



# Quiz Explanation

## Wilson - Ch. 9 - Congress

You answered this question correctly.

**Question 1)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "The Evolution of Congress" -- is false?

- A) The Framers expected that Congress would be the dominant branch of the federal government; for most of the pre-Civil War era, it was.

For much of the 143 years between 1789 and 1932, Congress and/or the Supreme Court dominated 25 out of the 30 presidents (Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Wilson were the 5 exceptions).

For most of the 57 years between 1932 and 1989, a series of domestic and foreign crises (the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War) produced 6 new activist presidents (Franklin Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Nixon, and Reagan).

Explanation:

With the end of the Cold War, we saw a more even balance between two presidents (George H.W. Bush and Clinton) and Congress.

However, with the "war on terror" (9/11/2001 - present) and the "great recession" (Dec. 2007 - present) we have seen two more activist presidents (George W. Bush and Obama).

- B) Several times during the 20th century, Congress struggled with conflicts over the distribution of power within the House of Representatives – whether that chamber should have strong central leadership or not.

In the early decades of the 20th century, the House did have two extremely powerful and despotic Speakers – ‘Tsar’ Reed and ‘Boss’ Cannon. However, in 1910 the House membership revolted against Cannon and stripped many powers from the Speaker’s position. A few decades later, two other Speakers, Sam Rayburn and ‘Tip’ O’Neill exercised considerable control over the House – not by regaining autocratic powers, but instead by exercising exceptional leadership skills and powers of personal persuasion. Between 1994 and 1998, Speaker Newt Gingrich acquired and then lost significant official powers. Since then, the House has returned to its traditional view that power should be shared between the Speaker and the chairs of committees and subcommittees.

Explanation:

- C) As party loyalty has become weaker among the voters, it has also become weaker among members of the House of Representatives.

No, although party loyalty has grown weaker in the electorate, members of the House have become more partisan since the 1970s. Party does make a difference – not as much as it did 80 years ago and not nearly as much as it does in a parliamentary system – but party affiliation is still the single best predictor of voting behavior in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Explanation:

- D) A major change in the politics of the U.S. Senate occurred when the Constitution was amended in 1913 to require that U.S. senators be directly elected by the people instead of by state legislatures.

This was a Progressive-Era reform intended to reduce the influence of moneyed interests who often rigged the selection of U.S. senators in state legislatures by offering large bribes to sway votes.

Explanation:

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

**You answered this question correctly.**

**Question 2)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "Who Is in Congress?" -- is false?

- A) The size of the U.S. House membership is fixed by law at 435 and is reapportioned among the states roughly in proportion to the size of their population after each decennial census.

Explanation: NC currently has 13 House seats. Within each state, the districts from which representatives are elected must be approximately equal in population.

- B) During the 19th century, a majority of members typically served only one term; during the 20th century, serving in Congress became a life-long career for many members.

Explanation: Some factors in the change include: the scope of federal authority has greatly increased, the pay for members of Congress has greatly increased, and it became much easier to get to and from Washington.

- C) Incumbents often enjoy enormous advantages over challengers in congressional elections.

Explanation: With the decline of party identification, other factors have become more important in shaping vote choice -- especially the greater name recognition and the publicity for service to constituents that incumbents enjoy. In most congressional elections, over 90% of incumbent representatives are reelected and over 60% of incumbent senators.

- D) Nonetheless, the Republicans were able to capture control of both the House and Senate in the 1994 election.

Explanation: The Republican Party maintained their majorities in both houses of Congress until the 2006 mid-term election.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

**You answered this question correctly.**

**Question 3)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "The Organization of Congress: Parties and Interests" -- is false?

- A) Party leadership carries less power in the House than the Senate.

Explanation: No, the opposite is the case. Being so large (435 members), the House simply must allow party leaders to exercise more control than in the 100-member Senate; otherwise too little legislation would get passed in the House.

- B) The ideological differences between the parties are so pronounced that the average southern Democrat in the House is more liberal than the average northern Republican.

