

2016-11-09

## Institutions of Government

### Congress

- **Constituents** = the group of people being represented by a Congressperson
- Office Requirements
  - House of Reps
    - \* At least 25 years old
    - \* Citizen for at least 7 years
  - Senate
    - \* At least 30 years old
    - \* Citizen for at least 9 years
- Election cycles
  - House of Reps
    - \* Popularly elected every two years
  - Senate
    - \* Initially, elected by state legislatures every 6 years
      - Due to 17th Amendment, senators are now popularly elected

### Districts

- For the assignment of representatives, **districts** are drawn
  - **District** = a section of the state in question
  - The candidate with the plurality in that district wins the seat
  - If a state has  $x$  representatives, they draw  $x$  districts
- **Redistricting** = the process of state legislatures re-drawing district boundaries
  - Meant to be a mechanism through which the electoral process keeps up to date with a changing population
  - Happens when a new census is done
  - Results in **Gerrymandering** = the drawing of districts to benefit one party
    - \* Cram as many of the opposing party into a few, concentrated districts
    - \* Let the rest of the districts be a narrow but predictable victory for your party

## Incumbency

- **Incumbency** = the state of seeking re-election
- After cold war, there is a large increase in “career politicians”
  - People are seeking stability and level-headedness
- Advantage in advertising and visibility
- **Franking Privileges** = ability to use existing infrastructure to communicate with constituents at no cost
  - Primarily mail system = they can send postage for free
    - \* FREE ADVERTISING
- **Gerrymandering** = technically illegal, but is still done
  - As a result, only about 25% of seats were *truly* competitive
- **Credit Claiming**
  - **Casework** = individual help provided to constituents
  - **Pork Barrel** = projects or grants that specifically benefit certain districts/states
    - \* Tangible things: roads, bridges, highways, hospitals, schools, etc
  - **Earmark** = extra provisions baked into a bill that benefit a certain group of constituents
    - \* Like the “add your pork” instruction on the Mock bill assignment
    - \* Less tangible
- **Position Taking** = the act of portraying one’s self as hardworking, principled individuals
  - Can be easier to back up if you have a good voting record
- Much of the time, opponents to incumbents are poorly funded and disorganized in comparison
- *Why do incumbents ever lose?*
  - Scandals
  - Gerrymandering puts them at a disadvantage
  - Anti-government sentiment

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## 2016-11-10

### How Congress is Organized to Make Policy

- The Great Compromise

- Established a **bicameral legislature**
  - \* Composed of *two* houses
    - Senate
    - House of Representatives
- Federalist Paper 51
  - \* “in order to control the legislative authority, you must divide it”
- House of Representatives
  - 435 members = assigned to each state based on population
    - \* Each state gets 1 to start with, even if they don’t have that much population
  - 2-year terms in office
    - \* Constantly re-elected
    - \* Makes the House the institution of government closest to the people
  - Responsible for all spending/taxing bills = **power**
  - Debate time is limited == **rule**
    - \* This is because there are 435 PEOPLE
  - General role = regulate spending
- Senate
  - 100 members
    - \* Each state gets 2 members
  - Is responsible for federal appointments and foreign affairs = **power**
  - Debate time is not limited = **rule**
    - \* **Filibuster** = senator can stand and argue for a bill for as long as they want
  - General role = overseeing the government and foreign affairs

## Powers

- Legislative Powers
  - **Expressed Powers**
    - \* Also known as **enumerated powers**
    - \* Examples
      - Declare war
      - Coin money
      - Levy taxes
      - Control immigration
  - **Implied Powers**

- \* Justified by the **Necessary and Proper Clause**
    - Also called **Elastic Clause**
- Non-Legislative Powers
  - House of Representatives
    - \* Decide president if majority of electors is not reached
    - \* Initiate impeachment process
  - Senate
    - \* Try impeached officials
    - \* Verifying treaties
  - Both
    - \* Amendment passing