

CHAPTER 6

CONGRESS AT WORK

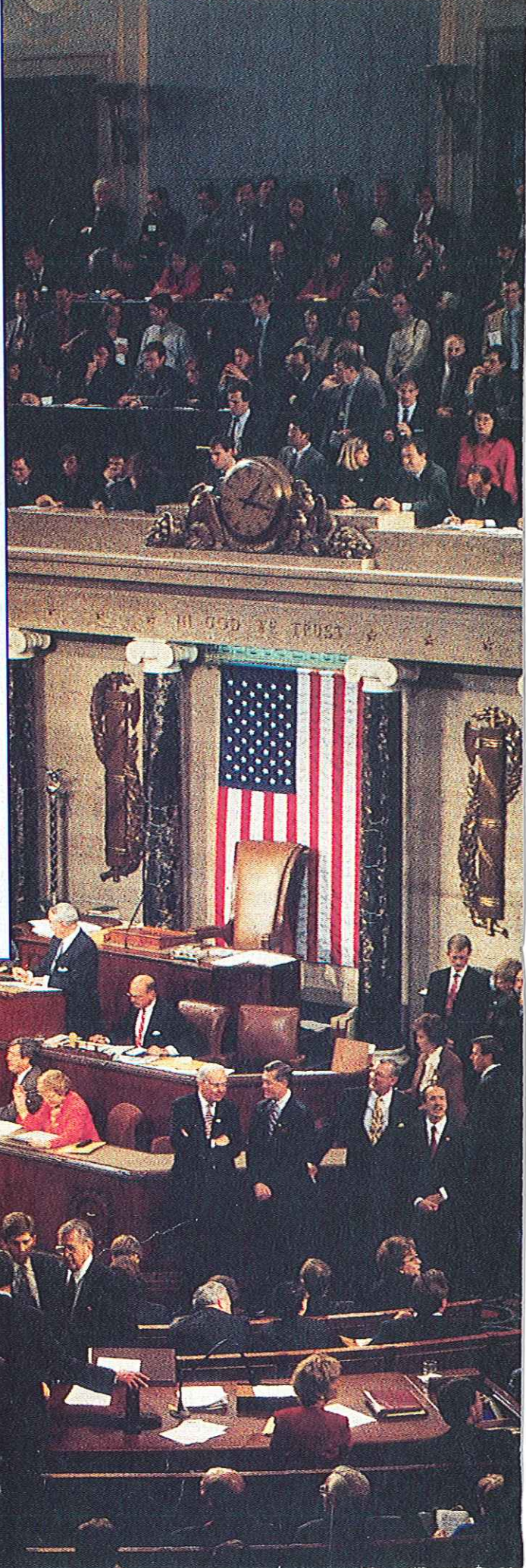
Some people might praise Congress by saying that no other institution in the world operates quite like it. Others might utter these words as an insult, criticizing Congress for being slow and for operating under complicated, mazelike rules.

Still, Congress has developed a remarkable system for tackling the enormous task of making the nation's laws. To fully appreciate this system, you must begin by examining the organization of Congress as well as the legislative process. This chapter also considers the impact of Congress on the well-being of the citizens it serves.



Government Notebook

In your Government Notebook, write a paragraph describing the process you think Congress goes through in considering and voting on legislation.



SECTION 1

ORGANIZATION OF CONGRESS

Political Dictionary



quorum
term limits
incumbent
majority party
minority party
Speaker
floor leader
party whip
president *pro tempore*
censure
expulsion

Objectives

- ★ What are the terms and sessions of Congress?
- ★ How is congressional leadership organized?
- ★ What are the rules of conduct in Congress?

Making laws that govern a nation of millions of people is a great responsibility. As noted in Chapter 5, Congress operates under a set of rules that determines how to carry out this responsibility. Some of these rules are outlined in the Constitution. Others have been made by Congress itself. These rules dictate how long Congress is in session, who leads Congress, and how sessions are conducted.

Terms and Sessions

Congressional elections take place every even-numbered year in November. All of the members of the House and one third of the members of the Senate are elected in any congressional election year. Each new term of Congress begins on January 3 following the November election and

lasts two years. Each Congress is numbered, from the 1st Congress in 1789 and 1790 to the 105th Congress in 1997 and 1998, and so on.

Each congressional term is divided into two 1-year sessions. Prior to the adoption of the Twentieth Amendment, which states that each new congressional term will begin on January 3, congressional terms began in December, 13 months after congressional elections had taken place. The amendment was passed to prevent congresspeople from serving an entire year as “lame ducks”—members who had not been re-elected.

After the passage of the amendment, sessions lasted from January until August or September. During the last few decades, however, Congress has remained in session almost continuously. Members take recesses, or breaks, of various lengths during the summer, before elections, and around holidays. When Congress is in session, a **quorum**, or majority of members, must be present to conduct business.

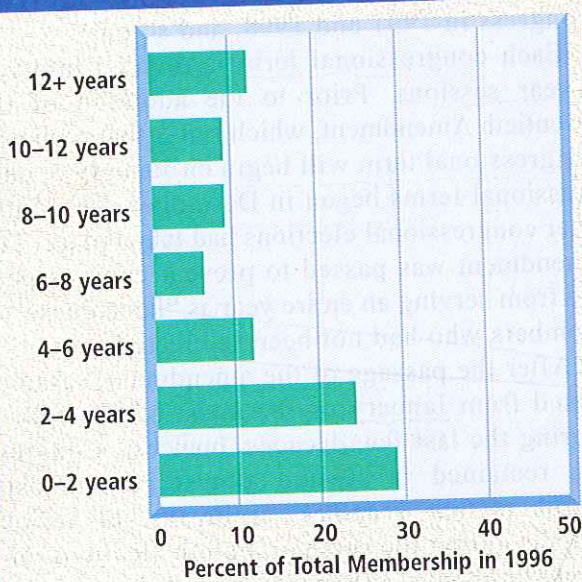
Sometimes problems that require congressional action arise while Congress is in recess. If necessary, the president can recall congressmembers to Washington for a special session. This rarely happens, however.

Term Limits

Today there are no **term limits**—legal limits on the number of terms a person can serve—for members of Congress. Term limits have been the subject of much debate in recent years, however. Those in favor of term limits criticize Congress, saying that it is an institution in which career politicians dominate the lawmaking process. These critics believe that a person who is new to Congress might be more in touch with citizens’ concerns.

Political observers have noted a curious fact. Although Congress as an institution may be unpopular, voters generally are satisfied with their own representatives and senators. Therefore, **incumbents**, or officeholders, tend to have a good chance of being re-elected. This may be because of name recognition or because incumbents have had the opportunity to help constituents and to get projects and pass favorable legislation for their districts or states. They also have a record of performance in Congress that voters can evaluate. Challengers cannot be similarly evaluated because they have not been in office. Voters often remember what the incumbent has

Years Served in the House



Source: Facts on File, Nov. 7, 1996

In both the House and the Senate a large percentage of congressmembers are incumbents. A fairly small percentage of incumbents, however, serves for more than 12 years. What percentage of representatives has served more than 12 years?

done for their state or community and view challengers as untried and inexperienced.

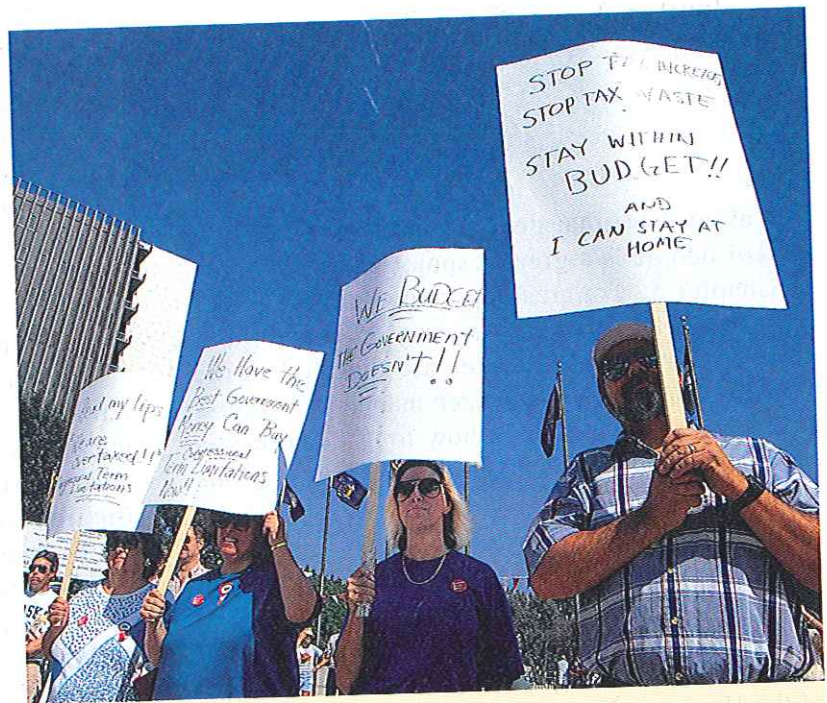
The Permanent Congress Since the 1950s the incumbent advantage has helped keep congressional turnover low—around 8 percent. In 1988 congressional turnover figures were particularly low—with 97 percent of the incumbents running for re-election winning their races. Such statistics fed a growing concern over lengthy periods of congressional service. Many people charged that these incumbent leaders had become entrenched in a “permanent Congress.” These critics believed that Congress had become unresponsive to the people and resistant to change.

The congressional elections in 1992 marked a downturn, for a time at least, in the permanent Congress. An unusually large number of House members retired. In addition, the

number of incumbents who ran for re-election and were defeated rose from 7 in 1988 to 43 in 1992. Thus, the House saw its biggest change since 1948, with 110 representatives—more than one fourth of its membership—newly elected. In the elections of 1994 the trend continued, with 87 new members elected—35 of whom had defeated incumbents and 52 of whom had taken seats for which incumbents did not seek re-election. In 1996, however, incumbents made a much stronger showing, with around 94 percent of them gaining re-election.

