

# The Legislative Branch

## *Participating IN GOVERNMENT*

**Congressional Voting** How well does your member of Congress represent your interests when he or she votes on bills? Track your representative's vote on important bills during this session of Congress. Post the voting record on a class bulletin board. Write or E-mail your representative regarding how well his or her votes matched your class's positions.



## Electronic Field Trip

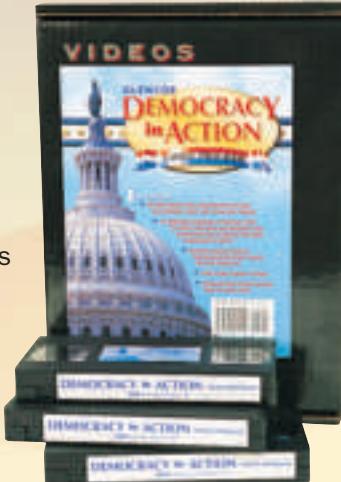
### The Capitol

Take a virtual tour of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., and discover first-hand how the legislative branch works.

#### Glencoe's Democracy in Action Video Program

The United States Capitol is a symbol of American government. The **Democracy in Action** video program "The Capitol" shows how the Capitol has been the center of decision making throughout America's past and continues to be the focus of the nation's attention.

As you view the video program, try to identify several of the functions that the Capitol serves.

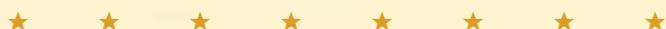


► The statue *Freedom*, cast in bronze with the help of enslaved laborers, stands on top of the dome of the United States Capitol.



#### Hands-On Activity

Use library or Internet resources to find information about your state capitol, where your state legislature meets. Create an information pamphlet about your state capitol. Incorporate information about historic events, present-day uses, architectural influences, art objects or symbols in the building. Use a word processor to design and compose your pamphlet.



## Chapter 5

# The Organization of Congress

### Why It's Important

**Your Congress** Beginning in January each year, 535 members of Congress come together to determine such things as the safety of your workplace, the amount of taxes you pay, and how medical care will be provided.

 To learn more about how Congress works and how it impacts you, view the *Democracy in Action* Chapter 5 video lesson:

#### The Organization of Congress



**Chapter Overview** Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at [gov.glencoe.com](http://gov.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 5—Overview** to preview chapter information.

# Congressional Membership

## Reader's Guide

### Key Terms

bicameral legislature, session, census, reapportionment, redistrict, gerrymander, at-large, censure, incumbent

### Find Out

- How does apportionment of membership in the House of Representatives in districts provide representation to local voters?
- What are the key common characteristics of members of Congress?

### Understanding Concepts

**Political Processes** How well do you think members of Congress represent the people who have delegated legal authority to them?

#### COVER STORY

## Congress Votes Out Perks

WASHINGTON, D.C., 1996

Rank had its privilege, until Congress heard rumblings from the people. Pressured by constituents, senators decided to hand over a few perks. They voted out free lunches, as well as costly gifts and expense-paid junkets to fancy resorts. Was the vote about politics or real reform? Wisconsin Democrat Russell Feingold said, "We in the Senate have to show that we are not fundamentally different from other people." The senators refused to surrender their free parking at the National Airport, however.



**Free parking at National Airport**

The Founders did not intend to make Congress a privileged group, but they did intend that the legislative branch have more power than any other branch of government. The Constitution emphasized the importance of the lawmaking branch by describing Congress in Article I. As James Madison said, Congress is "the First Branch of this Government."

The United States Congress is a **bicameral legislature**, meaning that it is made up of two houses, in this case, the Senate and the House of Representatives. Most of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention agreed to a bicameral legislature. Eighteenth-century colonial legislatures had followed the English Parliament with its upper house and a lower house.

Today Congress plays a central role in formulating national policies. Congress initiates and approves laws dealing with everything from health care to tax changes.

## Congressional Sessions

 Each term of Congress starts on January 3 of odd-numbered years and lasts for two years. For example, the 107th Congress began its term in January 2001 and the 108th Congress began in January 2003.

Each term of Congress is divided into two **sessions**, or meetings. A session lasts one year and includes breaks for holidays and vacations. Until the Twentieth Amendment was ratified in 1933, Congressional sessions did not formally end until March, which left a four-month period between the election and the formal start of new members. This time delay was shortened when the session start date was moved to January.

Congress remains in session until its members vote to adjourn. Neither the House nor the Senate may adjourn for more than three days without the approval of the other house. Also, if Congress is adjourned, the president may call it back for a special session if necessary.

## Division of the House



◀ **Past** During sessions of the British House of Commons, “the Government,” (shown here) led by Prime Minister William Pitt in the 1790s, sits on one side while the “opposition” sits on the other side. The speaker sits in the center, between the two parties.

**Present** British procedures influenced the U.S. House of Representatives. Each major political party sits on one side of the chamber, while the Speaker occupies a platform in the front and center.



**Political Processes**  
*How does the physical division into political groups help the Speaker of the House to moderate debates?*

## Membership of the House

With its 435 members, the House of Representatives is the larger body of Congress. The Constitution does not set the number of representatives in the House. It simply states that the number of House seats must be apportioned, or divided, among the states on the basis of population. Each state is entitled to at least one seat in the House, no matter how small its population.

**Qualifications** The Constitution sets the qualifications for election to the House of Representatives. Representatives must be at least 25 years old, be citizens of the United States for at least 7 years, and be legal residents of the state that elects them. Traditionally, representatives also live in the district they represent.

**Term of Office** Members of the House of Representatives are elected for two-year terms. Elections are held in November of even-numbered years—for example, 1996, 1998, and 2000. Representatives begin their term of office on January 3 following the

November election. This means that every two years, all 435 members of the House must run for reelection. It also means that the House reorganizes itself every two years. Because more than 90 percent of all representatives are reelected, however, there is great continuity in the House. If a representative dies or resigns in the first session of Congress, the state must hold a special election to fill that vacancy. Procedures for vacancies that occur during the second session vary from state to state.

## Representation and Reapportionment

In order to assign representation according to population, the **Census Bureau** takes a national **census**, or population count, every 10 years. The first census was taken in 1790, and each state was apportioned its representatives. The next census will be in 2010. The population of each state determines the new number of representatives to which each is entitled—a process called **reapportionment**. States with slow population growth or a population decrease may lose representatives, while states with more rapid population growth may gain representatives.

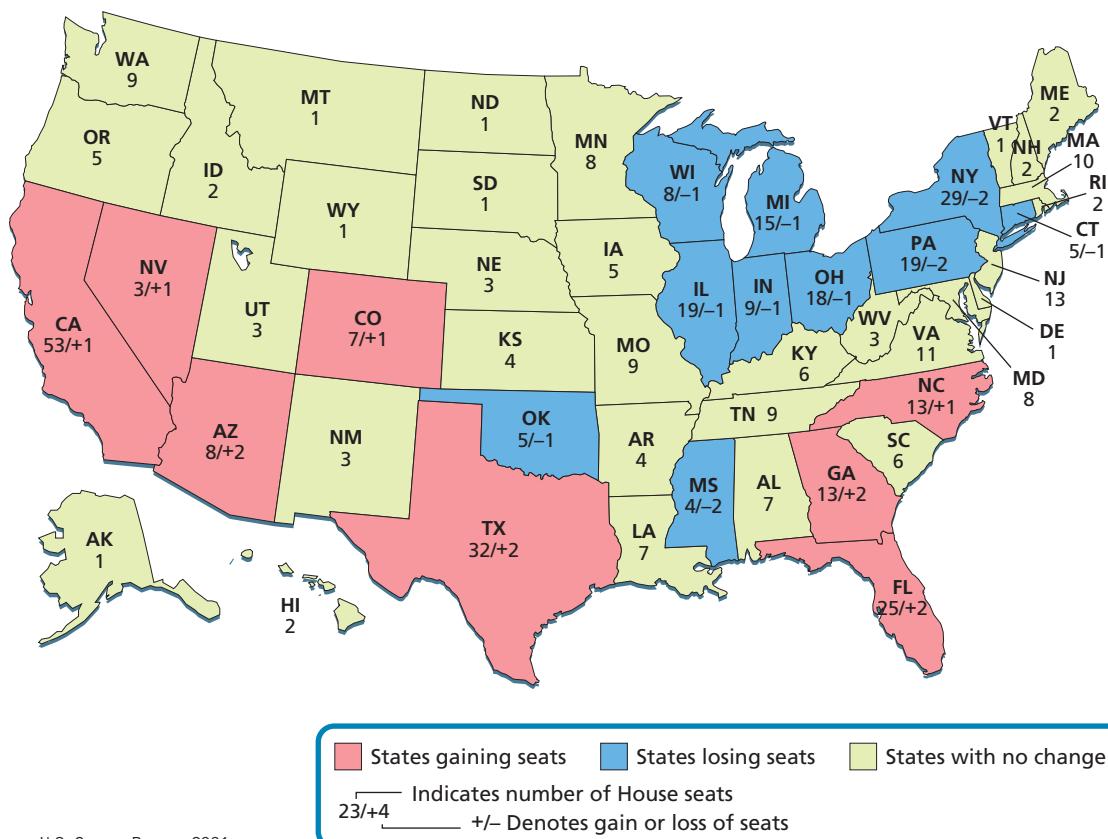
Originally the House had only 64 members. Over the years, as the population of the nation grew, the number of representatives increased. After the 1810 census the House had 186 members. By 1911 the House had 435 members. After the debate sparked by the 1920 census, and concern about the increasing size of the House, Congress passed the Reapportionment Act of 1929 limiting the House to 435 representatives. Now each census determines how those 435 seats will be divided among the 50 states.

**Congressional Redistricting** After the states find out their reapportioned representation for the next 10-year period, each state legislature sets up congressional districts—one for each representative. Representatives are elected from these

congressional districts. If a state is entitled to only one representative, it has one congressional district. In most states the state legislature draws the boundary lines for each congressional election district. The process of setting up new district lines after reapportionment has been completed is called **redistricting**.

Over the years some state legislatures abused the redistricting power. They did so in two ways—by creating congressional districts of very unequal populations and by gerrymandering. During the early 1960s, for example, there were some states in which the largest district in the state had twice the population of the smallest district. In these states a person's vote in the largest congressional districts had only half the value of a person's vote in the smallest districts.

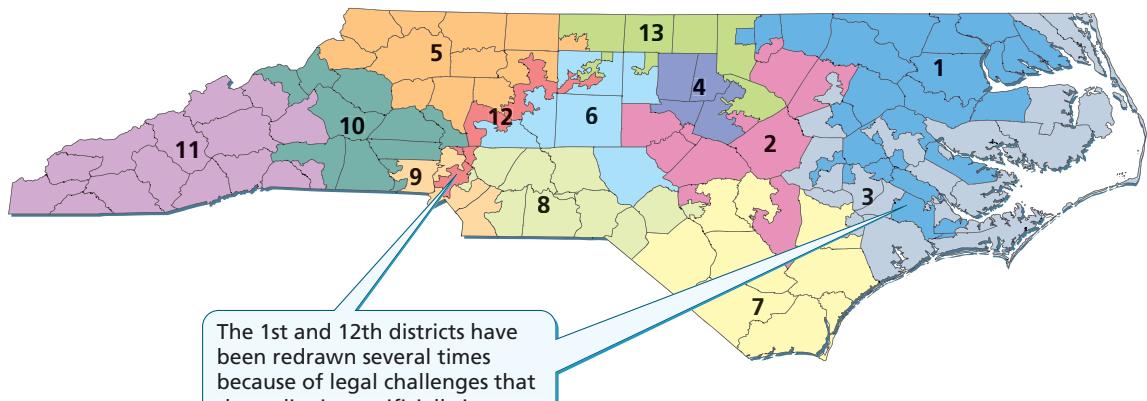
## Congressional Apportionment, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2001

**Critical Thinking** This apportionment map is based on the 2000 census. It will be adjusted after the census of 2010. What is the general trend in reapportionment because of population shifts?

