amended, or if there's been a vote.)

Your email notice will inform you that action has been taken on a bill you've subscribed to <http://assembly.ca.gov/legislativedeadlines> and it will list the bill number(s). You must then access the internet and go to [www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov) – select *LEGISLATION* and enter the bill number you're interested in—a summary screen will appear on which you can select any/all information available on your bill of interest.

To subscribe to these email notices simply do the following:

1. Click the "Bill Information" button on ([www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov)).
2. Enter the information in the "Bill Number" box for the specific bill you wish to view, click "search."
3. Select the specific bill of interest from the list displayed.
4. Scroll to the bottom of the Bill Document screen and click the "Subscribe" button.
5. Enter your email address in the box, and then click the "OK" button. You will then get confirmation that you have subscribed to the bill.

## How to Find Your Legislator

You voted for your Legislative Members and they represent you. It is important to remember that education is an essential tool in the process to get disability issues on their radar. Education is one of the key ways to exercise our rights as citizens. It is our right and obligation to express our concerns to our Legislative Members. Speaking with your member can be an empowering experience for

you and an effective educational experience for your Legislator. To do that effectively you have to know who your Member is. Finding your member is easy:

1. Go to the following website:  
[http://www.legislature.ca.gov/legislators\\_and\\_districts/legislators/your legislator.html](http://www.legislature.ca.gov/legislators_and_districts/legislators/your legislator.html)
2. Click on Find Your Legislator
3. Enter your address and zip code
4. Click on locate and your Senator and Assembly Members will appear.

## Practical Tips on How to Meet with Your Legislator

### **1. Every citizen has the right to seek a meeting with their Legislator, Council person, or other elected representative.**

Keep track of who your Legislators are and what they are interested in.

### **2. Plan your meeting with a Legislator.**

Decide what you are going to talk about. Don't talk about a lot of issues—stick to no more than two or three.

Decide what you want to get out of the visit, for example, a promise to vote for your issue or maybe you just want to give the Legislator information about the issue.

Allow time for small talk, but not too much.

### **3. Listen.**

Figuring out the Legislator's views will help you know what information to give.

If you are meeting with a "silent type," ask questions to get them to talk.

If you are meeting with a "long-winded type," gently bring them back to the point.

### **4. Be prepared, but you don't have to be an expert.**

Most Legislators aren't experts either. Do your homework, but you don't have to know every little detail. Talk about your personal feelings and experiences.

It is OK to say "I don't know," and say you'll find out.

Don't argue or confront.

### **5. Don't stay too long.**

If you get what you want, say thanks and leave. If you don't get what you want, say thanks, that you are disappointed, and leave.

Remember you may come back, so leave on a good note.

## **6. Remember you are there to build a relationship.**

If the Legislator is good on an issue you've been interested in, say thanks during the visit.

If not, there may be another issue where they will be on your side.

Your visit may keep them from actively opposing your issue.

## **7. Follow-up is important.**

Be sure to send a thank-you card. If staff members were there, write to them too. They can be important allies.

## **8. Letter Writing: Writing to a public official does make a difference.**

Public officials know that every person who writes represents many others who feel the same but don't write. Follow these tips:

- Be clear about what you want.
- Tell a story or example to make the issue real.
- Ask for a direct response with their position.
- Personal letters are much better than form letters or petitions.

## **9. Get to know the Legislator's staff.**

Legislators have staff people you can contact. They are usually easy to reach and can help get your message to the Legislator.

