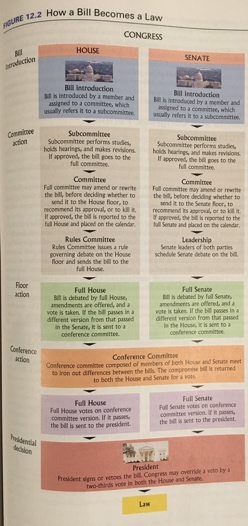
Chapter 12: Congress

1. The Representatives and Senators
   1. The Members
      1. 435 Members of the House
      2. 100 Members of the Senate
      3. Salary of $174,000
      4. Statistically made up of White Men
   2. Why Aren’t There More Women in Congress
      1. Women occupy only 17% of Congress
      2. Women tend not to win party nominations
      3. Women are less incentivized to run as they have families and children to take care of – less ambition.
2. Congressional Elections
   1. Who Wins Elections?
      1. Incumbents
         1. Those already holding office. In congressional elections, incumbents usually win.
      2. Many are career politicians and are fighting from day one for reelection
   2. The Advantages of Incumbency
      1. People often vote in the same person many times because they are familiar and if they are doing a good job, the public doesn’t want to risk it on an unfamiliar candidate
      2. Advertising
         1. Incumbents spend a lot of money on advertising and community outreach in order to keep a positive public perception.
      3. Credit Claiming
         1. Casework
            1. Activities of members of Congress that help constituents as individuals, particularly by cutting through bureaucratic red tape to get people what they think they have the right to get.
         2. Pork barrel
            1. Federal projects, grants, and contracts available to state and local governments, businesses, colleges, and other institutions in a congressional district.
      4. Position taking
         1. Positions candidates take affect the outcomes of an election.
      5. Weak Opponents
         1. Incumbents are far likely to face weak opponents, because incumbency scares off potential running mates.
      6. Campaign Spending
         1. Challengers have to raise large sums of money to beat an incumbent.
         2. The candidate spending the most money usually wins.
   3. The Role of Party Identification
      1. Most citizens identify with a party, so a clear party identification by a candidate may be enough to secure voters.
      2. Gerrymandering has created a system where districts are drawn so a certain party always wins based on the demographics of voters.
   4. Defeating Incumbents
      1. Challengers are naïve about their chances of winning.
      2. Incumbents may loose supporters after a census where seats are reapportioned.
      3. Changes in public opinion can thrust incumbents out of office.
   5. Open Seats
      1. When an incumbent is not running for reelection, and the seat is open, there is greater likelihood of competition
   6. Stability and Change
      1. Incumbency results in stability which allows members of Congress the ability to gain expertise in dealing with complex issues
      2. Some people have proposed term limitations for members of Congress because of the resistance of change.
3. How Congress is Organized to Make Policy
   1. American Bicameralism
      1. Bicameral legislature
         1. A legislature divided into two houses. The US Congress and all state legislatures except Nebraska’s are bicameral.
         2. Each state is guaranteed two senators
         3. Representatives are divided up based on population, but there casn never be more than 435.
      2. The House
         1. House Rules Committee
            1. The committee in the House of Representatives that reviews most bills coming from a House committee before they go to the full House.
         2. Seniority has power in the House and representatives are more likely to vote along party lines.
      3. The Senate
         1. Senators are nearly equal in power
         2. Less disciplined and less centralized than the House
         3. Filibuster
            1. A strategy unique to the Senate whereby opponents of a piece of legislation use their right to unlimited debate to prevent the Senate from ever voting on a bill. Sixty members present and voting can halt a filibuster.
   2. Congressional Leadership
      1. The House
         1. Speaker of the House
            1. An office mandated by the Constitution. The Speaker is chosen in practice by the majority party, has both formal and informal powers, and is second in line to succeed to the presidency should that office become vacant.
            2. Presides over the House when it is in session
            3. Makes committee assignments
            4. Appoints legislative leaders and staff
            5. Controls which bills get assigned to which committee.
         2. Majority leader
            1. The principal partisan ally of the Speaker of the House, or the party’s manager in the Senate. The majority leader is responsible for scheduling bills, influencing committee assignments, and rounding up votes in behalf of the party’s legislative positions.
         3. Whips
            1. Party leaders who work with the majority leader or minority leader to count votes beforehand and lean on waverers whose votes are crucial to a bill favored by the party.