## North Carolina Congressional Districts, 2002



Source: North Carolina General Assembly Web site, [www.ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net)

**Critical Thinking** What governing body has the final authority to determine whether legislative districts are constitutional?



### Landmark Cases

**Redistricting Cases** In a series of decisions during the 1960s, the Supreme Court addressed reapportionment issues in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. In a case originating in Tennessee, *Baker v. Carr*<sup>1</sup> (1962), the Court held that federal courts could decide conflicts over drawing district boundaries. Two years later, in *Reynolds v. Sims*<sup>2</sup>, the Court held that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment required that seats in both houses of the Alabama state legislature be apportioned on a population basis. In *Wesberry v. Sanders*<sup>3</sup> (Georgia, 1964), the Court ruled that the Constitution clearly intended that a vote in one congressional district was to be worth as much as a vote in another district. This principle has come to be known as the “one-person, one-vote” rule. As a result, today each congressional district contains about 650,000 people.



See the following footnoted materials in the Reference Handbook:

1. *Baker v. Carr* case summary, page 754.
2. *Reynolds v. Sims* case summary, page 764.
3. *Wesberry v. Sanders* case summary, page 767.

Following the census of 1990, several states drew new district lines to increase the power of ethnic or racial minorities. This approach increased the number of minority representatives, but it also tended to concentrate the Democratic vote, leaving neighboring districts more Republican.

The Supreme Court ruled that North Carolina’s 1992 redistricting map was unconstitutional because it used race as the “predominant factor” in drawing districts. North Carolina redrew its legislative districts in 1997. These were challenged in court on similar grounds, but in 2000 and 2001, the Supreme Court upheld the new redistricting plan. Because there are no clear guidelines for the states on this issue, the Court has ruled on a case-by-case basis.



**Gerrymandering** Historically, state legislatures have abused their power to divide the state into congressional districts by gerrymandering. **Gerrymandering** means that the political party controlling the state government draws a district’s boundaries to gain an advantage in elections. Gerrymandering often results in district boundaries that have very irregular shapes. The term *gerrymandering* can be traced to

**Elbridge Gerry**, an early Democratic-Republican governor of Massachusetts. Gerry had signed a redistricting plan that gave his party a big political advantage over the Federalists. To a map of one particularly irregular district that looked like a salamander, artist Gilbert Stuart added a head, wings, and claws. A newspaper editor published the map as a cartoon and labeled it a “Gerrymander.” Federalists popularized the term.

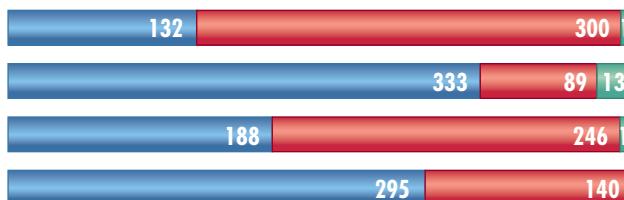
“Packing” and “cracking” are ways to gerrymander. *Packing* a district means drawing the lines so they include as many of the opposing party’s voters as possible. Crowding the opposition’s vot-

ers into one district makes the remaining districts safe for the majority party’s candidates. *Cracking* means dividing an opponent’s voters into other districts, to weaken the opponent’s voter base.

The Supreme Court has ruled that congressional districts must be compact and contiguous, or physically adjoining. This requirement, plus the one-person, one-vote ruling, has cut down on some of the worst examples of gerrymandering. Nevertheless, the competitive struggle of the two-party system continues to fuel the practice of gerrymandering. Many districts today are still drawn in irregular shapes for political reasons.

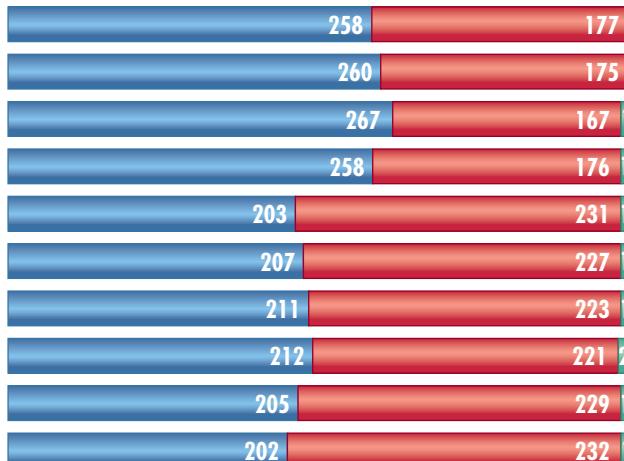
## Swings in Control of Congress\*

### Political Division of the House to 1967

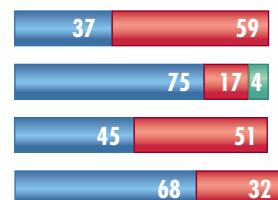


Republicans led Congress in the 1920s until the Great Depression. Except for the late 1940s, Democrats then controlled Congress until the late 1980s.

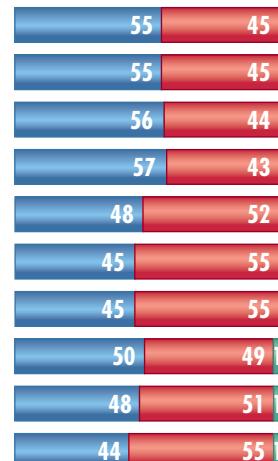
### Political Division of the House Since 1987



### Political Division of the Senate to 1967



### Political Division of the Senate Since 1987



\* These results are the results on Election Day, except for the 2001–03 Senate, in which party control changed soon after the election. Divisions of seats within a Congress can change after an election due to death, retirement, and party switching.

Sources: [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov); [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).

■ Democrats ■ Republicans ■ Independents

**Critical Thinking** Democrats and Republicans have each had periods of dominance in the House and Senate. When was the most lopsided division? Why?

## Membership of the Senate

 According to the Constitution, the Senate “shall be composed of two senators from each state.” Thus, each state is represented equally. Today’s Senate includes 100 members—2 from each of the 50 states.

**Qualifications** The Constitution provides that senators must be at least 30 years old, citizens of the United States for 9 years before election, and legal residents of the state they represent. All voters of each state elect senators **at-large**, or statewide.

**Term of Office** Elections for the Senate, like those for the House, are held in November of even-numbered years. Senators also begin their terms on January 3, after the election held the previous November.

The Constitution provided for continuity in the Senate by giving senators 6-year terms and by providing that only one-third of the senators would run for reelection every 2 years. In fact, the Senate has more continuity than the Framers planned because most senators win reelection.

If a senator dies or resigns before the end of the term, the state legislature may authorize the governor to appoint someone to fill the vacancy until the next election. The governor may also call a special election to fill the seat.

**Salary and Benefits** The Senate and the House set their own salaries. In 1789 salaries for both houses were \$6 per day. Low pay in the early years deterred some people from running for Congress. Congress has voted itself periodic salary increases. In 1991 it voted for a pay hike of \$23,000, explaining that the increase would be accompanied by a prohibition on honoraria—money paid for speeches.

Meanwhile, a constitutional amendment affecting legislative salaries was being considered. Originally proposed by James Madison in 1789, the **Twenty-seventh Amendment<sup>1</sup>** was finally ratified by the required 38 states when Michigan cast the deciding vote on May 7, 1992. The amendment prohibits a sitting Congress from giving itself a pay raise. Any new congressional salary increase will take effect after an intervening election.

Almost immediately a group of plaintiffs, including some legislators, used the new amendment

to challenge a cost-of-living adjustment to raise salaries to \$133,600 in January 1993. (Automatic cost of living adjustments raised salaries to \$150,000 in 2002.) A United States District Court judge had ruled that:

*“Automatic annual adjustments to congressional salaries meet both the language and the spirit of the 27th Amendment. . . . One way to maintain high-quality government is to provide our elected officials with a living wage that automatically changes to reflect changed economic conditions.”*

—Judge Stanley Sporkin, 1992

In addition to their salaries, members of Congress enjoy a number of benefits and resources. These include stationery, postage for official business (called the “franking privilege”), a medical clinic, and a gymnasium.

Members also receive large allowances to pay for their office staff and assistants, trips home, telephones, telegrams, and newsletters. All members are entitled to an income tax deduction to help maintain two residences, one in their home state and one in Washington, D.C. Moreover, when they retire, senators and representatives may be eligible for pensions of \$150,000 or more a year for life.

**Privileges of Members** The Constitution provides members of Congress certain protections while they carry out their legislative duties. They are free from arrest “in all cases except treason, felony, and breach of the peace,” when they are attending Congress or on their way to or from Congress. Members of Congress cannot be sued for anything they say on the House or Senate floor.

This privilege does not extend to what members may say outside of Congress. In *Hutchinson v. Proxmire<sup>2</sup>* (1979), the Supreme Court ruled that members of Congress may be sued for libel for statements they make in news releases or newsletters.

The Senate and the House both may judge members’ qualifications and decide whether to seat them. Each house may refuse to seat an elected member by a majority vote. This power of **exclusion** was later defined by the Supreme Court

 See the following footnoted materials in the Reference Handbook:

1. The Constitution, pages 774–799.

2. *Hutchinson v. Proxmire* case summary, page 760.

in the case of *Powell v. McCormack* (see Supreme Court Cases to Debate on page 131). Each house may also “punish its own members for disorderly behavior” by a majority vote and expel a legislator by a two-thirds vote. Only the most serious offenses such as treason or accepting bribes are grounds for expulsion. Members who are guilty of lesser offenses may be censured. **Censure** is a vote of formal disapproval of a member’s actions.

## The Members of Congress



Congress includes 535 voting members—100 senators and 435 representatives. In addition, there are 4 delegates in the House—1 each from the District of Columbia, Guam, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands—and 1 resident

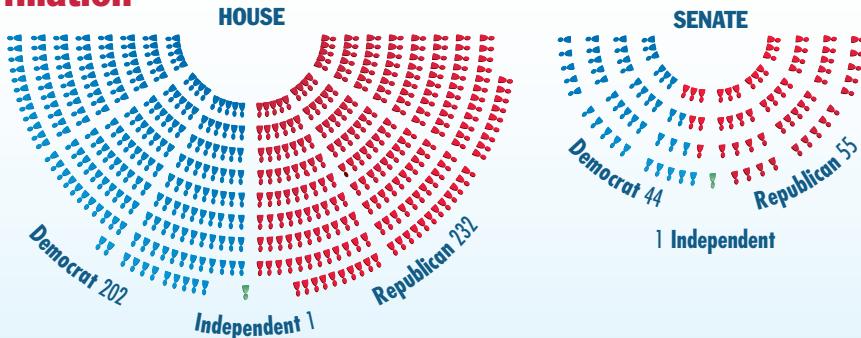
commissioner from Puerto Rico, none of whom can vote. However, they do attend sessions, introduce bills, speak in debates, and vote in committees.

**Characteristics** Nearly half the members of Congress are lawyers. A large number of members also come from business, banking, and education. Why are there so many lawyers? Because lawyers by profession deal with laws, it is logical for them to serve as legislators. Training in law helps a legislator understand the complex legal issues that may affect legislation.

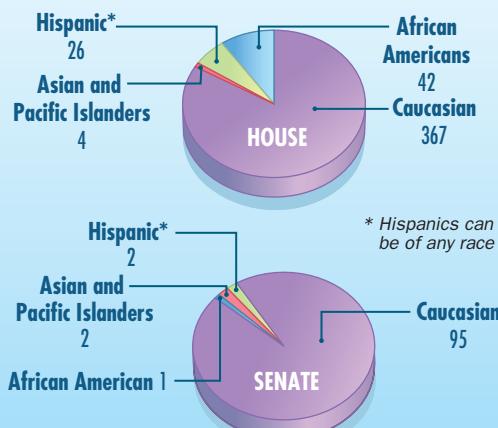
Senators and representatives typically have been white, middle-aged males. The average age of members of Congress is usually over 50. Slowly Congress has begun to reflect the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the general population.

