



The Legislative Branch

What Does Congress Do?

- Legislation
 - Passing bills, etc.
- Oversight
 - Monitoring the executive branch & bureaucracy
- Constituent Service



Two Houses Compared

	HOUSE	SENATE
Term	2 years (all 435 elected every two years)	6 years (1/3 elected every two years)
Elected From (constituency)	Congressional district <i>Average about 711,000*</i>	State (at large) <i>Smallest: WYO about 600,000*</i> <i>Largest: CA about 38 million*</i>
Special Powers	-Initiate revenue bills -Impeachment (majority)	-Try Impeachments (2/3) -Ratify Treaties (2/3) -Confirm appointments
Constitutional Presiding Officer	Speaker	President of the Senate (VP) President pro tempore
Political Leader	Speaker	Majority Leader
Debate	More Limited	Less Limited (Filibuster)
	<i>*Based on 2010 Census</i>	

What's a Constituency?

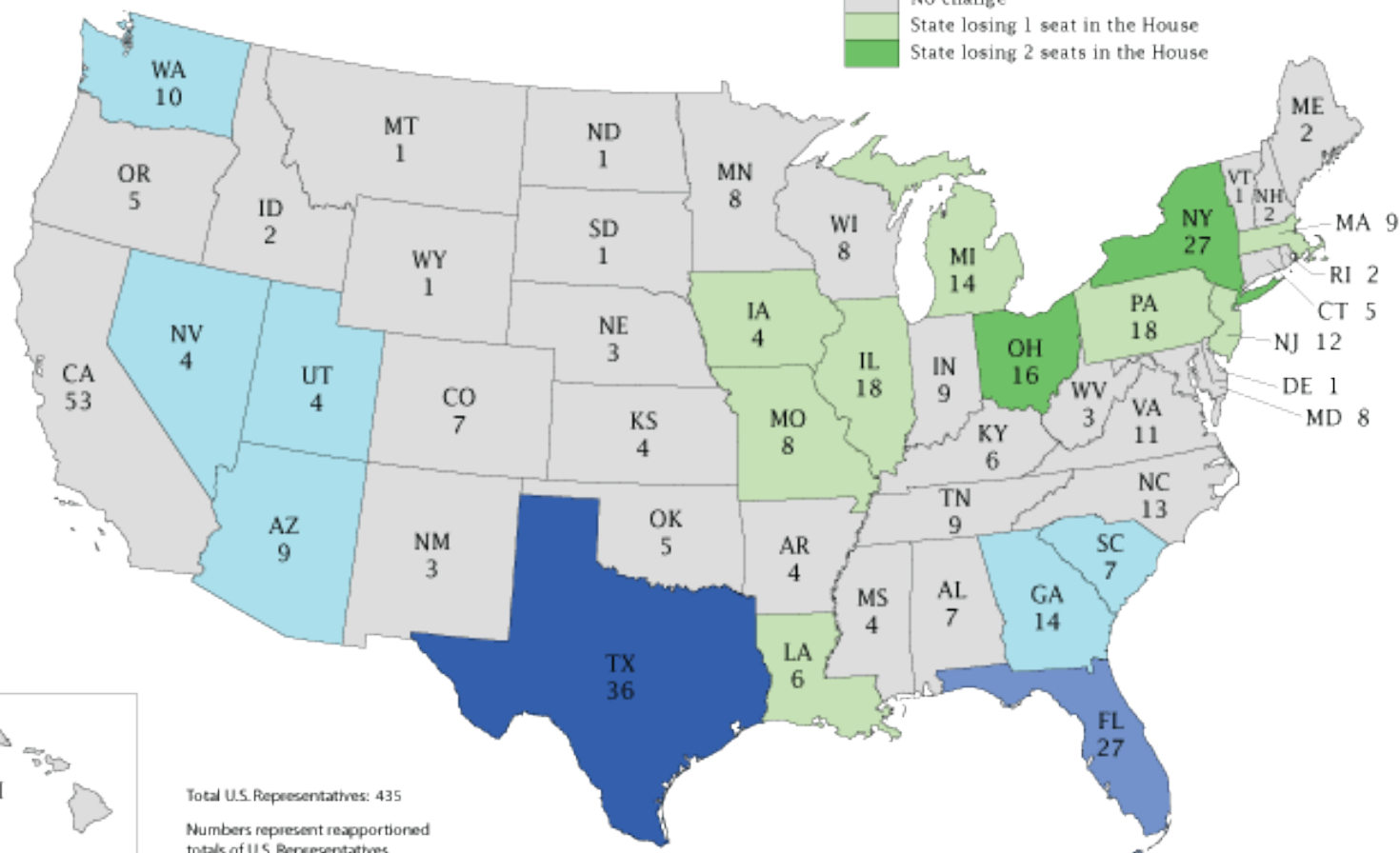
- Constituency =
 - Electoral District
 - Voters of a District (as a whole)
 - US Congressional District Map:
https://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/cong_dist/uswall/cd115/CD115_US_WallMap.pdf
- Constituent = One Voter



Apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives Based on the 2010 Census

Change from 2000 to 2010

- State gaining 4 seats in the House
- State gaining 2 seats in the House
- State gaining 1 seat in the House
- No change
- State losing 1 seat in the House
- State losing 2 seats in the House



Total U.S. Representatives: 435

Numbers represent reapportioned totals of U.S. Representatives.



California's Congressional Districts



Organization of the Legislature



- **Partisanship**
 - How do the political parties affect the legislature?
 - The party with the majority of seats uses its majority to lead and to promote its policy agenda
- **Leadership**
 - Who leads the House and Senate and how does it matter?
 - The majority party picks the leaders of each House and the chairs of all committees. They can control what is discussed and what is approved (or not)
- **Committees & Rules**
 - Why are committees and rules so important to understanding how Congress works?
 - Most of the legislative and oversight work is done in committees. The majority of seats in a committee are held by the majority party.
- **Seniority**
 - What does the amount of time spent as a representative have to do with how powerful a member of Congress can be? More senior legislators usually hold more influential positions (no term limits for the Senate and House of Representatives)
- **Staff**
 - What is the role of the people who assist members of Congress?
 - Individuals and agencies provide information, assist constituents, and do a lot of the legislative work

Some Terms to Know

- **Majority**

- refers to party with the majority of the members in the legislative chamber

- **Minority**

- refers to party with minority of members

- **Whips**


- Are assistants to the leaders who are supposed to rally party members to vote (& vote the party line) on legislation

Leadership

- House leadership:
 - This link to the House web page lists the leaders of the House
 - <https://www.house.gov/leadership>

Leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives

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**UNITED STATES
HOUSE of
REPRESENTATIVES**

116th Congress, 2nd Session · The House is in session · [Watch Live House Floor Proceedings](#)

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Leadership

The majority party members and the minority party members meet separately to select their leaders. Third parties rarely have had enough members to elect their own leadership, and independents will generally join one of the larger party organizations to receive committee assignments. A party caucus or conference is the name given to a meeting of or organization of all party members in the House. During these meetings, party members discuss matters of concern.

[Learn more about the history of House leadership](#).


Speaker of the House




Rep. Nancy Pelosi

Elected by the whole of the House of Representatives, the Speaker acts as leader of the House and combines several roles: the institutional role of presiding officer and administrative head of the House, the role of leader of the majority party in the House, and the representative role of an elected member of the House. The Speaker of the House is second in line to succeed the President, after the Vice President.


Democratic Leadership




Majority Leader
Rep. Steny Hoyer
Represents Democrats on the House floor.



Majority Whip
Rep. James Clyburn
Assists leadership in managing party's legislative program.




Assistant Speaker
Rep. Ben Ray Luján
Assists the Majority Leader.




Democratic Caucus Chairman
Rep. Hakeem Jeffries
Heads organization of all Democratic Party members in the House.


Republican Leadership




Republican Leader
Rep. Kevin McCarthy
Represents Republicans on the House floor.



Republican Whip
Rep. Steve Scalise
Assists leadership in managing party's legislative program.



Republican Conference Chairman
Rep. Liz Cheney
Heads organization of all Republican Party members in the House.



Republican Policy Committee Chairman
Rep. Gary Palmer
Heads Conference forum for policy development.

23rd District of California

[Full Biography](#)[Our District](#)