Support for Term Limits Criticism of the permanent Congress has sparked a grassroots movement at the state level for term limits. In 1990 Colorado passed a law establishing term limits for its congressmembers. In 1992 thirteen more proposed laws establishing term limits made it onto state ballots, and all of them passed.

In 1995, however, the Supreme Court ruled that neither the states nor Congress may impose term limits on members of Congress without a constitutional amendment. Many citizens’ groups and some legislators are working to pass an amendment for Congress similar to the Twenty-second Amendment, which limits the president to two terms.



POLITICAL PROCESSES Grassroots movements for term limits were sparked by critics of politicians who serve in Congress for long periods. *What are some of the criticisms of a permanent Congress?*

CASE STUDY

Effects of Term Limits

PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY What effects would term limits have on the work of Congress? Critics of term limits argue that government is complicated and that it often takes several terms to understand it. Short-term members have little experience in the running of Congress and must depend more on well-informed nonelected groups, including interest groups. As a result, a Congress of only short-term members might be less likely to reach independent decisions.

Critics of term limits also argue that the chance for re-election gives politicians a reason to do a good job. A congressman who could not run again for office would be less likely to work hard to address the concerns of voters. In addition, say critics, when voters are unhappy with the performance of an incumbent, they can remove that person from office simply by electing someone else.

Supporters of term limits reply that one or two terms is enough time to learn the job and that the current system encourages unnecessary spending. To gain re-election, they say, some representatives try to win the favor of voters by securing nonessential projects for their districts. Supporters believe that members whose terms are limited by law will do what is right rather than merely what will get them re-elected.

Congressional Leaders

Congressional leadership is organized strictly by party. In each house of Congress the political party that holds the most seats is called the **majority party**. The political party with fewer seats is called the **minority party**. Presiding officers and committee chairs always come from the majority party. Members also receive their committee assignments based on their party membership.



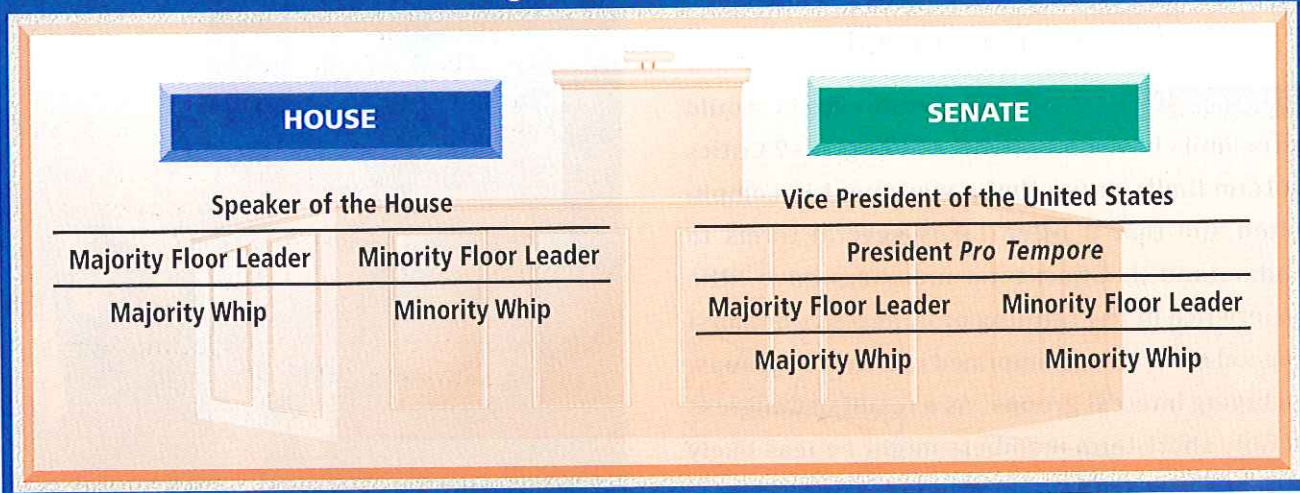
POLITICAL PROCESSES House majority leader Dick Arney, Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, and Senate majority whip Trent Lott speak to the press in 1996. What makes a party the majority party?

The House operates under stronger leadership than does the Senate and is controlled by stricter rules. Having more than four times as many members as the Senate, the House requires more structure to keep it functioning smoothly.

House Leaders The most influential position in the House of Representatives is that of **Speaker**. Although the Constitution mentions the position of the Speaker, it says nothing about the powers accompanying the office. In practice, as the presiding officer of the House, the Speaker officially gives the floor to members who wish to speak. The Speaker also controls floor debates and has a powerful hand in controlling the flow of legislation. The Speaker not only assigns legislation to committees but also helps appoint committee members and other House leaders from his or her party.

The visibility of the Speaker's office has increased dramatically in the past two decades. This has been particularly true at times when one party has controlled Congress while the other party has held the presidency. In such cases the Speaker has

Congressional Leadership



This chart illustrates the organization of leadership in Congress. There are only small differences between the organization of the leadership in the House and the Senate. What is the vice president's role in the Senate?

emerged as a leader of the opposition to the president and his party's policies. In the mid-1990s, for example, when President Clinton and the Democratic Party held the White House and the Republicans were the majority party in Congress, Speaker Newt Gingrich became well known as a strong voice in government.

House members of each party also choose their own **floor leader**. The majority floor leader serves as an assistant to the Speaker and is the second-most-influential member of the House. The minority floor leader is the minority party's chief spokesperson. These two people are commonly referred to as the majority leader and the minority leader.

In addition, each party chooses its own **party whips**. The main function of a party whip is to monitor and influence how his or her party's members vote on legislation. Today many members are involved in each party's whip organization. For example, almost half of all House Democrats belonged to their party's whip organization during the 105th Congress. Whips act as an intelligence network for the party leadership. By discovering members' opinions on particular legislation, whips enable leaders to more efficiently drum up support for the party's official stance.

Senate Leaders The presiding officer in the Senate is the vice president of the United States.

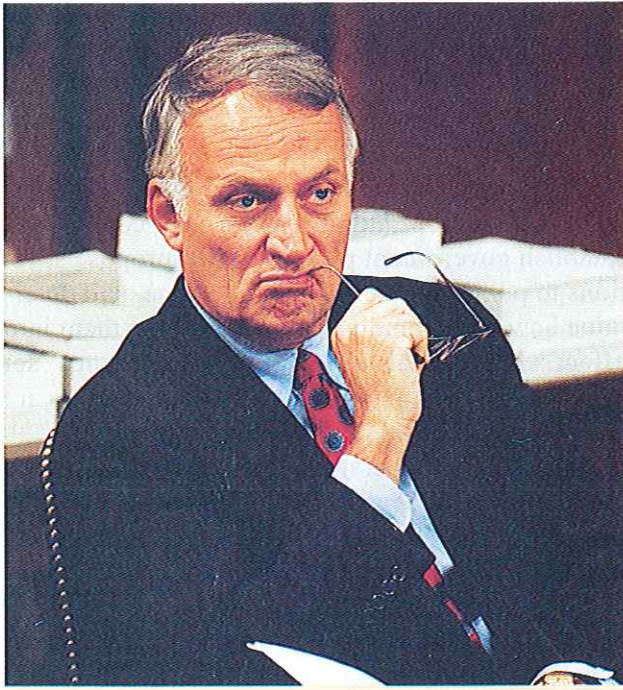
Unlike the Speaker of the House, the vice president's only substantial role in Congress is to break tie votes. In the absence of the vice president, the **president pro tempore** is the formal head of the Senate. The president *pro tempore* is the person in the majority party who has been in the Senate the longest.

The general organization of the Senate parallels that of the House—and the leaders of both houses are selected in a similar manner. The most powerful Senate leader, however, is the majority leader. He or she is the main strategist for the majority party and serves as the party's chief spokesperson.

Rules of Conduct

The Constitution gives Congress the power to judge its members' qualifications. When the House or the Senate questions the constitutional qualifications of a newly elected member, it may refuse to seat the member unless its concerns are resolved. Such challenges are rarely made and may be reviewed by the Supreme Court.

Both houses also have the right to judge their members' behavior. The House and the Senate have each set strict rules of conduct for their members, including in financial matters. For example, members may not use campaign contributions for personal expenses. In addition, they must disclose their financial holdings. This helps



POLITICAL PROCESSES Former senator David Durenberger listens to the proceedings during a Senate Ethics Committee hearing investigating charges that he improperly reported his personal finances. What types of punishment may congressmembers receive for violating rules of conduct?

prevent or uncover any conflicts of interest between members' potential financial gain and the legislation they consider.

Either house may vote by a simple majority to discipline one of its members because of poor


conduct. Such discipline might be in the form of a reprimand—or scolding—or it might be a stronger disciplinary measure called a **censure**.

In January 1997 the House officially reprimanded Speaker Newt Gingrich—the first formal punishment the House had ever imposed on a Speaker. Gingrich was charged with bringing discredit upon the House after it was discovered that he had used tax-exempt donations for political purposes and then submitted false information about his actions to the House Ethics Committee that was investigating him. The report submitted by the investigative subcommittee did not conclude whether Gingrich's actions were “intentional” or merely “reckless,” but it did say that Gingrich had failed to seek adequate legal advice regarding the donations. In addition to the reprimand, the committee fined Gingrich \$300,000. The penalty was approved by a 395-to-28 vote.

For more serious or criminal conduct, the House or the Senate may vote to expel a member. **Expulsion** requires a two-thirds vote and formally removes a member from office. Only 4 representatives and 15 senators have been expelled in the history of Congress. Of the 15 senators, 14 were expelled during the Civil War for supporting the southern states' secession. Other members, however, have resigned under threat of expulsion. Senator Bob Packwood, for example, resigned in 1995 after lengthy hearings on charges that he had engaged in sexual and official misconduct while in office.

