

The Organization of Congress

Section 1

Creation and Evolution of Congress

Key Terms

- **Legislative sessions**
- **Recesses**
- **Special sessions**
- **Apportionment**
- **Census**
- **reapportionment**

- **Congressional district**
- **Single member districts**
- **At large**
- **Gerrymandering**

Congress is the first branch of government

All legislative power rests with the Congress of the U.S.

Congress elected directly by the people

President electoral college

Supreme Court Appointed

Bicameral Legislature

- **Conflict at Constitutional Convention**
- **Two chambers**
 - **House**
 - **Senate**

House

Represents people as a whole

Elected 2 year term

**Elected on basis of population
of the state**

**Every state gets at least 1
representative**

Senate

**Appointed by state legislatures
until 17th Amendment**

Senators now elected

2 each state

Elected for 6 years

100 members

Senate and House check each other

To become a law, a bill must be passed by both houses

Senate can pass laws but only House can appropriate money

Congressional Meetings

- **Each Congress lasts 2 years**
 - **Called a Term**
- **20th Amendment –**
 - **Terms start Jan 20th odd years**
 - **Congress can change date if it needs to**

- **Each term has 2 sessions**
 - **1 each year**
- **Until 1940 Congress only met for 4 or 5 months a year**
- **Now Congress stays in session most of year**
- **Few short breaks**
 - **Christmas, vacations, fall**

- **Members must vote to adjourn**
- **Only President can call "Special Sessions"**
- **Sometimes President will make a Recess appointment**

Apportionment of the House

- **House seats are apportioned on basis of population**
- **7 states have only 1 rep.**
- **Nonvoting delegates**
 - **DC, Samoa, Guam, Virgin Is., Puerto Rico**

Census taken every 10 years

- 1929 set house size at 435**
- Census determines state seats**
- Census Bureau give plan to President**
- President submits plan to Congress**

the electoral college



Congressional Districting

Original methods

- **Single member districts**
- **Members at large**
- **1842 Single Memb. Required**
- **Each member represents about same number citizens**

Congressional Dist. Of unequal population

- **1960's many states had unequal representation**
- **Westberry v. Sanders ruled 1man 1 vote rule**
 - **Based on 14th amendment**

Gerrymandering

- **Elbridge Gerry, governor of Mass. And Essex County**
- **Two Methods**
- **Packing – as many of one party as possible**
- **Cracking – divide opponents strength by drawing boundaries**



The Original Gerrymander

FraudFactor.com

Racial Gerrymandering

- **1990's Justice dept. required racial balancing**
- **Bizarre results**
- **1995 & 96 courts ruled racial balancing demeaning**

NC 12th: 1998 Gerrymandered

Winston-Salem



Charlotte

Law of
unintended
consequences

Remainder of
state black
voters
unrepresented

The Organization of Congress

Section 2

House and Senate Terms and Qualifications

Key Terms

Franking privilege

Casework

Pork barrel

The House of Representative

Lower chamber

Terms of Office

- **Elected every 2 years**
- **Elections Nov of even years**
- **Take office Jan 3**
- **90% re-elected**
- **No term limits**

House Qualifications

- **25 years of age**
- **Citizen of U.S. for 7 years prior to election**
- **resident of state**
- **tradition to live in district**
- **House judges qualifications**
- **can't exclude if qualified**

The Senate

- **Upper chamber**
- **Each state 2 senators**
 - **Art V says can't be changed**
- **17th Amend. direct election**

Senate Terms of Office

- **six year term**
- **1/3 elected every 2 years**
- **Governor appoints vacancies**
- **“continuous body”**
- **More time to study issues**

Senate Qualifications

- **30 years old**
- **citizen of U.S. for 9 years**
- **resident of state**
- **Senate judges qualifications**
- **Can exclude members elected**

Power of Incumbency

- **90% re-elected**
- **know issues**
- **high visibility**
- **franking privilege**
- **case work – serve voters**
- **pork barrel – state projects**
- **easy to raise campaign money**

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Section 3

Members of Congress and their Responsibilities

Key terms

- **congressional immunity**
- **censure**
- **expulsion**
- **reprimand**

Profile of members

- **high income, education & occupation status**
- **Most have college degrees**
- **Most law degrees**
- **Most white, male protestants**

105th Congress

Char.	House	Senate	U.S. Pop.
Age	50.9	58.4	33
Male	89 %	91 %	49.1 %
Female	11 %	9 %	51.9 %
Minority	13.5 %	4 %	33 %
College	98 %	99 %	21.4 %
Non-Coll.	2 %	1 %	78.6 %

Compensation & Benefits

- **Sets own pay & compensation**
- **Both houses \$136,700**
- **Speaker & VP \$175,400**
- **Majority & Minority Leaders \$151,800**
- **Tax deduction for two homes**
- **Office and staff allowance**

Compensation & Benefits cont.

