

# Does Congress work?

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# The Data

- *“At the direction of the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, in support of the Legislative Branch Bulk Data Task Force, the Government Publishing (GPO), the Library of Congress (LOC), the Clerk of the House, and the Secretary of the Senate are making Bill Status information in XML format available through the GPO’s Bulk Data repository starting with the 113th Congress.”*
- Massive shoutout to ProPublica and the @UnitedStates GitHub



# The Data

- Contains nearly every piece of metadata about a bill:
  - Every action it has undergone
  - Every version of every title (official, popular, short)
  - All/top subjects
  - Summary (if present)
  - Current status
  - History (all prior statuses)
  - Sponsors/cosponsors
  - Committees
  - Amendments
  - Related bills



# Types of Bills

- Simple resolutions = vote only in originating chamber, not law
  - this means a passage rate of 0%
- Concurrent resolutions = vote in both chambers, not law
- Joint resolutions = vote in both chambers, can be law or constitutional amendment
- Bills = vote in both chambers

Bills die at the end of a Congress.



# Subjects include...

- Health (11%)
- Armed forces and national security
- Government operations and politics
- International affairs
- Crime and law enforcement
- Public lands and natural resources
- Education
- Congress
- Finance and financial sector
- Transportation and public works
- Immigration
- Science, technology, communications
- Labor and employment
- Environmental protection
- Energy
- Economics and public finance
- Civil rights and liberties
- Social welfare
- Families
- Private legislation (0.000075%)



# Most Supported House Bills

- H.R.2519 - The American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin Act
  - 385 cosponsors; **passed**
- H.R.930 - Lymphedema Treatment Act
  - 385 cosponsors; introduced
- H.R.820 - Childhood Cancer STAR Act
  - 371 cosponsors; introduced
- H.R.299 - Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2018
  - 330 cosponsors; passed House
- H.R.392 - Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act of 2017
  - 329 cosponsors; introduced



# Most Supported Senate Bills

- S.2823 - Music Modernization Act
  - 80 cosponsors; introduced
- A resolution objecting to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 and to all efforts that undermine direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians for a secure and peaceful settlement.
  - 78 cosponsors; introduced
- Fix NICS Act of 2017.
  - 77 cosponsors; introduced
- S.1182 - National Flood Insurance Program Extension Act of 2018
  - 76 cosponsors; **passed**
- S.Res.512 - A resolution designating the week of May 13 through May 19, 2018, as "National Police Week".
  - 76 cosponsors; agreed to



## Who sponsored the most?

Senator Orrin Hatch (R) - UT  
- 125 bills, 0.032%

Senator Charles Grassley (R) - IA  
- 97 bills, 0.062%

Senator Marco Rubio (R) - FL  
- 92 bills, 0.022%

Senator Amy Klobuchar (D) - MN  
- 92 bills, 0.033%

Senator Benjamin Cardin (D) - MD  
- 87 bills, 0.0%

## Who didn't sponsor any?

10 representatives and 1 senator with shortened terms sponsored none

The following served full terms and sponsored one bill each that did not pass:

Representative Peter Visclosky (D) - IN-1

Representative Emanuel Cleaver (D) - MO-5

Representative Nancy Pelosi (D) - CA-12

Representative Trey Gowdy (R) - SC-4

Representative Paul Ryan (R) - SC-4

Representative Jim Jordan (R) - OH-4





## Who has the best passage rate?

Representative Henry Cuellar (D) - TX-28  
- 9 bills, 0.333%

Representative Kevin Brady (R) - TX-8  
- 14 bills, 0.286%

Representative Mike Bost (R) - IL-12  
- 11 bills, 0.272%

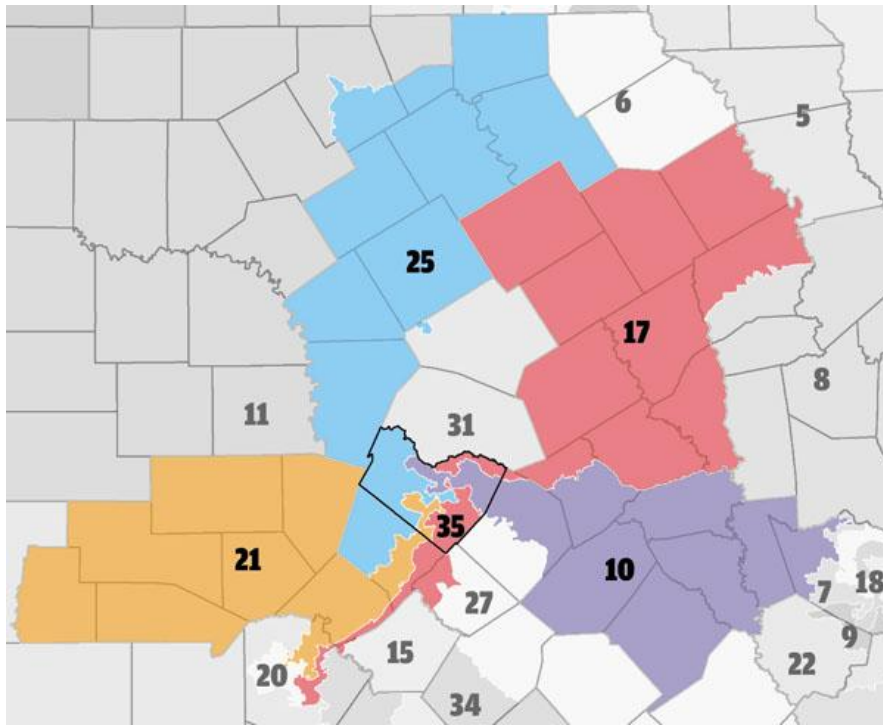
Representative John Larson (D) - CT-1  
- 8 bills, 0.25%

Representative Mac Thornberry (R) - TX-13  
- 12 bills, 0.25%

## Who has the worst passage rate?

326 legislators (58.8% of them)  
have a passage rate of 0%





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**What about Austin's  
representatives?**

TX-10: Michael McCaul

TX-17: Bill Flores

TX-21: Lamar Smith

TX-25: Roger Williams

TX-31: John Carter

TX-35: Lloyd Doggett



## Austin's Representatives' Records

TX-10: Michael McCaul (R)

- 33 bills, 0.091%

TX-25: Roger Williams (R)

- 14 bills, 0.0%

TX-17: Bill Flores (R)

- 12 bills, 0.0%

TX-31: John Carter (R)

- 8 bills, 0.125%

TX-21: Lamar Smith (R)

- 13 bills, 0.077%

TX-35: Lloyd Doggett (D)

- 18 bills, 0.0%



# Texas's Senators' Records

Senator John Cornyn (R)

81 bills, 0.074%

Senator Ted Cruz (R)

66 bills, 0.015%



# Prediction Time!

- Sponsors (and party)
- Number of cosponsors (from each party)
- Top subject
- Official bill title
- Number of amendments
- Number of related bills



# Any signal?

Bad indicators:

- Subjects including Taxation, Education, Health, and Congress

Good indicators:

- Subjects including Government operations and politics, Economics and public finance, Public lands and natural resources, Armed forces and national security
- Number of Republican cosponsors
- Number of total cosponsors
- Number of Democratic cosponsors



Demo time!



# Next Steps

- Host it on AWS or Heroku
- Pull in voting record to find similar legislators
- Expand this analysis to more Congresses
  - especially to see how “bipartisanship” changes over time





Any questions?

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