SECTION 1

REVIEW

1. Define the following terms: quorum, term limits, incumbent, majority party, minority party, Speaker, floor leader, party whip, president *pro tempore*, censure, expulsion.
2. When are members of Congress elected, and when do they take office? How long do their terms last?
3. Name the leadership positions in the House and in the Senate. What is the role of each? Why is leadership in the House stronger than in the Senate?
4. How does Congress oversee its members' conduct?
5. **Thinking and Writing Critically**  Do you support term limits for members of Congress, or do you believe that they should be able to serve an unlimited number of terms? Why?
6. **Applying** **PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY** As you have learned, congressional leadership is determined by party. Draw up a list of what you think are the pros and cons of this arrangement.

SECTION 2

THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM

Political Dictionary



bill
appropriations
standing committee
subcommittee
select committee
joint committee
conference committee
seniority system

Objectives

- ★ What kinds of committees are there in Congress?
- ★ How are committee assignments made?
- ★ What kinds of staff help congressmembers and committees perform their work?

As you can imagine, Congress faces a huge and complex task in making the nation's laws. No member of Congress could possibly examine all proposed legislation in detail. Thus, congressional committees were formed to allow legislation to be examined by smaller bodies that are more expert in the subject than the House or the Senate as a whole. In this way, Congress can give more in-depth consideration to proposed legislation.

Each congressional committee deals with a specific area of public policy, such as defense, education, or health. Committees pore over **bills**, or proposed legislation, before they are submitted to the House or the Senate as a whole. Committees also oversee the performance of the executive branch agencies in their policy area.

Committees have existed since the first Congress. In the beginning, however, members resisted giving much power to committees. They feared that committees might develop into powerful groups that could force legislation through the rest of Congress. By the 1820s, however,

committees began to play a role similar to the one they have today.

Types of Committees

There are two basic types of committees: authorizing and appropriations. Authorizing committees establish government policies. They propose solutions to public problems, such as crime, and determine how much funding is needed to put them into effect. The actual **appropriations**—funds set aside for specific purposes—for these solutions are made by appropriations committees.

Each house has many authorizing committees but only one appropriations committee. No authorized government program can become law unless it receives funding from the appropriations committee.

Comparing

Governments

British Parliament

Britain, like the United States, has a bicameral legislature, though the structure of the British Parliament is very different from that of Congress. Parliament is made up of both a lower house—the House of Commons—and an upper house—the House of Lords. The monarch holds the largely ceremonial position of chief of state. The king or queen does, however, have the power to reject legislation passed by the houses of Parliament, although no monarch has exercised this power since the early 1700s.

The 651 members of the House of Commons are elected by the people. The House of Commons is considered the primary governing body of Britain because nearly all legislation is made in this house. In addition, the House of Commons has the power to pass bills into law without the approval of the House of Lords, most of whose more than 1,200 members inherit their seats. Although the House of Lords has no veto power, it may suggest revisions to bills passed by the House of Commons.

Congressional Standing Committees

HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEES	SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Appropriations • Banking and Financial Services • Budget • Commerce • Economic and Educational Opportunities • Government Reform and Oversight • House Oversight • International Relations • Judiciary • National Security • Resources • Rules • Science • Small Business • Standards of Official Conduct • Transportation and Infrastructure • Veterans' Affairs • Ways and Means 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry • Appropriations • Armed Services • Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs • Budget • Commerce, Science, and Transportation • Energy and Natural Resources • Environment and Public Works • Finance • Foreign Relations • Governmental Affairs • Indian Affairs • Judiciary • Labor and Human Resources • Rules and Administration • Small Business • Veterans' Affairs

The chart above includes a list of House and Senate standing committees.
 Why do you think that the House and Senate have many similar committees?

Congressional committees can also be divided into five other categories. These are standing committees, subcommittees, select committees, joint committees, and conference committees.

Standing Committees The permanent committees in each house of Congress are called **standing committees**. There are currently 19 standing committees in the House and 17 in the Senate. (See the chart above.) Standing committees deal with broad areas of legislation, such as trade, foreign policy, or finance.

Subcommittees Standing committees are further divided into smaller, more specialized bodies called **subcommittees**. There are about 175 subcommittees in Congress.

Traditionally, the chairs of the standing committees were able to dominate the subcommittees by appointing the subcommittee chairs. This changed, however, with reforms in the 1970s. These reforms allowed more less-experienced members to head subcommittees, which gave these members more power in the committees themselves. In addition, many new subcommittees were formed in the House. Soon, more than 50 percent of the House majority members were

chairing subcommittees. In the Senate, more than 80 percent chaired subcommittees.

Select Committees Committees created to deal with special issues not covered by standing committees are known as **select committees**. These committees usually focus on investigations rather than legislation and usually are temporary. A famous select committee in the Senate investigated the Watergate case in the 1970s.

Joint Committees Committees made up of members from both the House and the Senate are called **joint committees**. These committees deal with matters that are best handled by the two houses working together. Some joint committees, such as the Joint Economic Committee, study and advise Congress in key policy areas. This is more efficient than having two committees—one in the House and one in the Senate—study broad policy issues.

Conference Committees Members of both houses of Congress also meet together in **conference committees**—temporary bodies appointed to work out a compromise between House and Senate versions of a bill passed by both houses. Conference committees are explained more fully in Section 3.

Careers in Government



Congressional Staffer

Have you ever wanted to work on Capitol Hill? The opportunity to work with lawmakers and to influence public policy attracts armies of young people seeking congressional staff jobs.

Congressional staffers generally are young, with most of them using the position as a stepping-stone to another career. Some go on to work for interest groups and government agencies. Some even run for office, occasionally winning the seat of their retiring boss.

One route to staff jobs is through summer internships. Each summer, thousands of young people take these apprentice positions, often for little or no pay. Most congressmembers hire interns only from their state or district, and most interns are college undergraduates. Students typically find summer internships with the help of a college placement office, through personal connections with the member, or through persistent letter writing.

Internship jobs usually involve clerical work, such as sorting mail, running errands, and filing papers. Interns, however, also experience the atmosphere of Congress, learn its procedures, and make contacts with staffers who can help them secure permanent jobs later.



Here, an intern works in the office of Representative Henry Bonilla. An internship can provide valuable experience for later jobs.

Competition for entry-level staff jobs is fierce. Many job-seekers move to Washington, D.C., and support themselves by working odd jobs. They submit hundreds of resumés, often going door-to-door looking for openings. Frequently, members of Congress will reward people who worked actively on their campaigns by giving them staff positions. Most people who land entry-level jobs have enthusiasm, a high energy level, good communications skills, and related job experience.

Committee Assignments

By dividing its labor into committees, Congress is better able to examine important issues and make effective decisions. At the same time, committee assignments give members a visible role for which they can claim credit in their district or state. For these reasons, committee assignments are critical to members of Congress.

Committee Chairs Given the importance of committees, committee chairs hold a great deal of power. They always belong to the majority party and traditionally were selected using the **seniority system**, or by the length of time they served on the committee in question. Today, although chairs are

not always the most senior member, seniority still plays an important role in chair assignments.

There is a case to be made for the seniority principle. Members who serve on the same committee for a long time can gain great skill in dealing with specific policy areas. The seniority principle also gives chairs considerable independence because they do not have to rely on the party leadership or on other members to keep their jobs.

As a result of the seniority system, by the 1960s some longtime congressmembers had chaired the same committees for more than 10 years. This locked out many younger members of Congress from powerful committee chair positions. Critics of the system believed that it prevented the introduction of new leadership and new ideas.



POLITICAL PROCESSES *Senator Orrin Hatch (right), chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, speaks with Governor Michael Leavitt of Utah. What role does seniority play in the selection of committee chairs?*

In response, Congress in the 1970s changed the way committee chairs are selected. Today they are elected by members of the majority party. Although the most senior members still are most often elected, some younger members with fewer years of service have been made chairpersons.

In 1995 members of the 104th Congress changed the committee structure further. The Republican majority in the House cut overall committee staff by one third, limited the number of terms a person could serve as a committee chair, and eliminated three standing committees. These changes were part of a larger effort to reduce the size of government.

Committee Membership The most critical factor in determining committee membership is the members' own wishes. A member is most likely to join a committee on which he or she has asked to serve. Members ask to serve on particular committees for various reasons. Some seek special benefits for their districts or states. Members can accomplish this by influencing policy in areas important to their constituents; forest policy, for example, might be highly important to people in a logging district. A member also can help constituents by obtaining government money for projects in their locality. As one committee member said, "As far as I can see, there is really only one basic reason to be on [this] committee. . . . Most of all, I want to be able to bring home projects to my district."

Other members seek committee assignments to influence broad public policy issues of national concern, even though such assignments often give the member no particular advantages with constituents. For example, a representative might seek an appointment on the International Relations Committee even though the committee's work does not relate directly to his or her district.