         4. Minority leader
            1. The principal leader of the minority party in the House of Representatives or in the Senate
      2. The Senate
         1. The vice president is the president of the Senate
         2. Modern vice presidents are active in representing the president’s views to the Senate.
      3. Congressional Leadership in Practice
         1. Party leadership has been more effective in recent years leading to more policy agreement within parties and more voting unity at the floor.
   3. The Committees and Subcommittees
      1. Standing committees
         1. Separate-matter committees in each house of congress that handle bills in different policy areas
      2. Joint committees
         1. Congressional committees on a few subject-matter areas with membership drawn from both houses
      3. Conference committees
         1. Congressional committees formed when the Senate and the House pass a particular bill in different forms. Party leadership appoints members from each house to iron out the differences and bring back a single bill.
      4. Select committees
         1. Congressional committees appointed for a specific purpose, such as the Watergate investigation
      5. The Committees at Work: Legislation and Oversight
         1. Legislative oversight
            1. Congress’s monitoring of the bureaucracy and its administration of policy, performed mainly through hearings.
      6. Getting on a Committee
         1. Experience is key
         2. Members with more connections to the majority leadership will land positions on more committees.
      7. Committee Chairs and the Seniority System
         1. Committee chairs
            1. The most important influencers of the congressional agenda. They play dominant roles in scheduling hearings, hiring staff, appointing subcommittees, and managing committee bills when they are brought before the full house.
         2. Seniority system
            1. A simple rule for picking committee chairs, in effect until the 1970’s. The member who had served on the committee the longest and whose party controlled the chamber became chair, regardless of party loyalty, metal state, or competence.
   4. Caucuses: The informal Organization of Congress
      1. Caucus
         1. A group of members of Congress sharing some interest or characteristic. Many are composed of members from both parties and from both houses.
   5. Congressional Staff
      1. Congress hires staff to help fulfill all of their obligations
      2. Personal staff
         1. Staff working directly for a congress member
         2. Average House has 17 assistants
         3. Average Senator has 40 assistants
         4. They answer mail, communicate with voters, help solve problems, etc.
      3. Committee Staff
         1. Organize hearings, research legislative options, draft reports, write legislation, etc.
      4. Staff Agencies
         1. Groups that aid congress in research and proposals.
4. The Congressional Process
   1. Bills
      1. A proposed law, drafted in legal language. Anyone can draft a bill, but only a member of the House of Representatives or the Senate can formally submit a bill for consideration.
   2. How a Bill Becomes a Law?
      1. 
   3. Presidents and Congress: Partners and Protagonists
      1. President is the “chief legislator”
      2. Presidents can influence congress, but congress can have their own agenda separate from the presidents.
      3. Presidents can exercise “veto” to stop legislation
   4. Party, Constituency, and Ideology
      1. Presidents come and go, parties endure.
      2. Parties and the constituency are more influential on domestic policies
      3. Party Influence
         1. Most of the time members vote along party lines, however things like civil rights issues have required both parties to form a coalition.
      4. Polarized Politics
         1. In the past three decades’ republicans have become more conservative and democrats have become more liberal.
         2. This is likely because of gerrymandering at the district level
      5. Constituent Opinion Versus Member Ideology
         1. The simplest way for a constituent to influence politics is by electing someone who shares the same viewpoints as them
         2. Campaign contributions monetary or not can also influence the opinions of politicians.
         3. When there are differences in opinion, congress still has control
   5. Lobbyists and Interest Groups
      1. 35,000 registered lobbyists
      2. 12,000 organizations
      3. Everyone is trying to influence the decisions of congress
      4. There is some evidence that lobbying pays off, but it is not as much as one might think.
      5. There are simply too many factors that decide how congressmen vote on an issue
5. Understanding Congress
   1. Congress and Democracy
      1. In a large nation, the success of democratic government depends on the quality of representation.
      2. Certainly some aspects of congress are unrepresentative
      3. Congress does try to listen to the American people
      4. Representativeness Versus Effectiveness
         1. Some argue that Congress is too representative and that they are constantly thinking of small groups and defending them.
         2. They argue that Congress should be an objective policymaking institution
   2. Congress and the Scope of Democracy
      1. Congress is responsible for many jobs in the US Government
      2. Members of Congress protect the interest of their constituents.
      3. Congress does not impose programs on a reluctant public; instead, it repsonds to the public’s demands for them.