

## **BOX 5.2**    **Methods of Voting**

**In the House.** There are four ways of voting in the House: voice, division, ye and nay votes, and recorded votes. A **voice vote** means that lawmakers call out “yea” or “nay” on one side or the other when a question is put by the presiding officer, and the chair decides the result. A **standing vote** (or **division vote**) means that those in favor of a proposal and then those opposed stand up while the chair takes a head count. Only vote totals are announced; there is no record of how individual members voted. **Yea and nay** votes are provided for by the Constitution and are obtained “at the Desire of one-fifth of those present” regardless of how few lawmakers are in the chamber. These votes are taken using the electronic voting system, creating a record of how each member voted. A **recorded vote** under House rules is obtained when a lawmaker states, “Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.” If at least one-fifth of a quorum (44 of 218) stand and support the request, then the recorded vote will be taken by electronic device. The distinction between recorded votes and the yeas and nays goes to the number of lawmakers required to support each request: *one-fifth of a quorum* (44 of 218) for a recorded vote and *one-fifth of those present* (as low as 1 out of 5 or as many as 87 out of 435) for the yeas and nays. In the event that a quorum is not present, House rules and practices also provide a way for a single member to effectively delay a vote on a question until a time when a sufficient number of members are present to order a vote by electronic device. To do this, a member says, “I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present, and I make a point of order that a quorum is not present.” Under the rules this could trigger a single vote to both establish a quorum and settle the question, but in modern practice the Speaker postpones further proceedings on the question, and the point of order is considered withdrawn. The Speaker must resume proceedings on the question within 2 legislative days, and at that point a member could request a recorded vote if it is still desired. Members employ the no quorum method when they might not be able to get the support of either a fifth of those present or a fifth of a quorum, or when they wish to decide later whether to vote by the electronic voting system. When members are certain that they want a public record of how each member voted, they are more likely to attempt to lock in a vote by electronic device by requesting the yeas and nays.