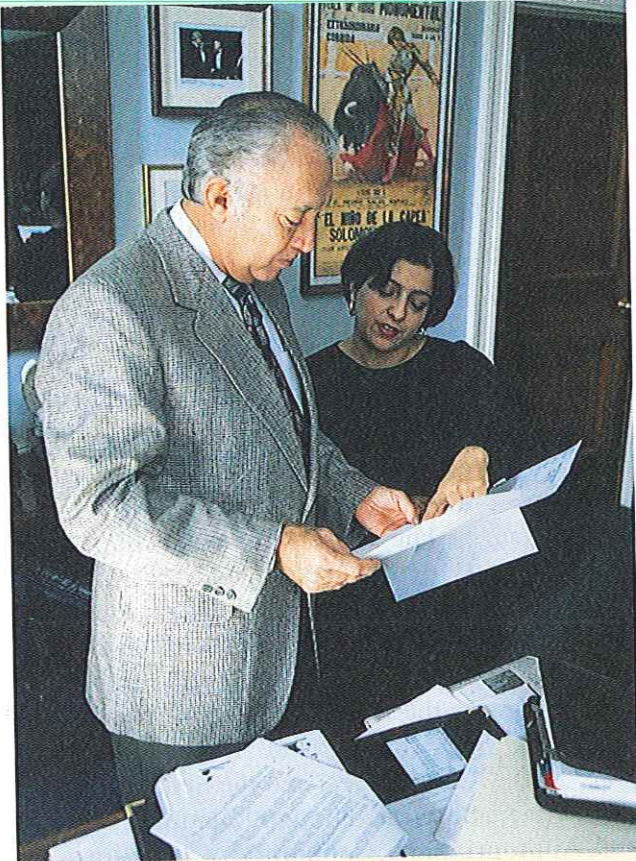
The more powerful committees typically receive more applications than there are seats available. As a result, members often have to "run" for seats on committees such as the House's Appropriations, Budget, Rules, and Ways and Means Committees, and the Senate's Armed Services, Foreign Relations, Finance, and Appropriations Committees. Selections are based on the political needs of the member, how long the member has been in Congress, his or her loyalty to the party leadership, and whether or not the member's state already has representatives on the committee.

Once members have been named to a committee, they may stay as long as they wish (except for appointees to the House Budget Committee, which limits membership to six years). Many members remain on a committee to increase their seniority. The member with the most seniority often becomes the committee chair and holds great influence in directing the committee's work.

Congressional Resources

Performing all the work of Congress requires extensive resources. For this reason, congressmembers and committees have large staffs to assist them. In addition, congressional agencies conduct valuable research that helps members of Congress and their staffs do their jobs.

Personal Staff For the first 100 years of Congress, only committee chairs had staffs. The other members' offices were simply their desks on the House and Senate floors. By 1827 the House was hiring young boys as "pages," or messengers. Pages often were orphans or the children of members' friends. Members had started hiring personal staff by the 1890s.



CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT Representative Solomon Ortiz discusses legislative issues with a member of his staff. In what ways do congressional staff members help Congress fulfill its responsibilities?

Today the number of congressional staffers is in the thousands. These people work directly for the members and play a key role in their work. They suggest policies to members, draft bills, and negotiate with other staff about the language of proposed legislation. Before committee hearings, they write questions for members to ask witnesses.

Stories abound of staffers who are powerful players in making public policy. Members have even complained at times about the power of their own staffers. "Senators, I fear, are becoming annoying constitutional impediments [stumbling blocks] to the staff," a senator once said. "Someday we may just allow the staff to vote and skip the middle man."


These concerns should be kept in perspective, however. Staffers make many suggestions, but they seldom act against the wishes of their employer.

Committee Staff Committee members have staff as well. These people formally work for, and are on the payroll of, the committee. However, each member of a committee typically hires one or more committee staffers who work primarily for him or her, so they actually function much like personal staff. Because they deal with a single policy area, though, committee staffers tend to know more about the issues they work on than do personal staff.

Congressional Agencies In addition to congressional staffs, there are several agencies that help Congress carry out its work. The Library of Congress provides research facilities, and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) helps deal with the enormous budget process each year. In addition, the General Accounting Office (GAO) watches over the spending of funds appropriated by Congress, and the Government Printing Office (GPO) prints thousands of publications that provide members and the public with information on the U.S. government.

SECTION 2

REVIEW

1. Define the following terms: bill, appropriations, standing committee, subcommittee, select committee, joint committee, conference committee, seniority system.
2. What is an authorizing committee? an appropriations committee? How many appropriations committees are there in Congress?
3. How are committee assignments made? Why do members of Congress seek particular committee assignments?
4. Name the kinds of congressional resources. How do they help the legislative process?
5. **Thinking and Writing Critically**  Does the seniority system benefit or hurt the legislative process? Explain your answer.
6. **Applying POLITICAL PROCESSES** Why is it important that members of Congress have many resources to help them do their jobs? What might happen if they had only one or two staff members to aid them?

SECTION 3

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

Political Dictionary



filibuster
cloture
roll-call vote
pocket veto
line-item veto

Objectives

- ★ How are bills referred to a committee?
- ★ What is the purpose of committee hearings and markup sessions?
- ★ What happens to a bill when it reaches the full House or Senate floor?
- ★ What courses of action can the president take on a bill passed by Congress?

The Constitution states that each house of Congress may set its own procedures. Thus, the House and the Senate set the specific rules for considering legislation, except for the procedures dealing with presidential vetoes, which are established in the Constitution.

The legislative process developed by the House and the Senate is slow and includes many steps. This careful process ensures that legislation is thoroughly considered before being passed or rejected. It also means that only a very small percentage of the bills introduced are passed. For example, only 610 of the 10,513 bills introduced in the 102nd Congress were passed into law.

Although citizens, interest groups, the president, and others may suggest ideas for a bill, only members of Congress may introduce legislation. A bill may be introduced first in the House or in the Senate, except for tax bills, which must begin in the House. By custom, appropriations bills also begin in the House. After being introduced, a bill generally goes through six main steps before becoming a law:

- ★ referral to committee,
- ★ hearings,
- ★ markup,
- ★ floor consideration,
- ★ conference committee, and
- ★ presidential action.

Referral to Committee

In most cases a bill that is introduced in Congress is referred to a committee, which may send it to a subcommittee for consideration. Committee consideration is crucial. A bill rarely reaches the full House or Senate floor without committee approval.

In the House, referral decisions are made by the Speaker, and in the Senate by the presiding officer. Most referrals are routine. In the Senate, for example, a bill about price supports for peanuts goes to the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, and a bill about weapons development goes to the Armed Services Committee.

In cases where the referral is not so straightforward, however, the referral power gives the

105TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1253

To authorize appropriations for the Department of State and related agencies for the fiscal years 1998 and 1999, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 9, 1997

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey introduced the following bill, which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

A BILL

To authorize appropriations for the Department of State and related agencies for the fiscal years 1998 and 1999, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the "Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1998 and 1999".

6 **SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

7 The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.
Sec. 2. Table of contents.
Sec. 3. Definitions.

POLITICAL PROCESSES All House and Senate bills are clearly labeled and numbered to make identification easier. Who is responsible for suggesting bills?



PUBLIC GOOD *Committee hearings usually are open to the public, enabling many journalists and camera crews to attend. Why is it important for the public to have access to information presented in these hearings?*

majority party a powerful tool in controlling legislation. Which committee considers a bill greatly affects its fate because committees often have a consistent position on issues coming before them. For example, it makes a world of difference whether a bill dealing with the control of pesticides is referred to an agricultural or an environmental committee. The agricultural committee will tend to limit such control, while the environmental committee will tend to strengthen it. Drafters of legislation often write a bill in a way that encourages a referral to the committee most likely to favor its passage.

Hearings

Many bills have committee or subcommittee hearings, which usually are open to the public. Journalists, television camera crews, interest group representatives, and tourists crowd into hearings. Not all committee members attend, however. With busy schedules and hearing times that often conflict, all members of a subcommittee are seldom present at any but the most important hearings. Staffers often sit in for those who are absent.

Supporters and opponents of a bill testify at its hearing. Typically, testimony comes from the bill's sponsors and from federal and public officials.

Representatives of interest groups also testify. Many times, ordinary citizens who are affected by the problem the bill addresses—for example, competition from foreign products—have testified. Celebrities also have appeared. In 1994, for example, two members of the band Pearl Jam testified during a House hearing on accusations that Ticketmaster charged customers too much for concert tickets.

Committee chairs often use hearings and the accompanying media coverage to build support for, or increase opposition to, a bill. Chairs also have some freedom in deciding who testifies and in what order. Again, this freedom enables chairs to affect how committee members, the media, and the public view the bill.

Markup

In the Senate, after a subcommittee approves a bill, the exact phrasing is decided line by line at the full committee level. This process is called markup. In the House, markup typically takes place at both the subcommittee and full committee levels.

In markup sessions, crucial decisions are made about what specific features a bill will have. For example, for coal miners to qualify for government benefits, how much proof must there be that their lung disease was caused by mining? Should

Citizenship in

Action

Teens Testify Before Congress

Members of the public are asked to testify in front of Congress on a regular basis. These witnesses often are experts on a particular issue before a congressional committee. Sometimes, however, young people who have taken a stand on policies that affected them are asked to present a point of view or personal story in a congressional hearing.

In 1995, for example, 17-year-old high school student Melanie Moyer wrote Representative Tom Bevill of Alabama a letter regarding her concerns about funding for the arts. As a regular performer in community theater, Melanie opposed the government's proposed funding cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). In her letter she asked Representative Bevill to support the NEA and requested the chance to share the impact that theater had on her life. She asked for the opportunity to talk to members of Congress and



Some young people are asked to testify before congressional committees to share their view on issues that have affected their lives.

promised to be on the next plane to Washington if given the chance.

Representative Bevill accepted Melanie's offer. In March 1996, Melanie traveled to Washington, D.C., to testify before a House Appropriations subcommittee. Calling it a privilege to appear before Congress, Melanie shared with the committee the letter-writing campaign she had launched on behalf of the NEA and the supportive letters she had received in return.

Melanie Moyer is just one of many young people who have shared their views with Congress. In 1995, for example, several young people from across the country were invited to Washington to testify before the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution. At issue was the proposed Religious Equality Amendment, which would have allowed organized prayer in public schools.

