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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VARIOUS FORMS OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

(excerpted from the Guide to Legislative Process in the House, US House of Representatives Committee on Rules)

BILLS

A bill is the form used for most legislation, whether permanent or temporary, general or special, public or private.

Bills may originate in either the House of Representatives or the Senate, with one notable exception provided for by the Constitution. Article I, Section 7, of the Constitution, provides that all bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives but the Senate may propose or concur with amendments, as on other bills. By tradition, general appropriation bills also originate in the House of Representatives.

There are two types of bills—public and private. A public bill is one that affects the public generally. A bill of a private character, that is, a bill that affects an individual rather than the population at large, is called a private bill. A private bill is used for relief in matters such as immigration and naturalization and claims against the United States.

A Senate bill is designated by the letter "S." followed by its number. The term "companion bill" is used to describe a bill introduced in one House of Congress that is similar or identical to a bill introduced in the other House of Congress.

A bill that has been agreed to in identical form by both bodies becomes the law of the land only after—

1. Presidential approval; or
2. failure by the President to return it with objections to the House in which it originated within 10 days while Congress is in session; or
3. the overriding of a Presidential veto by a two-thirds vote in each House.

It does not become law without the President's signature if Congress by their final adjournment prevent its return with objections. This is known as a "pocket veto."

JOINT RESOLUTIONS

Joint resolutions may originate either in the House of Representatives or in the Senate—not, as may be supposed, jointly in both Houses. There is little practical differ-