Explanation: These ideological differences between the parties in Congress are becoming more pronounced as conservative southern politicians increasingly abandon the Democratic party and move over to the Republican party.

- C) A congressional caucus is an association of members of Congress created to advocate a political ideology or to advance a regional or economic interest.

Explanation: Congressional caucuses are growing rapidly in numbers; there are now dozens of them.

- D) Congressional caucuses are a growing rival to the Republican and Democratic parties as a source of policy leadership.

Explanation: As party-leadership powers have declined in the House (they were never as strong in the Senate), caucus influence has expanded.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

**You answered this question correctly.**

**Question 4)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "The Organization of Congress: Committees" – is false?

- A) The most important leadership powers in the U.S. House are found in the chairs of committees and subcommittees.

Explanation: The most important decisions – the real "work" – in both chambers of Congress is done in committees and subcommittees. Although House committee chairs have lost some powers since the 1970s, they are still the most important decision makers in the legislative process in that chamber.

- B) The ratio of Republicans to Democrats in the House or Senate determines that proportion of committee chairs that each party holds in that chamber.

Explanation: No, it is a 'winner-take-all' situation. Whichever party wins a majority of seats in the House or the Senate, that party gets to name the chairs of ALL of that chamber's committee chairs. Hence, a congressional election can significantly change the distribution of power in either or both chambers by changing which party gets all committee chairs.

- C) Usually, the ratio of Republicans to Democrats on a committee or subcommittee roughly corresponds to their ratio in the House or Senate.

Explanation: This is a custom, not a written rule, but it is almost always observed.

- D) A small shift in popular votes in the 2014 congressional elections could make a huge difference on Capitol Hill.

Explanation: This is because the two parties are so ideologically divided and because the current Democratic majority is so narrow in the Senate.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

**You answered this question correctly.**

**Question 5)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "The Organization of Congress: Staffs and Specialized Offices" – is false?

- A) The non-elected staff members that assist and work for senators and representatives constitute one of the fastest growing bureaucracies in the federal government.

Explanation: The personal staffs of federal legislators have increased more than fivefold since the end of World War II. There are now approximately 20,000 people working for Congress.

- B) Members of Congress are less likely to deal with one another through staff intermediaries than through personal contact.

Explanation: No, it is just the opposite. Because of the enormous increase in their workload in modern times, members of Congress are MORE likely to deal with one another through staff intermediaries than through personal contact. Consequently, Congress has become less collegial, more individualistic, and less of a deliberative body.

- C) The General Accounting Office (GAO) investigates policies and makes recommendations on almost every aspect of government to Congress.

Explanation: Although the director of the GAO is nominated by the president, the agency is very much a servant of Congress.

- D) The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) advises Congress on the likely impact of different spending programs and attempts to estimate future economic trends.

Explanation: Like the GAO, the CBO is a non-partisan (hence, politically neutral) staff agency for Congress.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

**You answered this question correctly.**

**Question 6)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "How a Bill Becomes a Law" – is false?

- A) Lawmaking procedures in Congress give the advantage to those who support passing legislation rather than those who oppose.

Explanation: No, the complexity of the procedures ordinarily gives many opportunities for opponents to bottle up in committee, add 'poison-pill' amendments, or otherwise defeat legislation.

- B) If a bill is not passed within the two-year term of Congress, it is dead and must be reintroduced during the next Congress.

Each term of Congress lasts for two, one-year sessions. Each term of Congress is consecutively numbered. The Congress that was elected in 2008 and took office in 2009 is the 111th Congress.

Explanation: Wilson is in error when he says that "If a bill is not passed within ONE SESSION of Congress, it is dead ...." What he should have said was that, "If a bill is not passed by the end of the 2ND SESSION of a Congress, then it is dead."

- C) In the U.S. House of Representatives, legislation is almost always considered by one or more committees before it can be brought to the floor of the chamber for a vote to pass it; such committee consideration is easily bypassed in the U.S. Senate.

Explanation: The legislative process is much more decentralized in the House. In the Senate, bills may be considered in any order at any time for any length of time when a majority of the Senate so chooses.