One of the speakers was Jason Nauman, who had been a high school senior and student council president in 1993 when he went up against his county's school board over whether a prayer or references to religion could be included in his graduation speech. During the hearing two years later, Jason related his experience to Congress and voiced his support for the amendment. Also testifying was 13-year-old Amber Johnston-Loehner, who talked about her experiences when she sought to distribute religious material to her fifth-grade classmates in 1992.

Not everyone receives the opportunity to share his or her views with Congress. Those who do, however, often hold deep convictions and are not afraid to voice them to those in power. By sharing their views, these citizens can help formulate change in both their communities and the United States as a whole. Of course, anyone, young or old, can participate in the political process, such as by writing a letter to a congressperson on issues of concern.

What Do You Think?

1. Why are young people sometimes asked to testify before a congressional committee?
2. How did Melanie Moyer express her concern over proposed funding cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts?

employers who hire illegal immigrants be jailed or only fined? Markup is time-consuming, precise work that involves mountains of details.

Traditionally, markup sessions were held in secret. Since the 1970s, however, most have been open, though not televised. Some people suggest that the openness has increased the influence of interest groups because they can closely observe a committee's actions and possibly pressure its members. Still, markup sessions are the most likely place in Congress for genuine debate rather than speech-making and posturing for the media.

After markup, a bill must be approved by the full committee before it can move to the House or Senate floor. A bill that fails to be approved dies in committee, and no further action is taken. If a bill is approved, however, committee staff members write a committee report. This report explains the changes that the bill would bring about and presents major arguments on the bill's behalf. The report helps members who are not on the committee to make their voting decisions.

Floor Consideration

For both the House and the Senate, there are standard operating rules that guide procedures for the passage of a bill. Some rules set procedures for voting, admission to the floor, and how business is conducted. In addition, before reaching the House or Senate floor for consideration and voting, most major bills are given strict, specific floor rules that limit floor debate and the changes that can be made to a bill. Strict floor rules thus increase the influence of committees because their work cannot be changed much by the full House or Senate. In contrast, the less strict the floor rules are, the more likely it is that a committee's bill will be changed by the full House or Senate.

Floor Rules in the House The House Rules Committee devises the set of rules that determines the conditions for debate and amendment of a House bill. Although rules can vary a great deal from bill to bill, there are traditionally three main types of rules—open, closed, and modified. An open rule allows representatives

to propose any amendments that relate to the subject of the bill at hand. A closed rule prohibits amendments altogether. A modified rule determines that some parts of the bill may be amended, but not others.

House rules are not easily changed because of tight control by the House leadership. In some cases, however, the Rules Committee may allow what is called a waiver, or an abandoning, of point of order. This waiver allows a technical violation of House standard operating procedures—such as those for voting, orders of business, and duties of officers—so that the bill will make it to the House floor more quickly.

Although the Rules Committee acts on most bills, some actually bypass the rules process altogether. For example, some minor bills go to the floor on a set day and pass with little debate. In addition, bills that are considered noncontroversial may proceed under a suspension-of-the-rules procedure, which is set by the Speaker and dictates that only 40 minutes of debate will be allowed, no amendments will be heard, and a two-thirds vote is required for passage. The Speaker may enact this procedure only if the bill calls for expenditures of less than \$100 million. Yet other bills—known as “privileged” bills—may be sent to the floor at any time and do not go through the Rules Committee. These generally are major bills such as budget or appropriations bills.



POLITICAL PROCESSES This photo shows the electronic tally of floor votes in the House as broadcast on C-Span. How do committee reports help members of Congress make their voting decisions?



POLITICAL PROCESSES This 1965 photo shows Senate leader Everett Dirksen as he prepares materials to read in a filibuster against a bill to strike down right-to-work laws. How can a senator use a filibuster to block legislation?

Floor Rules in the Senate The Senate does not follow a strict set of rules, as in the House. Standard Senate floor rules, for example, place no limit on how much time may be spent debating a bill nor on the number and kind of amendments that may be offered.

The Senate's standard rules, however, often are set aside if the members of the Senate unanimously agree to do so. A unanimous consent agreement can change many procedures—for example, it can set the length of time a bill can be debated and determine whether amendments can be submitted, and if so, how many. Thus, if one senator objects to the Senate's standard debate rules, he or she can ask that a special rule be set for the bill.

The requirement for unanimous consent on changing a bill's particular debate rules gives senators a great deal of power. By withholding consent to the debate rule of a bill he or she dislikes, any member can tie the Senate in knots. In effect, every senator has veto power over the rules of each bill that comes to the floor. As one former representative observed, "If you just want to be unpleasant and have a temper tantrum . . . , you can have a field day in the Senate. You can break all the toys in the sandbox if that's what you want in order to get your way and you can pout with very great effect." Senate leadership must often negotiate to achieve a unanimous consent agreement.

Filibusters Sometimes it is impossible to negotiate a unanimous consent agreement. In such cases a bill may fall prey to a notorious congressional procedure known as a **filibuster**—an effort by one or more senators to hold up the final vote on a bill through delaying tactics. These tactics range from nonstop speechmaking to the offering of endless amendments. The Senate may sit for hours during a filibuster. A filibuster allows an intense minority to block the actions of the majority.

Over the years the Senate has moved to limit filibusters. In 1917 the Senate adopted a rule allowing a two-thirds, or 67-vote, majority to call for **cloture**, which stops a filibuster by setting a time limit on debate. This majority was lowered to three fifths, or 60 votes, in 1975.

Voting After all floor debate, congressmembers vote on the bill and any amendments made to it. Critical bills usually receive a **roll-call vote**, in which each member is called on individually to declare his or her vote.

Conference Committees

A bill that has been passed in one house is then sent to the other house for consideration. In most cases, a similar or identical bill is already being considered in the other house. The other house may pass a somewhat different bill. House and Senate versions of a bill may then be sent to a joint conference committee. As noted in Section 2, conference committees consist of both House and Senate members, who almost always come from the committees that drafted the initial versions of the bill.

Because conference committee members usually are chosen from among supporters of the bill, they have strong reasons to compromise rather than letting the bill die in conference. In addition, the bills that are sent to conference committees generally are some of the most important or controversial pieces of legislation. After differences are resolved, the committee prepares a conference report. It is rare for the House or the Senate to reject a conference committee's recommendation.

Presidential Action

A bill that has been passed by both houses is sent to the president, who may do one of four things:

- ★ sign the bill, which makes it law;
- ★ veto the bill;
- ★ keep the bill for 10 days without signing it. If Congress is in session during this time, the bill becomes law without the president's signature. This option is rarely used and is reserved for bills that the president dislikes but not enough to veto; or
- ★ **pocket veto** the bill. If the president receives a bill within 10 days of Congress's adjournment, he or she may hold the bill without signing it, and the bill does not become a law.

Vetoes are relatively rare. While Congress can pass a bill over a presidential veto, it is difficult to obtain the required two-thirds vote in both houses. Therefore, to ensure a bill's approval, Congress often works to answer presidential concerns about a bill before it is sent to the White House.




POLITICAL PROCESSES The summary voting board is part of the electronic voting system used in the House of Representatives. How has technology such as the electronic voting system helped Congress speed up the voting process?

In 1996 Congress passed, and the president approved, a bill establishing a **line-item veto**, which gives the president the additional authority to veto certain parts of a spending bill without vetoing the entire measure. Several congressmembers filed a lawsuit against the bill, saying it was unconstitutional. In June 1997 the Supreme Court ruled that the lawmakers did not have the right to file a lawsuit because the president had not yet exercised the power. The line-item veto thus remained in question.

SECTION 3

REVIEW

1. Define the following terms: filibuster, cloture, roll-call vote, pocket veto, line-item veto.
2. How are bills assigned to a committee? How can referring a bill to a particular committee instead of another affect its fate?
3. What happens during committee hearings? Why do committees need markup sessions, and what occurs during them?
4. How are floor debate rules established in the House and in the Senate?
5. What can the president do with a bill after receiving it?
6. **Thinking and Writing Critically**  What are the advantages and disadvantages of having committee hearings open to the public?
7. **Applying POLITICAL PROCESSES** As noted in this section, Congress follows particular steps in considering legislation. Why might it be important that Congress follow these steps each time a bill is introduced?

SECTION 4

CONGRESS AND THE PUBLIC GOOD

Political Dictionary

pork-barrel spending



Objectives

- ★ Do special interests obstruct Congress in promoting the public good?
- ★ What is the main criticism of the committee system, and how does it affect the public good?
- ★ What role does Congress play in promoting the public good?

There is no doubt that Congress affects the well-being of the citizens it serves. The question is whether that effect is good or bad. Criticisms of Congress arose even before the 1st Congress met. One newspaper stated almost 100 years ago that “if God had made Congress, He would not boast of it.” Are such criticisms justified? Or do Congress and its members work for the public good?

Influence of Special Interests

One major criticism of Congress is that it promotes special interests at the expense of the public good. In other words, congressmembers give too much weight to the narrow concerns of interest groups and of their home districts or states.

Interest Groups Critics charge that interest groups use campaign donations and other tactics to control members of Congress. As noted in Chapter 5, there is some connection between interest group support and congressmembers’ voting behavior. However, this connection often stems from the fact that interest groups contribute to the campaigns of members who already share the groups’ views. (The connection between

interest groups and members of Congress is explained more fully in Chapter 17.)

In fact, members often vote *against* the views of interest groups that support them. They do so because they are influenced more by their own beliefs, their constituents’ views, and the position of their political party than they are by interest groups.

Home Districts Congress also has been criticized for the role that constituents’ interests play in the lawmaking process. By representing their constituents, members of Congress give U.S. citizens a voice in government. Sometimes, however, members represent their constituents’ interests by acquiring funds for unnecessary projects. This **pork-barrel spending** awards projects and grants, or “pork,” from the government “barrel” to a member’s home district or state. Projects include the construction of government buildings, roads, bridges, and other transportation projects. While these projects might be helpful to the community that receives them, they often are not the best use of taxpayers’ money.



