

## **THE CONGRESS**

### **16. What is the Congress?**

The Congress of the United States is the legislative (lawmaking) and oversight (Government policy review) body of our National

Government, and consists of two Houses—the Senate and the House of Representatives.

#### MEMBERS, OFFICES, AND STAFF

#### **17. What qualifications are prescribed for a Member of Congress?**

The Constitution (Article I, Section 2 for the House, Section 3 for the Senate) prescribes qualifications for Members of Congress.

A Member of the House of Representatives must be at least 25 years of age when entering office, must have been a U.S. citizen for at least 7 years, and must be a resident of the State in which the election occurred.

A Member of the U.S. Senate must be at least 30 years of age to enter office, must have been a U.S. citizen for 9 years, and must be a resident of the State in which the election occurred.

#### **18. What is the term of a Congress and how often must it meet?**

A Congress begins at noon January 3 of each odd-numbered year following a general election, unless by law a different day is designated. A Congress lasts for 2 years, with each year constituting a separate session.

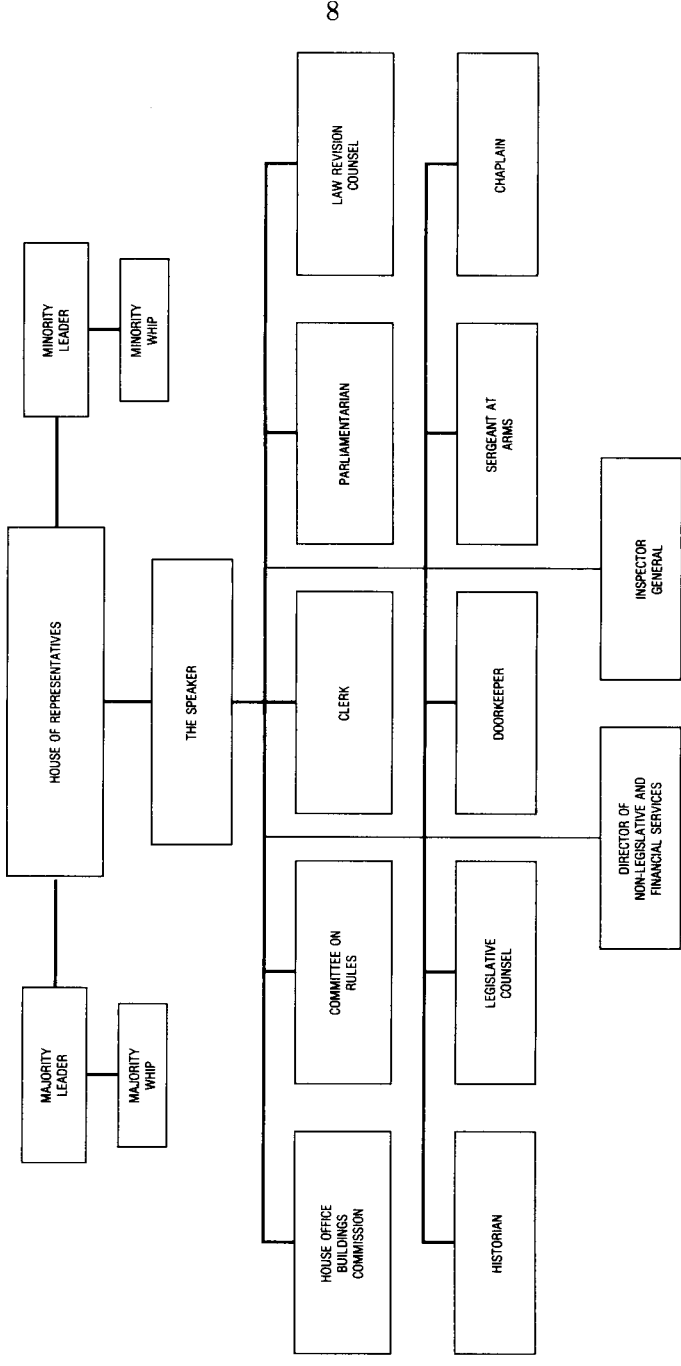
The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires Congress to adjourn sine die not later than July 31 of each year unless there is a declared war, or unless Congress otherwise provides. In odd-numbered years, the Congress must take an August recess if it fails to adjourn by July 31.

