

GR 5.1 - Congress Breakdown



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Introduction to Congress



BACKGROUND

- Legislative Branch of the Government
- Bicameral: Two Houses
- House of Representatives: Based on Population
 - 435 total members
- Senate: Equal representation (2 per state)
 - 100 total members
- Main role is making laws

Why is Congress bicameral?

The Great Compromise of 1787

- Disagreement on representation between small and large states
- Virginia plan focused on representation **based on population**
- New Jersey plan focused on **equal representation**
- Decided to include both and create a bicameral legislature where all were represented
- Based on ideas of Checks and Balances



Current members of the 119th Congress (2025-2026)

■ House of Representatives

The House of Representatives has a total of 435 voting members (with committees) but currently lists 441 on the Congress website. Out of the 441, the registered parties are underneath

- Republican: 222
- Democratic: 219

■ Senate

The Senate has a total of 100 members but currently lists 102 on Congress website. Out of the 102, the registered parties are underneath

- Republican: 55
- Democratic: 45
- Independent: 2

■ Why 102 & 411?

With some members resigning for specific reasons (JD assuming Vice President) or including U.S. territory representatives, Congress might have some discrepancies while replacements and transitions are completed

What are the key differences between the chambers (House and Senate)?

Why do you think the founders structured congress this way?

Questions



Qualifications

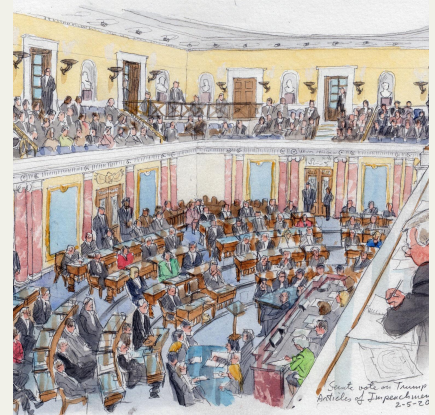
■ House of Representatives (The people's House)

- Only having 2 year terms
- Must be 25 years of age
- Must be a citizen for at least 7 years
- Must be a resident of the State represented at time of election
- Represent district within the states



■ Senate (The Upper Chamber)

- Having 6 year terms
- Must be 30 years of age
- Must be a citizen for at least 9 years
- Must be a resident of the State represented at time of election
- Represent entire state



Adam Gray

Representative of 13th District in
California (Merced County)

- Registered under the Democratic Party
- Born and raised in Merced
- Represented Merced and Stanislaus county for 10 years in California State Assembly



Why do you think the qualifications for serving in Congress are so simple (age, citizenship, residency)?

Why might some people argue that term limits should exist for members of Congress?

Questions



Congressional Leadership Roles

Speaker of the House



Mike
Johnson

Most powerful position in congress

2nd in line for presidency after the vice president

Sets the legislative agenda
(Decides which bills get debated)

Presides over House sessions
(Recognize speakers, enforce rules)

Can influence national policy
(deciding what issues get attention)

House Majority Leader



Steve
Scalise

**2nd in command for the majority
party in House**

**Manages daily legislative
operations**

**Helps speaker with setting the
legislative agenda**
(Decides which bills get debated)

**Works with committee chairs to
move key bills forward**

House Minority Leader



Hakeem
Jeffries

Leader of the largest opposition party

Develop alternative policies to challenge the majority party

Strategize elections
(To gain control of the house)

Works to unify opposing party on major issues

Can negotiate compromise with majority party

What are house whips?

Each party elects a house whip to enforce party discipline

- Count votes before key bills are brought up
- Pressure members to vote in line with party membership



Katherine
Clark

Democratic
Representative



Thomas
Earl
Emmer

Republican
Representative

President of the Senate



JD Vance

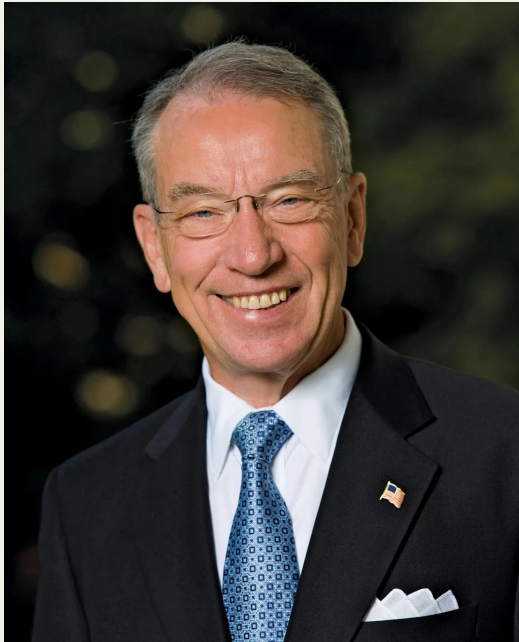
Vice President of the United States

Presides over senate sessions

Breaks tie votes
(Only on a 50/50 split)

