

LEGISLATIVE TERMINOLOGY

Amendment: An amendment is any modification to a bill. Most bills are amended as they progress through the legislative process.

Biennium: Two-year period. The Washington State fiscal biennium is from July 1 of odd-numbered years to June 30, two years later.

Bills: Bills are any proposed changes to the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). A bill can create a new law, modify a current law, or eliminate an existing law.

Caucus: A meeting of members of a body who belong to the same political party.

Co-Sponsor: A co-sponsor is a Representative or Senator who adds their name as a supporter to the prime sponsor's bill.

Committee: A portion of a legislative body charged with examining matters specifically referred to it.

Companion Bill: Companion bills are two identical versions of the same bill that are introduced in both the House and Senate. Companion bills start out with the same versions, but generally differ as they go through the process and as amendments are made.

Cut-Off Dates: Deadlines set by the Legislature for a specified action like committee action or passage of a bill.

Engrossed Bill or E: Engrossed bills contain all amendments that have been added in the house of origin (e.g. EHB 1405 or ESHB).

Enrolled Bill: Enrolled bills have passed both chambers and contain all amendments adopted by both houses and a certificate of enrollment, including the date passed, votes cast on the bill, and the certifying officers' signatures. Enrolled bills are ready to be sent to the Governor for consideration.

HB: Abbreviation for House Bill; these are numbered starting with 1000 at the beginning of each biennium.

Hearing: A legislative committee meeting at which witnesses present testimony on matters under consideration by the committee.

Interim: Time between legislative sessions.

Prime Sponsor: All bills must be introduced by a member of the House or Senate. The prime sponsor introduces the legislation and their name appears first on the signature sheet.

SB: Abbreviation for Senate Bill; these are numbered starting with 5000 at the beginning of each biennium.

Session: Official meeting of the Legislature. The Constitution provides for one 105-day regular session during odd-numbered years and one 60-day regular session during even-numbered years each biennium.

Substitute Bill or S: A substitute bill replaces an original bill with a new bill in every way excluding the title. If a committee adopts amendments, it is common for these amendments to be rolled into the substitute bill (e.g. SHB 6043 or SSB 6043).