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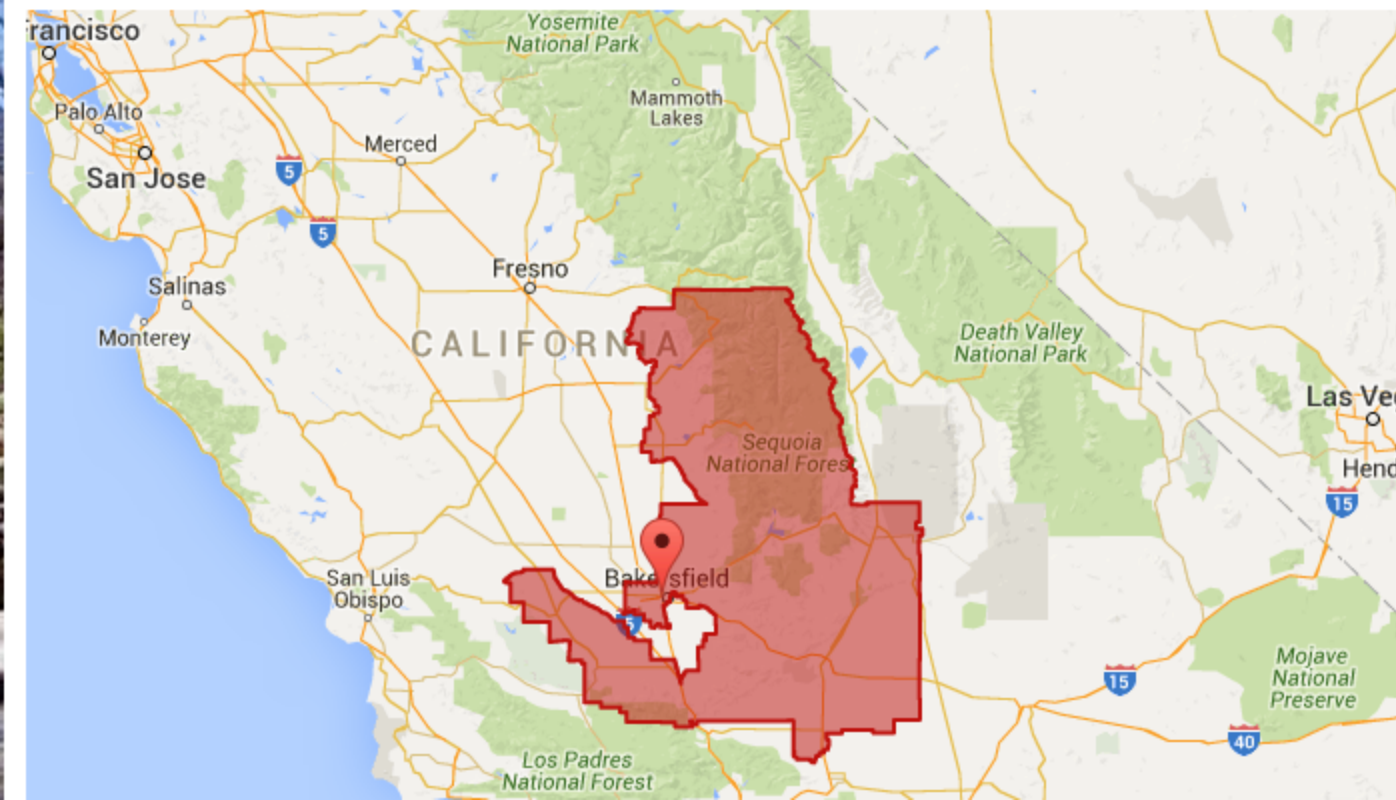


STAY CONNECTED



Over 700,000 people reside in California's 23rd Congressional District, which covers most of Kern and Tulare Counties, and northeastern Los Angeles County. The district includes the cities of Bakersfield, California City, Frazier Park, Kernville, Lake Isabella, Lancaster, Mojave, Porterville, Ridgecrest, Taft, and Tehachapi. The 23rd District also encompasses the Sequoia and Los Padres National Forests.



The three largest industries in the 23rd District are agriculture, energy, and defense. It is one of America's top agricultural districts, producing over \$3 billion annually in crops such as: cotton, citrus, grapes, stone fruits, pistachios, wine grapes, almonds, olives, tomatoes, onions, garlic, carrots, alfalfa, cattle and sheep. In addition, Kern County makes a large contribution to American energy independence, producing more oil annually than the entire state of Oklahoma, and the district. It is also a leader in wind, solar, and geothermal energy production. Northeastern Los Angeles County and eastern Kern County are the sites of Edwards Air Force Base, the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division at China Lake, the Mojave Air & Space Port, and NASA Armstrong Flight Research Center, respectively.





Leadership: Senate


- President of the Senate (designated by Constitution)
 - VP of the U.S.
 - President Pro Tempore
- Majority Party
 - Majority Leader
 - Whips
- Minority Party
 - Minority Leader
- This link is to the Senate leadership page
 - <http://www.senate.gov/senators/leadership.htm>

Senate Leadership: majority party

 Find Your Senators 

 [VIEW ARCHIVED FLOOR PROCEEDINGS](#)


UNITED STATES SENATE



SENATORS

COMMITTEES

LEGISLATION & RECORDS

ART & HISTORY

REFERENCE

Contact

Leadership & Officers


Former Senators

Qualifications & Terms of Service

Facts & Milestones


States

Leadership & Officers




Listed below are the current leadership and officers for the 116th Congress. Also available on [Senate.gov](#) are historical essays on and lists of [Senate leadership](#) and [Senate officers](#).

