

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government – Unit 3 Study Guide

Chapter 10: Congress

Key Concepts:

- Review Article I of the Constitution
 - **Details the legislative branch (Congress).**
 - **Placed at beginning of Constitution to emphasize its supremacy as the people's branch of gov't.**
 - **Establishes the qualifications for serving and means by which members are to be elected.**
- Explain the differences between the House of Representatives and the Senate.
 - Qualifications
 - **HOR:**
 1. **25 years' old.**
 2. **Citizen of US for 7 years.**
 3. **Resident of state they wish to represent.**
 - **Senate:**
 1. **30 years old.**
 2. **Citizen of US for 9 years.**
 3. **Resident of state they wish to represent.**
 - Exclusive Powers
 - **HOR:**
 1. **Originate revenue bills by introducing tax legislation.**
 2. **Initiate impeachment cases.**
 - **Senate:**
 1. **Checks the impeachment cases**
 2. **Approve major presidential appointments**
 3. **Ratify treaties**
- Be able to describe some of the historical changes made in Congress since its inception in 1789
 - **The members in the House of Representatives has increased from 65 to 435(in 1929), it grew with the population. Reapportionment began, this set the limit to 435 members, to accommodate the population, every 10 years' congress allows state to redraw their congressional district lines.**
- Describe the process of gerrymandering and its effects on democracy and representation
 - **Gerrymandering is when politicians deliberately draw congressional district lines for electoral advantage.**
 - **Partisan:** state legislators draw district lines to guarantee that a political party will win seats in Congress.
 - **Incumbents:** when state legislators draw district lines in a way that guarantees that the current officeholders will win reelection
 - **Racial:** When state legislators draw district lines in a way that will increase the likelihood of a racial or ethnic minority candidate winning the seat.

- **Ways to fix gerrymandering:**
 1. **Set-up a politically independent commission of appointed experts or judges to draw boundaries.**
 2. **Use a mathematical formula**
 3. **Hire a gerrymander to set up boundary lines to equally represent the population.**
- Discuss Congressional demographics and the types of representation that occur in Congress
 - **19% of women hold seats in national legislature. Other demographic groups are also underrepresented in Congress. African Americans hold around 10% of seats in the House of Representative and just 2 seats in the Senate. Hispanics hold 7% in the House and 3% of the seats in the Senate. In terms of professional background, 40% of representatives and 60% of senators have law degrees The median age in the U.S. is 37 but average ages in the House and Senate are 57 and 61. All in all, the statement that Congress is full of "old Caucasian men" is true.**
- Identify the powers of Congress
 - Discuss Enumerated vs. Implied powers and where they are found.
 - **Implied power: general powers suggested by constitution rather than specifically enumerated with. find in article I.**
 - **Enumerated power: a list of items found in Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution that set forth the authority of Congress. such as borrow money, collect taxes, etc.**
- Be able to explain some of the “checks” on Congressional power and how they are “balanced” between the other branches
 - **Congress can veto bills within the house and the senate. The senate or the house can veto each other's bill. Congress can impeach or override the President. However, the President can veto bills from Congress. President can nominate judges, but judges can decide if presidential acts are unconstitutional. The Court can declare Congress unconstitutional.**
- Be able to discuss the role of political parties in Congress and how they affect the legislative agenda
 - **Development of parties enable congress to mobilize camps in support of or in opposition to legislation. They facilitate legislative productivity. Make the legislative process easier They try to build coalitions of members who share interests and values and will support legislation on the party's agenda. Parties have a sophisticated whip structure that canvasses members on the floor of Congress to gauge the preference of the party rankandfile and negotiate with possible defectors Majority party controls the referral of legislation to congressional committees. A bills survival depends on referral to a favorable committee. The majority party, through the vehicle of the Rules committee, controls the extent to which a bill can be debated on the floor house. A bill can be sabotaged on the house floor if left open to unlimited debate. (Bills not supported by party leadership rarely pass into law) Party leaders also control the legislative process in order to accomplish policy goals. By controlling the committee assignment process, the majority**

party guarantees that each committee panel will protect the party's interest in legislative hearings and markups. The majority party also controls the selection of committee chair, further protecting the party's interest as legislation goes through committees.

- Be able to identify the party leadership and the purpose and functions of their roles in Congress
 - **Vice President:** serves as the president of the chamber. Practically speaking, the vice president rarely presides over the Senate, only voting in the event of a tie
 - **Speaker of the House:** elected by the House, presides over sessions, looks over bills, making the "bill" calendar.
 - **Administrative duties-**presiding over sessions, serving as the chamber spokesperson, and overseeing House offices and legislative
 - **Legislative duties-** influencing committee membership, managing the referral of bills to committee, and scheduling the legislative calendar
 - **Second in line**—after the vice president
 - **Majority leader** is the leader of the majority party in a legislative body, especially the party member who directs the activities of the majority party on the floor of either the Senate or the House of Representatives.
 - **The lead speaker** for the majority party during floor debates.
 - **Develops the calendar.**
 - **Assists the president or speaker with program development and policy formation and policy decisions.**
 - **Minority leader** is the party member who directs the activities of the minority party on the floor of a legislative body, as of the U.S. Congress.
 - **Developing the minority position.**
 - **Negotiating with the majority party.**
 - **Directing minority caucus activities on the chamber floor.**
 - **Leading debate for the minority**
 - **Majority Whip-**
 - **Assist the floor leader**
 - **Ensure member attendance**
 - **Count votes**
 - **Generally, communicate the majority position**
 - **Minority Whips-**
 - **Assist the minority leader on the floor**
 - **Count votes**
 - **Ensure attendance of minority party members**
 - **President Pro Tempore:** Preside over the Senate in the president's absence. Exercise the powers and duties of the president in his or her absence, assume other duties as assigned by the president
- Be able to explain the purpose of committees and why they are important to Congress
 - **Committees are the checks for each bill. Most bills that are introduced into Congress are not passed because of Committees. Each "step" has several**