

§ 8.72

**Daily Starting Times
in the House**

Starting times are usually announced early in each session by the majority-party leadership.

January 4, 2007, through May 13, 2007:

- 2:00 p.m. on Monday
(12:30 p.m. for morning hour)
- 12:00 noon on Tuesday
(10:30 a.m. for morning hour)
- 10:00 a.m. on all other days

May 14, 2007, until the end of the first session:

- 12:00 noon on Monday
(11:00 a.m. for morning hour)
- 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday (9:00 a.m. for morning hour)
- 9:00 a.m. on Friday

bers can bring up for consideration on the House floor and that are *privileged* to interrupt the regular order of business.

In the House, measures on certain calendars, or to be brought up for consideration subject to certain procedures, are privileged on certain days. These calendars and procedures are the Discharge and Private Calendars; District Day; Calendar Wednesday; and suspension of the rules. Business privileged on any day the House meets includes general appropriations bills; privileged reports from committees that have the right to report at any time, including special rules from the Rules Committee; and reported resolutions of inquiry. Amendments in disagreement and Senate amendments that do not require consideration in the Committee of the Whole are also privileged.

When the House is in session, it tends to follow meeting times announced by the majority-party leadership at the beginning of each session. (See § 8.72, *Daily Starting Times in the House*.)
(For information on House floor documents, see § 12.20.)

§ 8.80 House Floor: Methods of Consideration

There are numerous ways to bring a measure to the House floor for debate, possible amendment, and a vote on passage. A measure might come to the floor because of the calendar on which it was placed or because it is a certain day of the week or the month. Another measure might find its fate in the hands of the majority leadership, especially the Speaker of the House. One measure might come to the floor because it is noncontroversial, and another might make it there only after complex negotiations.

Unanimous Consent

Noncontroversial measures, which have been cleared by the respective party leaders, can come to the floor by unanimous consent. Once cleared, a member can ask permission to bring up the particular measure. A single objection by another member will stop the process. A member can, alternately, “reserve the right to object” in order to ask about the request, traditionally to check if the measure has been cleared by the minority party. Once the member seeking to bring up the measure responds, the member reserving the right to object withdraws

the reservation, and the consent request is agreed to “without objection.” This exchange, under the reservation, is all the discussion that occurs on a measure brought up by unanimous consent.

Suspension of the Rules

This procedure, for largely noncontroversial measures, accounts for more than half of all measures considered by the House. On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of each week, and during the last six days of a session, the Speaker may recognize members to move to “suspend the rules and pass” a particular measure or conference report. Suspension measures can also be considered on other days by unanimous consent or pursuant to provisions of a special rule.

A measure traditionally will not be considered under the suspension procedure if it was controversial in committee. (The majority party’s rules supplement House rules in guiding the leadership on legislative and other matters. However, party rules have no official status in House proceedings and cannot be a basis for a point of order.)

Debate on a motion to suspend the rules is limited to forty minutes, with twenty minutes controlled by a proponent and twenty minutes controlled by an opponent, regardless of party affiliation. In practice, a majority floor manager controls twenty minutes and a minority floor manager controls the other twenty minutes. Measures considered under this process are not subject to floor amendment, although the motion to suspend may incorporate an amendment. Because the motion would then be to “suspend the rules and pass the bill with an amendment,” no separate vote is taken on the amendment. Points of order cannot be raised on a measure or conference report brought up under suspension of the rules.

To pass, a measure considered under the suspension procedure requires two-thirds of the members present and voting to vote for the motion. Unless a recorded vote is requested, however, a measure considered under this procedure can be passed by a voice vote.

Private Calendar

Bills on this calendar generally relate to individual immigration and claims matters and are placed there when reported by the Committee on the Judiciary or any committee considering a private bill. Measures on the Private Calendar can come to the floor on the first Tuesday of each month. At the discretion of the Speaker, private measures can also be considered on the third Tuesday of each month.

Each party usually appoints *official objectors* to review bills on the Private Calendar. If an official objector has a concern about a bill, there can be an objection to its consideration. More often, however, the bill is “passed over, without prejudice.” It gives sponsors a chance to address concerns before the bill comes up under the next call of the Private Calendar.

Each bill is called up automatically in the order in which it was reported from committee and placed on the Private Calendar. A bill is considered under a special procedure, called “in the House as in the Committee of the Whole.” Under this process, there is no general debate,

but members may speak for five minutes. There is usually little debate and measures pass by voice vote.

Discharge Calendar

Any member may file a motion with the clerk of the House to discharge a committee from consideration of any measure that has been pending before the committee for thirty legislative days. A motion to discharge a special rule from the Committee on Rules can be filed if the special rule has been pending before that committee for seven legislative days. The Discharge Calendar is considered on the second and fourth Mondays of each month, although a measure eligible for discharge (by having 218 signatures on its discharge petition) must be on the Discharge Calendar for seven legislative days.

Discharge motions are considered in the House with twenty minutes of debate equally divided between a proponent and an opponent. The only intervening motion is a nondebatable motion to adjourn.

Special Rule

A measure not in order under the means discussed above generally comes to the floor under provisions of a *special rule*. A special rule sets the guidelines for a measure's consideration, including time for *general debate* and any limits on the *amendment process*. Most important and controversial legislation is considered under the terms of a special rule to enable the leadership to structure debate and amendments.

Rules are considered in the House under the *one-hour rule*, with time controlled by a majority floor manager. The majority floor manager customarily yields thirty minutes to the minority floor manager "for purposes of debate only." Accordingly, special rules can be amended only if the majority floor manager offers an amendment to the rule or yields time to another member to offer an amendment, or if the previous question on the rule is defeated. (The previous question is in the form of a motion ("I move the previous question"), which, if agreed to, cuts off further debate and the possibility of amendment.)

§ 8.90 Rules Committee and Special Rules

For most major legislation, it is the Rules Committee that determines if and how a measure will be considered on the floor. The Rules Committee is empowered to report a *special rule* in the form of a simple resolution (for example, H. Res. 123) to govern floor debate, the amendment process, and other procedures related to floor consideration of a measure. (See § 8.91, *Special Rules Glossary*.)

Requesting a Special Rule

When a committee reports a measure, the committee chair, usually by letter to the Rules Committee chair, requests that a Rules Committee hearing be scheduled on the measure. The