



Publications of Congressional Committees: A Summary

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Summary

House and Senate committees publish a variety of documents dealing with legislative and other policy issues, investigations, and internal committee matters. These include committee hearings; legislative, investigative, conference committee, and committee activity reports; calendars; and committee prints. These publications are usually available from the issuing committee, the House or Senate document rooms, and increasingly, from committee websites as well. For more information on legislative process, see <http://www.crs.gov/products/guides/guidehome.shtml>.

Contents

Hearings	1
Reports	1
Committee Calendars	2
Committee Prints	2

Contacts

Author Contact Information	3
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Hearings

Printed hearings contain the edited transcripts of testimony given during committee consideration of proposed legislation, investigative or oversight activities, or Senate confirmation proceedings. Also included are questions from committee members and responses by witnesses; prepared statements by committee members, the witnesses, and other interested parties; and supporting documents submitted to the committee.

Although hearings are often not printed for months after testimony is given, witness statements, and sometimes Member questions and answers, may appear on a committee's website within days. Senate Rule XVII, paragraph 5 provides that, if hearings have been held on a measure, the "committee reporting the measure or matter shall make every reasonable effort" to make printed hearings available prior to floor consideration. House Rule XIII, clause 4(c) stipulates that a general appropriation bill reported by the Committee on Appropriations may not be considered unless printed hearings have been available to members for three calendar days.

Reports

There are four main types of committee reports: (1) reports that accompany a legislative measure when it is reported for chamber action; (2) reports resulting from oversight or investigative activities; (3) reports of conference committees; and (4) committee activity reports, published at the conclusion of a Congress.

Legislative reports provide an explanation of a measure, the committee's actions in considering it, and arguments why the House or Senate should approve the committee's position on the bill or legislative matter, as reported. House Rule XIII, clause 2(a) requires a committee to prepare a printed report when forwarding a measure for floor action. Most Senate bills sent to the floor are accompanied by a written report, although Senate rules do not require it. Chamber and committee rules require certain provisions in committee reports. For example, both the House and the Senate require committees to allow for minority, supplemental, or additional views of committee members to be included in legislative or investigative reports. Chamber rules also impose certain other content requirements for committee reports. (See CRS Report 98-169, *House Committee Reports: Required Contents*, by Judy Schneider, and CRS Report 98-305, *Senate Committee Reports: Required Contents*, by Elizabeth Rybicki).

An oversight or investigative report describes a committee's effort to evaluate federal agency and program performance, and inform Congress and the public of alleged governmental waste, inefficiency, or public or private wrongdoing. Committees have broad latitude in deciding the contents and structure of these reports.

The report of a conference committee states in legislative language how the House and Senate propose to resolve the differences between each chamber's version of a measure. The report is accompanied by a joint explanatory statement that describes the reconciliation of differences in nonstatutory language. Under Senate Rule XXVIII, paragraph 4, conference reports are required to be printed as Senate reports. When a conference report has already been printed by the House, however, the Senate routinely dispenses with this requirement.

Activity reports published after the conclusion of a Congress provide a narrative description of a committee's actions over the course of that Congress. These reports may include summaries of legislation, investigations, hearings, and oversight activities, and the titles of documents issued by the committee. Committee activity reports are mandated by the 1970 Legislative Reorganization Act and subsequent chamber rules.

Committee Calendars

Committee calendars are a comprehensive record of a committee's actions in summary or tabular format. They typically include: committee rules, membership, and subcommittees; a brief legislative history of each measure referred to the committee; lists of hearings, business meetings and markups, and conference reports; legislation indexed by sponsor and short title; and lists of other committee publications.

All House and Senate committees except for the ethics and Appropriations committees in each chamber (and, since the 103rd Congress, the House Administration Committee) publish calendars. Although neither statutes nor chamber rules require the publication of committee calendars, the practice has been common for more than 50 years. Most committees publish their calendars at the conclusion of each session. The information is cumulative so that the final calendar for each Congress identifies all activities of a committee. Final committee calendars are often not available in printed form for several months after the conclusion of a Congress.

Committee Prints

Committees also publish a variety of other information as "committee prints." These documents may include committee rules, full committee and subcommittee memberships, draft legislation, and reports on policy issues and other matters deemed of interest to a committee. At the discretion of each committee, some prints are numbered; others are not.

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