### Profile of the 109th Congress

#### Party Affiliation

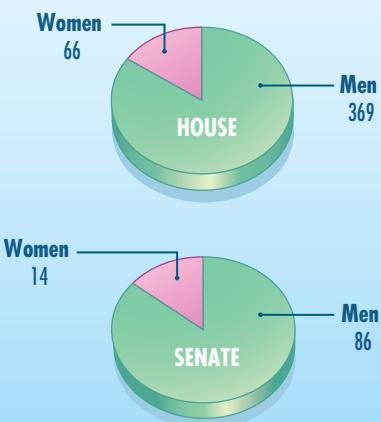


#### Race and Ethnic Background<sup>†</sup>



Sources: [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov), [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).

#### Gender<sup>†</sup>



<sup>†</sup>All figures represent total number of voting members of Congress.

**Critical Thinking** Congress is changing slowly to reflect America’s diverse population.  
Which house of Congress is more diverse?

**Reelection to Congress** Membership in Congress has changed very slowly because office-holders seldom lose reelection. One representative put it simply: "All members of Congress have one primary interest—to be reelected." Beginning with Franklin Roosevelt's landslide presidential victories in the 1930s, incumbency helped Democrats dominate Congress in all but a few years.

Between 1945 and 1990, about 90 percent of all **incumbents**, or those members already in office, won reelection. In some elections, many seats went unchallenged because opponents knew that they would have little or no chance of winning. One analyst said that winning an election to Congress for most members was like removing olives from a bottle—"after the first one, the rest come easy."

Why have incumbents been so successful? First, incumbents find it easier to raise campaign funds because they have worked with so many people while representing their district. Second, many districts have been gerrymandered in the incumbent party's favor. Third, incumbents are better known to voters, who see them at rallies and on television and read about them in newspapers. Fourth, incumbents use their position to help solve voters' problems. Finally, incumbents win because the majority of voters believe their incumbent best represents their views.

**Campaigning Online** While television and radio remain the dominant campaign technologies, people running for Congress have begun using the Internet as a campaign tool. Challengers for open seats and incumbents in highly competitive races

are making the greatest use of the Web. Nearly all candidates now have election Web sites that serve as electronic brochures providing biographies, press releases, lists of upcoming campaign events, and other information. Candidates also use their election Web sites to recruit volunteers and to raise campaign contributions. A few candidates have even used their Web sites to broadcast, in real time, campaign events such as speeches.

Not many candidates, however, have taken advantage of the interactive capacities of the Internet. In recent elections, for instance, only one in ten candidates has conducted "town hall" type meetings with voters through their Web sites. Some experts predict more candidates will do so in the future. Experts also forecast that congressional candidates will make greater use of Web technologies such as search engines, portals, and e-mail lists to identify voters in their districts interested in particular issues like gun control or health care. The Internet can then be used to communicate directly with such voters using specially targeted e-mails or Web sites. Finally, experts anticipate more candidates will start using the Internet to improve communications within their campaign organizations.

## GOVERNMENT *Online*

**Student Web Activity** Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at [gov.glencoe.com](http://gov.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 5—Student Web Activities** for an activity about the congressional membership.

## Section 1 Assessment

### Checking for Understanding

- Main Idea** In a graphic organizer similar to the one below, compare the qualifications for representatives and senators.

House	Senate
- Define** bicameral legislature, session, census, reapportionment, redistrict, gerrymander, at-large, censure, incumbent.
- Identify** Elbridge Gerry, Twenty-seventh Amendment.
- How does Congress reapportion House seats among the states every ten years?

### Critical Thinking

- Making Inferences** Members of Congress spend part of their time working for reelection. Which house has a greater percentage of its time remaining for legislative work? Why?

## Concepts IN ACTION

- Political Processes** What percentage of people believe that their representative does not listen to them? Formulate a questionnaire that surveys voters about this issue.



## Supreme Court CASES TO DEBATE

*Returns and Qualifications of its own Members.” It establishes the age, citizenship, and residence requirements for the House and Senate. Does the Constitution allow Congress to judge qualifications beyond these three specific requirements? The case of Powell v. McCormack addressed this question.*

### Powell v. McCormack, 1969

*The Constitution gives Congress the power to be the “Judge of the Elections,*



**Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.**

#### Background of the Case

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., was reelected to the House of Representatives in November 1966. However, a congressional investigation had already disclosed questionable activities by Powell and members of his staff during his previous terms. The House refused to seat Powell. In March 1967 Congress declared the seat vacant and notified the governor of New York to order a new election.

Powell charged that he had been unlawfully excluded from his seat in the House and brought suit in the federal courts. Speaker John McCormack and four other officials were named as defendants. They responded that Congress had authority under the Constitution to judge the qualifications of its own members.

The federal district court dismissed the complaint on the grounds that it did not have jurisdiction in this matter. The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia refused to hear the case on the grounds that it was essentially a political question. The Supreme Court heard the case of *Powell v. McCormack* in 1969. The 90th Congress, to which Powell had been elected, was

no longer in session. In the meantime (1968) Powell had been elected again and seated in the 91st Congress. His lawyers now asked the Court for back salary for the two years he was denied his seat.

#### The Constitutional Issue

One constitutional question was whether the case was justiciable—could be decided by the Court—under the Constitution. The defendants held that the case was not justiciable by the Court because the Constitution gave Congress, not the Court, power to judge the qualifications of its members.

Further, defendants submitted that the question was “political” and therefore not justiciable by the Court. Finally, defendants asked whether the Court could coerce officers of the House or issue injunctions compelling officers or employees of the House to perform specific acts.

Powell’s lawyers believed that Congress did not have the power to judge the moral qualifications of members. The Supreme Court referred to debates at the Constitutional Convention that related to giving Congress power to judge its members’ qualifications.

#### Debating the Case

##### Questions to Consider

1. What might be a far-reaching result if the Court decided in favor of the Speaker?
2. What might be a far-reaching result if the Court decided in favor of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.?

##### You Be the Judge

Must Congress accept a member if he or she meets the three basic tests—age, citizenship, and residency? Does Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., deserve back pay and restoration of his seniority rights?

# The House of Representatives

## Reader's Guide

### Key Terms

constituents, caucus, majority leader, whips, bill, calendars, quorum

### Find Out

- Why are committees more important in the House than they are in the Senate?
- Why is the Rules Committee one of the most powerful committees in the House?

### Understanding Concepts

**Growth of Democracy** Why does the majority party often get the credit or blame for everything Congress does?

## COVER STORY

### A Floor Fight in Congress

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, 1798

Debate on the Sedition Act has reached such a furor that representatives are no longer safe in chambers. In a heated argument yesterday, Mr. Griswold of Connecticut attacked Mr. Lyon of Vermont with a cane. Mr. Lyon defended himself with fire tongs.

Fire tongs cannot remove the hot coals from speeches of Federalists who promote the Sedition Act. Mr. Allen of Connecticut, who supports the Sedition Act, read from the *Aurora*, "Where a law shall have been passed in violation of the Constitution . . . is there any alternative between abandonment of the Constitution and resistance?" Mr. Gallatin addressed the chamber to reveal the real purpose of the Sedition Act: to silence all Republicans.



Lyon defends himself

Political division and debate is unavoidable in democratic government. Legislators must have freedom to express their sometimes inflammatory opinions. Rules are necessary to help ensure fairness, to enable the legislature to conduct business, and to protect the minority.

Article I, Section 5<sup>1</sup>, of the Constitution says: "Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings." Thomas Jefferson compiled the first parliamentary manual for the Senate when he was vice president. He emphasized the importance of rules:

*"It is much more material that there be a rule to go by, than what the rule is; that there may be a uniformity of proceeding in business not subject to the caprice [whims] of the Speaker or captiousness [criticisms] of the members."*

—Thomas Jefferson, 1797

### Rules for Lawmaking

 The main task of each house of Congress is the same—to make laws. Because the House and Senate differ in many ways, each house has organized itself to carry out its work of making the laws. Complex rules and a structure of leadership enable Congress to carry out its lawmaking duties.

**Complex Rules** Each chamber has scores of precedents based on past rulings that serve as a guide to conducting business. The House and Senate each print their rules every two years. House rules are generally aimed at defining the actions an individual representative can take, such as limiting representatives to speaking for five minutes or less during a debate.



See the following footnoted materials in the Reference Handbook:  
1. *The Constitution*, pages 774–799.

The complex rules in the House are geared toward moving legislation quickly once it reaches the floor. House debates rarely last more than one day. Moreover, leaders of the House of Representatives have more power than leaders in the Senate. For example, the rules of the House allow its leaders to make key decisions about legislative work without consulting other House members.

**Committee Work** Committees do most of the work of Congress. In the House, committee work is more important than in the Senate. Because the membership of the House is so large, its members must organize themselves into smaller groups in order to accomplish their work efficiently. In the committees representatives have more influence than on the House floor, and they have the time to study and shape bills.

In addition, representatives tend to specialize in a few issues that are important to their **constituents**—the people in the districts they represent. For example, Major R. Owens, a representative from Brooklyn, New York, is the only trained

librarian in Congress. He emphasizes the importance of libraries in promoting literacy. As an African American, Owens also supports funding for African American colleges and aid for underprivileged students. He explains:

**“**We need more role models who will open new possibilities for those who have been excluded from the dreams that others take for granted. **”**

—Major R. Owens

Finally, because House members are elected from districts, much of their time is devoted to serving the interests of their constituents. John J. Duncan, Jr., of Tennessee said:

**“**I have a firm belief we have too many laws on the books now. . . . I've made it pretty clear I believe constituent service is most important and is where a freshman can be most effective. **”**

—John J. Duncan, Jr., 1988

## We the People

### Making a Difference

#### Vernon Baker



Medal of Honor



In 1944 Vernon Baker, a 25-year-old army second lieutenant serving in World War II, was shot in the wrist by a German sniper. He spent two months in a segregated hospital, then returned to lead his men into battle. On the morning of April 5, 1945, Baker destroyed two enemy bunkers, an observation post, and three machine gun nests. His company was nearly wiped out, but he ordered the seven remaining men to retreat while he drew enemy fire. Somehow, amid exploding shells, Lieutenant Baker escaped.

Although the army segregated African Americans during the war, Baker and his men fought like heroes. Asked why he fought so courageously

for a country that treated him as a second-class citizen, Baker replied, “I was a soldier with a job to do, and I did it for the men I was leading.”

Presented with the Distinguished Service Cross for his service in Italy, Baker remained in the military after the war. When he retired from the army in 1968, he took a job with the Red Cross, counseling needy military families.

In 1990 Army officials reexamined their records, looking for congressional Medal of Honor candidates among African Americans with outstanding service in World War II. Fifty years after his act of bravery, Vernon Baker accepted the medal in a White House ceremony. “It’s a great day. We’ve all been vindicated,” he said.

**TIME**  
**For the Record**

**Speaking Frankly** Members of Congress don't need stamps for their official mail: their signature, real or printed, is known as a frank and is accepted by the Post Office. Franking cannot be used for personal business or for political campaigns. It can be used only on letters mailed to constituents. Because this privilege gives incumbents an advantage during an election year, members of Congress can't send out large volumes of franked mail right before an election.

**Importance of Party Affiliation** Many procedures in Congress are organized around the political party affiliation of members. In both the House and Senate, the Republicans sit on the right side of the chamber, the Democrats on the left. In each house the majority party selects the leaders of that body, controls the flow of legislative work, and appoints committee chairs. The power to organize the House explains why some conservative Democrats switched to the Republican Party when it became the majority party in Congress after the 1994 election.

The Republican majority began sweeping changes of House rules in 1995, promoted to make the House more accountable. Some changes centralized power in the speakership in order to help Republicans carry out their agenda. The new rules provided for fewer committees, fewer staff members, term limits for chairpersons and the Speaker, and an end to absentee voting in committees. Despite strong resistance from the Democratic leaders in the House, the new Republican majority was able to push through the reforms.

