

**Chapter 9: Congress**

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- I. The evolution of Congress
    - A. Constitutional powers Box, p. 196
    - B. Intent of the framers: Congress would be the more dominant, but checked by the combined powers of the other two branches
    - C. Evolution
      - 1. This was generally so until the Civil War (except for Washington, Jefferson, & Jackson)
      - 2. The U.S. Supreme Court was often dominant from the 1870s-1930s (except for T. Roosevelt & Wilson)
      - 3. With the Great Depression, WWII, and the Cold War, the executive branch became increasingly dominant from 1933-72
      - 4. With the end of the Cold War, we have had more balance between the 3 branches
      - 5. But with the “war on terror” and the “great recession” we’ve had more activist presidents
  - II. Who is in the Congress?
    - A. Personal characteristics: region, age, class, religion, sex, and race: Table 9.1, p. 199 becoming more representative – except for class – education, income, and occupation
    - B. Years of service: greatly increasing – now a life-long career for many members
    - C. Party
      - 1. House: [http://clerk.house.gov/art\\_history/house\\_history/partyDiv.html](http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/house_history/partyDiv.html)
      - 2. Senate: [http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/one\\_item\\_and\\_teasers/partydiv.htm](http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/one_item_and_teasers/partydiv.htm)
  - III. Getting elected to Congress
    - A. Plurality election: except runoff primary in South
    - B. Personalized and issue-based campaigns
  - IV. The *informal* organization of Congress Box, p. 203
    - A. Party organization: party voting: majority of Rep. v. majority of Dem. – increasing polarization Fig. 9.1, p. 205
    - B. Interests (caucuses)
      - 1. Congressional Black Caucus
      - 2. Democratic Study Group
      - 3. Conservative Democratic Forum: boll weevils
      - 4. Wednesday Group: gypsy moths
  - V. The *formal* organization of Congress
    - A. Committees
      - 1. Standing Box, p. 208; Box, p. 210
      - 2. Select
      - 3. Joint
      - 4. Conference
    - B. Staffs and specialized offices
      - 1. Tasks of staff members
      - 2. Staff agencies
        - a. Congressional Research Service
        - b. General Accounting Office
        - c. Congressional Budget Office
  - VI. How a bill becomes a law Fig. 9.2, p. 214; Box, p. 216
    - A. Introducing a bill
      - 1. Bills
      - 2. Joint resolutions:
        - a. Propose Const. amendments
        - b. State Congress’s position on for. pol./nat. sec. (Tonkin Gulf, War Powers, Persian Gulf)
    - B. Study by committees
    - C. Floor debate
      - 1. House
      - 2. Senate
    - D. Methods of voting
      - 1. Not recorded: voice or division (standing)
      - 2. Recorded: teller or roll call – electronic in House
    - E. Earmarks: <http://earmarks.omb.gov/>
      - 1. Definition: provision that directs approved funds to be spent on specific projects or that directs specific exemptions from taxes or mandated fees.
      - 2. Pros & cons:

- VII. How members vote
  - A. Representational view: cues from constituents (delegate model)
  - B. Organizational view: cues from colleagues
  - C. Attitudinal view: cues from own ideology (trustee model)
  - D. Mix of all three: (politico model)
  
- VIII. A polarized Congress in an un-polarized nation
  - A. Congressional redistricting
  - B. Cues to voters
  - C. Seniority and safe districts
  
- IX. Ethics and Congress
  - A. Constitutional checks and balances
  - B. Congressional ethics code Box, p. 222
  - C. Reducing powers and perks
    - 1. Pork-barrel legislation
    - 2. Franking privilege
    - 3. Placing Congress under law Box, p. 226
  - D. Imposing term limits
    - 1. Historical precedents for imposing term limits on Congress
    - 2. Arguments
      - a. For
        - (1) Increase election competition
        - (2) Improve candidate pool
        - (3) Reduce corruption in office
        - (4) Increase Congressional responsiveness to voters
        - (5) Reduce gridlock with executive branch
      - b. Against
        - (1) Term limits are anti-democratic
        - (2) Increase the influence of media and money in Congressional elections
        - (3) Increase the number of unresponsive "lame ducks"
        - (4) Increase the influence of unelected Congressional staff
        - (5) Increase the influence of unelected executive bureaucrats
    - 3. Partisan differences
      - a. Which party now favors term limits? Neither
      - b. Why? Although the Democratic Party now has majority in both chambers the Republican Party still hopes to get those majorities back in the next election.
    - 4. Constitutional issue
      - a. Conflicting grants of power over Congressional elections
        - (1) Article I, section 4: *time, place, and manner of elections* prescribed by state legislatures
        - (2) Article I, section 5: *qualifications of members* judged by each house of Congress
      - b. In *U.S. Term Limits v. Thornton* (1995) the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all state-imposed (SC & 22 others) term limits on Congress; the Court ruled that adding to the Constitutionally specified qualifications for members of Congress will require a Constitutional amendment.
    - 5. Problem: no one definition of term limits is agreed upon by those who favor term limits (see handout at: [http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/pls101/wilson\\_chapter\\_outlines/C8\\_term\\_limits.PDF](http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/pls101/wilson_chapter_outlines/C8_term_limits.PDF))
      - a. How many terms are allowed? most common in the state legislatures = 6 for H & 2 for S = 12 years
      - b. Are the limits on contiguous terms only or on all terms served?
      - c. How many offices are affected?
  
- X. The power of Congress
  - A. Relative to the executive branch
    - 1. President
    - 2. Bureaucracy
  - B. Relative to judicial
  
- XI. What it all means
  - A. Localized viewpoint
  - B. Decentralized process
  - C. Little party discipline
  - D. Heavy committee workload with little floor deliberation