Neither the House nor the Senate may adjourn for more than 3 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays) without the concurrence of the other Chamber. It has also become a common practice for the Congress to adjourn after making provision for the House and Senate leaders to summon the Congress back into session in emergency circumstances. Similarly, the Constitution grants the President the authority to summon the Congress for a special session if circumstances require.

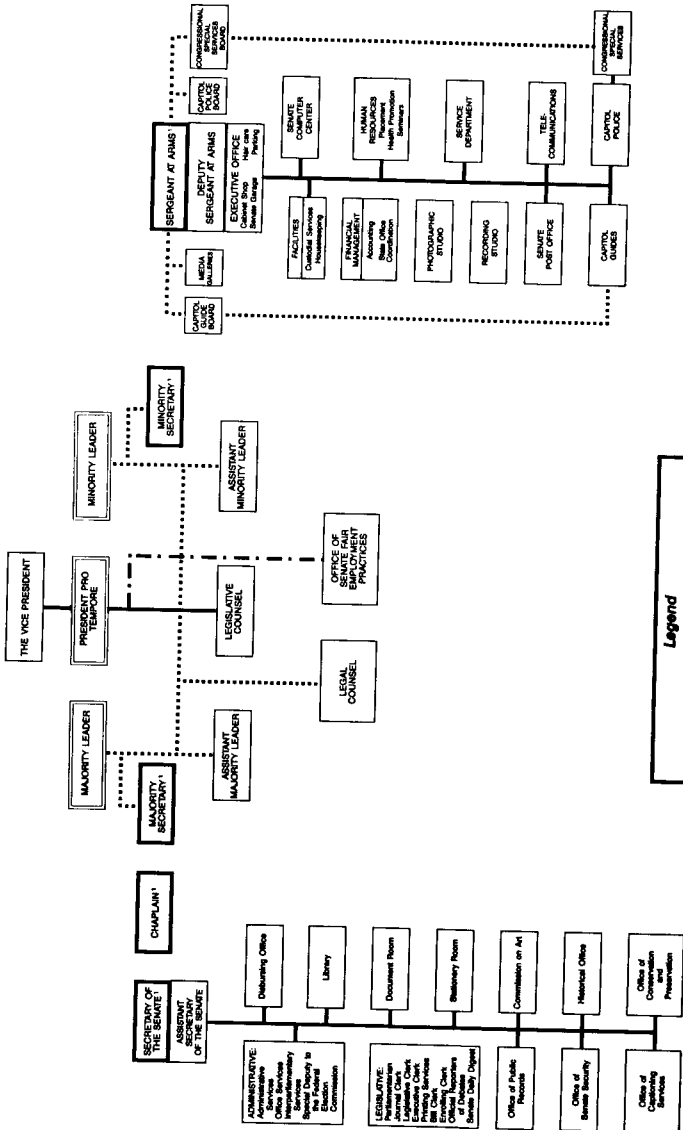
#### **19. How many Members does each State have in the Senate and House of Representatives?**

Each State, under the Constitution, is entitled to two Senators, each serving a 6-year term and at least one Representative, serving a 2-year term. Additional House seats are apportioned on the basis of State population. (See State Population and House Apportionment table in Appendix).