Handy Websites:

[www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov)

[www.senate.ca.gov](http://www.senate.ca.gov)

[www.assembly.ca.gov](http://www.assembly.ca.gov)

<http://gov.ca.gov>

[www.dof.ca.gov](http://www.dof.ca.gov)

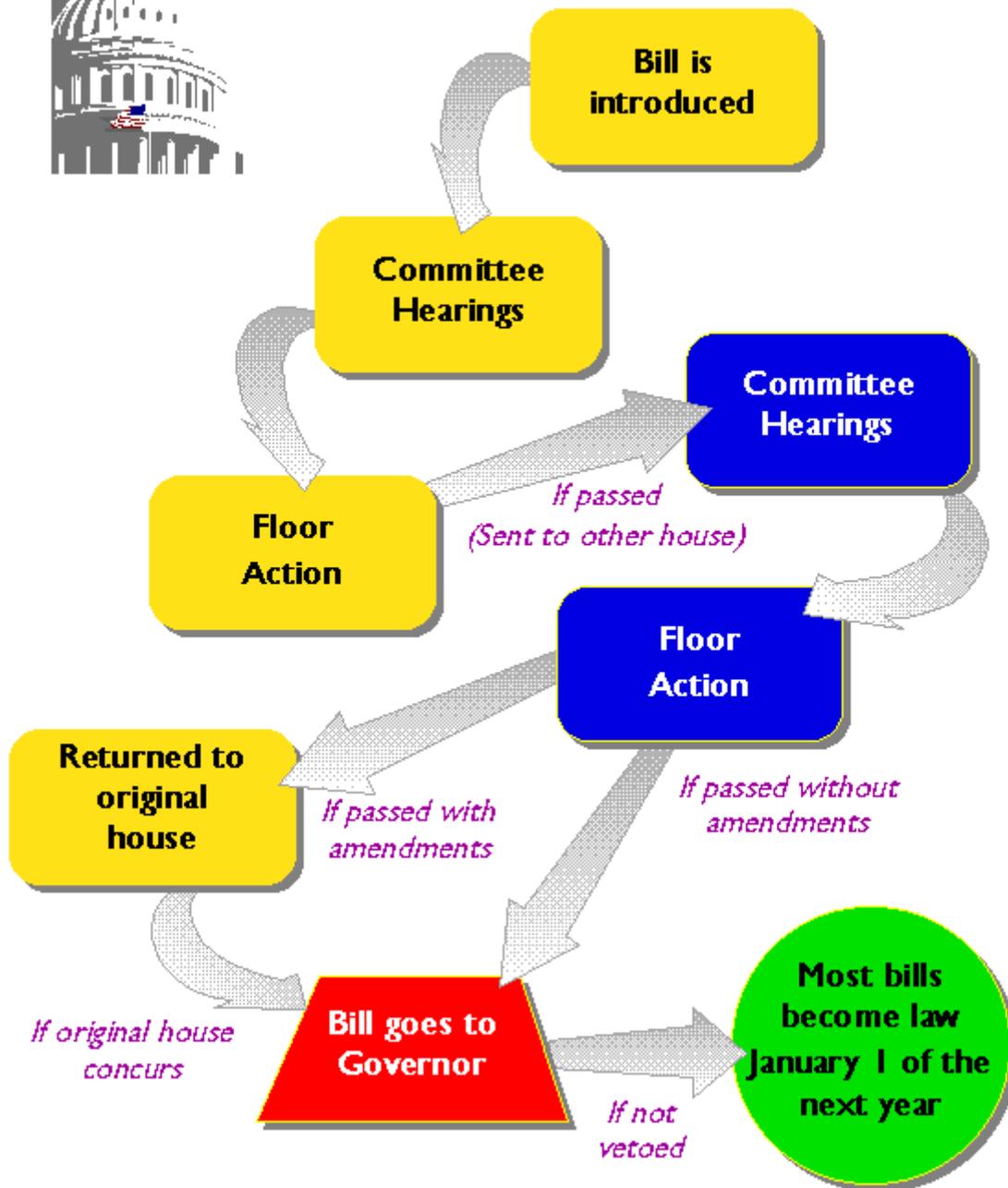
[www.lao.ca.gov](http://www.lao.ca.gov)

Full Legislative Glossary:

<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/glossary.html>



# How a Bill Becomes a Law



## Appendix: Abbreviated Glossary of Legislative Terms

**Across The Desk:** The official act of introducing a bill. The measure is given to the Chief Clerk or his or her representative at the Assembly Desk in the Assembly Chambers or to the Secretary of the Senate or his or her representative in the Senate Chambers. It then receives a number and becomes a public document available from the bill room.