- D) In the U.S. House, the Rules Committee is powerful because it controls the length of floor debate and the admissibility of amendments.

Explanation: Fewer barriers to floor consideration exist in the U.S. Senate; although recent rules changes make it harder to filibuster.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

**You answered this question correctly.**

**Question 7)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "How a Bill Becomes a Law" – is false?

- A) If a House committee does not report a bill out to the floor, the bill usually stalls there and is successfully blocked by its opponents on the committee.

Explanation: In very rare cases, a majority of the House will sign a 'discharge petition' to pull a stalled bill out of committee for a floor vote. Almost always, the House committee gets its way.

- B) In order to pass a bill, a quorum (half the membership) must be present on the floor.

Explanation: Neither House nor Senate rules allow a member to cast their vote from elsewhere or to have someone else vote for them on the floor. They have to be physically present to cast their vote. In very rare cases, on close and crucial votes, an ill or injured member has come in on a stretcher to cast a vote.

- C) In recorded floor votes, a member can vote for ('yea'), against ('nay'), or 'present.'

Explanation: Members sometimes vote 'present,' to avoid taking a stand on controversial legislation but to also go on the record as being present for the vote. The latter is sometimes important to avoid giving future challengers the opportunity to criticize the incumbent for missing too many floor votes.

- D) In both a 'voice' vote and a 'roll-call' vote, the names are recorded of which members voted which way.

Explanation: 'Voice' votes do NOT record how the individual members voted.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

**You answered this question correctly.**

**Question 8)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "How Members of Congress Vote" -- is false?

- A) Legislators are more likely to vote to please constituents when the latter have arrived at a consensus on an issue that is highly salient for most of them.

Explanation: That is why the correlation between congressional roll-call votes and constituency opinion is higher on civil rights and social-welfare issues than on most foreign-policy, gun control, and abortion issues. The latter three issues are less salient to and/or generate less agreement among voters.

- B) When voting on matters on which constituency interest or opinions are not vitally at stake, members of Congress respond primarily to cues provided by their colleagues.

Explanation: These organizational cues come from party leaders, ideological compatriots, and trusted members of the sponsoring committee or your state's delegation.

- C) Senators are more likely than representatives to be in tune with public opinion.

Explanation: It's just the opposite -- since representatives face reelection every 2 years, they are forced to pay closer attention to and more often vote according to the majority sentiment in their district. Since senators face reelection only every 6 years and since (except for the smallest states) senators represent a much larger and more diverse population with less consensus on most issues, they are freer than representatives to pay less attention to their constituent's desires.

- D) Some states are represented by senators with almost diametrically opposed views.

Explanation: Currently, North Carolina is one of those states. Richard Burr (R) is a conservative and Kay Hagan (D) is more liberal.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

**You answered this question correctly.**

**Question 9)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "What It All Means" -- is false?

- A) When the Democrats gained 5 House seats in the 1998 midterm election (but not enough to give them a majority), Speaker Newt Gingrich resigned as Speaker and as a House member.

Gingrich had repeatedly argued that the 1998 midterm elections would be a referendum on Clinton's presidency. When the voters gave the Democratic party 5 additional seats in the House, he conceded that the electorate had rejected his attempts to remove Clinton from office.

Explanation: Gingrich was further distressed that the voters had, for only the second time since 1860, given the president's party a net increase in House seats in a midterm election. The only other prior midterm-election gain for the president's party in the House was in 1934 under FDR.

Like FDR and Clinton, George W. Bush was able to avoid the 'midterm-election curse' in 2002, when the Republicans picked up seats in both the House and the Senate.

Presidents usually expect their party to lose some seats in each midterm election because marginal candidates often ride into office on the president's coattails in a presidential election only to be defeated in the next midterm election.

- B) Compared to any European parliament, representation of interests in the U.S. Congress is more localized.

Explanation: Because our senators and representatives must get themselves nominated by running primaries and then get themselves elected without much help from their party, they spend a lot more time providing services to their constituents than do members of European parliaments.

- C) The power in the U.S. Congress is highly decentralized.