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



# UNITED STATES SENATE



**Legend**

- Direct responsibility
- Oversight responsibility
- Appointive and removal authority
- Elected officers of the Senate
- Leadership
- Elected Officers

**20. What is the size of the House of Representatives and how is it determined?**

Under the law now in force, the membership of the House of Representatives is fixed at 435 Members representing the 50 States. In addition to the 435 Representatives, there is one Delegate for each of the following: the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa (each elected for a 2-year term); as well as a Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico (elected for a 4-year term). A new rule, passed in the 103d Congress, permits the Delegates and Resident Commissioner to vote in the Committee of the Whole only. Previous to the 103d Congress, the Delegates and the Resident Commissioner could sponsor legislation and could vote in committees, but not in the House Chamber.

The Constitution entitles each State to at least one Representative. Beyond this minimum, Representatives are apportioned among the States according to population. Population figures used for apportionment are determined on the basis of each 10-year census.

The only other constitutional limitation is that the number of Representatives "shall not exceed one for every thirty thousand." (This provision sets the minimum size of a congressional district. Following the 1990 census, the average district size was about 570,000 people). Since 1941, the Congress has used the method of "equal proportions" to calculate actual apportionment. This method makes the difference between the average number of Representatives per million people in any two States as small as possible.

**21. Who defines the congressional districts—the Federal Government or the States?**

Congress fixes the size of the House of Representatives, and the procedure for apportioning the number among the States, but the States themselves carry on from there. State legislatures pass laws defining the physical boundaries of congressional districts, within certain constraints established by the Congress and the Supreme Court (through its reapportionment and redistricting rulings). Each State is apportioned its number of Representatives by means of the Department of Commerce's decennial census.

In the very early years of the Republic, most States elected their Representatives at large. The practice of dividing a State into districts, however, was soon instituted. Congress later required that Representatives be elected from "districts composed of a contiguous and compact territory," but this requirement is no longer in the Federal law.

The redistricting process has always been provided for by the State law, but Congress can choose to exercise greater authority over redistricting. In 1967, for example, Congress by law prohibited at-large elections of Representatives in all States entitled to more than one Representative. Today, all States with more than one Representative must elect their Representatives from single-Member districts.

**22. What is a Member of Congress?**

A Member of Congress is a person serving in the Senate or the House of Representatives. A Member of the Senate is referred to as Senator, and a Member of the House of Representatives, as Representative or Congressman or Congresswoman.

**23. What is a Delegate or Resident Commissioner, as distinguished from a Representative?**

The office of Delegate was established by ordinance from the Continental Congress (1774-89) and confirmed by a law of Congress. From the beginning of the Republic, accordingly, the House has admitted Delegates from Territories or districts organized by law. Delegates and Resident Commissioners may participate in House debate but they are not permitted to vote on the floor, except in the Committee of the Whole. This limited voting privilege was given to the Delegates and Resident Commissioner by a rule change in the 103d Congress. All serve on committees of the House and possess powers and privileges equal to other Members in committee, including the right to vote in committee. Currently, there are four Delegates in the House and one Resident Commissioner.

**24. What oath of office is required for Members of Congress, and when is it administered?**

Article VI of the U.S. Constitution requires that Members of Congress, and all executive and judicial officers shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation to support the Constitution. The oath of office is as follows: *"I, \* \* \*, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign or domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God."*

Representatives take the oath of office on the first day of the new Congress, immediately after the House has elected its Speaker. Those Senators elected or reelected the previous November take the oath of office as the first item of business when the Senate convenes the following January. Representatives elected in special elections during the course of a Congress, and Senators appointed to fill a vacancy in the Senate generally take the oath of office on the floor of their respective Chamber when the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate has received formal notice of the new Member's election or appointment from State government authorities. On rare occasions, because of illness or other circumstances, a Member-elect has been authorized to take the oath of office at a place other than the House or Senate Chamber. In those circumstances, the Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate sees to the proper administration of the oath.

**25. In the event of the death, resignation, or declination (refusal to serve) of a Member of Congress, how is the vacancy filled?**

The Constitution (Article II, Section 2, Clause 4) requires that all vacancies in the House of Representatives be filled by election. All

States require special elections to fill any House seat which becomes vacant during the first session of a Congress. Procedures governing vacancies occurring during the second session of a Congress differ from State to State, and are largely dependent on the amount of time intervening between the vacancy and the next general election.