**Act:** A bill passed by the Legislature and approved by the Governor.

**Action:** Deposition of any question before the Legislature.

**Adjournment:** Termination of a meeting; occurring at the close of each legislative day upon the completion of business, with the hour and day of the next meeting being set prior to adjournment.

**Adjournment Sine Die:** Final adjournment of the Legislature; regular sessions of the Legislature are adjourned sine die at midnight on November 30 of each even-numbered year.

**Adoption:** Approval or acceptance; usually applied to amendments or resolutions.

**Amendment:** Formal proposal to change the language of a bill after it has been introduced. Amendments must be submitted to Legislative Counsel for drafting.

- Author's Amendments: Amendments proposed by the bill's author anytime after bill introduction. In committee they are amendments placed in the bill prior to the committee hearing that are subject to the committee chair's approval.
- Hostile Amendments: Amendments proposed by another member and opposed by the author in a committee hearing or during Assembly or Senate Floor consideration.

**Appropriation:** The amount of money made available for expenditure by a specific entity from a specific source such as the General Fund, for a specific purpose.

**Approved By The Governor:** Signature of the Governor on a bill passed by the Legislature.

**Archives:** Location and contents of public records kept by the Secretary of State, including copies of all measures considered at each session, journals, committee reports, and documents of historic value.

**Assembly:** The house of the California legislature consisting of 80 members, elected from districts apportioned on the basis of population. \

**Bicameral:** Legislature consisting of two houses.

**Bill:** A proposed law, introduced during a session for consideration by the Legislature, and identified numerically in order of presentation; also, commonly refers to Joint and Concurrent Resolutions and Constitutional Amendments.

**Bill Analysis:** A document that must be prepared by committee and/or floor analysis staff prior to hearing the bill in that committee. It explains how a bill would change current law and sometimes mentions support and opposition from major interest groups.

**Caucus:** (1) A closed meeting of legislators of one's own party; (2) any group of legislators who coalesce formally because of their interest in specific issues.

**Chair:** A metaphorical designation of the current presiding officer.

**Chamber:** The Assembly or Senate chamber where Floor Sessions are held.

**Chapter:** After a bill has been signed by the Governor, the Secretary of State assigns the bill a "Chapter Number" such as "Chapter 123, Statutes of 1992," which is subsequently used to refer to the measure rather than the bill number.

**Chapter Out:** When two or more bills, during one year of the session, amend the same section of law and more than one bill becomes law, amendments made by the bill enacted last (and therefore given a later or higher chapter number) becomes law and prevail over the amendments made by the bill or bills previously enacted.

**Co-Author:** Any member of either house, with the agreement of the author of a bill, may add his or her name on that member's bill as a coauthor, usually indicating support for the proposal.

**Codes:** Bound volumes of law organized by subject matter. The code to be changed by a bill is referred to in the title of the bill.

**Committee Of The Whole:** The Assembly or Senate meeting as a committee for the purpose of receiving information.

**Companion Bill:** An identical bill introduced in the other house. This procedure is far more common in Congress than in the California Legislature.

**Concurrence:** One house approving a bill as amended in the opposite house. If the author is unwilling to move the bill as amended by the other house, the author requests "non-concurrence" in the bill and asks for the formation of a conference committee.

**Consent Calendar:** File containing bills which have received no dissenting votes and which have received unanimous agreement to pass.

**Constituent:** A person who resides within the district of a legislator.

**Consultant:** A committee professional staff person.

**Convene:** To assemble a meeting. The Legislature generally convenes twice a week.

**Daily File:** Publication produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively for each day those houses are in session. The publication provides information about bills to be considered at upcoming committee hearing and bills eligible for consideration during the next scheduled Floor session. Any bill to be heard in committee must be noticed in the Daily File for four days, including weekend days. The Daily File also contains useful information about committee assignments and the legislative calendar.

**Digest:** Prepared by the Legislative Counsel, it summarizes the effect of the proposed bill on current law. It appears on the first page of every printed measure.

