

# CRS Report for Congress

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## Bills, Resolutions, Nominations, and Treaties: Origins, Deadlines, Requirements, and Uses

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In each chamber of Congress, four forms of legislative measure may be introduced (or, for resolutions, submitted) and acted on: bills, joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and resolutions of one house (“simple resolutions”). In addition, under the Constitution the Senate acts on two forms of executive business: nominations and treaties. This fact sheet provides a tabular comparison of the formal characteristics and uses of these six different kinds of business. For more information on legislative process, see [<http://www.crs.gov/products/guides/guidehome.shtml>].

The rules of the two houses include references to the four types of measure, but generally take for granted the distinctions among them, which have developed in the course of congressional history. Today, a bill or joint resolution is used when the purpose is to make law; a joint resolution is also used for the purpose of proposing an amendment to the Constitution. The other two forms of resolution are used for internal business of Congress itself. Additional detail on the uses of each form of measure appears in CRS Report 98-706, *Bills and Resolutions: Examples of How Each Kind is Used*. Executive business is so called because it is transmitted by the President, who must obtain the advice and consent of the Senate before the nomination or treaty becomes effective.

The following table compares all six of the forms of business on which Congress acts in terms of the following characteristics:

- **Form of Business:** bill, joint resolution, concurrent resolution, simple resolution, nomination, or treaty.
- **Designation:** series in which business of this form is numbered.
- **Origin:** who may formally introduce, submit, or transmit to Congress business of this form.
- **Deadline for action:** point at which business of this form ceases to be available for action (unless earlier disposed of).
- **Requirements for approval:** institutions required to act for business of this form to be enacted, finally adopted, or otherwise approved.
- **Product or Use:** result of successful action on business of this form.

**Table 1. Forms of Business Before Congress**

<b>Form of Business</b>	<b>Designation <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Deadline for action <sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Requirements for approval</b>	<b>Product or Use</b>
<b>Legislative Business (Measures)</b>					
Bill	S. H.R.	Member of chamber of introduction	Final adjournment of a Congress	Both chambers and President	Law (statute)
Joint Resolution (except to amend Constitution)	S.J.Res. H.J.Res.	Member of chamber of submission	Final adjournment of a Congress	Both chambers and President	Law (statute)
Joint Resolution (to amend Constitution)	S.J.Res. H.J.Res.	Member of chamber of submission	Final adjournment of a Congress <sup>c</sup>	Both chambers (by two-thirds' vote) <sup>c</sup>	Constitutional amendment
Concurrent Resolution	S.Con.Res. H.Con.Res.	Member of chamber of submission	Final adjournment of a Congress	Both chambers	Regulation of Congress as a whole
Resolution ("simple resolution")	S.Res. H.Res.	Member of chamber of submission	Final adjournment of a Congress	Chamber of origin	Regulation of chamber of origin
<b>Executive Business</b>					
Nomination	[by name]	President	Adjournment of a session of the Senate, or a Senate recess of over 30 days <sup>d</sup>	Senate	Confirmation (advice and consent to appointment)
Treaty	Treaty Doc. <sup>e</sup>	President	Indefinite	Senate	Advice and consent to ratification

a. Designations beginning with "S." are used for Senate measures; those beginning with "H." for House measures. For each form of measure, the designation is followed by a sequence number (e.g., "H.R. 1").

b. Deadline unless the business is earlier disposed of, or (for nominations and treaties) unless withdrawn by the President. For legislative measures, the maximum is the two-year life span of a Congress.

c. After action by Congress, the amendment must also be ratified by three-fourths of the states, usually within a time period specified in the joint resolution.

d. Deadline unless, when the Senate recesses or adjourns its session, it orders that nominations not be returned to the President. The maximum deadline is the final adjournment of a Congress.

e. This designation is followed by the number of the Congress and a sequence number (e.g., "Treaty Doc. 105-1"). Before the 97<sup>th</sup> Congress, the form used was "Ex." followed by a sequence letter and the number of the Congress and session (e.g., "Ex. A, 96-1").