## House Leadership

Organized leadership coordinates the work of the 435 individual members of the House of Representatives. These leaders serve 6 purposes:

(1) organizing and unifying party members; (2) scheduling the work of the House; (3) making certain that lawmakers are present for key floor votes; (4) distributing and collecting information; (5) keeping the House in touch with the president; and (6) influencing lawmakers to support the policies of their political party. The Constitution provides only for the presiding officer of the House. Other than that, the House chooses all its other leaders.

**The Speaker of the House** The Speaker of the House is the presiding officer of the House and its most powerful leader. The Constitution states that the House "shall choose their Speaker and other officers." A **caucus**, or closed meeting, of the majority party chooses the House Speaker at the start of each session of Congress, and the entire House membership approves the choice of Speaker.

As both the presiding officer of the House and the leader of the majority party, the Speaker has great power. Presiding over the sessions of the House, the Speaker can influence proceedings by deciding which members to recognize first. The Speaker also appoints the members of some committees, schedules bills for action, and refers bills to the proper House committee. Finally, the Speaker of the House follows the vice president in the line of succession to the presidency.

Today, Speakers rely as much on persuasion as on their formal powers to exercise influence. On a typical day, the Speaker may talk with dozens of fellow members of Congress. Often the Speaker does so just to listen to requests for a favor. As former Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill once put it, "The world is full of little things you can do for people." In return, the Speaker expects representatives' support on important issues.

**House Floor Leaders** The Speaker's top assistant is the **majority leader**. The majority leader's job is to help plan the party's legislative program, steer important bills through the House, and make sure the chairpersons of the many committees finish work on bills important to the party. The majority leader is the floor leader of his or her political party in the House and, like the Speaker, is elected by the majority party. Thus, the majority leader is not actually a House official but a party official.

The majority leader has help from the majority whip and deputy whips. These **whips** serve as assistant floor leaders in the House. The majority whip's job is to watch how majority-party members intend to vote on bills, to persuade them to vote as the party wishes, and to see that party members are present to vote.

The minority party in the House also elects its own leaders. These include the minority leader and the minority whips. The responsibilities of these leaders are much the same as those of the majority party's leaders, except they have no power over scheduling work in the House.

## Lawmaking in the House

To a visitor, the floor of the House of Representatives may seem totally disorganized. Some representatives talk in small groups or read newspapers. Others constantly walk in and out of

the chamber. Most representatives are not even on the floor, because they are in committee meetings, talking with voters, or taking care of other business. Representatives reach the floor quickly, however, when it is time for debate or a vote on proposed bills.

Usually, the House starts its floor sessions at noon or earlier. Buzzers ring in members' offices in the House office buildings, committee rooms, and in the Capitol, calling representatives. The House is normally in session from Monday through Friday. Mondays are for routine work. Not much is done on Friday because many representatives leave to go to their home districts over the weekend. Thus, most of the House's important work is done from Tuesday through Thursday.

**How House Bills Are Scheduled** All laws start as **bills**. A proposed law is called a bill until both houses of Congress pass it and the

Comparing Governments						
Country	Legislative Chamber(s)	Number of Members	Term of Office	Method of Selection	Date of Last Constitution	
Egypt	National Peoples Assembly	454	5 yrs.	popular election	1971	
Israel	Knesset	120	4 yrs.	popular election	1949	
Japan	Diet House of Representatives House of Councillors	480** 252	4 yrs. 6 yrs.	elected by local and national constituencies	1947	
Mexico	Chamber of Deputies Senate	500 128	3 yrs. 6 yrs.	popular election popular election	1917	
Russia	State Duma Federation Council	450 178	4 yrs.* 4 yrs.*	popular election local election	1993	
United Kingdom	House of Commons House of Lords	659** 500***	5 yrs. life	popular election appointed	no written constitution	
United States	House of Representatives Senate	435 100	2 yrs. 6 yrs.	popular election popular election	1789	

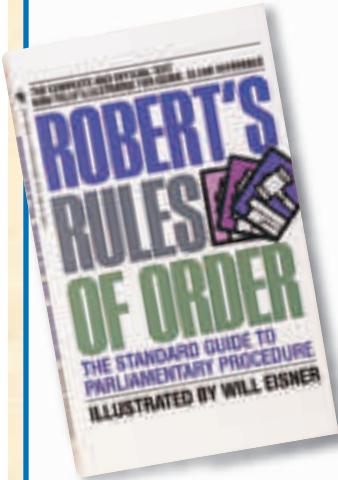
\* Initial term was two years; changed to four after second election.  
 \*\* Number varies.  
 \*\*\* Normal attendance is 300, but many more vote on key decisions.

Source: CIA, *The World Factbook* (Washington, D.C.).

**Critical Thinking** Culture and history play large roles in how legislatures are formed around the world. *In what two ways is the United Kingdom unique among the countries shown above?*

# Participating IN GOVERNMENT

## Parliamentary Procedure



Like Congress, all deliberative assemblies need rules to conduct business in a fair and impartial way. Rules of order had their origin in early British Parliaments. Thomas Jefferson's *Manual of Parliamentary Practice* (1801) provided rules for the new United States government. Many groups use *Robert's Rules of Order*, first published in 1876 by U.S. army officer Henry M. Robert. *Robert's Rules* addresses such issues as:

1. How to make a motion and how to amend a motion
2. What rank or precedence various kinds of motions have
3. How to table or suspend a motion

4. How to close or extend debate
5. How to raise the question of consideration and how to vote
6. What duties and powers the presiding officer has

### Activity

1. Obtain a copy of *Robert's Rules of Order*. Appoint a small group to find rules pertaining to the items listed above. Discuss the needs of a small group meeting (about the size of your class). Write rules for such a meeting based on these needs.
2. Choose a presiding officer for a meeting of your government class and a parliamentarian to enforce the rules. Hold a meeting in which the class determines an issue to discuss, hears opinions from the floor, and decides whether to take any action.

president signs it. According to the procedure currently in place, to introduce a bill in the House, representatives drop it into the hopper, a mahogany box that is accessible to all near the front of the chamber.

After a bill is introduced, the Speaker of the House sends it to the appropriate committee for study, discussion, and review. Of the thousands of bills and resolutions introduced during each legislative term of Congress, only about 10 to 20 percent ever go to the full House for a vote. Bills that survive the committee process are put on one of the House calendars. **Calendars** list bills that are up for consideration.

The House has five calendars. Three are used to schedule different kinds of bills for consideration. The Union Calendar lists bills dealing with money issues. Most other public bills are put on the House Calendar. The Private Calendar lists bills that deal with individual people or places. Any bill that the House gives unanimous consent to debate out of regular order is listed on the Consent Calendar. Finally, the Discharge Calendar is used for petitions to discharge a bill from committee.

**The House Rules Committee** The Rules Committee serves as the “traffic officer” in the House, helping to direct the flow of major legislation. It is one of the oldest House committees, and the most powerful. After a committee has considered and approved a major bill, it usually goes to the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee can move bills ahead quickly, hold them back, or stop them completely.

Because the Rules Committee has the power to decide how and when legislation will be considered by the House, it has often been the focus of political battles. From 1858 to 1910, the Speaker of the House, as chair of the Rules Committee, dominated the flow of legislation. In 1911 the House revolted against Speaker Joseph G. Cannon's authoritarian leadership and removed him from the Rules Committee.

In 1975 Democratic majorities in the House once again placed the Rules Committee under control of the Speaker. The Democratic Caucus gave the Speaker the power to appoint, subject to caucus ratification, all majority-party members of the Rules Committee. A former Speaker explained:

**“**The Rules Committee is an agent of the leadership. It is what distinguishes us from the Senate, where the rules deliberately favor those who would delay. The rules of the House . . . permit a majority to work its will on legislation rather than allow it to be bottled up and stymied. **”**

—Speaker Jim Wright, 1987

Republicans became the majority party in the House of Representatives in 1995. Their new Speaker, Newt Gingrich, as minority leader in the previous Congress had sparked an ethics investigation that resulted in Speaker Jim Wright's resignation. Gingrich asserted the power to appoint committee chairpersons, including the leader of the powerful Rules Committee.

**Function of the Rules Committee** Major bills that reach the floor of the House for debate and for a vote do so by a “rule”—or special order—from the Rules Committee. As major bills come out of committee, they are entered on either the Union Calendar or the House Calendar in the order received. The calendars have so many bills that if they were taken up in that order, many would never reach the floor before the end of the session. To resolve this problem, the chairperson of the committee that sent the bill to the Rules Committee may ask for it to move ahead of other bills and to be sent to the House floor. If the Rules Committee grants the request, the bill moves

ahead. The Rules Committee may also include a time limit for debate on the bill and specify how much the bill may be amended on the floor.

## Other Purposes of the Rules Committee

The Rules Committee also settles disputes among other House committees. For example, the Armed Services Committee may be considering a bill that involves an area also covered by the Veterans' Affairs Committee. The Rules Committee can help resolve any dispute between the two committees.

Finally, the Rules Committee often delays or blocks bills that representatives and House leaders do not want to come to a vote on the floor. In this way the Rules Committee draws criticism away from members who might have to take an unpopular stand on a bill if it reaches the floor.

**A Quorum for Business** A **quorum** is the minimum number of members who must be present to permit a legislative body to take official action. For a regular session, a quorum consists of the majority of the House—218 members. When the House meets to debate and amend legislation it may often sit as a Committee of the Whole. In that case, only 100 members constitute a quorum. This procedure helps speed the consideration of important bills. The Committee of the Whole cannot pass a bill. Instead, it reports the measure back to the full House with whatever changes it has made. The House then has the authority to pass or reject the bill.

## Section 2 Assessment

### Checking for Understanding

- 1. Main Idea** In a graphic organizer similar to the one below, show three ways in which the Rules Committee controls legislation.

Rules Committee	

- 2. Define** constituents, caucus, majority leader, whips, bill, calendars, quorum.  
**3. Identify** Rules Committee.  
**4. Analyze** the role of House committees.  
**5. How does a representative introduce a bill in the House?**

### Critical Thinking

- 6. Understanding Cause and Effect** Why are changes in House rules more likely to occur when political control of the House shifts to another party?

### Concepts IN ACTION

**Growth of Democracy** Browse through current newspapers and magazines to find out what legislation the majority party in the House is trying to pass. Make a chart of the key legislation and record its progress for several weeks.

# The Senate

## Reader's Guide

### Key Terms

president pro tempore, filibuster, cloture

### Find Out

- Why does the Senate have fewer rules and a less formal atmosphere than the House?
- Why does the Senate usually take longer than the House to pass a bill?

### Understanding Concepts

**Growth of Democracy** Why do floor debates in the Senate often include powerful speeches charged with emotion?

### COVER STORY

## First Lady Elected

NEW YORK, N.Y., NOVEMBER 7, 2000

First Lady Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate for senator from New York, defeated Republican Congressman Rick Lazio. At first, Clinton's race seemed an uphill one. The problems of her husband's presidency lingered, and she faced accusations of being a carpetbagger, since she had only recently established residency in the state. Clinton campaigned hard, however, and won by a healthy 55-43 percent margin. She was helped by the fact that her first opponent, New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani, dropped out of the race mid-campaign.



Hillary Clinton

The Senate is a deliberative body. Senators handle issues of specific interest to them in their committees, but they also deal with many other issues on the floor, where there is plenty of time for debate. Senators, who represent entire states, are expected to know something about and deal with many issues—from national defense to social issues to farming.

### The Senate at Work



Visitors going from the House to the Senate are often startled by the difference. The Senate chamber is smaller than the House chamber. Usually only a few senators attend sessions. The Senate chamber has 100 desks—one for each senator—facing a raised platform where the president pro tem and another senator preside over sessions. The party leaders or their assistants stay in the Senate chamber at all times to keep the work moving and to look after their party's interests.

**Informal Atmosphere** In the Senate, the rules are more flexible than in the House. They are designed to make certain that all senators have maximum freedom to express their ideas. For example, the Senate usually allows unlimited debate on proposed legislation. Senate rules are spelled out in fewer than 100 pages. With fewer rules, the Senate has a more informal atmosphere than the House. They may debate a proposal on and off for weeks or even months before taking action on an issue.