Constitutionally Mandated Officers




Vice President
Pence, Michael R.




President Pro Tempore
Grassley, Chuck (R-IA)

Political Party Leaders


Republican Leadership




Republican Leader
McConnell, Mitch (R-KY)




Majority Whip
Thune, John (R-SD)




Republican Conference Chairman
Barrasso, John (R-WY)



Republican Policy Committee Chairman
Blunt, Roy (R-MO)



Vice Chairman of the Senate Republican Conference
Ernst, Joni (R-IA)



Republican Senatorial Committee Chairman
Young, Todd (R-IN)

Senate Leadership: minority party



UNITED STATES SENATE

SENATORS

COMMITTEES







LEGISLATION & RECORDS

ART & HISTORY

REFERENCE

Senate
(R-IA)

Democratic Leadership

 <p><i>Democratic Leader Chairman of the Conference</i> Schumer, Charles E. (D-NY)</p>	 <p><i>Democratic Whip</i> Durbin, Richard J. (D-IL)</p>	 <p><i>Assistant Democratic Leader</i> Murray, Patty (D-WA)</p>
 <p><i>Chairwoman of Policy & Communications Committee</i> Stabenow, Debbie (D-MI)</p>	 <p><i>Vice Chair of Conference</i> Warren, Elizabeth (D-MA)</p>	 <p><i>Vice Chair of Conference</i> Warner, Mark R. (D-VA)</p>
 <p><i>Chair of Steering Committee</i> Klobuchar, Amy (D-MN)</p>	 <p><i>Chairman of Outreach</i> Sanders, Bernard (I-VT)</p>	 <p><i>Vice Chairman of Policy & Communications Committee</i> Manchin, Joe, III (D-WV)</p>
 <p><i>Secretary of the Conference</i> Baldwin, Tammy (D-WI)</p>	 <p><i>Chairman of Campaign Committee</i> Van Hollen, Chris (D-MD)</p>	



Committees: The Committee System

- Chair of Committees (leadership)
 - Selection & Powers
- Types of Committees
 - Standing committees
 - Subcommittees
 - Select committees
 - Joint committees
 - Economic, taxation, library, printing
 - Conference Committee
- Current committees and leadership
 - Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/senators/leadership.htm>
 - House: <https://www.house.gov/committees>

Other People to Consider: Congressional Staff

- Personal Staff
 - Home state/district and DC
- Committee Staff
- Agencies
 - For example:
 - Congressional Research Service
 - General Accounting Office
 - Office of Technology Assessment
 - Congressional Budget Office

Putting it all together

What does Congress do, and why?

Legislating

How a Bill Becomes a Law

HOW DOES A BILL

BECOME A LAW?



