



Legislative Branch

I. 2 Houses (bicameral)

A. House of Representatives

Qualifications:

✓ Formal:

- 25 years old
- U.S. Citizen for 7 years
- live in state represented

← constitutional
Qualifications

✓ Informal:

- party identification
- political experience
- name familiarity
- ethnicity
- gender

← what you need to get elected.

1. 435 Members
2. 2 Year Term
3. Small Constituency → Districts
4. Younger
5. Low Prestige
6. Lower Visibility
7. Limited Debate - time limits
8. Committees do most work
9. No treaty or appointment power (given to Senate)
10. "The Lower House" (nickname)

B. Senate

Qualifications:

Formal:

- 30 years old
- U.S. Citizen for 9 years
- live in state represented

← constitutional requirements

Informal:

- party identification
- political experience ← electable features
- name familiarity
- ethnicity
- gender

1. 100 Members
2. 6 Year Term
3. Large Constituency → an entire state!
4. Older
5. High Prestige
6. Higher Visibility
7. Open Debate - Filibuster - just keep talking to delay vote!
8. Committees and Floor
9. Approve Treaties & Appointments - Check on President/Courts
10. "The Upper House"

II. Powers

A. Make Laws ← MAIN Job!

B. Checks and Balances

1. Executive Branch

2. Judicial Branch

III. Vocabulary

A. term

"a two year period of time during which Congress meets"

*a period of time that elected officials hold office

B. session

period of time **each year** that Congress assembles and conducts business--start on noon on Jan. 3 (unless a different day is set)

C. special session

an session of Congress, called by the president, to deal with emergency situations

D. adjourn

to suspend until the next session

E. apportionment

"distribute," as in seats, in the legislature → to district them based on census.

F. off-year election

election held between presidential elections; generally have lower voter turn-out

G. continuous body

(refers to the Senate) only 1/3 of total seats are up for election every two years

H. constituency

people of interest that the congressmen represent - voters.

I. partisans

lawmaker who owes his/her first allegiance to the political party and vote according to the party lines

influence on votes.

J. oversight function

Congress, working through the committees, checks on the executive branch to see that they are working correctly. GAO - Government Accounting Office

→ Audit accounts of all govt offices -

K. franking privilege

The benefit of free postage afforded to members of Congress

IV. The Members

A. Backgrounds

Age: 53 (H) 58 (S) (Average)

Women: 63 (H) 14 (S)

Ethnicity: 39 (A.A.) 23 (H) 4 (As.A.) 2 (N.A.) 1 (N.H.)

Married w/ average 2 kids

Religion: 60% Protestant, 25% Catholic, 8% Jewish

Career: majority are lawyer

B. The Job

1. Trustee

Follow the guidance of their constituents. Rely on their own morals, values, judgement, etc.

2. Partisan - Political Party Loyalty

Make decisions based on their party's recommendations or demands.

3. Politicos

Try to find a balance between the party-line and their own constituency's demands or expectations

C. Compensation

1. Salary

Average: \$155,000/year

2. Non-salary

Special tax deductions.

Retirement plans.

Life insurance.

Health care.

Offices in Washington.

Funds for hiring staff.

Franking privilege.

Some dining discounts.

Health clubs.

Free parking at the capital.

3. Politics of Pay

Limits on Pay:

1-Changes don't go into effect until after the next election (27th Amendment)

2-Presidential veto power. - Stop their laws

3-Backlash from constituents. → can get voted out of office!

4. Privileges

Immunity: Can't be arrested while on official business for House or Senate.
Can't be sued for comments in debates.

→ 4. PAC's - Influence

Political Action Committee -
Raise money for causes +
Candidates

Interest Group: Lobbyist who
try to sway Congressmen to
vote in their favor for their
business or cause they
represent.

All tax payer
paid for life!