No other legislative power other than tie break

President Pro Tempore of the Senate



Chuck
Grassley

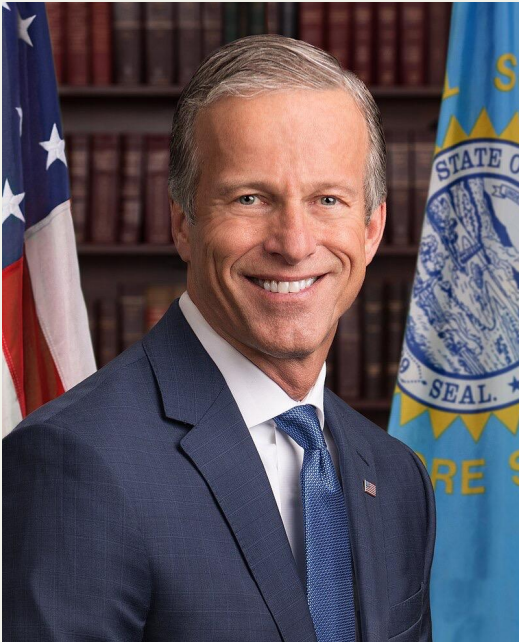
**Longest serving Member of the
majority party**

**Presides over senate sessions
when the VP is not present**

3rd in line for presidency

**Helps to maintain order in
senate sessions**

Senate Majority Leader



John
Thune

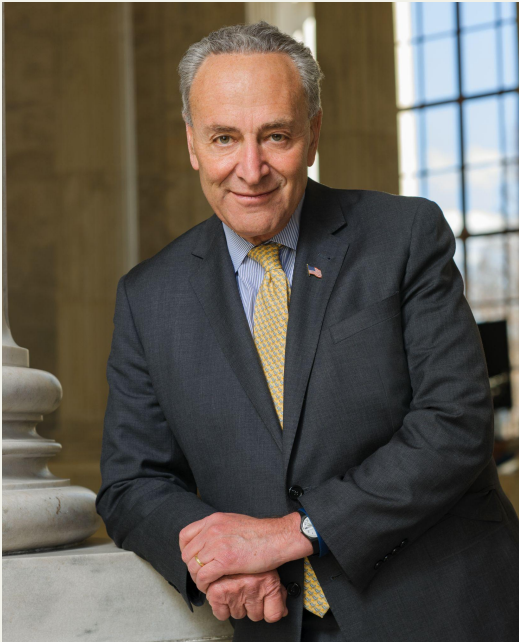
Sets the senate legislative session

Schedules bills for debate and votes

Decides what legislation is priority

Can delay or block bills by controlling floor time

Senate Minority Leader



Chuck
Schumer

Leader of the minority party in
the senate

Works to block or amend
majority party legislation

Coordinates with party members
on legislative strategies

Can delay or block bills by
controlling floor time

What are Senate whips?

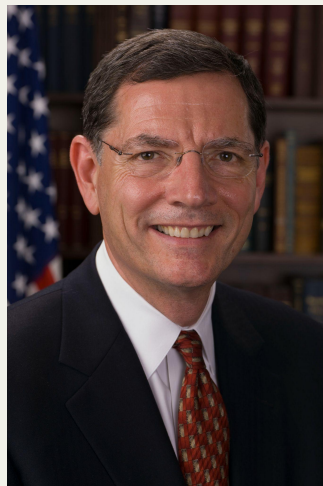
Similar to house whips

- Count votes before key decisions
- Ensure party members vote in line with party leadership



Richard
Durbin

Democratic
Representative



John
Barrasso

Republican
Representative

Why does the majority party in each chamber control most of the decision making?

Why do you think some congressional leaders (Speaker of the House) become household names, while others remain somewhat unknown?

Questions



Reapportionment & Redistricting

What is Reapportionment & Redistricting?

Reapportionment

- Every 10 years, House Seats are redistributed among states based on population shifts (Based on Census)
- *Before 2020 California had 53 house seats & after 2020 census, California now has 52 house seats*

Redistricting

- After reapportionment, states redraw district boundaries
- Done by state legislatures (Not in California, done by independent commission CCRC)

What is Gerrymandering?

Gerrymandering is the act of manipulating district boundaries to benefit a political party

Types of Gerrymandering

- Packing: Concentrating one's party's voters into a single district to minimize their influence elsewhere
- Cracking: Splitting up voters of the opposing party into multiple districts to limit their voting power

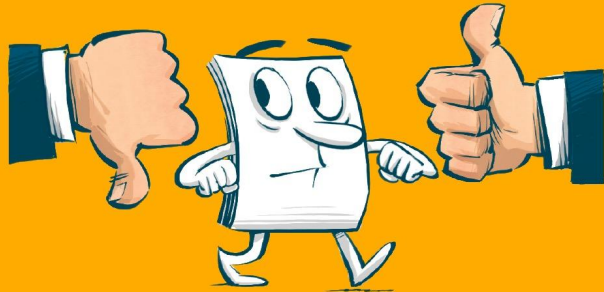
Why is the U.S. census so important for determining representation in Congress?

Why do some states use independent commissions for redistricting instead of allowing the state legislature to do it?

Questions



How a Bill becomes a Law



■ Step 1

- Bill is introduced into house or Senate
- Bill is assigned to a committee for research, amendments, & debate
- Full House or Senate debate & vote on Bill

■ Step 2

- Once passed in one chamber, the bill then has to go to the other chamber and follow the same process
- In the chance of different votes in the chambers, a compromise is reached between both chambers

■ Step 3

- President signs the bill into law
- President can also Veto bill but can be overridden with $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote in both chambers
- Allow it to become a law without signing it (With congress in session after 10 days)
- Use a pocket Veto (When congress is not in session)

I'm Just a Bill

Schoolhouse Rock



Why does the process of passing a law take so long?

Why does the President have veto power over legislation?

Questions



- How does representation in Congress impact policy making?

Exit Ticket Question