**Senate Leaders** Leadership in the Senate closely parallels leadership in the House, but the Senate has no Speaker. The vice president presides in the Senate, but may not vote except to break a tie. Also, Senate procedures permit individual senators more freedom in their activities. Consequently, party leaders in the Senate may not have as much influence over other senators as their counterparts in the House.

**The Vice President** The Constitution names the vice president as president of the Senate. The vice president, however, does not have the same role and power as the Speaker of the House. The vice president may recognize members and put questions to a vote. Because the vice president is not an elected member of the Senate, he or she may not take part in Senate debates. The vice president may, if the situation warrants, cast a vote in the Senate, but only in the event of a tie. A vice president may try to influence the Senate through personal contact with senators, however. Many recent vice presidents previously served as senators and thus had close relationships with their former colleagues.

Most vice presidents find Senate duties unchallenging and devote much of their time to executive branch activities, leaving little time to preside over the Senate. In the absence of the vice president, the **president pro tempore** (or president pro tem) presides. The term *pro tempore* means “for

the time being.” The Senate elects this leader. The president pro tempore is from the majority party and is usually its most senior member.

**Majority and Minority Floor Leaders** The majority and minority leaders are the most important officers in the Senate. Elected by the members of their political parties, the majority and minority leaders in the Senate are party officials rather than official Senate officers. The majority leader’s main job is to steer the party’s bills through the Senate. To do this, the majority leader plans the Senate’s work schedule and agenda in consultation with the minority leader.

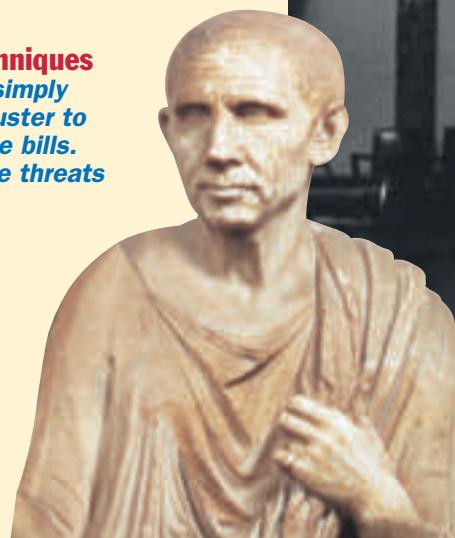
The majority leader is responsible for making certain the majority party members attend important Senate sessions and for organizing their support on key bills. The minority leader develops criticisms of the majority party’s bills and tries to keep senators in the minority party working together. As in the House, whips and assistant

## The Filibuster—Then and Now

**Present** During a 1960 filibuster Colorado Republican Gordon Allott, draped in a bedsheet, left his cot to proceed with his oration. ▶

**Past** In 60 B.C., Cato the Younger initiated a filibuster to block Caesar’s election as consul. ▶

**Legislative Techniques**  
*Often senators simply threaten to filibuster to defeat legislative bills. Why would these threats work?*



whips assist the majority and minority leaders of the Senate by making sure that legislators are present for key votes.

**How Senate Bills Are Scheduled** As in the House, any member of the Senate may introduce a bill. Procedures for moving bills through the Senate, however, are more informal than in the House. Because it is smaller, the Senate has never needed a committee like the House Rules Committee. Instead, Senate leaders control the flow of bills to committees and to the floor for debate and vote. They do this by consulting closely with one another and with other senators.

The Senate has only two calendars. **The Calendar of General Orders** lists all the bills the Senate will consider, while the Executive Calendar schedules treaties and nominations. The Senate brings bills to the floor by unanimous consent, a motion by all members present to set aside formal rules and consider a bill from the calendar. The procedure has not changed much through the years. In 1913 Massachusetts senator Henry Cabot Lodge explained that the Senate conducted most of its business through unanimous-consent agreements:

*“Not only the important unanimous-consent agreements which are reached often with much difficulty on large and generally contested measures, but constantly on all the small business of the Senate we depend on unanimous consent to enable us to transact the public business.”*

—Henry Cabot Lodge, 1913

**The Filibuster** Because the Senate usually allows unlimited debate on any bill under consideration, one way for senators to defeat a bill they oppose is to filibuster against it. To **filibuster** means to stall the legislative process and prevent a vote. Stall tactics include talking continuously, delaying issues in committee, and other procedural roadblocks.

Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina set the record for a filibuster when he spoke against the Civil Rights Act of 1957 for 24 hours and 18 minutes. A filibuster by a group of senators could go on for weeks or even months.

A filibuster can be stopped when three-fifths of the Senate (60 members) votes for cloture. **Cloture** is a procedure that allows each senator to speak only 1 hour on a bill under debate. Obtaining a vote in favor of cloture, however, is usually difficult, especially when each party controls close to the same number of Senate seats.

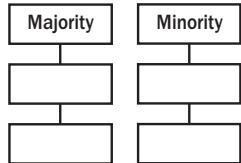
The filibuster is not commonly utilized as a legislative tactic in the Senate today. Senate rules now allow other matters to continue during a filibuster, weakening the filibuster's effectiveness. Because of the close division of political parties in the Senate, the simple threat of a filibuster is often enough to delay or defeat a bill.

**Politics** As in the House, Senate procedures are organized around the members' party affiliations. Republicans sit on the right side of the chamber, while Democrats sit on the left. More importantly, the majority party controls the flow of legislative work.

### Section 3 Assessment

#### Checking for Understanding

- Main Idea** In a graphic organizer similar to the one at the right, analyze the relationship between the Senate majority and minority leaders, whips, and assistant whips.



- Define** president pro tempore, filibuster, cloture.
- Identify** Calendar of General Orders.
- How does the Senate bring bills to the floor?

#### Critical Thinking

- Making Comparisons** Compare the rules and procedures of the House with those of the Senate.

### Concepts IN ACTION

**Growth of Democracy** Search through a reference work of historic speeches. Use one of the speeches as a model for a persuasive speech of your own.

# Congressional Committees

## Reader's Guide

### Key Terms

standing committee, subcommittee, select committee, joint committee, conference committee, seniority system

### Find Out

- Why are several different kinds of committees necessary in the House and Senate?
- Why are committee chairpersons considered the most powerful members of Congress?

### Understanding Concepts

**Political Processes** Why have committees become the power centers in Congress?

### COVER STORY

## Judiciary Committee Looks at Hollywood

WASHINGTON, D.C., SEPTEMBER 18, 2000

Asks for R-rated films shown during television programs with a large percentage of viewers under 17 have sparked a Senate investigation. A federal report also found that underage teenagers are easily sneaking into R-rated movies.

Many people in Hollywood are suspicious because the hearings are being held less than two months before a national election. "I think it's a bunch of weasels scrambling for votes," said Larry Kasanoff, who heads a company that makes movies based on action-oriented video games like Mortal Kombat and Duke Nukem.



Studio executive testifies.

While the subject of R-rated movies makes for a dramatic hearing, much of the detailed day-to-day work of considering proposed legislation takes place in committees that meet in congressional offices. Sometimes the hearings are more exciting and informative than the floor debates that follow.

## Purposes of Committees

 Both the House and Senate depend upon committees to effectively consider the thousands of bills that are proposed each session. Committees help ease the workload and are the key power centers in Congress.

The committee system serves several important purposes. First, it allows members of Congress to divide their work among many smaller groups. Lawmakers can become specialists on the issues their committees consider. This system is the only practical way for Congress to operate because no lawmaker can possibly know the details of each of the thousands of bills introduced in each term of Congress.

Second, from the huge number of bills introduced in each Congress, committees select those few that are to receive further consideration. Committees are the places in which lawmakers listen to supporters and opponents of a bill. It is in committees where they work out compromises, and decide which bills will or will not have a chance to become law. Most bills never get beyond the committee stage.

Third, by holding public hearings and investigations, committees help the public learn about key problems and issues facing the nation. Congressional committees have called the public's attention to such issues as organized crime, the safety of prescription drugs, hunger in America, airline safety, and many other issues and concerns that have confronted the nation.

## Kinds of Committees

 Congress has four basic kinds of committees: (1) standing committees; (2) select committees; (3) joint committees; and (4) conference committees. Congress may, however, change the method of committee organization and the number of committees.

**Standing Committees** Very early in its history, Congress set up permanent groups to oversee bills that dealt with certain kinds of issues. These are called **standing committees** because they continue from one Congress to the next. The House and Senate each create their own standing committees and control their areas of jurisdiction, occasionally adding or eliminating a standing committee when necessary.

The majority party has power to write the rules in Congress. Republicans made changes in the structure and titles of several committees when they became the majority in 1995. They also set six-year term limits for committee chairpersons. The last major realignment of standing committees in the Senate took place in 1977.

Because the majority party in each house controls the standing committees, it selects a chairperson for each from among its party members. The majority of the members of each standing committee are also members of the majority party.

Party membership on committees is usually divided in direct proportion to each party's strength in each house. For example, if 60 percent of the members of the House are Republicans, then 60 percent of the members of each House standing committee will be Republicans. Thus, a 10-member committee would have 6 Republicans and 4 Democrats. However, the party in power in the House will often have a super majority on the most important committees.

**Subcommittees** Nearly all standing committees have several **subcommittees**. Each subcommittee specializes in a subcategory of its standing committee's responsibility. Subcommittees, like standing committees, usually continue from one Congress to the next, although the majority party may make changes. For example, House Republicans in the 104th Congress limited most committees to no more than five subcommittees. The exceptions were Appropriations with 13 subcommittees, Government Reform and Oversight with 7 subcommittees, and Transportation and Infrastructure with 6 subcommittees.

**Select Committees** From time to time, each house of Congress has created temporary committees. Usually, these committees, called **select committees**, study one specific issue and report their findings to the Senate or the House. These issues

### THE LAW and You

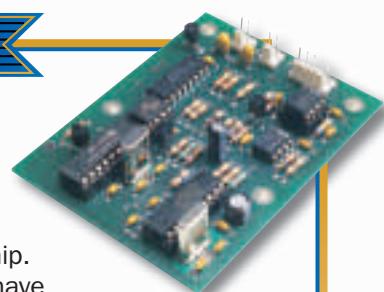
## The V-Chip

To address the concerns of many parents who felt that TV violence was contributing to aggressive behavior in young children, Congress gave parents more control over home television viewing. Use of a V-chip is part of a new communications policy that became law in 1996.

The law requires manufacturers to install a V-chip in new television sets beginning in 1998. This computer chip enables parents to block out shows that have been coded as violent, lewd, or inappropriate for young children.

Legislators know that widespread use of the V-chip will come only after older television sets are no longer in service. However, the device provides

politicians a way of taking action on TV violence without stirring up a controversy over censorship. Most children's activists have welcomed the V-chip, although they realize it will not be effective without parents' active participation.