- **phone, telegram & postage**
- **health insurance**
- **free outpatient**
- **military hospital**
- **generous pensions**
- **recreation & free dining room**
- **free research facilities LOC**

Privileges of Members

- **Art 1 Sec 6**
- **No arrest for civil cases**
- **Congressional Immunity**
 - **free speech**
 - **can't be sued**

Roles of members

- Much time learning issues
- Try to be on “floor”
- Time with constituents, lobbyists and others
- raising money
- attending functions

Policy Making role

- **Identifying and researching problems and bills**
- **Decide issues**

Representative Role

- **represent folks back home**
- **Instructed delegate**
 - **Vote as constituents would vote**
- **Trustee**
 - **Vote conscience**

Servant of Constituents Role

- **intermediary with bureaucracy**
- **flooded with constituent requests**

Committee Member Role

- **May server on 6 or more committees**

Politician and Party Member Role

- **Work on party issues**
- **Caucuses**
- **Internal Groups**
- **Political Groups**

Conduct of Members

- **House and Senate have power to punish members**
- **Expulsion**
 - **only 4 in history**
- **Censure**
 - **23 Reps and 9 Senators**
- **Repremand**

The Organization of Congress

Section 4

The Structure of Congress

Terms

majority party

Speaker of the House

caucus

presidential succession

majority leader

minority leader

whips

president pro tem

standing committees

seniority rule

subcommittees

select committees

joint committees

conference committees

administrative assistant

legislative director

legislative assistants

caseworkers

legislative correspondents

House Leadership

Speaker of the House

- **mandated by Constitution**
- **Tradition – long time member**
- **chosen by caucus of majority party**
- **presides over the House**
- **Second in line to be President**

Speaker of House powers

- **Controls which bills go to which committees**
- **presides over sessions**
- **votes if a tie**
- **committee assignments**
- **schedules bills for action**

**Speaker may choose Speaker
pro tem**

Much political clout

**If president in different party,
speaker may speak for party**

Majority Leader

- **elected by party caucus**
- **help plan for party**
- **organize party members to support party bills**
- **make committee chairs support bills important to party**

Minority Leader

- **duties same as majority leader**
- **keep minority party together**
- **organize opposition to majority party program**

Whips

- **assist majority or minority party leaders**
- **keep members inline with party positions**
- **rounds-up members to vote**
- **keep track of members position on votes and issues**

Senate Leadership

- **Vice Pres. is Pres. of Senate (only votes in ties)**
- **President Pro Tem serves as Pres. when VP absent**
- **Real power held by Majority Leader and Whips**

House

Speaker

**Majority
Leader**

**Minority
Leader**

**Majority
Whip**

**Minority
Whip**

Senate

**Vice
President**

**Majority
Leader**

**Minority
Leader**

**Majority
Whip**

**Minority
Whip**

Committees and Subcommittees

- **Most of congressional work done by committees**
- **Not mandated in Constitution**
- **Study and research bills then recommend pass or no pass**
- **Screen which bills are passed**
- **Committees decide which bills have a chance to pass**

Standing Committees

- **Most powerful**
- **Bills must be approved before consideration by full House or Senate**
- **House 19**
Senate 17
- **Size varies from 12 to 57 members**

Standing Committees

- **members chosen by party caucus**
- **controlled by majority party**
- **Seniority Rule**
Chairman most senior member
- **number based on percentage of members in House or Sen.**

Sub committees

- **Standing committees broken into smaller committees**
- **Today more than 200**

Select Committees

- **investigate specific problems**
- **can be permanent or temporary**

Joint Committees

- **members from House and Senate**
- **Some permanent**
Joint Economic Committee
Atomic Energy Committee

Conference Committees

- **Iron out difference between House & Senate bills**

Congressional Support

- **Personal Staff**
- **Committee Staff**
- **Support Agencies**

Personal Staff

- **House about 20**
Senate about 40
- **Administrative Assistant**
Most important
Runs office
- **Legislative Director**
Assigns staff jobs
Has assistant – Legislative Assistant

Personal Staff *continued*

- **Legislative Assistant**
Does research on bills
- **Caseworkers**
Help people back home
- **Legislative correspondents**
handle mail, prepare press releases, general office help

Committee Staff

- Each committee has staff
- Research issues and problems
- Make recommendations
 - *Roy Cohen*
 - *Hillary Clinton*

Support Agencies

- **General Accounting Office**
Review of gov. programs
- **Library of Congress**
Congressional Research Service
- **Congressional Budget Office**
Coordinate Budget
- **Gov Printing Office**

Web Sites

- **General Accounting Office**

www.gao.gov

- **Library of Congress**

www.loc.gov

- **Congressional Budget Office**

www.cbo.gov

Thanks!

