

GLOSSARY

Act - Legislation once it has been passed in one legislative body. Acts are generally named, rather than numbered, as bills are. Legislation that has passed both Houses will generally keep this title.

Bill - The name given to legislation introduced in the House or Senate. Each bill is designated "HR" if it is introduced in the House and "S" if it is introduced in the Senate. For each two-year congressional term, bill numbers are just assigned sequentially, so the numbers are reused frequently. For this reason, it is probably more accurate to remember the name of a bill, its sponsor, or the subject material that it discusses.

Calendar - The agenda or list of business that is waiting for deliberation before each legislative body.

Case -

1. A legal action litigated between two opposing parties (i.e. Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones). The initial trial in front of a judge or jury, and all subsequent appeals, including an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court if it comes to that, are considered to be part of the case Smith vs. Jones.

2. An opinion written by a judge and the facts and explanations that accompany the opinion and explain how it was reached are also considered a case. The judge's written opinion for the case of Smith vs. Jones may also be used as precedent in later cases.

Case Law - A set of principles and rules of action that have been made by judges by continually writing opinions on cases being litigated. Contrast this with the way that Statutory Law is made. Case Law is built on the principle that judges will decide new cases based on precedent that has been set by previous cases.

Citation - A reference to the full text of a statute, case, or other source of legal information.

Committee - The body of members within the House or the Senate that reviews and investigates material on a certain topic. Most standing committees are further divided into subcommittees that are even smaller groups of people that deal with more specific topics for that committee, then report back to the committee as a whole. The full committee, in turn, will report back to the entire House or Senate on a particular bill, often proposing amendments to it.

Conference Committee - A group of people appointed from both the House and the Senate in order to reach a compromise when two different versions of the same bill have been passed by the two chambers.

Conference Report - If both the House and the Senate pass a different version of the same bill, a conference committee is established to work out the differences between the two versions. The agreement reached within the committee is published in a conference report, and issued to both the House and the Senate. The legislation goes back to both chambers for a vote. It cannot be amended at this point. If it is not approved by both, it must go back to the conference committee.

Executive Order - An executive order is a direction from the President to an agency to change one or more regulations in the *Code of Federal Regulations*. They are numbered sequentially; more than 13,000 have been issued so far.

Final Rule - This is the final legal version of a regulation.

Hearings - Hearings are held by committees or subcommittees so that testimony may be presented by experts to members of Congress. Hearings may include published and visual materials, as well as spoken testimony and answers to questions.

Interim Rule - If there is no prior notice given in the form of a proposed rule, an interim rule may be issued. A comment period may be allowed to get input on the regulatory changes being proposed before the final rule is issued.

Law - An act of Congress that has been signed by the President or passed over his veto by Congress becomes law.

Parallel Citations - References to proceedings of the same case printed in different legal reporters. For example, the same case might be printed in the reporter for the state of Pennsylvania and for the Atlantic region.

Pocket Veto - The President can "kill" a bill by holding on to it at the end of a congressional session. When Congress is in session, the President has 10 days to either sign a bill or veto it. If Congress adjourns within those 10 days, the President can simply hold on to the bill and let it die.

Precedent - A case opinion that provides guidance to a judge making a decision for a later case. Generally, the earlier case is relevant because it has similar facts or raises similar legal questions.

Proclamation - A proclamation is made by the President for a ceremonial or commemorative purpose, to make a general announcement about policy, or to announce a new agreement, such as a trade agreement. They are numbered sequentially; there have been more than 7,000 so far.

Proposed Rule - This is generally the first form that a new regulation will take. It is published in the Federal Register. It appears with a request for comments and a contact person so that the public can be involved in the implementation of laws. These comments are considered before the final rule is published.

Regulation - An agency may add, revise, or remove text from the *Code of Federal Regulations* in response to a newly passed law, voluntarily, or at the request of a company or other agency that is affected by that area of the law. Individual changes are usually called rules. Together, they are generally called regulations.

Regulation Identifier Number (RIN) - When rules are first proposed, they are given a RIN. These are sequential and allow rules to be identified and tracked. Each rule is also marked with the parts of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) that are affected by it.

Rule - An agency may add, revise, or remove text from the *Code of Federal Regulations* in response to a newly passed law, voluntarily, or at the request of a company or another agency that is affected by that area of the law. Individual changes are usually called rules. Together, they are generally called regulations.

Shepardize - To trace the history of a particular case. There are several reasons you might want to do this. By tracing the history of a case, you can determine whether the case is still "good law," or if it has been affected by a later court decision or legislative action. You might also want to see if the precedent established in this case is still good in order to apply its legal principles to another case. *Shepard's* also provides parallel citation references.

Statutory Law - Law that is created by legislative bodies. Contrast this with the way that Case Law is made.

Veto - The President refuses to sign a bill into law and, instead, returns it, unsigned, to either the House or the Senate. In order for that bill to become law, the House and the Senate must both pass the bill with a 2/3 majority in order to override the President's veto. The President must return the unsigned bill to the House or Senate within 10 days in order to veto it. If he does nothing in those 10 days, the bill automatically becomes law.

[Send comments](#) to the Web Developer

© Muhlenberg College

Last modified on October 24, 2003

This document: <http://www.muhlenberg.edu/library/guides/legal/glossary.html>