

Committees with Jurisdiction over Emergency Management and Related Issues

The House and the Senate both divide their work among committees and subcommittees that have jurisdiction over certain subject areas. Within these areas, they are responsible for holding hearings, carrying out oversight, evaluating and voting on legislation, and—in the case of the Senate—considering Presidential nominations.

The rules of the House and the Senate set out the jurisdictions of the committees. Beyond that, the committees have a fair amount of leeway in their activities. Many bills are referred to a committee during the course of a Congress, and most of them will not be considered. The head of the committee—the chairman—determines the agenda, deciding what legislation to consider and what hearings to hold, among other things.

A number of committees and subcommittees in the House and Senate have jurisdiction over emergency management and related issues. The list below identifies the most relevant ones and their general areas of responsibility:

Senate

Senate Appropriations Committee: This is the committee responsible for writing appropriations bills, the legislation that provides funding to agencies and programs. This includes, for example, bills that fund the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Commerce

Homeland Security Subcommittee: This subcommittee is responsible for writing the bill that funds the Department of Homeland Security.

Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies: This subcommittee is responsible for writing the bill that funds the Department of Commerce and its components, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (NWS).

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC): This committee has broad jurisdiction over federal activities and homeland security. It is responsible for matters related to the Department of Homeland Security, except for the Coast Guard, the Transportation Security Administration, immigration, customs revenue, commercial operations, and trade. Its jurisdiction includes FEMA, except for the National Flood Insurance Program—which falls under the Senate Banking Committee.

Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight and Emergency Management: This subcommittee has jurisdiction over a wide-range of issues, including FEMA.

Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation: This committee has jurisdiction over the Department of Commerce, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (NWS). It also has jurisdiction over the Coast Guard.

Committee on Banking, Housing, & Urban Affairs: This committee has a broad jurisdiction that includes FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program.

House of Representatives

Committee on Appropriations: This is the committee responsible for writing appropriations bills, the legislation that provides funding to agencies and programs. This includes, for example, bills that fund the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Commerce

Homeland Security Subcommittee: This subcommittee is responsible for writing the bill that funds the Department of Homeland Security.

Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies: This subcommittee is responsible for writing the bill that funds the Department of Commerce and its components, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (NWS).

Committee on Homeland Security: This committee has broad jurisdiction over the Department of Homeland Security. It shares jurisdiction over FEMA with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, although neither have jurisdiction over the National Flood Insurance Program. It also shares jurisdiction with the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology over the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG), the Fire Prevention & Safety grants (FP&S), and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grants (SAFER). The committee has sole jurisdiction over the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP) and the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI).

Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications: This subcommittee focuses on issues related to emergency management, such as first responders, grants, and FEMA, among other subjects.

Transportation & Infrastructure Committee: This committee shares jurisdiction over FEMA with the Committee on Homeland Security, although neither have jurisdiction over the National Flood Insurance Program.

Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management: This subcommittee oversees a range of issues, including the federal management of emergencies and disasters.

Committee on Financial Services: The jurisdiction of this committee includes FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program.

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology: This committee's jurisdiction includes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (NWS). It also shares jurisdiction with the Committee on Homeland Security over the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG), the Fire Prevention & Safety grants (FP&S), and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grants (SAFER).

Glossary

Amendment: A proposal to change the text of a bill, a resolution, another amendment, or some other measure.

Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute/Substitute Amendment: This generally refers to an amendment that replaces the entire text of the underlying bill.

Appropriation Bill: A bill that allows federal agencies to make payments out of the Treasury for specified purposes. More simply, these are bills that provide funding to agencies and programs.

Authorizations Bill: A bill that establishes a federal program or agency or continues them.

Bill: A proposed law. Bills are labeled with an “S.” if they originate in the Senate and an “H.R.” if they originate in the House of Representatives. They are given a number depending on the order in which they were introduced.

Bill referral/referral: After a bill is introduced, it is generally referred to the committee with jurisdiction over its subject matter. In the Senate, bills generally go only to the committee with jurisdiction over the main subject of the bill. In the House, bills may go to all of the committees with jurisdiction over the different subjects a bill may address. If a bill goes to several committees, the Speaker of the House will designate one as the primary committee of jurisdiction.