**District:** The area of the State represented by a legislator. Each district is determined by population and is known by a number. There are 40 Senate districts and 80 Assembly districts.

**District Bill:** Legislation introduced specifically on behalf of a legislator's district, generally affecting only that district.

**Do Pass:** Affirmative recommendation made by a committee which moves a bill to the floor or to the next committee.

**Do Pass As Amended:** Passage recommended by committee providing the language of the bill is changed as specified.

**Double Refer:** Legislation recommended for referral to two policy committees rather than one for hearing. The first committee is not bound by the recommended second referral. Both committees must approve the measure to keep it moving in the process. Typically used for sensitive issue areas that transcend the jurisdiction of one policy committee. Bill referrals are made by the Assembly and Senate Rules Committees for their respective houses.

**Dropped:** Author has decided not to pursue the passage of the bill.

**Enrolled Bill:** Whenever a bill passes both houses of the Legislature, it is ordered enrolled. In enrollment, the bill is again proofread for accuracy and then delivered to the Governor. The "enrolled bill" contains the complete text of the bill with the dates of passage certified by the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the Assembly.

**Enrollment:** When bills are filed with the Governor and resolutions are filed with the Secretary of State once they have been accepted by both houses.

**File:** The agenda for the business of the house. It is printed daily.

**First Reading:** Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. The first reading of a bill occurs when the measure is introduced.

**Fiscal Bill:** Generally, a measure that contains an appropriation of funds or requires a State agency to spend money for any purpose. The Legislative Counsel determines which bills are fiscal bills. The designation appears at the end of the Legislative Counsel's Digest found on the first page of each bill. Fiscal bills must be heard by the Assembly and Senate Appropriations Committees in addition to the policy committees in each house.

**Fiscal Committee:** The Appropriations Committee in the Assembly and the appropriations Committee in the Senate to which all fiscal bills are referred if they are approved by policy committees. If the fiscal committee approves a bill, it then moves to the floor.

**Fiscal Deadline:** The date on the legislative calendar by which all bills with fiscal implications must have been taken up in a policy committee and referred to a fiscal committee. Any fiscal bill missing the deadline is considered "dead" unless it receives a rule waiver allowing further consideration.

**Floor:** (1) The Assembly or Senate Chambers; (2) The term used to describe the location of a bill or the type of session. Matters may be referred as "on the floor."

**Floor Manager:** The legislator responsible for taking up a measure on the floor. This is always the bill's author in the first house and a member of the other house designated by the author when the bill is considered by the other house. The name of the floor manager in the other house appears in parenthesis after the author's name in the second or third reading section of the Daily File.

**Hearing:** A committee meeting convened for the purpose of gathering information on a specific subject or considering specific legislative measures.

**Held In Committee:** A bill fails to get sufficient votes to pass out of committee.

**Hijack:** Amendments which delete the contents of a bill and insert entirely new provisions. Can be accomplished with or without the author's permission.

**House:** Refers to either the Senate or the Assembly in California.

**Law:** The rules which govern our daily lives.

**Legislative Advocate:** An individual engaged to present to legislators, the views of a group or organization. They are required by law to register with the Secretary of State. More commonly known as lobbyists.

**Legislative Analyst:** Provides thorough, nonpartisan analysis of the budget submitted by the Governor; also analyzes fiscal impact of other legislation.

**Legislative Counsel:** The Legislative Counsel (who is elected jointly by both houses) and his or her legal staff is responsible for, among other things, drafting all bills and amendments, preparing a digest (summary) of each bill, providing legal opinions, and generally representing the Legislature in legal proceedings.

**Legislative Counsel's Digest:** The digest is a brief summary of the changes the proposed bill would make to current law. The digest is found on the front of each printed bill.

**Lower House:** The Assembly.

**Majority Floor Leader:** The "number two" issues and political strategist for the Assembly's majority party, second in command to the Assembly Speaker. Elected by the Assembly majority party members.

**Majority Leader:** The "number two" issues and political strategist for the Senate's majority party, second in command to the Senate President pro Tempore. Elected by the members of the Senate's majority party.