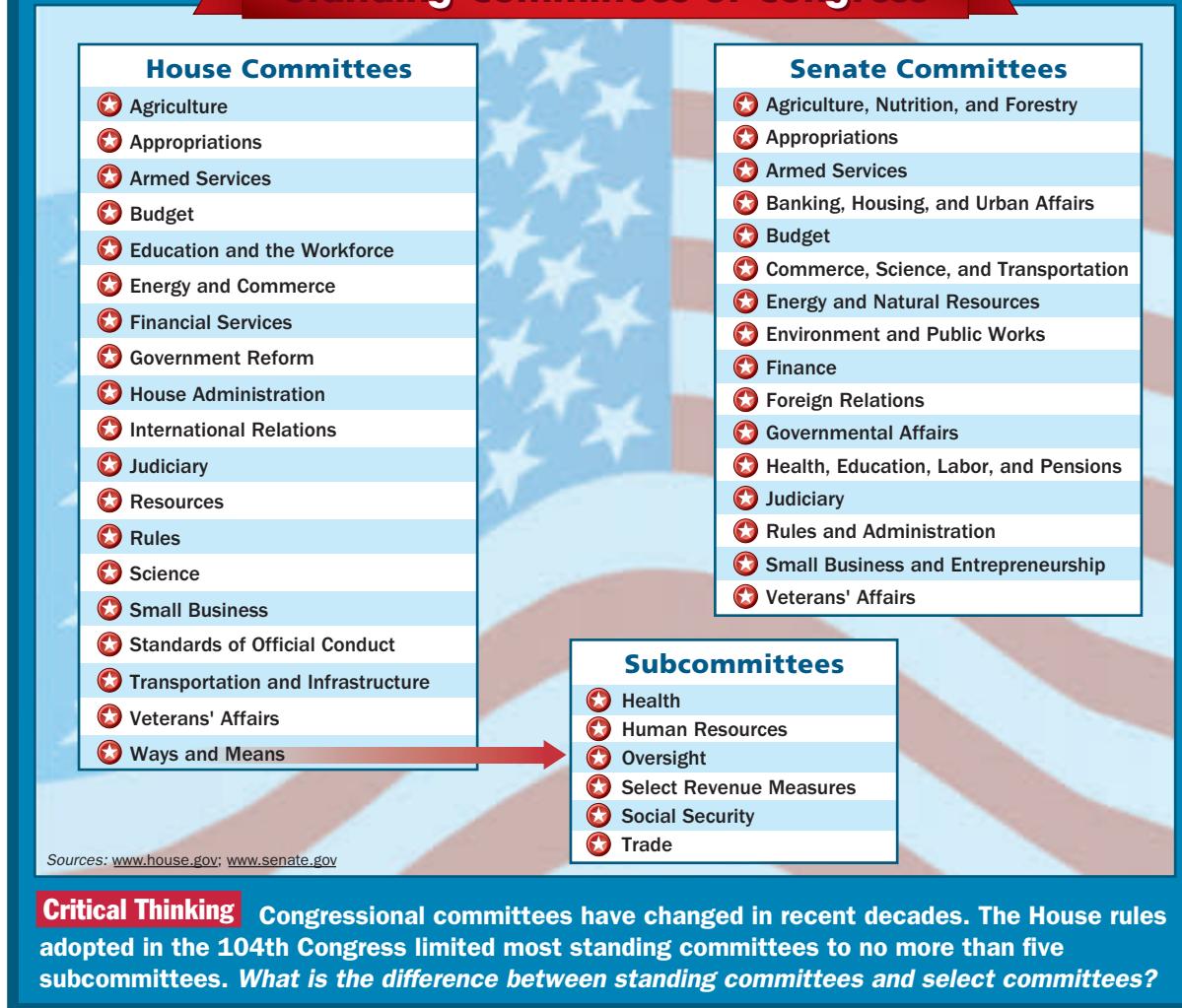


**The V-chip**

**Participating  
IN GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY**

**Debate the Issue** Do you think the V-chip is a real solution to violence viewed on television? Analyze the issue and present your view.

# Standing Committees of Congress



House Committees	Senate Committees
★ Agriculture	★ Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
★ Appropriations	★ Appropriations
★ Armed Services	★ Armed Services
★ Budget	★ Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
★ Education and the Workforce	★ Budget
★ Energy and Commerce	★ Commerce, Science, and Transportation
★ Financial Services	★ Energy and Natural Resources
★ Government Reform	★ Environment and Public Works
★ House Administration	★ Finance
★ International Relations	★ Foreign Relations
★ Judiciary	★ Governmental Affairs
★ Resources	★ Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
★ Rules	★ Judiciary
★ Science	★ Rules and Administration
★ Small Business	★ Small Business and Entrepreneurship
★ Standards of Official Conduct	★ Veterans' Affairs
★ Transportation and Infrastructure	
★ Veterans' Affairs	
★ Ways and Means	

Sources: [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov); [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

**Subcommittees**

- ★ Health
- ★ Human Resources
- ★ Oversight
- ★ Select Revenue Measures
- ★ Social Security
- ★ Trade

**Critical Thinking** Congressional committees have changed in recent decades. The House rules adopted in the 104th Congress limited most standing committees to no more than five subcommittees. *What is the difference between standing committees and select committees?*

can include: (1) matters of great public concern, such as organized crime; (2) overlooked problems, such as hunger; or (3) problems of interest groups, such as owners of small business, who claim that Congress has not met their needs. Select committees usually cannot report bills to their parent chamber, however.

Select committees were usually set up to last for no more than one term of Congress. In practice, however, select committees may be renewed and continue to meet for several terms of Congress. For this reason, both the House and Senate have reclassified several select committees, such as the **Select Intelligence Committee**, as permanent committees. In 1993 the House terminated four select committees.

**Joint Committees** Made up of members from both the House and the Senate, **joint committees** may be either temporary or permanent. Like other committees, they have members from both political parties. These committees—such as the Joint Economic Committee—usually act as study groups with responsibility for reporting their findings back to the House and Senate.

In theory, joint committees coordinate the work of the two houses of Congress. In practice, lawmakers usually limit joint committees to handling routine matters such as are handled by the Joint Committee on Printing, and the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress. Some joint committees, however, have been set up to study more volatile matters such as atomic energy,



**Committee Membership** Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (UT, left) and Patrick Leahy (VT, right) confer during hearings to confirm the nomination of Attorney General John Ashcroft in 2001. *Evaluate the motivation behind requests for committee assignments. Why would a senator seek assignment to judiciary, foreign relations, or budget committees? To committees that could benefit his or her constituents?*

defense, and taxation. Joint committees do not have the authority to deal directly with bills or to propose legislation to Congress.

**Conference Committees** No bill can be sent from Congress to the president until both houses have passed it in identical form. A **conference committee** is a temporary committee set up when the House and Senate have passed different versions of the same bill. Members of the conference committee, called conferees, usually come from the House and Senate standing committees that handled the bill in question. Democrats and Republicans are represented in the same way here as on other committees.

The job of the conference committee is to resolve the differences between the two versions of the bill. Conference committees play a key role in policy making because they work out a bill that both houses may accept and send to the president. The committee accomplishes this task by bargaining over each section of the bill. A majority of the conferees from each house must accept the final compromise bill—called a conference report—before it can be sent to the floor of the House and Senate. When the conference committee's report—the compromise bill it has finally worked

out—reaches the floor of each house, it must be considered as a whole and may not be amended. It must be accepted or rejected as it is when it comes from the conference committee.

### Choosing Committee Members

 Membership in congressional committees is extremely important to the role played by members of Congress. Assignment to the right committees can help strengthen a member's career in several ways. First, membership on some committees can increase a lawmaker's chances for reelection. For freshmen, the best committees may be those that deal with bills that will benefit a lawmaker's state or district.

Second, membership on some committees can mean the lawmaker will be able to influence national policy making. Committees that often help formulate national policies include those dealing with education, the budget, health, the judiciary, and foreign policy. Third, some committees enable a member to exert influence over other lawmakers because they deal with matters important to everyone in Congress. Some of these committees include the House **Rules Committee** and taxation and appropriations committees.

In the House the key committees are Rules, **Ways and Means**, and **Appropriations**. In the Senate the most prestigious committees are Foreign Relations, Finance, and Appropriations. Assignment to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, for example, will give a lawmaker a chance to directly influence American foreign policy. Senators on this committee usually receive a great deal of publicity.

**Assignment to Committees** In both the House and Senate, the political parties assign members to the standing committees. Newly elected members of Congress who wish to serve on a particular committee or veteran lawmakers who wish to transfer to another committee may request assignment to the committees on which they want to serve. Each member may only serve on a limited number of standing committees and subcommittees.

### The Committee Chairperson's Role

Along with party leaders, the chairpersons of standing committees are the most powerful members of Congress. They make the key decisions about the work of their committees—when their committees will meet, which bills they will consider, and for how long. They decide when hearings will be held and which witnesses will be called to testify for or against a bill. In addition, chairpersons may hire committee staff members and control the committee budget. Finally, they manage the floor debates that take place on the bills that come from their committees.

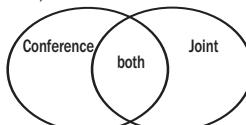
Since the 1970s the powers of committee chairpersons have been limited somewhat. The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 made the committee system more democratic by allowing a majority of committee members to call meetings without the chairperson's approval. It also stated that committee members who disagree with the chairperson must have time to present their views and that reasonable notice must be given for all committee hearings. Rule changes in 1995 prohibited the chairperson from casting an absent member's vote and required committees to publish all members' votes.

**The Seniority System** The unwritten rule of seniority traditionally has guided the selection of chairpersons. The **seniority system** gave the member of the majority party with the longest uninterrupted service on a particular committee the leadership of that committee.

Criticism of the seniority system has resulted in several changes. Beginning in 1971, House Republicans voted by secret ballot to select the highest-ranking Republican on each committee. In 1973 the Democrats, who were the majority party in the House, adopted the same procedure. In a historic action in 1975, House Democrats voted to replace three senior committee chairpersons. In 1995 Republicans also bypassed several senior members up for chairs and ruled that chairpersons of House committees could hold their positions for no more than three consecutive terms.

### Section 4 Assessment

#### Checking for Understanding

- 1. Main Idea** In a Venn diagram, show how a conference committee and a joint committee are alike and how they are different.  


A Venn diagram consisting of two overlapping circles. The left circle is labeled "Conference" and the right circle is labeled "Joint". The area where the two circles overlap is labeled "both".
- 2. Define** standing committee, subcommittee, select committee, joint committee, conference committee, seniority system.
- 3. Identify** Select Intelligence, Rules, Ways and Means, Appropriations Committees.
- 4. List** four important powers of a committee chairperson.

#### Critical Thinking

- 5. Making Inferences** Why did Republicans, when they won control of Congress in 1995, institute many rule changes?

#### Concepts IN ACTION

**Political Processes** Watch coverage of a congressional committee on television, or read about it in a newspaper. Outline the major issues presented in the testimony before the committee. Write a position paper in which you agree or disagree with the witnesses.

# Staff and Support Agencies

## Reader's Guide

### Key Terms

personal staff, committee staff, administrative assistant, legislative assistant, caseworker

### Find Out

- Why do members of Congress have large personal and committee staffs?
- How could a committee staffer have more influence than a member of Congress over a proposed bill?

### Understanding Concepts

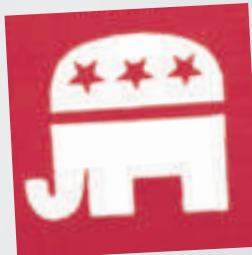
**Political Processes** How do staffs and support agencies help members of Congress carry out their many responsibilities?

## COVER STORY

### House Audits Books

WASHINGTON, D.C., JANUARY 1995

The new Republican majority wasted no time in “cleaning house.” First, they ordered an audit of House records. Then the House Oversight Committee voted to trim staff in the television office and reduce staff in the photography office. Members of Congress would now have to pay the full cost of such services out of their own office funds. The new majority party also cut 96 staff positions that were attached to 28 legislative service organizations. The service organizations dated back to 1959 when Congress certified the Democratic Study Group to analyze legislation.



Republican logo

The work of Congress is so massive and complicated that lawmakers need trained staffs to help them do their work effectively. Staff members also carry out the work of congressional committees. In addition, a number of supporting agencies perform important functions for members.

House rules in 1995 cut the total of committee staff by one-third compared to the levels of the previous Congress. The Senate also made less dramatic cuts—a 15 percent reduction in committee staff. At the same time Congress adopted a resolution to cut the legislative branch budget and reduced the budget of the General Accounting Office. Such staff reductions are rare.

### Congressional Staff Role



When Lowell Weicker of Connecticut was in the Senate, a woman wrote to him complaining about the way an airline had handled her dog. The dog, shipped as animal cargo, had died in flight. One of the senator’s secretaries mentioned the letter to the press secretary, who thought that perhaps the incident had news value. He phoned the Federal Aviation Agency and other government offices and found that there had been many similar cases. After informing the senator, the secretary wrote a draft of a bill to authorize the Transportation Department to regulate air transport of animals. Senator Weicker later introduced the legislation on the floor of the Senate. The story became headlines in Weicker’s home state, and he received many letters of appreciation.

