

TEXT SUMMARY

The Senate has 100 members, two from each State—a number established by the Constitution. The Senate is therefore a much smaller body than the House of Representatives. The voters of each State elect one senator in any given election, unless the other seat has been vacated by death, resignation, or expulsion and so also needs to be filled.

The Senate is called the “upper house” of Congress because senators meet stricter qualifications and serve longer terms than representatives do. Senators serve six-year terms whose start dates are staggered so that only one-third of the senators’ terms end at the same time. This means that every two years about 33 senators come up for reelection. The Senate is, therefore, a **continuous body**: it never contains

only new members, so a majority of its membership always has experience.

The longer terms for senators and the larger size and geographic diversity of their **constituencies**—those people who elect them—are designed to remove senators, at least somewhat, from day-to-day politics. In contrast to their **colleagues**, or coworkers, in the House, senators have more power and prestige and are more likely to be seen as national political leaders.

To become a senator, a person must be at least 30 years of age, have been a citizen of the United States for at least nine years, and live in the State that he or she wishes to represent.

THE BIG IDEA

Each State has two seats in the Senate, the smaller of the two houses of Congress.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Membership in Congress

Who Can Become a Member of Congress?		
Qualification	House	Senate
Age	At least 25	At least 30
Citizenship	At least 7 years	At least 9 years
Residency	Must be from the state	Must be from the state

The qualifications for senator are harder to meet than those for representative.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What makes the Senate a continuous body?
2. **Chart Skills** What is the youngest age at which a person may become a member of Congress?