**Majority Vote:** A vote of more than half of the legislative body considering a measure. The full Assembly requires a majority vote of 41 and the full Senate requires 21, based on their memberships of 80 and 40 respectively.

**Majority Whip:** One of the members of the majority party's leadership team in the Assembly or Senate; responsible for monitoring legislation and securing votes for legislation on the floor.

**Measure:** Any bill, resolution, or constitutional amendment that is acted upon by the Legislature.

**Minority Floor Leader:** The Senate's highest ranking minority party post; chief policy and political strategist for the Senate's minority party.

**Minority Whip:** One of the members of the minority party's leadership team in the Assembly or Senate; responsible for monitoring legislation and securing votes for legislation on the floor.

**Motion:** A formal request for action made by a legislator during a committee hearing or Floor Session.

**Non-fiscal Bill:** A measure having no financial impact on the state and, therefore, not required to be heard in an Assembly or Senate fiscal committee as it moves through the legislative process. Non-fiscal bills are subject to somewhat different legislative calendar deadlines than fiscal bills.

**On Call:** A roll call vote in a committee or an Assembly or Senate Floor Session that has occurred but has not yet been concluded and , therefore, formally announced. Members may continue to vote or change their votes as long as a measure remains "on call." Calls are usually placed at the request of a bill's author in an effort to gain votes. Calls can be lifted by request anytime during the committee hearing or Floor Session, but cannot be carried over into the next legislative day.

**On File:** A bill on the second or third reading file of the Assembly or Senate Daily File.

**On The Floor:** The Assembly or Senate Chambers where legislation is considered by the full Assembly or Senate.

**Pass on File:** Bills are taken up during a Floor Session according to their member in the Assembly or Senate Daily File. An author may choose to "pass on

file" thus temporarily giving up his or her chance to take up a measure on the floor.

**Passage:** Favorable action on a measure before either house.

**Postpone:** Motion to delay action on matters before the house.

**President of the Senate:** The State Constitution designates the Lieutenant Governor as President of the Senate, allowing him to preside over the Senate and cast a vote only in the event of a tie. The Lieutenant Governor's role is largely ceremonial because he has not cast a tie breaking vote since 1975 and, in practice, does not preside over the Senate.

**President Pro Tempore Of The Senate:** (literally: for the time) Highest ranking leader and most powerful member of the Senate; also chairs the Senate Rules Committee. Elected by all Senators at the beginning of each two-year session.

**Presiding:** The act of managing the proceedings during Floor Session. In the Assembly, the Presiding Officer can be the Speaker, Speaker pro Tempore or any other Assembly Member appointed by the Speaker. In the Senate, the presiding officer can be the President, President pro Tempore, or any other Senator appointed by the President pro Tempore.

**Presiding Officer:** The member who presides over a legislative Floor Session. In the Assembly, the presiding officer is usually the Speaker pro Tempore (not to be confused with the Speaker). In the Senate, it is a senior Senator designated by the Senate President pro Tempore.

**Principal Coauthor:** A legislator singled out to share credit along with the author of a bill or resolution.

**Put Over:** Action delayed on a legislative measure until a future date without jeopardy to the measure.

**Quorum:** A simple majority of the members of the full committee or the full Assembly or Senate; the minimum number of legislators needed to begin conducting official business. Once a quorum is established, the absence of a quorum is grounds for immediate adjournment of a committee hearing or Floor Session.

**Reading:** Presentation of a bill before the house by reading the title thereof. A bill is either in first, second, or third reading until it is passed by both houses.

**Recess:** (1) An official pause of any length in a committee hearing or Floor Session that halts the proceedings for a period of time but does not have the finality of adjournment; (2) A break of more than four days in the regular session schedule such as the "Easter recess", etc.

**Reconsideration:** A motion giving the opportunity to take another vote on the item in question. The motion for reconsideration must be accepted by a majority of the members present and voting.

