

Policy Glossary

A guide to local government nomenclature

In City Hall

Appropriation: legislation to provide specific funding for an authorized program

Bill: a proposed state-level law

City Clerk: a public official charged with recording the official proceedings and vital statistics of a city

Direct Lobbying: direct communication with a legislator, legislative staff member, or any other government employee who may participate in the formulation of the legislation, about a specific piece of legislation and reflects a view on that legislation. Direct Lobbying also encompasses any communication with the general public expressing a view about a ballot initiative, referendum, bond measure, or similar procedure

Grassroots Lobbying: a communication with the general public that reflects a view on specific legislation and includes a call to action that encourages people to contact their legislative representatives or staff in order influence that legislation

Issue Advocacy: communication of positions on issues of social, economic, or philosophical concern that are related to the organization's charitable or exempt purposes. Commonly used to mean all policy-related activities that are not intended to intervene in an election for or against a candidate for public office

Local Government: the governments of cities, counties, and special districts

Regulation: a rule or order that has the force of law that originates from the executive branch (usually from an agency), and deals with the specifics of a program

Forms of Government

Council- Manager: the most common form of government, especially popular in cities with populations over 10,000

- City Council oversees the general administration, makes policy, sets budget
- Council appoints a professional city manager to carry out day-to-day administrative operations
- Often the mayor is chosen from among Council on a rotating basis

Mayor- Council: the second-most common form of government, especially popular among older cities, very large cities, or very small cities

- Mayor is elected separately from the Council, is often full-time and paid, with significant administrative and budgetary authority
- Strength of mayor's authority is contingent upon the municipal charter
- Some cities appoint a professional manager who maintains limited administrative authority

In Council Chambers

Adjourn: to end a meeting with the intention of resuming it later

Amendment: a proposal to change, or an actual change to, a given piece of legislation

Chairperson: a member of the majority party who presides over the work of a committee or subcommittee

Ordinance: a piece of legislation enacted by a municipal authority

Public Comment: the designated time during which members of a community may testify before Council

Recess: marks a temporary end to the business of the Council and sets a time for the next meeting

Resolution: a formal decision of a governing body; a motion which has obtained the necessary majority vote in favor

On the Ballot

Ballot Measure: ballot measures allow voters to propose and enact laws. They include ballot initiatives, constitutional amendments, bond measures, and referenda

Candidate Forum: a public meeting or assembly allowing for open discussion of issues by candidates where candidates appear sequentially

In your Neighborhood

Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8 vouchers): a federal program administered by local housing authorities. Eligible tenants receive vouchers they can use to help pay for apartments in the private market. Tenants pay between 28 and 40 percent of their household income for rent and utilities, and the housing authority pays the difference between this amount and the amount the landlord requests

Market Rate Housing: the prevailing monthly cost for rental housing. It is set by the landlord without restrictions

Project-based Section 8 housing: a federal program which grants a long-term rent subsidy to developers of privately owned rental housing stock to in exchange for affordable rents

Public Housing: housing owned and run by a local housing authority. To be eligible to live in public housing, you must meet program requirements including being low income. In most cases, rent including utilities can comprise no more than 30% of your income

Subsidized Housing: all federal, state or local government programs that reduce the cost of housing for low- and moderate-income residents. Housing can be subsidized in numerous ways including tenant-based mechanisms such as vouchers or project-based ones, such as tax credits.