Explanation: Because the real business of the U.S. Congress is done in committees and subcommittees, the process is greatly decentralized. Furthermore, when a complex piece of legislation must be considered, it is often referred to several committees.

- D) Compared to the members in any European parliament, the senators and representatives in the U.S. Congress are much less individualistic.

Explanation: No, it is just the opposite. Because their primary loyalty is to their constituents and they are operating in a highly decentralized system with much less party discipline, members of the U.S. Congress are far more likely than their European counterparts to defect on issues and vote with the opposition party.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

**You answered this question correctly.**

**Question 10)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "Ethics and Congress" -- is false?

- A) Decentralizing governmental power is a sure guarantee that corruption will be eliminated.

Explanation: Not necessarily; when bits and pieces of power are placed in many hands, there are many opportunities to exercise influence, and many officials have something to sell at a price many favor seekers can afford.

- B) No senator or representative may accept a fee or honorarium for giving a speech.

Explanation: There are also strict limits on the monetary value of gifts they can legally accept -- including meals and tickets to sporting or theatrical events.

- C) As it stands, the ethics rules seem to favor people with inherited wealth or those who earned large sums before entering Congress and to penalize people of modest means who might want to take advantage of legitimate opportunities to give speeches for large fees while in Congress.

Explanation: Hence, not only does it take large sums of money to get elected to Congress, but members are limited in how they can supplement their salaries -- inheritances and earnings from stocks and bonds are ok, speaking fees are not ok.

- D) No senator or representative may lobby Congress within one year after leaving Congress.

Explanation: However, they can legally lobby the executive branch departments and agencies immediately after leaving Congress. Hence, there tends to be a very ethically troubling 'revolving door' that allows exiting members of Congress to accept very lucrative jobs representing the same interest groups that were previously attempting to influence their votes as a member of Congress.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

**You answered this question correctly.**

**Question 11)** Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- about "The Power of Congress" -- is false?

- A) Between 1932 and 1972, Congress tended to lose power to the president.

Explanation: Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon were most assertive in expanding presidential authority. Harry Truman and John Kennedy were less successful in challenging Congress. Dwight Eisenhower was the least assertive of the presidents in this era.


- B) In 1973, Congress passed, over Nixon's veto, the War Powers Act, giving itself greater involvement in the use of U.S. military forces in foreign combat.

Explanation: Under the War Powers Act, presidents still can (and have often since 1973) commit U.S. forces to foreign combat without a Congressional declaration of war. For example, President Ronald Reagan ordered the U.S. military invasion of the Caribbean island nation of Grenada. Since combat in this "little war" only lasted two days, Reagan did not need congressional authorization.


However, under provisions of the War Powers Act, such ‘undeclared’ wars can continue beyond 60 days only with the majority-vote approval of both houses of Congress. Should either house fail to authorize continuation of the ‘undeclared’ war within 60 days of commitment of U.S. forces to foreign combat, then the president must withdraw all U.S. forces from combat within the next 30 days. No offensive operations can be initiated by U.S. forces during this withdrawal period.

In 1991, it was in compliance with the War Powers Act that President Bush asked Congress to authorize the use of U.S. forces against the forces of Iraq in Kuwait before the beginning of ‘Desert Storm’ phase of the Persian Gulf war. Congress did so by overwhelming majorities in both houses.

In 2002, President George W. Bush requested that Congress pass another joint resolution authorizing him to use military force against Iraq if that country failed to comply with U.N. inspection and removal of any and all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. After intense debate, both houses of Congress passed this resolution.

-  C) Conflict and stalemate are more likely, but not inevitable, when the two parties divide control of the two elected branches.

Explanation: Even when the presidency and Congress are in different hands, a lot of legislation gets enacted because both parties sense that the voters and many influential interest groups want action.

-  D) Since 1995, Congress cannot exempt itself from the legal requirements that its legislation imposes on everyone else.

Explanation: Before the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 stopped the practice, Congress had often excluded itself from compliance with the laws it passed in many areas – civil rights, labor-management relations, privacy, etc.

-  E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

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