This story illustrates that congressional staff members do much of the important work on legislation. Lawmakers rely on their staffs to help them handle the growing workload of Congress, communicate with voters, help run committee hearings and floor sessions, draft new bills, write committee reports, and attend committee meetings. Congressional staffs also

help lawmakers get reelected. Staffers help members of Congress get publicity, keep an eye on political developments back home, and write speeches and newsletters. They also help raise funds for election campaigns and meet with lobbyists and visitors from home.

## Congressional Staff Growth

 Congress has not always relied on staff to accomplish its work. For almost 100 years, senators and representatives had no personal aides. Occasionally they might hire assistants out of personal funds, but Congress provided no paid staff. Inadequate staffing had become an urgent complaint by the time Congress considered the Legislative Reorganization Act in 1946. After that the number of staff members increased dramatically. The House and Senate employed 2,000 personal staff members in 1947, but more than 11,500 in 1990. Committee staff increased from 400 to more than 3,000 in that same period.

Congressional staffs grew as lawmaking became more complex after the early 1900s. Lawmakers could not be experts on all the issues that came before their committees or upon which they voted in Congress. Having a large staff became one way to get expert help. Also, the demands that constituents placed on lawmakers increased over the years. Members of Congress needed a large office staff simply to deal with the many letters from people in their states or congressional districts. In addition to writing to their senators and representatives, voters in increasing numbers have turned to their lawmakers for help in solving problems. One lawmaker explained, “More than half my total staff time is devoted to resolving individual difficulties that have developed between citizens and their government.”

## Personal Staff

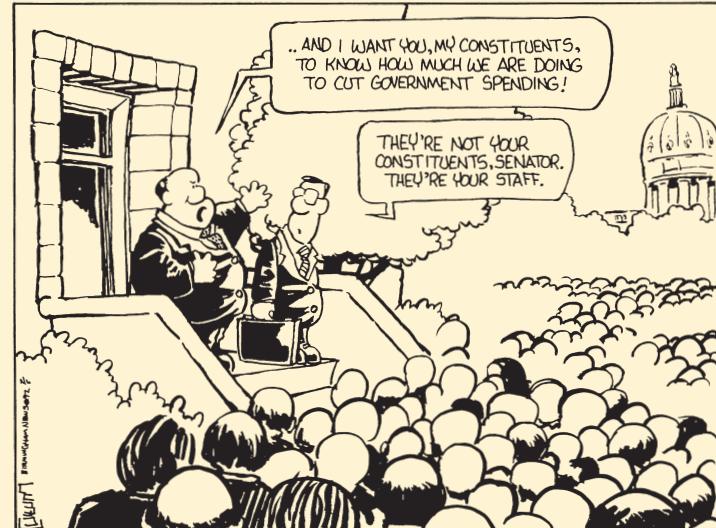
 Congress includes two types of staffs: **personal staff** and **committee staff**. Personal staff

members work directly for individual senators and representatives. Committee staff members work for the many House and Senate committees.

The size of senators' personal staffs varies because allowances to pay for them are based on the population of the senator's state and distance from the capital. Senators each receive a yearly budget to operate their offices. Most of this amount is to pay staff salaries. About one-third of personal staff members work in the legislators' home states. The rest work in Washington, D.C. Each member of the House has an allowance to pay for a personal staff. The House and Senate employ thousands of personal staff aides. Lawmakers can hire and fire staff members at will.

**Administrative Assistants** Lawmakers usually have three types of personal staff members in their offices. The **administrative assistant**, called an AA, is a very important legislative aide. The AA runs the lawmaker's office, supervises the lawmaker's schedule, and gives advice on political matters. A good AA also deals with influential people from the lawmaker's congressional district or state, who may influence the lawmaker's reelection.

### An Expanding Government



**Public Perceptions** Members of Congress must balance the need for large staffs with the need to cut government spending. **What public perception of Congress does the cartoonist enhance with this cartoon?**

**Legislative Assistants** **Legislative assistants**, or LAs, are a second type of personal staff member. An LA makes certain that the lawmaker is well informed about the many bills with which she or he must deal. An LA does research, drafts bills, studies bills currently in Congress, and writes speeches and articles for the lawmaker.

Another important part of the LA's job is to assist the lawmaker in committee meetings and to attend committee meetings when the lawmaker cannot be present. Senators and representatives are members of so many committees and subcommittees that they cannot possibly attend all the committee meetings. When they do attend committee meetings, they often come in at the last minute and briefly talk with their LA to find out what has taken place. The LA, who has followed the meeting and studied the bill in question, may have prepared a short speech for the lawmaker or made up a list of questions for the lawmaker to ask

### Aiding Lawmakers



**Influencing Congress** Members of Congress, like Representative Maxine Waters, depend on their legislative aides. **How might legislative assistants influence members of Congress?**

witnesses. Often the senator or representative has not seen the speech or the questions but relies on the LA's judgment.

LAs also keep track of the work taking place on the floor of Congress, as well as bills that are in committee. While routine legislative business goes on, the lawmaker may be in a committee meeting or talking with voters. When the buzzer rings, signaling time for a vote, lawmakers rush to the floor of the Senate or House from their offices or committee rooms. They may not know what the vote is about unless it involves a major bill that has been scheduled long in advance. As they walk, they look for their LAs. In his book *In the Shadow of the Dome*, former LA Mark Bisnow describes the scene:

*"As the door of the "Senators Only" elevator opened, their bosses would pour out. . . . If they did not know what they were voting on (votes occurred frequently throughout the day, and it was hard to keep track), . . . they would glance to the side to see if someone were waiting. A staffer might wave and run up for a huddled conference behind a pillar; or if the senator were in a hurry . . . he [or she] might simply expect a quick thumbs-up or thumbs-down gesture."*

—Mark Bisnow, 1990

**Caseworkers** Some personal staff members are called **caseworkers** because they handle the many requests for help from people in a lawmaker's state or congressional district. In addition to their offices in Washington, D.C., lawmakers are likely to have offices in key cities in their home district. Caseworkers usually staff these offices.

### Committee Staff

Every committee and subcommittee in Congress has staff members who work for that committee. The larger a committee is, the more staff people it will likely have. The committee chairperson and the senior minority party member of the committee are in charge of these staff members. Committee staffers draft bills, study issues, collect information, plan committee hearings, write memos, and prepare committee

reports. They are largely responsible for the work involved in making laws.

Some senior committee staff members are very experienced and are experts in the area their committee covers, whether it be tax policy, foreign affairs, or health care. Laurence Woodworth, who spent 32 years on the staff of the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, is a good example of such an expert. As the committee's staff director for 14 years, he was largely responsible for all changes in the tax laws. Later, Woodworth left the committee to become assistant secretary of the treasury.



Thomas Jefferson

**Too Much Power?** The people do not elect congressional staffers. Yet they play a key role in lawmaking. Do they have too much influence? Some lawmakers believe they do. Other lawmakers disagree. They say that the staff really collects information and develops alternative courses of action for the lawmakers.

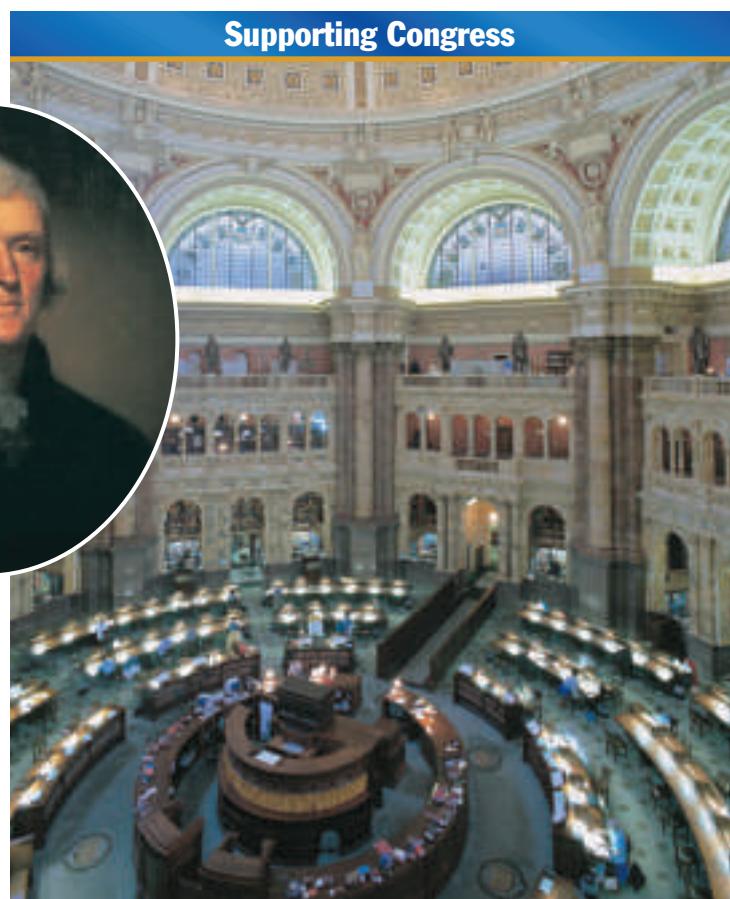
## Support Agencies



Several agencies that are part of the legislative branch provide services that help Congress carry out its powers. Some of the services these agencies provide are also available to the other branches of government and to private citizens. Congress has created four important support agencies.

**The Library of Congress** Congress created the **Library of Congress** in 1800 to "purchase such books as may be necessary for the use of Congress." Today, it is one of the largest libraries in the world. This great center of information contains more than 100 million items, including books, journals, music, films, photographs, and maps. As the administrator of the copyright law, the copyright office in the Library receives two free copies of most published works copyrighted in the United States.

The Library has a Congressional Research Service (CRS) with hundreds of employees. Every



## Supporting Congress

**Congressional Research** Congress established the Library of Congress in 1800, and in 1815 purchased Thomas Jefferson's private library of about 6,000 books. The Main Reading Room is the center of the greatest research library in the United States. **Why would members of Congress require research materials?**

year, CRS answers thousands of requests for information from lawmakers, congressional staff, and committees. CRS workers will check out anything, from the number of kangaroos in Australia to the crime rate in urban areas. Members of Congress use the CRS to answer requests for information from voters. They also use CRS for research on matters related to bills before Congress.

**Congressional Budget Office (CBO)** Congress established the CBO in 1974 to coordinate the budget-making work of Congress, study the budget proposals put forward by the president each year, and make cost projections of proposed

new programs. The CBO counterbalances the president's elaborate budget-making organization, the Office of Management and Budget. CBO staff members study economic trends, keep track of how much congressional committees are spending, and prepare a report on the budget each April. They also calculate how Congress's budget decisions might affect the nation's economy.

**General Accounting Office (GAO)** Established in 1921, this agency is the nation's watchdog over the spending of funds Congress appropriates. A comptroller general appointed to a 15-year term directs the **GAO**. The agency has a professional staff of about 3,300 people. They review the financial management of government programs that Congress creates, collect government debts, settle claims, and provide legal service.

Many GAO staff members answer requests for information about specific programs from lawmakers and congressional committees. GAO staff members prepare reports on various federal programs for lawmakers, testify before committees, develop questions for committee hearings, and provide legal opinions on bills under consideration. Almost one-third of the GAO's work now comes from congressional requests for information.

**Government Printing Office (GPO)** The **Government Printing Office** is the largest multi-purpose printing plant in the world. It does the printing for the entire federal government. Every

day the GPO prints the *Congressional Record*, a daily record of all the bills introduced in both houses and of the speeches and testimony presented in Congress. Members of Congress can make changes in speeches they have made before they are printed in the *Record*. They can even have speeches they never actually made in the House or Senate printed in the *Record*.