PUBLIC GOOD Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina meets with young people on the steps of the Capitol. Why is it important for Congress to listen to the concerns of the public?

Opinions about what constitutes pork differ, however. It has been said that one person's "pork is another's good investment." For example, are there any government construction projects, such as a new highway, under way where you live? Does this seem like pork-barrel spending to you, or is it a good investment in the growth of business and jobs in your community? This may be a difficult question to answer because the response often varies depending on whom one asks.

Nonetheless, because many members work hard to bring federal money to their district or state, it is easy to find examples of what most observers would view as pork. For example, the following might qualify by most people's standards:

- ★ \$500,000 to renovate the boyhood farm of Lawrence Welk, a television orchestra leader, so it could become a tourist attraction in Strasburg, North Dakota. The money was part of an agriculture appropriations bill.
- ★ \$320,000 to buy the home of President William McKinley's in-laws in Canton, Ohio (McKinley's own home is no longer standing), for donation to the state of Ohio as a museum.
- ★ \$10 million to build a ramp to Milwaukee's County Stadium parking lot.



PUBLIC GOOD *Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia worked hard to bring the Internal Revenue Service processing center to his state. Why is pork-barrel spending difficult to identify?*

Others might not be so easy to identify. For example, Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, for many years the chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, was particularly aggressive in seeking federal money for his state. As a result, a number of government offices moved to West Virginia, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Identification Center and an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) processing center. This helped bring additional money and jobs to West Virginia.

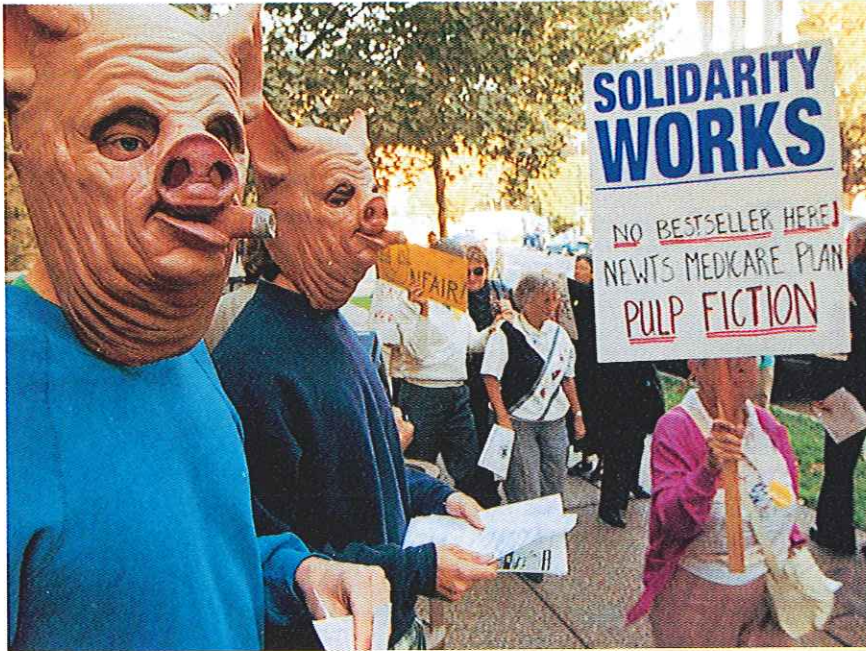
Some people defend pork-barrel spending as an appropriate way to address and represent local concerns. A problem arises, however, because not every district shares equally in such spending. Members of certain committees, such as the House Agriculture Committee and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, bring their constituents a much larger share of pork-barrel spending than is received by people in other areas.

What if all constituents received an equal share of pork-barrel spending? Would this promote the public good? To answer this question, you must understand how legislators pay for pork-barrel spending. Like all government spending, pork-barrel projects are paid for by taxes. Thus, if everyone's local concerns were rewarded with pork-barrel projects, high taxes would result. Pork-barrel spending, whether it is equally or unequally distributed, has a price.

The evidence suggests, however, that the granting of projects to meet district needs, like the granting of interest groups' contributions, is a problem but is not out of control. In fact, pork-barrel spending is a rather small slice of government spending, about 1 percent according to one budget expert's estimate.

Between 1980 and 1991, when measured in constant 1987 dollars, total spending on major programs that included significant elements of pork actually declined. Such spending decreased by 26 percent for water and power projects, by 14 percent for construction grants to state and local government, and by 44 percent for other project grants within government.

In addition, some people say that because many voters have demanded a decrease in pork-barrel spending, legislators are responding. During the 1994 congressional campaign, for example, instead of highlighting the federal projects they had brought home, a greater number of candidates



CITIZENSHIP Concerned citizens in Sacramento, California, rally against pork-barrel spending. Why have some members of Congress campaigned against pork-barrel projects benefiting their state?

openly opposed pork-barrel spending in their campaigns, even for their own districts.

A number of candidates even campaigned against pork-barrel projects benefiting their own districts or states. According to one observer,

“People seem to feel that you’re not doing them any favors by recycling their tax dollars through Washington and bringing home a few pennies.”

In a 1994 race, Greg Ganske, an Iowa Republican, campaigned against several projects the incumbent Democrat had brought to the district. During the campaign, Ganske said that the projects were “like shipping a nice lean Iowa pig to Washington and getting back two thin strips of bacon.”

Power of the Committee System

Another criticism of Congress is that it sets up unrepresentative committees. In other words, critics believe that current congressional committees do not properly represent the concerns of Congress or the country as a whole.

What is the basis of this charge? As you have learned, members often serve on a committee because their constituents have a strong interest in programs in that committee’s policy area. For example, a House member from a rural farming district might seek assignment to the Agriculture Committee. Critics thus charge that most committee members represent a few strong local concerns instead of the interests of the country as a whole. Many people worry that unrepresentative committees often use their powerful influence to push harmful legislation through Congress and to control congressional investigations.

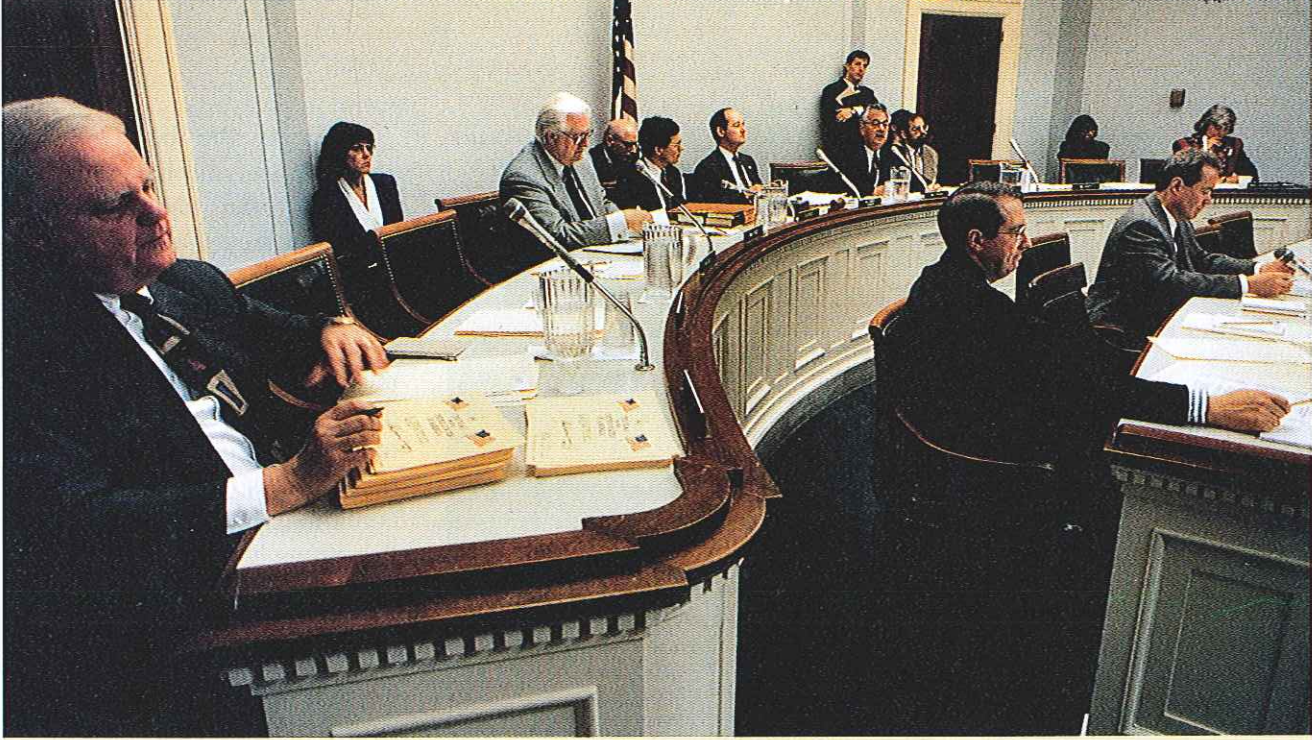
There are, however, several forces that weaken committees’ ability to force narrow, locally oriented policies on

Congress as a whole. First, members with many different viewpoints are assigned to the key committees. As a result, committees are generally not dominated by one viewpoint. In addition, most committee assignments are based more or less proportionally on a party’s representation in Congress. (The majority party controls a slightly larger percentage of committee seats than its percentage of seats in Congress as a whole.) This helps to keep committees representative.

Also, committees’ recommendations are not always followed by the full House or Senate. Committee members know that they can be overruled if they stray too far from what most members and their constituents want. Finally, the opening of committee hearings to the public and to the media makes it more difficult to pass narrow legislation that does not represent the interests of the country or the wishes of a majority of congressmembers.

Voice of the People

When judging Congress’s role in promoting the public good, keep in mind that Congress is only one part of the larger system of the U.S. government. The federal government is also made up of the president, all the government agencies, and the federal courts.



CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT *Members of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution meet to discuss committee business. What types of issues do you think this committee would commonly discuss?*

Indeed, the local concerns represented in Congress are checked and balanced as they should be by the executive and judicial branches. In contrast to Congress, the president and the rest of the executive branch represent the national concerns of the majority of U.S. citizens as a whole. The judicial branch defends the minority's concerns by protecting citizens' constitutional rights.

It would be inefficient and even harmful if all institutions of the national government were as locally oriented as Congress. It is essential, however, to have one branch of government that directly provides a place that represents the local concerns of the people, whether they live in the congressperson's district or are part of an interest group.

SECTION 4


REVIEW

1. Define the following term: pork-barrel spending.
2. Why do some critics believe that interest groups and home districts keep legislators from promoting the public good? Are these criticisms justified? Explain your answer.
3. Are congressional committees unrepresentative of national concerns? Explain your answer.
4. Whom does Congress represent that no other branch of government represents? How does Congress differ from the other branches of government in this way? Why is this representation essential to promoting the public good?

5. Thinking and Writing Critically

Why do you think that some congressional reformers spend much of their time attacking instances of pork-barrel spending even though it accounts for only a tiny percentage of the federal budget? Should members of Congress spend more time passing legislation and performing their other duties rather than opposing pork-barrel projects? Explain your answer.

6. Applying **PUBLIC GOOD**

 Search the Internet for information on this year's federal budget. If 1 percent of this is spent on pork, what would be the total amount of pork-barrel spending?

SECTION 1 Congress has developed a remarkable system for facing the huge task of making the country's laws. It operates under a system of rules that determines how long it is in session, who its leaders are, and how sessions are conducted.

Each congressional term is divided into two 1-year sessions. Each session begins on January 3.

Representatives serve 2-year terms, and senators serve 6-year terms. There are no limits to the number of terms members of Congress may serve, though some people believe that the lack of term limits has led to an unresponsive Congress.

Congressional leadership is organized strictly by party. The party that holds the most seats is called the majority party. The political party with fewer seats is the minority party. Presiding officers and committee chairs always come from the majority party. The most influential person in the House is the Speaker. The presiding officer in the Senate is the vice president of the United States. In the absence of the vice president, the president *pro tempore* is the formal head of the Senate.

SECTION 2 Congressional committees are bodies that deal with a specific area of public policy, such as defense, education, or health. Committees consider proposed legislation before it moves on to the House or the Senate as a whole. Committees also oversee the performance of the executive branch agencies in their policy area.

There are two types of committees: authorizing committees and appropriations committees, and several categories of committees: standing committees, subcommittees, select committees, joint committees, and conference committees. Committee assignments are important to members of Congress because their work on congressional committees gives them a visible role to report to constituents.

To complete the large amount of work they face, members of Congress and committees need many resources. For this reason, members of Congress and their committees have large staffs and also are aided by congressional agencies.

SECTION 3 The Constitution states that each house of Congress may set its own procedures. The legislative process developed by Congress is slow and includes many steps. This process ensures that legislation is carefully considered before being passed or rejected. After a bill is introduced, there are six steps it may go through before being signed into law: referral to committee, hearings, markup, floor consideration, conference committee, and presidential action.

SECTION 4 Some critics charge that Congress serves special interests at the expense of the public good. They believe that congressmembers give too much weight to the narrow concerns of interest groups and of their home districts and states. Others say that Congress allows unrepresentative committees to decide legislation. Though it does suffer somewhat from these problems, Congress provides citizens with an essential voice in the branch of government designed to be particularly responsive to local and special intense concerns.



Government Notebook

Review the process that you outlined in your Government Notebook at the beginning of the chapter. Now that you have studied the chapter, compare that process with the real legislative process in Congress. Is the real process much more complicated than you originally imagined? Write your answer in your Notebook.

REVIEW

REVIEWING CONCEPTS

1. Why is most of Congress's work done through committees? What types of committees are there?
2. What are the rules of conduct for members of Congress, and what official actions may Congress take against a member who breaks them?
3. How are the leaders in each house of Congress selected?
4. How are committee assignments made?
5. How long is a term of Congress? Why do some people support term limits for members of Congress?
6. What major criticisms have been made of Congress?
7. Who assists members of Congress with their work?
8. What are the six steps in the legislative process after a bill is introduced?

THINKING AND WRITING CRITICALLY



1. **PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY** Although they are elected representatives of the people, members of Congress bring their own beliefs and priorities to the job. Should members vote according to their personal beliefs, or according to the wishes of their constituents? Why?
2. **POLITICAL PROCESSES** Does requiring unanimous consent on a bill's rules give individual senators too much power? Explain your answer.
3. **PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY** Leaders of congressional committees always are selected

from the majority party. Does this system give one party too much influence in the legislative process? Explain your answer.

4. **PUBLIC GOOD** Do you agree with the practice of allowing journalists and television camera crews to attend congressional subcommittee hearings? Do you think that media coverage of these hearings promotes the public good?

CITIZENSHIP IN YOUR COMMUNITY



As in Congress, many city and town councils create smaller committees or task forces to study particular issues, such as the need for a new transportation system, convention center, or landfill site. Research one such committee in your community. How are committee members and chairpersons appointed? Might this system of assignment affect the committee's findings? For example, you might consider whether members are selected solely by the mayor or by party affiliation. Write a report of your findings, suggesting any changes that you believe might improve the system.

INDIVIDUAL PORTFOLIO PROJECT



Imagine that you head a citizens' group that has submitted a proposal to your House representative for setting aside part of your district as a national park. Your representative has agreed to submit a bill to that effect. How can you and your fellow citizens influence the bill's progress through Congress? Write a plan of action that your group will follow to help secure the bill's passage at each step of the legislative process. You might wish to include a chart that outlines the steps.

PRACTICING SKILLS: CONDUCTING RESEARCH



Draw a flowchart of a bill's path through Congress from its introduction to presidential action. You may want to review your flowchart skills in the Skills Handbook on page xxv. The chart should be presented in a manner that makes the process easy to trace. You should use arrows to illustrate how the process begins and where it ends.

THE INTERNET: LEARNING ONLINE



Conduct an Internet search for information on the membership of Senate committees and subcommittees. You might start with search words such as *congressional committees*, *standing committees*, *Senate committees*, and *congressional subcommittees*. Create a flyer profiling the committee appointments and leadership positions held by each of your state's senators. Include a short description of each of these committees.

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES



THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

One of the many publications printed by the General Printing Office (GPO) is the *Congressional Record*. The *Record* contains a daily accounting of the business conducted in Congress, including transcripts of members' speeches. Read the excerpt below in which Representative Earl Pomeroy speaks about the importance of balancing the budget and the difficult process of reaching a compromise on the proposed Balanced Budget Amendment. Then answer the questions that follow.

“I rise to support this budget agreement. The agreement before us represents at least procedurally the hardest thing this body ever tries to do, compromise differences, accept less than what each party wants, and tolerate aspects of the agreement each party would not include if it

were simply a matter of writing its own package. Throughout the history of this place, this Chamber is mostly a matter of winner-take-all, the party of the majority passes the bills they want, and that is the end of it. In times of divided government, that often means a Presidential veto and the legislative initiative dies in the partisan standoff. Such was the fate of the balanced budget drive in the last Congress and it very well could have happened to the balanced budget effort this Congress, but the American people deserve better and the President and the leaders of Congress, both House and Senate, both majority and minority, have worked to give them better. This budget agreement accomplishes that difficult task.

Back where I come from and across the country, Americans wanted the parties to work together to iron out the most difficult problems facing this country. They wanted a balanced budget. They have to do it as individual families. Collectively they wanted to do it on behalf of the country. But they also wanted our values reflected. Those values include protecting the health care that our seniors depend upon, committing to a bright educational opportunity for our young people, and the opportunity for people at a midcareer track to go back [to school] and get the skills training they need to compete in the work force today. It means working and middle-income families find it just a little easier to make ends meet.”

1. How does the structure of the legislative branch make compromise difficult? Do you think that changes should be made to the way in which congressional legislation is passed?
2. What often happens to legislation during times when the government is divided? In what way does divided government bring this about?
3. Why do you think both parties in the House were able to reach a compromise on this issue? What values did some House members want included in the bill? Do you think the values that Pomeroy mentions reflect the public good?