**Rescind:** Revocation of previous actions.

**Roll Call:** A vote of a committee or the full Assembly or Senate. Committee roll calls are conducted by the committee secretary who calls each member's name in alphabetical order with the Chair's name last. Assembly roll calls are conducted electronically with each member pushing a button from his or her assigned seat. Senate roll calls are conducted by the Reading Clerk who reads each Senator's name in alphabetical order.

**Rule Waiver:** Specific exemption to the Assembly, Senate, or Joint Rules; formal permission must be sought and received.

**Rules:** Those ideas which govern the operation of either or both houses. There are Standing Rules of the Assembly, Standing Rules of the Senate, and Joint Rules.

**Second Reading:** Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. Second reading occurs after a bill has been reported from committee.

**Section:** A portion of the California Codes. The text of these sections are set forth in bills and proposed to be amended, repealed, or added.

**Senate:** The upper house of the California legislature consisting of 40 members elected from districts apportioned on the basis of population, one-half of whom are elected or re-elected every two years for four-year terms.

**Session:** The period during which the Legislature meets.

**Short Committee:** Lacking sufficient members of the committee; less than a quorum.

**Sine Die:** Final adjournment. It means adjournment without delay.

**Speaker:** The presiding officer of the Assembly elected by the membership of the Assembly at the beginning of the two-year session. This is the highest ranking member of the Assembly.

**Speaker Pro Tempore:** Takes the chair at the request of the Speaker. The pro Tempore is also elected by the membership of the Assembly.

**Sponsor:** The legislator, private individual, or group who developed a piece of legislation and advocates its passage.

**Spot Bill:** A bill that amends a code section in such an innocuous way as to be totally nonsubstantive. The bill has been introduced to assure that a germane vehicle will be available at a later date after the deadline has passed to introduce bills. At that future date, the bill can be amended with more substance included.

**Statutes:** Compilation of all enacted bills, chaptered by the Secretary of State in the order in which they become law.

**Subcommittee:** A subgroup of a full committee; composed of committee members from both parties.

**Summary Digest:** Brief summaries of each piece of legislation passed in the two- year session; prepared by Legislative Counsel. Measures are listed in the order they were signed into law.

**Third Reading:** Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. Third reading occurs when the measure is about to be taken up on the floor of either house for final passage.

**Third Reading Analysis:** A summary of a measure ready for floor consideration. Contains most recent amendments and information regarding how members voted on the measure when it was heard in committees. Senate floor analyses also list support or opposition information on interest groups and government agencies.

**Third Reading File:** That portion of the Daily File that lists the bills that are ready to be taken up for final passage.

**Two-Thirds Vote:** In the Assembly, 54; in the Senate 27; irrespective of any vacancies.

**Unanimous Consent:** The consent of all those members present, without objection.

**Unicameral:** A legislature consisting of one house.

**Upper House:** The Senate.

**Urgency Measure:** A bill affecting the public peace, health, or safety and requiring a 2/3's vote for passage. An urgency bill becomes effective immediately upon enactment.

**Urgency Clause:** Language in a bill which states the bill will take effect immediately upon enactment. A vote on the urgency must precede a vote on the bill. A 2/3 vote is required for passage.

**Veto:** The act of the Governor disapproving a measure. The Governor's veto may be overridden by 2/3's vote. The Governor can also exercise an Item veto, whereby the amount of appropriation is reduced or eliminated, while the rest of the bill approved. An Item veto may be overridden by 2/3's vote in each house.

We want to hear from you! After reading this fact sheet please take this short survey and give us your feedback.

English version: <http://fs12.formsite.com/disabilityrightsca/form54/index.html>

Spanish version: <http://fs12.formsite.com/disabilityrightsca/form55/index.html>

*Disability Rights California is funded by a variety of sources, for a complete list of funders, go to <http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/Documents/ListofGrantsAndContracts.html>.*

***The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is an organization of county governments working to improve mental health outcomes for individuals, families and communities. Prevention and Early Intervention programs implemented by CalMHSA are funded by counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63). Prop. 63 provides the funding and framework needed to expand mental health services to previously underserved populations and all of California's diverse communities.***



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