Congressional staff members spend a good deal of time preparing speeches for lawmakers because those words will be inserted in the *Congressional Record*. Thus, when voters ask about the lawmaker's position on a particular issue, the staff can send a copy of the *Record* containing a speech the lawmaker made on that issue to the constituent making the request.

Another valuable publication of the Government Printing Office is the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, updated and printed every year since 1878. Published by the Bureau of the Census, this volume provides statistical information about population, government finances, personal income, business, agriculture, education, law enforcement, national defense, elections, and many other topics. It is an invaluable source of data used by congressional staff as well as the general public.

The support agencies provide a vital function for Congress. They have helped the legislative branch become less dependent on the executive branch for information. This has helped Congress regain some of the power it held in earlier years.

## Section 5 Assessment

### Checking for Understanding

- Main Idea** In a graphic organizer like the one shown, analyze the differences between personal staff and committee staff in Congress.

Personal	Committee
- Define** personal staff, committee staff, administrative assistant, legislative assistant, caseworker.
- Identify** Library of Congress, Congressional Budget Office, General Accounting Office, Government Printing Office.
- Why did the numbers of congressional staff increase rapidly after 1900?

### Critical Thinking

- Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment** Why do you think the comptroller general who oversees the General Accounting Office is appointed for a 15-year term?

### Concepts IN ACTION

- Political Processes** Create a political cartoon that includes a caption about the role of committee staff in Congress. Take a position on whether professional staff members have too much power.

# Skills

## Critical Thinking

# Making Generalizations

Generalizations set forth a widely applied principle or rule based on particular facts. “Florida is warmer than Michigan” is a valid generalization based on temperatures recorded over many years.

### Learning the Skill

To make a valid generalization, follow these steps:

- Identify the subject matter.
- Gather related facts and examples.
- Identify similarities among these facts.
- Use these similarities to form a general statement about the subject.

### Practicing the Skill

Abigail Adams wrote the following letter to her husband, John, who was attending the Second Continental Congress in 1775. Read the excerpt and complete the activity that follows.

*“The reins of government have been so long slackened that I fear the people will not quietly submit to those restraints which are necessary for the peace and security of the community. If we separate from Britain, what code of laws will be established? How shall we be governed so as to retain our liberties? Can any government be free which is administered by general stated laws? Who shall frame these laws? Who will give them force and energy? It is true your resolutions, as a body, have hitherto had the force of laws; but will they continue to have? ”*



**Abigail Adams**

Identify each following generalization as valid or invalid based on the information presented.

1. There are many issues to answer if America separates from Britain.
2. Some governmental controls are necessary in a community.
3. The colonies should adopt the British code of laws.
4. The Americans should adopt a new constitution.

### Application Activity

Over a period of weeks, read the editorials in your local newspaper. Then write a list of generalizations about the newspaper’s position on issues such as politics or crime.



**The Glencoe Skillbuilder Interactive Workbook, Level 2**  
provides instruction and practice in key social studies skills.

## THE JOHNSON TREATMENT

**LYNDON B. JOHNSON**, SENATE LEADER FROM 1955 TO 1961, HAD A unique way of persuading colleagues to see his point of view. He would lean in close, cajole, and sometimes touch the other person for emphasis—techniques some might refer to as gentle bullying.

*Senator Johnson gives Senator Theodore Francis Green "the treatment."*

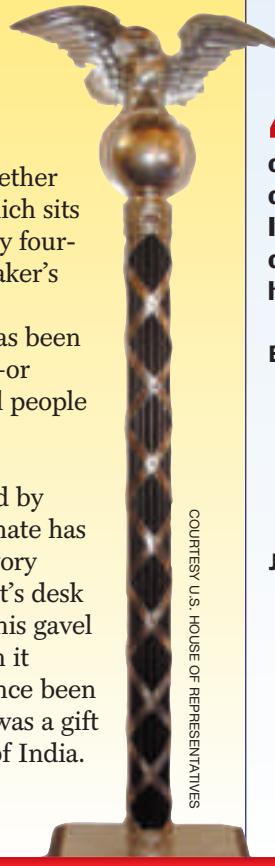
GEORGE TAMES/THE NEW YORK TIMES

BETTMANN/CORBIS

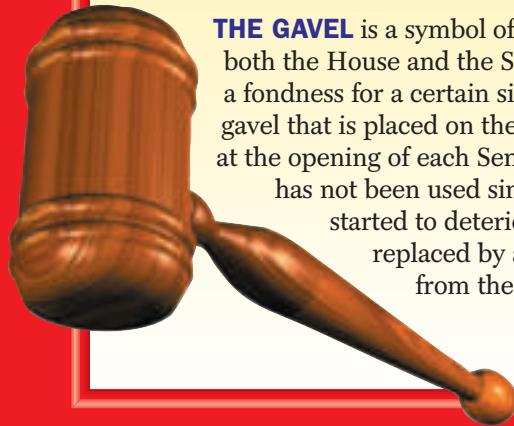


## SYMBOLS IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE

**THE MACE** is made up of 13 ebony rods tied together with silver string and topped by a globe upon which sits a silver eagle with outstretched wings. This nearly four-foot high bundle is placed at the right of the Speaker's desk at the beginning of each House session. If a member becomes unruly, the sergeant at arms has been known to place the mace in front of that person—or march up and down the aisle with the mace until people calm down.



COURTESY U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



**THE GAVEL** is a symbol of authority used by both the House and the Senate. The Senate has a fondness for a certain silver-capped ivory gavel that is placed on the vice president's desk at the opening of each Senate session. This gavel has not been used since 1954, when it started to deteriorate; it has since been replaced by a replica that was a gift from the government of India.

## VERBATIM

### WHAT PEOPLE SAID

**"I think it is high time we remembered that the Constitution speaks not only of the freedom of speech but also of trial by jury instead of trial by accusation...."**



**SENATOR MARGARET CHASE SMITH** of Maine, standing up to Senator Joseph McCarthy during his anti-Communist crusade in 1950

**"Members of the Congress, the Constitution makes us not rivals for power but partners for progress. We are all trustees for the American people, custodians of the American heritage."**

**PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY**, in a 1962 State of the Union Address

**"It is the duty of every member of this House to act upon his conscience and his sense of duty. It is his business to be right, careless of what may happen to him in consequence thereof."**

**REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS BRACKETT REED**, in an 1884 speech in the House of Representatives

**"Congress is the great commanding theater of this nation."**

**THOMAS JEFFERSON**, in an 1808 letter to William Wirt, a lawyer and statesman



BETTMANN/CORBIS

## MILESTONES



AP PHOTO/NASA

**LAUNCHED, 1998. JOHN**

**GLENN**, former Ohio senator and the first American to orbit Earth, became the oldest person to travel in space as a passenger aboard a NASA space shuttle. He was 77.

**APPOINTED, 1971. TWO 16-**

**YEAR-OLD GIRLS** became the first females to serve as Senate pages. In the 1830s, Senator Daniel Webster had appointed a 9-year-old boy to run errands and deliver messages for him—and the tradition of Senate pages was born, an all-male tradition that was not broken for more than 130 years.

**TALKED THE TALK, 1957.****SENATOR STROM THURMOND**

of South Carolina set a filibuster record by refusing to give up the Senate floor. He talked for 24 hours and 18 minutes.



IMAGES.COM/CORBIS

## NUMBERS

**1st** In 1968 Shirley Chisholm became the first African American woman elected to Congress. Four years later, the New York state resident was the first African American and first woman to enter the race for her party's nomination for president of the United States.



**1st** In 1992 Carol Mosley-Braun became the first African American woman elected to the United States Senate.



WARREN WINTER/CORBIS

**1st** Ben Nighthorse Campbell was the first Native American to chair the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. Judo champ, gold medalist at the Pan American Games, jewelry designer, rancher—all these titles fit this versatile senator.



WILLIAM PHILPOTT/CORBIS

**TIE BROKEN,****2001. VICE****PRESIDENT****DICK****CHENEY**

used his powers as president of the Senate (a position given to every U.S. vice president) to break a tie vote. Cheney's move approved an amendment to a resolution that allowed up to \$300 billion to be spent on Medicare prescription drug coverage.

**1** The number of votes in the Senate by which Texas squeaked into the Union in 1845. (Other senators were holding out, thinking Texas should be carved up into four separate states.)

**1** The number of votes by which the Senate approved the purchase of Alaska from Russia for around \$7 million.

# Assessment and Activities

## GOVERNMENT Online



**Self-Check Quiz** Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at [gov.glencoe.com](http://gov.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 5—Self-Check Quizzes** to prepare for the chapter test.

## Reviewing Key Terms

Match each term below with one of the following phrases or terms:

- |                    |                    |                  |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| a. House           | b. Senate          | c. Both chambers |
| 1. bill            | 6. joint committee |                  |
| 2. majority leader | 7. redistricting   |                  |
| 3. gerrymandering  | 8. reapportionment |                  |
| 4. filibuster      | 9. censure         |                  |
| 5. constituents    | 10. incumbent      |                  |

## Recalling Facts

- What are the qualifications for members of the House and Senate?
- Identify the most powerful committee in the House of Representatives.
- List four advantages incumbents have in running for office.
- How do House rules differ from Senate rules?
- What position in the Senate does the vice president serve?

## Understanding Concepts

- Political Processes** How does the census affect the reapportionment of the House?
- Growth of Democracy** Why does the Constitution provide for free and unlimited debate in Congress?
- Political Processes** How does the majority party in each house determine the flow of legislation?

## Chapter Summary

### Congress

#### Senate

#### House of Representatives

Vice president	Presiding officer	Speaker of the House
30 years old, 9-year U.S. citizen, legal resident of the state where elected	Qualifications	25 years old, 7-year U.S. citizen, legal resident of the state where elected
6 years	Term of office	2 years
100—two from each state	Number of members	435 voting representatives
\$154,700	Annual salary	\$150,000

#### Committees

- Needed to manage the thousands of bills proposed
- Include standing, select, joint, and conference committees

#### Staff

- Personal staff work for individual senators and representatives
- Committee staff work for particular committees

#### Support Agencies

- Help Congress carry out its powers
- Some services also available to other branches and the public

## Critical Thinking

- Making Inferences** Why are bills that minority party members introduce unlikely to be reported out of committee?
- Making Comparisons** In a graphic organizer like the one below, compare the duties of a congressional administrative assistant with those of a legislative assistant.

administrative	legislative

## Analyzing Primary Sources

In 1775, at the request of the Continental Congress, John Adams wrote *Thoughts on Government*, in which he detailed what he believed would be the components of an ideal form of government. He advocated, among other things, a bicameral legislature. Read the excerpt and then answer the questions that follow.

*"A representation of the people in one assembly being obtained, a question arises whether all the powers of government, legislative, executive, and judicial, shall be left in this body? I think a people cannot be long free, nor ever happy, whose government is in one Assembly. . . ."*

*[L]et a [distinct] Assembly be constituted, as a mediator between the two extreme branches of the legislature, that which represents the people and that which is vested with the executive power.*

*Let the Representative Assembly then elect by ballot, from among themselves or their constituents, or both, a distinct Assembly, which for the sake of perspicuity we will call a Council. It . . . should have a free and independent exercise of its judgment, and consequently a negative voice in the legislature."*

- John Adams advocated a bicameral legislature with an upper house that would be appointed by leaders and a lower house that would be elected by the population. What are the benefits of having a legislative body arranged in this manner?

## Interpreting Political Cartoons Activity

- What is the subject of this cartoon?
- What do the roots of the tree trunk symbolize?
- According to this cartoon, how difficult is it to unseat an incumbent in Congress?



- Even though Adams believed that one section of the legislative branch should be appointed, both houses of the U.S. Congress are directly elected. What are the benefits of direct elections of representatives?

## Participating in Local Government

The idea of a constitutional amendment requiring term limits for members of Congress has been debated in recent years. What are the arguments for and against a constitutional amendment on term limits? What is your view? Research this issue and write a letter to the editor of your local paper expressing your opinion for or against term limits. Be sure to include at least three arguments that support your position in the letter.

