

LEADERS IN CONGRESS

Because it's not a group project without some form of power structure.

Constitutionally speaking, the House Speaker, Senate President and Senate pro tempore are the only official leaders. The Constitution also states that the two houses may "choose their other Officer"

At the start of every congressional term in early Jan-ish on odd years, leaders are chosen. The big party caucuses all gather together and nominate/choose people out of view of the public.

Then, the public vote and whatnot happen which are always along party lines, so basically the majority party gets the seats.

HOUSE

At the top is the Speaker. The party that holds the majority in that house is usually (damn near always) the one who has people in leadership. The Speaker essentially hands people the metaphorical conch to speak, as well as carrying out certain administrative tasks as well as protecting the rights of the minority (according to this suspicious website I found).

At the second to top step are majority/minority leaders. They are the first leaders given the conch and are generally known as the spokesperson for a party. They also manage debate amongst their party and interact with the other leader across the aisle.

At the third to top are deputy leaders or whips, who are in charge of "party discipline" according to the textbook. The whip tracks votes amongst their party, make sure party members vote in ways aligned with the party, appoint sub whips and overall maintain a code of ethics and professionalism. In times of scandal or accusation the whip may pressure someone to step down or leave.

SENATE

At the top is the VP of the United States, acc. to the Constitution. Most of the time however, the VP rarely shows up and uses their power.

Below (technically) is the temporary president held by the most senior senator who resides in the majority party. They are in charge of taking the VP's job whilst they are gone (which is a lot of the time), which includes signing legislation, doing the oath thingy to let new people in.

At the practical top is the majority leader. In practice they're the ones leading and the chief legislator. Aside from their roles within the party, they are the first ones to be handed the conch, the ones to decide the calendar, which bills reach the floor for debates. However, the textbook explicitly explains that they don't get to decide explicitly how an individual party member votes (The Majority [P]leader).

Then you have party whips and officials whose roles match those of their House counterparts.

COMMITTEES

While not explicitly in the Constitution, they have been around for a long time. These are wieldy and focused groups that have been tasked with analyzing legislature. They are often faster than the Senate or House, and both houses may have these committees.

STANDING COMMITTEES

A standing committee [that's such a dumb spelling] are permanent ones focused on one long standing sector such as energy or transportation. For instance the Comm. on Transportation/Infrastructure grants grants, oversee policy regarding gasoline and regulates airports. The chairpeople are usually (damn near always) the most senior and experienced member in the majority party. The vice chair is the same thing but from the minor party. Usually the majority party controls bills and whether or not they make it to the floor, as bills must pass through these committees before reaching the floor.

Aside from that, committees may also be involved with special procedures such as impeachment. During Trump's first impeachment, the Judiciary Committee voted to let the impeachment proceed and send the articles over to the House floor. The other thing is congressional oversight via committees towards exec branch agencies; their jobs involve monitoring the activities of an agency and summoning their leaders when necessary. [[i'm going to jump off my roof why is there so much today and only today]]

Most members of committees are experienced in that sector and qualified as a result.

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

The textbook has bolded this term so it's important i guess. This committee is responsible for tax policy and is the first committee that tax raises/lowerings pass thru.

JOINT COMMITTEES

These are permanent ones tasked with things such as managing the LOC and doing research. These ones cross house lines and take members from both houses.

SELECT COMMITTEES

In special times or in emergencies, a short lived committee can be summoned for some very specific purpose, for example, COVID-19 or major scandals. One of the most recent examples is the House's select committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

These are committees summoned when a bill passes both houses but they can't agree on which variation to use. This committee usually just achieves a compromise where they edit the bill to meet in the middle.