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Congressional Staffer for a Day

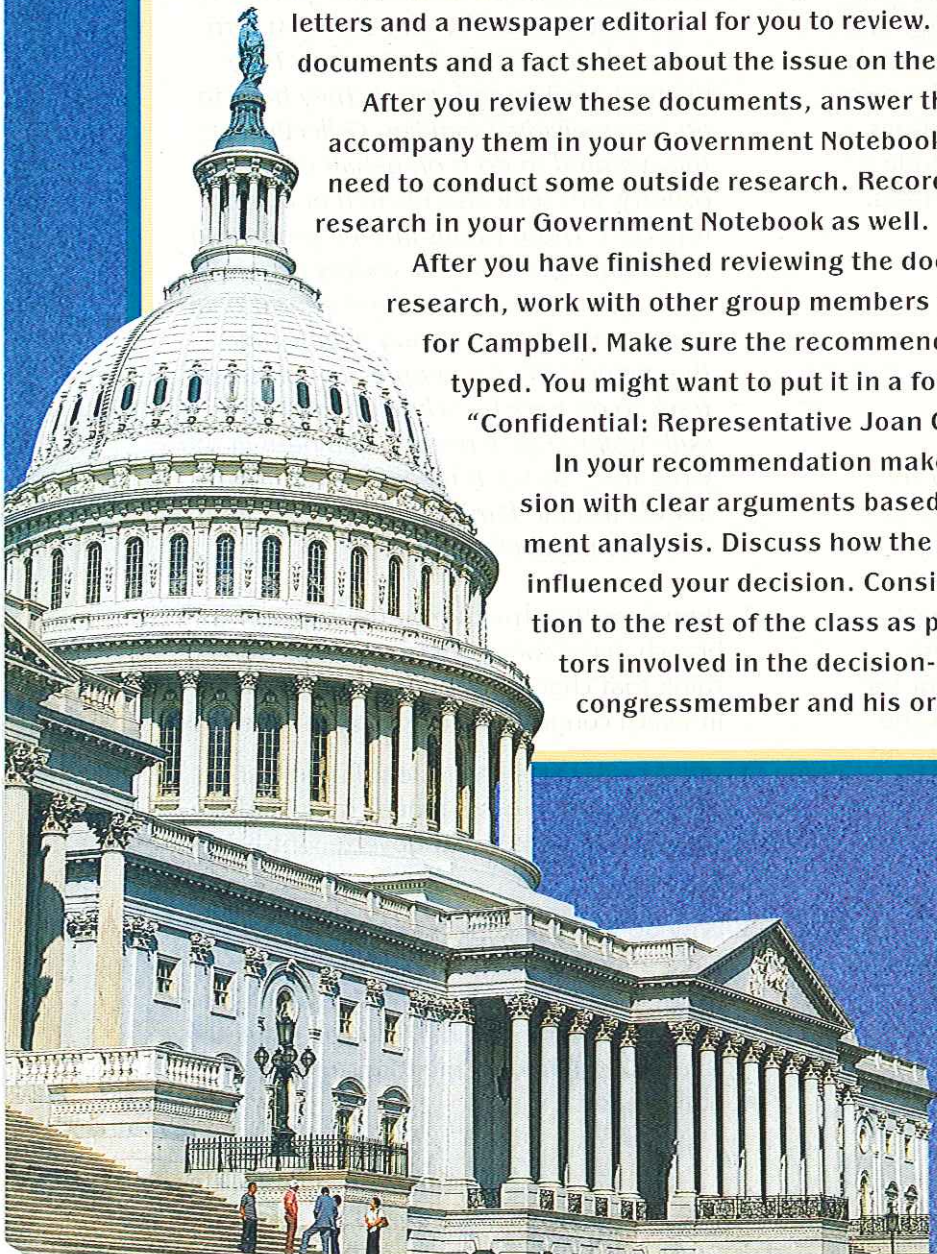
Imagine that you are part of a group of staff members who work in the office of Representative Joan Campbell. The congressman needs your group to develop a recommendation on whether she should support a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would raise the minimum legal voting age to 21.

The issue has created a great deal of controversy, and Campbell has received a number of letters from constituents on the issue. To help you make your recommendation, your boss, the chief of staff, has given your group two of the letters and a newspaper editorial for you to review. You will find these documents and a fact sheet about the issue on the following pages.

After you review these documents, answer the questions that accompany them in your Government Notebook. Your group also will need to conduct some outside research. Record the results of your research in your Government Notebook as well.

After you have finished reviewing the documents and conducting your research, work with other group members to develop a recommendation for Campbell. Make sure the recommendation is written neatly or typed. You might want to put it in a folder or binder labeled “Confidential: Representative Joan Campbell.”

In your recommendation make sure you support your decision with clear arguments based on your research and document analysis. Discuss how the letters and the editorial influenced your decision. Consider reading your recommendation to the rest of the class as part of a discussion on the factors involved in the decision-making process of a congressman and his or her staff.





Office of U.S. Representative
Joan Campbell

STAFF MEMORANDUM

To: Staff Researchers
From: Harold Box, Chief of Staff

HB

Representative Campbell is looking forward to hearing your recommendation on the proposed amendment to raise the minimum legal voting age to 21. Please review the fact sheet that follows. It will provide applicable background information. I also have provided two letters and a newspaper editorial on the issue.

After you read those documents, your group will need to conduct some outside research, with each member uncovering the answer to one of the following questions:

- Has the United States ever repealed an amendment? If so, explain the circumstances.
- How have amendments and other laws to extend voting rights affected voter turnout?
- What attempts have been made to increase voter turnout, particularly among young people?
- How high is voter turnout in other democratic countries? What is the minimum legal voting age in several of them?

Other research questions may cross your mind as you read the letters and the newspaper editorial. Below is a list of some sources you might find useful in doing your research. You might need to find other sources as well.

- library almanacs and encyclopedias
- *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (volumes by years)
- applicable articles listed in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*
- interviews seeking the opinions and experiences of people in the local congressional district

Good luck!



Office of U.S. Representative
Joan Campbell

FACT SHEET

Proposed Amendment to Raise the Minimum Legal Voting Age to 21

- The Twenty-sixth Amendment was ratified in 1971. It lowered the minimum legal voting age from 21 to 18 in all federal, state, and local elections.
- Some observers have said that making people aged 18 to 20 eligible to vote has been one cause for a decline in voter turnout. About 61 percent of eligible voters cast ballots in the 1968 presidential election. Just over 55 percent voted in 1972. Turnout has been even lower since then.
- Surveys have shown that far less than half of people aged 18 to 20 even bother to register to vote. Only 38.5 percent of people in that category said they registered to vote in the 1992 presidential election. In comparison, 61 percent of all eligible voters said they registered.
- The proposed amendment would make anyone under the age of 21 ineligible to vote. Sponsors say the amendment would help ensure that eligible voters are mature enough to take their right to vote seriously.

Representative Joan Campbell

CONFIDENTIAL

PUBLIC POLICY LAB

CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBLE VOTING

1111 Main Street
Chicago, IL 60607

Representative Joan Campbell
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Campbell:

As president of Citizens for Responsible Voting (CRV), I am writing to you in support of the proposed amendment to raise the minimum legal voting age back to 21. The goal of CRV is the development of educated and mature voters. We believe that your support for the amendment will help restore responsibility to the voting booth.

As you are aware, just over half of eligible voters have cast ballots in recent presidential elections. We believe the low level of voter turnout is partly because the minimum legal voting age was lowered to 18 by the Twenty-sixth Amendment.

Many of our young people today are fine, well-educated citizens. On the other hand, too many 18- to 20-year-olds do not take the time to study the election issues and candidates. In addition, many young people have not exercised their right to vote. We believe that this failure reflects a lack of the maturity that is needed to make important decisions about our government.

We believe that raising the minimum legal voting age back to 21 would give young people more time to mature and learn about our election system. When older, they will be better able to research and understand the issues and the stands taken by candidates for public office.

As you will recall, we supported your re-election last year by providing campaign volunteers and donating to your campaign fund. We did those things because of your past support for efforts to promote responsible voting. We hope you will continue to be a strong supporter of our efforts.

Sincerely,

Sheila Goldstone

Sheila Goldstone
President
Citizens for Responsible Voting

◀ WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- ★ What is the goal of CRV?
- ★ What does CRV believe raising the minimum legal voting age would do?
- ★ What have been CRV's connections with Representative Campbell in the past?

Representative Joan Campbell
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Campbell:

I am a senior at Central High School, and I have heard that there is a proposed amendment to the Constitution that would change the minimum legal voting age back to 21. I hope you will vote against this amendment.

I have worked to register eligible voters, and I have volunteered to work on political campaigns. If the law does not change, I will vote when I turn 18.

I think raising the minimum voting age would unfairly penalize me. I know that some people my age do not vote. But no one is proposing that older people be penalized because not everyone older than 20 votes.

I will be old enough to serve my country in the military and will have other responsibilities as an adult when I turn 18. I believe I should also have the right to vote.

Please vote no on the amendment.

Sincerely,

Anthony Washington

Anthony Washington
Central High School
Chicago Ridge, IL 60415

WHAT DO YOU THINK? ▶

- ★ How would the proposed amendment affect Anthony Washington?
- ★ How does Washington demonstrate that he is responsible in his role as a citizen? Does that help his argument that the amendment should be defeated? Explain.
- ★ What other reasons does Washington give to support his argument that the amendment should be defeated?

Congress Should Reject Attempt to Raise Voting Age

Congress is considering an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would repeal the Twenty-sixth Amendment and raise the minimum legal voting age back to 21. The amendment should be defeated because it is the wrong solution to the problems its supporters have identified.

Supporters of the amendment believe a higher minimum legal voting age would increase voter turnout. They also argue that older voters are more likely to have the maturity and sense of responsibility to educate themselves about issues and candidates for public office. Supporters of the amendment are right when they say that low voter turnout among young people is evidence that many do not take their right to vote seriously enough.

Opponents of the proposed amendment point to the Fifteenth and Nineteenth Amendments. Those amendments extended voting rights to former slaves and to

women. Not all African Americans and women vote, but no one proposes repealing those important amendments.

In addition, we believe that taking away the right to vote is no way to teach maturity and responsibility. One way to become mature and responsible is by accepting the challenges that society provides. One of the biggest challenges democracy presents citizens is choosing the best people to serve in government.

Many adults under the age of 21 have accepted the challenge and responsibility of voting. They should not be penalized because others their age have chosen to ignore that same challenge.

A better solution to the problem of low voter turnout would include ways to get more voters, from the age of 18 up, to educate themselves about the issues and candidates and actually go to the polls. We should not instead be proposing laws that would prevent some people from voting. The proposed amendment should not be passed.

▲ WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- ★ What did the Fifteenth and Nineteenth Amendments do? Are the results of these amendments applicable to the debate over raising the voting age?
- ★ What does the editorial writer suggest is a better solution to the problem of low voter turnout?

THINGS TO DO

1. Compare each member of your group's notes and ideas about each of the documents provided by the chief of staff.
2. Gather the research results from individual group members.
3. Discuss whether Representative Campbell should support the proposed amendment.
4. Prepare a formal report with the group's recommendation. Give the reasons for the group's decision.