Budget Resolution: A resolution adopted by both houses of Congress that sets forth an overall budget plan. It is not signed by the President and is not a law.

Business Meeting: See **Mark-Up**.

Chairman: The head of a committee or subcommittee.

Cloture: In the Senate, a procedure in to end debate on a measure and put an end to a filibuster.

Committee: A panel of Senators or Congressmen responsible for holding hearings, carrying out oversight, and evaluating and voting on legislation with jurisdiction over certain subjects.

Committee Staff: The chairmen and ranking members of congressional committees and subcommittees (and sometimes the other members as well) are provided staff to work for them in their capacity as committee members. These staff are in addition to the personal office staff that all members of Congress have.

Committee Report: A report accompanying a bill or other measure when it moves out of a committee. Committee reports typically provide a legislative history, an explanation of its provisions, and cost estimates, among other things.

Conference Committee: A temporary committee made up of members of the House and Senate that is created to reconcile differences between legislation passed by each chamber. Conference committees are not frequently established.

Conference Report: The agreement reached by a conference committee. The conference report is submitted to each chamber, which then votes on it.

Continuing Appropriations/Continuing Resolution (often referred to as a “CR”): An appropriations act that provides funding for federal agencies and programs when the regular appropriations acts have not been enacted by the beginning of the fiscal year. a “continuing resolution (CR)” A CR is a measure that provides funding for federal agencies and programs when the regular appropriations acts have not been enacted by the beginning of the fiscal year.

Filibuster: In the Senate, the use of dilatory or obstructive tactics to prevent measures from coming to a vote, often by taking advantage of the Senate’s rules allowing unlimited debate.

Floor/“on the floor”: Activities that are occurring as part of a formal session of the full House or Senate. For example, when a bill is “on the floor” in the Senate, that means that the full Senate is considering it. (This is in contrast to a bill being “in committee.”)

Hearing: A meeting of a committee or subcommittee that is generally held to gather information from witnesses. The purposes of hearing are usually to conduct oversight, carry out investigations, review legislation, or consider nominations.

House Majority Leader: A position second to the Speaker of the House in the majority party’s leadership. The majority party elects the Majority Leader.

Mark-Up: A committee or subcommittee meeting during which members debate and vote on nominations, bills, and other measures, as well as amendments to bills. Also referred to as a **Business Meeting**.

Oversight: Review of a federal agency or program.

Personal Office Staff: All Senator and Congressmen personal office staff to assist them in their responsibilities. Personal office staff fills a variety of responsibilities, such as administration, communications, and legislative work.

President’s Budget: The document the President is legally required to send to the Congress each year. It requests funding for existing programs, proposes new programs, and estimates revenue and spending for future fiscal years. While the President is required to submit the budget, Congress is not required to abide by it. It primarily serves as a proposal for Congress to consider.

Ranking Member: The highest ranking member of the minority party on a committee or subcommittee.

To “report” or “report out”: A committee’s formal submission of a bill or nomination to the House or Senate.

Scoring/Scorekeeping: The process of estimating the cost of legislation. The Congressional Budget Official (CBO) is typically responsible for this.

Senate Majority Leader: The leader of the majority party in the Senate. The majority leader is elected by his party and acts as its chief spokesman and manages the activities of the Senate.

Senate Minority Leader: The leader of the minority party in the Senate. Like the Senate majority leader, the minority leader is elected by his party and serves as his chief spokesman for his party. He also works with the majority leader to manage the activities of the Senate.

Session: The period in which Congress meets. A Congress generally has two sessions—a first session and a second session.

Subcommittee: A subunit of a committee. Subcommittees have similar responsibilities to full committees. They hold hearings and conduct oversight, for example. But legislation and nominations that a subcommittee approves must be approved by the full committee before it is reported to the Senate.

Whip: One of the leadership positions in the House and Senate. The majority and minority party whips are generally responsible for tracking and mobilizing votes.

Speaker of the House: The presiding officer of the House of Representatives and the head of the majority party’s leadership in that chamber. The Speaker is selected by his party and is formally elected by the entire House.

Note: The definitions in this glossary draw heavily from the following sources—

<http://www.senate.gov/reference/glossary.htm>

<https://www.congress.gov/help/legislative-glossary>

<http://www.thecapitol.net/glossary/>