

SECTION 1

## THE NATIONAL LEGISLATURE

### TEXT SUMMARY

Congress is the branch of the National Government that makes laws. The Constitution says that Congress will be bicameral—that is, made up of two houses, which are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is bicameral in order to give fair representation to both large and small States. In the Senate, each State is represented equally and has equal power. In the House of Representatives, States with larger populations get more representation.

The **term** of Congress is the length of time its officials serve after their election. Each term begins on January 3 of every odd-numbered year and lasts for two years.

Congress holds one **session**, or meeting period, every year. Each term has two sessions. Congress can **adjourn**, or end, a session when it finishes its business. Today, Congress meets almost year-round, with several recesses, or breaks. The President has an as yet unused power to **prorogue**, or adjourn, a session if the two houses cannot agree on an adjournment date.

In case of an emergency, the President may call Congress into **special session**. Because Congress spends so much of the year in session, the President has not called a special session in over 50 years.

### THE BIG IDEA

**Congress, made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives, is the National Government's legislative branch.**

### GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Representation in Congress



California has many more representatives in the House than Wyoming does, but both States have two senators.

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When does Congress start each new term?
2. **Diagram Skills** How does California's representation in Congress differ from Wyoming's?