

CRS Report for Congress

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Congressional Record: Its Production, Distribution, and Accessibility

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The *Congressional Record* is the most widely recognized published account of the debates and activities in Congress. The *Record* often reflects the intent of Congress in enacting legislation. This fact sheet is one of a series on the legislative process. Please see [<http://www.crs.gov/products/guides/guidehome.shtml>] for more information on the legislative process.

The Constitution mandates that each house shall keep and publish a journal of its proceedings. Accordingly, the House and Senate *Journals*, which are summaries of floor proceedings, are the official accounts of congressional proceedings, but the *Record* is better known and the most useful.

The *Record* is published daily by the Government Printing Office (GPO) when either house of Congress is in session. It is brought by GPO to the congressional post offices for early morning delivery to congressional offices as well as to both chambers.

Each day's *Record* contains an account of the previous day's congressional activity. However, if a session extends past midnight, the *Record* is usually published in two parts with the first part printed the following day, and action after midnight included in the next day's edition. Copies of the *Record* are also available for Representatives inside the House chamber and for Senators on their desks in the Senate chamber. Extra copies may be obtained from the House Document Room (B18, Ford House Office), the Senate Library (B15, Russell Senate Office Building), and the Senate Document Room (B04, Hart Senate Office Building).

The *Record*, which averages about 200 pages a day, consists of four sections: the proceedings of the House; the proceedings of the Senate; the Extensions of Remarks, containing matter not part of the spoken debates and proceedings; and the Daily Digest of activity in Congress. It does not contain any text of committee proceedings.

Located at the back of the *Record*, the Daily Digest of activity in Congress is a key to using a daily *Record*. Separately for the House and Senate, it contains summary information on chamber action the preceding day, including measures introduced, reported, debated, and passed, and appointments made. It also summarizes committee activities, provides the time and location of committee and subcommittee meetings

scheduled for the day the *Record* is delivered, and gives the time and date of the next convening of the House and Senate. The Daily Digest is prepared by the Daily Digest Offices in the House and Senate (House, 5-7497, and Senate, 4-2658)

The House and Senate each have teams of official reporters of debate who are present on the floor and responsible for taking down everything spoken and all business transacted. In addition, they make copies available to Members and staff to refine the text of speeches submitted for publication or words spoken in debate. The offices of the official reporters also assist Members and staff in determining if material they wish to insert in the *Record* will adhere to the two-page limit. If the material exceeds two pages, Members are required to announce the cost to print it. All manuscripts for submission in the *Record* must be returned to the official reporters of debate in a timely fashion to insure publication the following morning. Questions regarding material placed in the *Record* can be directed to the House official reporters of debate at 5-5621 or the Senate reporters at 4-3152.

Actual signatures are required from Members who wish to insert undelivered remarks in the Senate section of the *Record* known as “Additional Statements” or in the House portion known as “Extensions of Remarks.” These statements must be submitted by Members or their staffs either at the dais or in the respective cloakrooms in the House or Senate.

The *Record* is also available online through GPO and the Library of Congress. It can be searched either by full text for a certain date, by Member of Congress, or by topic. The website through GPO is [<http://www.access.GPO.gov>]. Once at the site, the user should click on GPO Access and then the *Congressional Record*, which is available from 1994 to the present. The website at the Library of Congress is available for the general public through THOMAS [<http://thomas.loc.gov>] and for congressional staff through the Legislative Information System [<http://www.congress.gov>]. At these sites, there are options for searching the full text of the *Record* from the 101st through 109th Congresses.

There are two editions of the *Record*, a daily one and a permanent one. Technical and parliamentary corrections and changes in the pagination are the major differences in these two versions of the *Record*. After the conclusion of each two-year Congress (through the 107th Congress, second session), GPO publishes the multivolume permanent, hardbound editions, together with an index for that Congress. However, a reduction in the paper version of the permanent *Record* has been mandated by Congress, and future, permanent editions of the *Record* will be on CD-Rom.

The Joint Committee on Printing, composed of Members of the Senate Rules and Administration and House Administration Committees, directs the printing of the *Record* by GPO. The committee controls the arrangement and style of the *Record*. Title 44 of the *U.S. Code* contains laws relating to the publication and distribution of the *Record*. Questions on *Congressional Record* policy should be directed to the Joint Committee on Printing at 4-6352. Since this committee does not have legislative authority, any resolution affecting policy would be considered by the House Administration Committee or Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

For more specific information on using the *Record*, consult CRS Report 98-265, *A Users Guide to the Congressional Record*.