HOUSE
of Representatives

SENATE

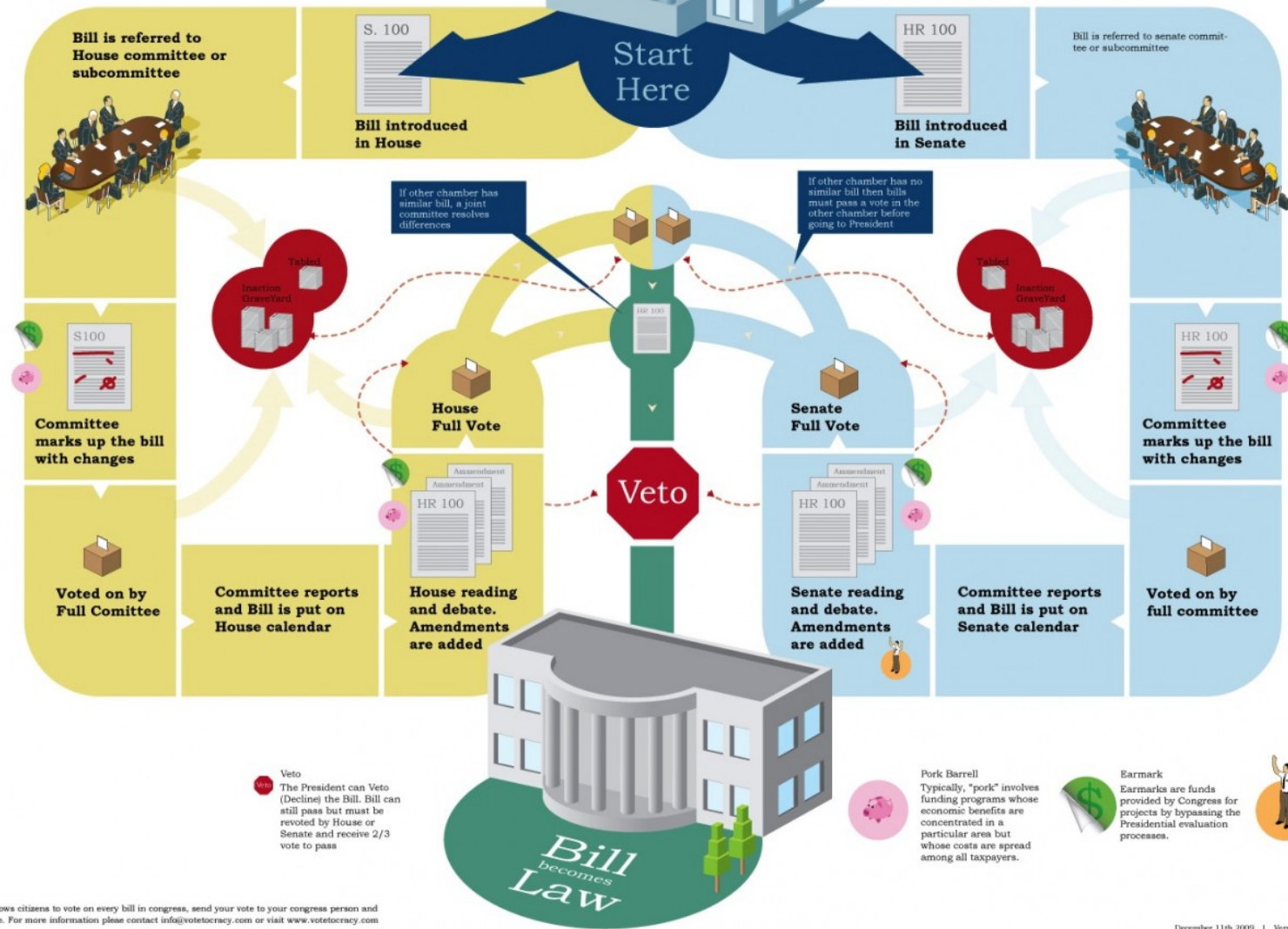
Start Here

435
Representatives

Each state receives representation in the House in proportion to its population but is entitled to at least one Representative. Each representative serves for a two-year term. The House was granted its own exclusive powers: the power to initiate revenue bills, impeach officials, and elect the president in electoral college deadlocks.

100
Senators

Each U.S. state is represented by two senators, regardless of population. This ensures equal representation of each state in the Senate. Senators serve staggered six-year terms.



Veto
The President can Veto (Decline) the Bill. Bill can still pass but must be revoked by House or Senate and receive 2/3 vote to pass

Pork Barrel
Typically, "pork" involves funding programs whose economic benefits are concentrated in a particular area but whose costs are spread among all taxpayers.

Earmark
Earmarks are funds provided by Congress for projects by bypassing the Presidential evaluation processes.

Filibuster
AKA - "Talking a bill to death." An informal term for extended debate or other procedures used to prevent a vote on a bill in the Senate.

Interactive Diagram of How a Bill Becomes a Law

[https://www.lexisnexis.com/help/CU/The Legislative Process/How a Bill Becomes Law.htm](https://www.lexisnexis.com/help/CU/The_Legislative_Process/How_a_Bill_Becomes_Law.htm)

Congressional Oversight

Congressional Legislation

- Congress creates agencies, authorizes activity and programs, and appropriates money for those programs
 - Authorization and appropriation are different steps
- The Executive Branch runs the programs

Oversight

- Congress checks up on what the Executive Branch does
 - Congressional oversight investigates waste, fraud, and abuse
 - Congress can request information and hold hearings and compel testimony (subpoena witnesses who work in the executive branch)
 - Congressional oversight occurs on a regular basis but also in response to constituent complaints

Motives and Behavior

What explains why members of Congress do what they do?

Congressional Motives and Behavior?

- Policymaking
 - Wanting to make a difference and to influence what government does
- Prestige
 - Personal aspirations such as influence and career choices
- Reelection
 - Whatever the goal, representatives have to get elected to accomplish them

Usually Assume Representatives want to get Reelected

- What affects re-election?
 - Incumbency Advantage
 - Name Recognition
 - Constituents (casework/constituency service)
 - Interest groups
 - Money (Campaign Funds \$\$\$\$\$)
- Political Party Support/Presidential Support (Popularity)
 - Political parties can influence who wins election, but cannot control candidacies
 - A popular or unpopular president can affect other electoral outcomes
- Voter Turnout