

AP GOV CONGRESS

REVIEWED!

Government in America (Pearson) Chapter 11

American Government: (Wilson) Chapter 13
Institutions & Policies

REPRESENTATIVES & SENATORS

- Congress is the legislative branch composed of 535 members
 - Senate: 100 members
 - Designed to represent the states equally
 - House of Rep: 435 members
 - Designed to represent the population
- Constitutional requirements:
 - Senate: age 30 & older, citizen for 9 years
 - House: age 25 & older, citizen for 7 years
 - Both: must live in the state
- Both women and minorities are underrepresented in Congress



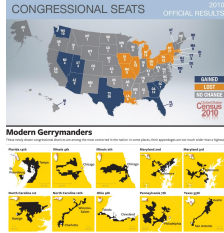
CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

- Congressional elections tend to be won by **incumbents**
 - Roughly 90% of House incumbents win reelection
 - Elections for Senate tend to be a bit more competitive
- Tendency for voters to disapprove of Congress, but unusual for incumbents to lose reelection- Why?
- Advantages of incumbency:
 - Advertising / Visibility
 - Credit Claiming
 - **Casework**: service to individual constituents
 - **Pork barrel projects**: federal money for projects within the district or state
 - Position taking
 - Weak opponents
 - Campaign spending



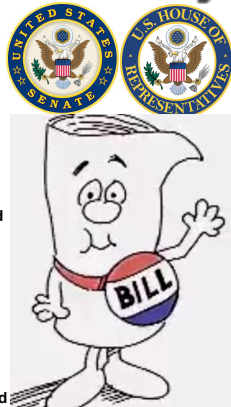
CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

- Congressional districts are typically controlled by one political party
 - State legislatures redraw districts every 10 years
 - District demographics are often redrawn to ensure safe Congressional seats for the party in control
 - **Gerrymandering**: manipulating district boundaries to help ensure a political advantage for one party over another
- How to defeat incumbents?
 - Bad economy, political/personal scandal
 - Changes in the midterms from shifting public mood
 - **Redistricting**: every 10 years Congressional districts are redrawn to deal with population changes reflected in the census
 - **Open seat**: incumbent is not running
- Debate: Is the stability of incumbents winning reelection good for government?
 - Thumbs up: Experience, expertise
 - Thumbs down: Career politicians in safe seats



How Congress is Organized to Make Policy

- Framers set up a **bicameral** legislature
 - **House of Representatives**: based on population
 - **Senate**: 2 representatives per state
 - Shout out to **Connecticut Compromise** ("Great")
- A bill has to pass BOTH to become law
 - "The **enumerated** and **implied powers** in the Constitution allow the creation of public policy by Congress" Includes:
 - Passing federal budget, raising revenue, and coining money
 - Declaring war
 - Passing laws that deal with wide variety of issues
- **House of Representatives**:
 - **Unique powers**: revenue bills start here, power to impeach
 - **Rules Committee** schedules when a bill will be voted on & amount of debate time allowed



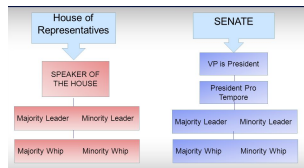
How Congress is Organized to Make Policy

- **Senate**:
 - **Unique powers**:
 - confirmation of many presidential nominations
 - ratification of treaties
 - impeachment trials
 - **Filibuster** is when an opponent of a bill takes the floor in a debate and keeps talking in order to delay or to prevent a vote
 - If **60 senators** vote to halt the debate a filibuster can be ended and a vote will be held = **Cloture**



CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

- Congressional leadership positions are chosen by the political parties
- Chamber rules impact the policy making process
- Both Senate & House:
 - **Majority leader**
 - Whips
 - Minority leader
 - Committee chairs
- **House of Rep**
 - **Speaker of the House** is chosen by the majority party
- **Senate**
 - **Vice President** serves as the head of the Senate
- Members of Congress are free to break from their party when voting



COMMITTEES & SUBCOMMITTEES

- **Committees** in each house of Congress determine the congressional agenda, help create legislation, conduct hearings, & debate bills
 - Standing committees: deal with bills in different legislative areas
 - Joint committees: members from both House and Senate serve
 - Conference committees: created to reconcile competing versions of the same bill passed by House & Senate
 - Select committees: created to deal with a specific policy issue
- **Discharge petitions in the House:** is a way to force a bill out of committee and to the House floor for a vote

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

COMMITTEES & SUBCOMMITTEES

- Getting on a committee is important Congressional leaders:
 - Create policy for their constituents or in areas they are passionate about
 - Help gain influence in Congress
 - Help with reelection
- **Committee chairs** influence the committees' agenda, schedule hearings, etc.
 - Gatekeeping role
 - The **seniority system** is still largely influential when selecting committee assignments and leadership positions

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	Ways and Means

How Congress is Organized to Make Policy

- Formal structure of Congress: committees and leadership positions
- **Informal organization** of Congress is through **caucuses**
 - **Congressional caucuses** are basically congressional interest groups consisting of members of similar ideology, demographics, geography, or interests
 - Members work toward advancing policies they support or towards opposing laws they think are bad
- Large network of **Congressional staff** and **interns** support the work of Congress
 - Work with constituents, draft legislation, meet with lobbyists, summarize bills, prep legislators for committees, etc.

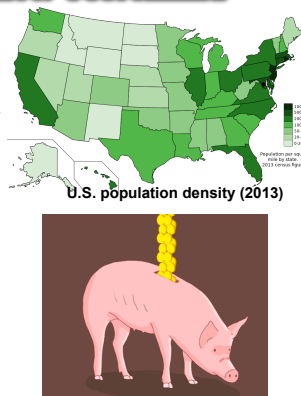




THE CONGRESSIONAL PROCESS & DECISION MAKING

- Only a member of Congress can introduce a bill
 - The **President** can try to persuade Congress to take up their legislative agenda
 - Propose bills
 - Lobby Congressional leaders
 - Congress does remain independent
 - Refusal to confirm appointments of “**lame duck**” presidents of the opposite party
- Ultimately it is a Congressional leaders constituents that hold legislators accountable
- **Polarization of politics** means many votes are split firmly along party lines
- **Different views of role of representatives**
 - **Trustee model of representation**: legislators should use their best judgment as to what is in the best interest for the people
 - **Instructed delegates model of representation**: legislatures should match the policy choices of their constituents
 - **Politico model**: hybrid of the two models
- **Lobbyists** and **interest groups** seek to influence Congressional leaders


UNDERSTANDING CONGRESS

- Due to its large size direct democracy is impractical
 - **Representative democracy**
- Congress is **unrepresentative**
 - Congress members are largely from the elite
 - Racial, gender, socio-economic groups underrepresented
- Members of Congress may look out for the needs of their constituents vs. those of the national interest
 - “**Pork barrel spending**”
 - “**Logrolling affect**”
- Continued debate about size and scope of government



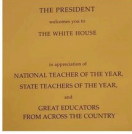



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