

U.S. Congress

A Developing Congress

Nathan Barron

Fall 2024

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1 Five Periods of Congressional Systems

The following typology is taken from Stewart's *Analyzing Congress*.

1.1 Experimental (1789-1812)

- Jeffersonian model of legislative workflow
- Most of the work occurred in the whole chamber
- Committees were mostly ad hoc and requested to report back to chamber
- Speaker was mostly a moderator; he could also appoint members to ad hoc committees
- “Legislative” influencers were often outside of Congress

1.2 Democratizing (1820-1860)

- Leadership of Henry Clay
- The solidification of party powers
- Establishment of standing committees
- Increased workload demands (post-war pensions)
- Increased interbranch competition
- Oversight of executive branch

1.3 Reconstruction (1865-1896)

- Firmer, more regional partisan affiliations
- Greater party homogeneity in the electorate
- Partisan structuring of committees
- Stronger procedural protections for majority in the House (Reed's Rules), including removal of disappearing quorum, removal of dilatory motions, creation of rules committee and scheduling and special orders

1.4 Textbook Era (1912-1968)

- Partisan realignment of 1890s
- Australian (secret) ballot and primaries electoral reforms
- Speaker Cannon's iron-fist rule over the Rules Committee and schism in the Republican party
- Cannon revolt: reduced power of the Speaker
- Creation of the Committee on Committees
- Democratic emphasis on party consensus (2/3 caucus rule)
- Republican rejection of the caucus style

1.5 Candidate-Centered Congress (1973-?)

- 1973 Reform: Stronger more developed committee and subcommittee system
- Reforms designed to benefit the majority party's agenda
- Increased mass polarization
- More deference to party leaders for agenda-setting and party discipline
- Technology and the opportunity for personal brand-making
- The cost of elections and the value of fundraising