



## **Legislative Guide**

### **Chapter 4: Glossary of Terms**

#### **Southern Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators**

Revised August 2007

## LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY TERMS

Act	An act is a law passed by Congress and
Advance funding	Funds that are appropriated in one fiscal year for obligation and use in the following fiscal year.
Appropriation	The amount of funds Congress makes available for a program or agency in a fiscal year. An appropriation is the most common way to provide budget authority and usually follows an authorizing bill and budget ceiling period.
Authorization	Legislation that establishes or continues a federal program or agency and specifies the maximum amount of money Congress can spend for that program or agency. Authorizations generally are enacted before an appropriation or budget ceiling is enacted.
Back Door Spending	Budget authority or spending without action by the appropriations committees.
Budget authority	Budget authority is the permission granted to an agency or department to create spending committees. Generally, budget authority is not the level at which a program or agency will be funded during a fiscal year, but is merely the upper limit of spending commitments that can be made.  The Federal Register publishes proposed Making (NPRM). In the NPRM, a designated amount of time is allowed for response to the proposed regulations before they are put into final form. This time period is referred to as the comment period.

Entitlement	The term committee usually refers to a committee of the House or Senate.
Committee Concurrent Budget Resolution	A resolution passed by both house of Congress to set budget ceilings. The first concurrent resolution sets a budget target, and the second concurrent resolution revises or reaffirms the targets and sets a binding spending ceiling. The resolutions do not have to be signed by the President.
Conference Committee	Same as Joint Committee
Continuing Resolution	Legislation that extends authority and existing activities when a regular appropriations bill has not been enacted by the beginning of the fiscal year.
Controllability	The ability to limit or change spending for a program during the fiscal year without changing the program's authorizing statute. Uncontrollable generally refers to entitlement programs such as Social Security.
Current Findings Current	Funds that are appropriated, obligated and used in the same fiscal year.
Services Estimate	The cost of keeping a program and its existing funding level in the following fiscal year adjusted for inflation and other economic indicators.
Deferral	A presidential action that delays or precludes federal spending. Deferrals take effect in the fiscal year for which they are proposed, unless rejected in either the House or Senate.
Department	For the financial aid community, this usually refers to the Department of Education whose responsibility it is to carry out the laws pertaining to education.
	Legislation mandating the payment of benefits to any person or governmental body

Joint Committee (Conference Committee) meeting the eligibility requirement for a fiscal year,

the federal government's accounting period, which begins October 1 and ends the following

September 30.  
Final Regulation

These final regulations represent the guidelines which are used to implement a law passed by Congress. They are published in the Federal Register.

Floor Forward

The floor refers to discussion and vote that takes place with the entire house or Senate.

Funding

Funds that are appropriated in one fiscal year for obligation in that fiscal year and used in the following fiscal year. Most education programs are forward funded, including student aid.

Function

A classification that divides the federal budget into 19 functions or parts. Function 500, for example, includes budget allocations for education, training, employment, and social services.

H.R.

The initials "H.R." before the number designates a bill originating in the House and means "House of Representatives".

Impoundment Interim

An action by the President to withhold money Congress has already appropriated.

Final Regulation

In some cases, response from the educational community causes considerable change in the NPRM or time does not permit for the necessary comment period. Rather than publishing final regulation, the Department publishes Interim Final Regulations. This allows for the regulations to take effect and at the same time permits further response and ~~consideration~~ **consideration** to a committee composed of members of the house and the Senate. A joint committee is usually convened in order to work out compromises on a bill.

## Mark Up

Supplemental This term refers to the amending, redrafting and final drafting of a bill before

Negotiated Rulemaking  
it is taken to the floor.

A process whereby government agencies and affected community representatives work together to develop consensus on proposed regulatory changes.

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)

The NPRM is published in the Federal Register and is used to announce proposed regulations.

Obligations

Commitments of the federal government requiring spending,

Outlays

The actual amount of dollars spent for a program or agency.

Reconciliation

A process used by Congress to reconcile spending to the targets and ceilings enacted in the budget resolutions. Generally, reconciliation occurs because the second budget resolution brings spending targets and ceilings below those in the first budget resolution.

Regulation

A regulation represents the guidelines used to implement the law.

Rescission

An action that conceals appropriations not yet spent. A rescission is proposed by the President and must be approved by Congress within 45 days or the money must be released.

S.

Senate bills are designated by "S" and the assigned number. This initial identifies bills originating in the Senate.

Spending approved as an addition to the regular appropriation for a program or agency. Supplemental appropriation provides funding above original estimates for the program.

**Unobligated Balance** The amount of budget authority not yet spent for a single year appropriate the balance is available at the end of a fiscal year, it is returned to the U.S. Treasury.

**Zero-Based Budgeting** A budgeting technique that sets all funding levels to zero without considering increases or decreases from the current operating level. The federal budget process is built on incremental budgeting which sets funding levels as increases/decreases or no change from current spending.