About Bills

H.R.	House Bill
S.	Senate Bill

A bill is a legislative proposal brought before Congress in either the House or the Senate. Bills introduced in the House are assigned sequential numbers in the order in which they are introduced and are preceded by "H.R.". Bills introduced in the Senate are assigned sequential numbers preceded by "S.".

- The House adopted a sequential numbering system in which bills were numbered consecutively for an entire Congress in the 15th Congress (1817), and the Senate began using the same numbering system in the 30th Congress (1847). Prior to that time, the Senate numbering system provided that sequential numbering started anew at the beginning of each congressional session.

- Bills within a single numbering sequence may be either public or private. Public bills pertain to matters that affect the general public or classes of citizens and become public laws if enacted. Private bills are concerned with relief or related actions with limited applicability and, if enacted, become private laws. The distinction between public and private bills has not always been clear, especially in bills from the earlier Congresses.

About Joint Resolutions

H.J. Res	House Joint Resolution
S.J. Res.	Senate Joint Resolution

A joint resolution, H.J. Res. or S.J. Res., is a legislative proposal that requires the approval of both Chambers and the signature of the President, just as a bill does, in order to have the force of law.

- Joint resolutions from each House are assigned a number in the order in which they are introduced. Joint resolutions may be introduced in either Chamber and generally are used for limited matters such as continuing or emergency appropriations or the designation of a commemorative holiday.

- There is little practical difference between bills and joint resolutions, although only a joint resolution may be used to propose amendments to the Constitution. In the case of a Constitutional amendment, the signature of the President is not required, but three-quarters of the states must ratify the proposed amendment before it can become part of the Constitution.

- Prior to the 77th Congress (1941), laws enacted by joint resolutions were numbered separately from bills in the Statutes at Large, but since that time there has been no distinction made between laws that were introduced as bills and laws that were introduced as joint resolutions.

About Concurrent Resolutions

H. Con. Res	House Concurrent Resolution
S. Con. Res.	Senate Concurrent Resolution

A concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. or S. Con. Res., is a proposal that requires the approval of both Chambers, but does not have the force of law and does not require the signature of the President. Concurrent resolutions may be introduced in either the House or the Senate and, upon approval by both, are signed by the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate. Generally, concurrent resolutions are introduced to make or amend rules that affect the operations of both Chambers or to express the sentiment of both Chambers. For example, a concurrent resolution may be introduced to set the time of Congress' adjournment or to convey the congratulations of Congress to another country on the anniversary of its independence.

- Beginning in the 55th Congress (1897), the concurrent resolutions passed by both Chambers have been printed as separate lists within the Statutes at Large.

About Simple Resolutions

H. Res	House Simple Resolution
S. Res.	Senate Simple Resolution

A simple resolution, H. Res. or S. Res., is a proposal that addresses matters entirely within the prerogative of one Chamber or the other. It requires neither the approval of the other Chamber nor the signature of the President, and it does not have the force of law. Simple resolutions concern the rules of one Chamber or express the sentiments of a single Chamber. For example, a simple resolution may offer condolences to the family of a deceased Member of Congress, or it may express the opinion of one Chamber or the other on foreign policy or other executive business.

About Public Laws

Public Law	Congress	Public Law Number
P.L.	85	1

Public laws result from the passage of public bills or joint resolutions that affect the general public or classes of citizens. A legislative proposal agreed to in identical form by both Chambers becomes a law if it: receives Presidential approval, is not returned with objections to the House in which it originated within 10 days while Congress is in session, or, in the case of a proposal that has been vetoed by the President, receives a two-thirds vote overriding the veto in each Chamber.

- Prior to the 57th Congress (1901), public laws were identified by assigned Statutes at Large chapter numbers.
- In 1901, a separate public law numbering system was introduced which assigned public law numbers sequentially, with the sequence beginning anew with each session of Congress. In the 60th Congress (1907), a system of sequential numbering of public laws was adopted which began anew at the beginning of each Congress rather than each congressional session.
- In the 85th Congress (1957), the chapter numbering was discontinued and the current system was adopted in which public laws are cited with the sequentially assigned public law number prefixed by the Congress in which the law was enacted.

About Private Laws

Private Law	Congress	Private Law Number
Pvt.L.	85	1

Private laws result from the passage of private bills or joint resolutions providing relief or related actions with limited applicability, affecting, for example, a specific individual, a specific corporation or other organization, or a specified locality in a specified circumstance. For example, private laws may provide relief to individuals in areas such as immigration, taxation, or settlement of claims against the Government involving veteran's benefits or military decorations.

- Prior to the 57th Congress (1901), private laws were numbered in a sequential list that included both public and private laws, but since that time they have been numbered in separate sequences.
- Since the 85th Congress (1957), the private law numbering system has included the sequentially assigned private law number prefixed with the number of the Congress in which the law was enacted (e.g., P.L. 85-1).