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Calendars of the House of Representatives

Christopher M. Davis

Analyst on Congress and the Legislative Process

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Summary

In the House of Representatives, the term *calendar* has two related meanings. This report, one of a series of reports on legislative process, explains calendars and their use in the House of Representatives.

First, *calendar* refers to several lists of measures and motions that are (or will soon become) eligible for consideration on the House floor. When a House committee reports a measure, it is placed on one of these calendars. If a measure is not on one of the calendars, either it is awaiting action by one or more House committees to which it was referred or it is being held “at the Speaker’s table” in anticipation that the House may agree to consider it, perhaps by unanimous consent, without first referring it to committee.

Second, *calendar* also refers to the document that contains these lists and other information about the status of legislation. The full title of this document is *Calendars of the United States House of Representatives and History of Legislation*. The calendar is printed daily and distributed within the House. The most recent daily issue of the calendar is available online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CCAL-114hcal-2015-08-04/content-detail.html>.

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The four House calendars are not calendars in the traditional sense. Because a measure is listed on a calendar does not guarantee that it will be considered on the House floor on a date certain—or at all. It could be argued that the word *menu* provides a more accurate picture of what the calendars actually represent in a parliamentary sense: lists of eligible legislation that the majority party leadership might choose to “order” in structuring the House’s floor schedule. Which measures on the calendar the leadership will schedule for consideration, and in what order, is a decision based on a combination of policy, political, and procedural factors.¹

In its second meaning, *calendar* also refers to the document that contains these lists and other information about the status of legislation. The full title of this document is *Calendars of the United States House of Representatives and History of Legislation*. The calendar is printed daily and distributed within the House. The most recent daily issue of the calendar is available online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CCAL-114hcal-2015-08-04/content-detail.html>.

The front cover of the calendar gives (1) the dates on which each session of the current Congress convened and adjourned sine die; (2) the number of days the House has actually met during the current session; (3) the date and time at which the House is next scheduled to meet and any special procedures that are in order on that day; and (4) any special orders—concerning special order speeches and morning hour debates, for example—to which the House has agreed.

The remainder of the calendar presents:

- Lists of measures that are on the *Union Calendar*, the *House Calendar*, or the *Private Calendar*. In general, authorization, appropriations, and tax bills are placed on the Union Calendar when they are reported from committee. All public bills and resolutions that are not placed on the Union Calendar are placed instead on the House Calendar. Private bills, affecting specific individuals or entities, are placed on the Private Calendar when reported from committee. On each of these three calendars, bills are listed in the order in which they were reported. Each list includes, in addition to the number and title of each bill, (1) the date on which the bill was reported and the member reporting it; (2) the committee that ordered it reported; and (3) the number of the written committee report accompanying the bill.
- A list of any *motions to discharge committees* that have received the required signatures of 218 members and that are awaiting action by the House.

¹ In modern practice, measures are sometimes brought directly to the House floor by suspension of the rules, by special rule, or by unanimous consent without being reported and placed on a calendar.

- Lists of *public laws* and *private laws* that have been enacted during the current Congress, giving for each the public or private law number and the corresponding House or Senate measure number.
- A legislative *history of bills and resolutions* that have been reported to or considered by either or both houses of Congress. There are separate sections for House bills, House joint resolutions, House concurrent resolutions, House resolutions, and each of the same four kinds of Senate measures. Within each section, the measures are listed in numerical order. The entry for each measure presents the dates on which various stages of the legislative process took place—for example, the dates on which the bill was reported from committee in the House, the date on which it later passed the Senate, and the date it became law. Also included are the numbers of relevant House and Senate reports and the roll-call tally, if any, by which the House or Senate passed or defeated the measure. This is one convenient place to determine the current status of a measure on which some legislative action has occurred.
- A list of measures that one House committee has reported and that the Speaker has referred to one or more other committees for a limited period of time.
- A list of *bills in conference*, with the dates on which each house agreed to go to conference and the names of the House and Senate conferees.
- A calendar for each month of the year, showing the days on which the House was in session and indicating the total number of days to date on which the House has met. Calendars published during the second session of a Congress include corresponding information for the first session.
- A chart that depicts the legislative history and current status of major bills, including appropriations bills, considered during the current session. For calendars published during the second session of a Congress, a comparable chart shows the legislative history and current status of major bills during the first session.

Calendars that are printed on Monday of each week, or on the first day that the House was in session during the week, contain three additional features: (1) information on *bills through conference*—that is, measures on which conference committees have completed action; (2) an alphabetical index of the *short titles* of pending bills; and (3) a *subject index* of the House and Senate measures that are listed in the section of the calendar on the history of bills and resolutions.

The final edition of the calendar that is published at the end of each Congress contains still more useful information, including lists of measures that became law and measures that the President vetoed and statistical data comparing the workload of the Congress with prior Congresses.

Author Contact Information

Christopher M. Davis
Analyst on Congress and the Legislative Process
cmdavis@crs.loc.gov, 7-0656

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This report was written by Stanley Bach, formerly a senior specialist in the Legislative Process at CRS; the listed author is available to answer questions concerning its contents.