In the Senate, when a vacancy occurs for any reason, the 17th amendment directs the Governor of the State to call an election to fill such vacancy, and authorizes the legislature to make provision for an immediate appointment pending such election. Among the States, only Arizona does not allow the Governor to make interim appointments, requiring, instead, a special election to fill any Senate vacancy. Prevailing practice in the States is that a special election to fill the vacancy is scheduled to be held at the time of the next statewide general election.

## **26. How can Members of Congress be removed from office or punished for misconduct?**

It is generally understood in the Congress that the impeachment process stipulated in the Constitution, which involves both the House and Senate, applies only to the removal of the President, Vice President, Supreme Court Justices, and Federal judges, and civil officers of the U.S. Government, and not to the removal of Members of Congress from office. The Constitution states that "Each House shall be the Judge of the . . . Qualifications of its own Members . . . [and may] punish its Members for disorderly Behaviour, and with the Concurrence of two thirds, expel a Member." Thus, disciplinary actions taken against a Member are a matter of concern for that House acting by itself.

Each Chamber has established a committee charged with reviewing allegations of misconduct against its Members: the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct and the Senate Ethics Committee. The Rules of the House and Senate also contain a Code of Official Conduct. The ethics committees review charges against a Member filed by another Member or by a private citizen.

The most severe punishment which can be imposed by either the House or Senate is the expulsion of the offending Member. This action requires, constitutionally, an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Members of that Chamber voting, a quorum being present. Alternatively, the House may vote to "censure" a Member for misconduct. This requires only a majority vote, and under party rules in the House, a censured Member automatically loses any committee or party leadership positions held during that Congress. In the Senate, the terms "censure" and "denunciation" are used almost interchangeably for violations of this magnitude.

A less severe form of disciplinary action in both the House and Senate is a "reprimand," again imposed by the Chamber by a simple majority vote. Typically, reprimands are reserved for ethical violations which are minor, or appear to be inadvertent or unintentional on the part of the Member.

Additionally, Members of Congress are subject to prosecution for treason, felony, or breach of the peace. Generally, when a Member has been indicted for a felony, a "leave of absence" from any party

or committee leadership position must be taken so long as the charges are pending. Usually, the House or Senate will not initiate internal disciplinary action until the criminal proceedings against the Member have been completed.

## **27. Are Members of Congress, to some extent, privileged from arrest?**

Article 1, Section 6 of the Constitution states that Senators and Representatives "shall in all Cases, except Treason, Felony, and Breach of the Peace, be privileged from Arrest during their Attendance at the Session of their respective Houses, and in going to and returning from the same." The phrase "Treason, Felony, and Breach of the Peace" has been construed to mean all indictable crimes and the Supreme Court has held that the privilege against arrest does not apply in any criminal cases.

## **28. Who are the officers of the House and how are they chosen?**

Elected officers include the Speaker, Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, Doorkeeper, and Chaplain. Another officer, the Director of Non-Legislative and Financial Services, is appointed jointly by the Speaker, Majority Leader, and Minority Leader. Each of these officers appoints the employees provided by law for his or her department.

The Constitution (Article 1, Section 2) says that the House "shall chuse [sic] their Speaker and other officers"; i.e., the Members vote as they do on any other question, except that in most cases it is strictly a party vote. Republicans and Democrats both meet before the House organizes for a new Congress, and choose a slate of officers. These two slates are presented at the first session of the House, and the majority party slate is, of course, selected. Traditionally, the majority party's nominee for Chaplain is not contested. The nominees for Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, Doorkeeper, and Chaplain are elected by a tally recorded by the House's electronic voting machine. The Director of Non-Legislative and Financial Services is appointed for a Congress by the Speaker, Majority Leader, and Minority Leader, acting jointly. For election of the Speaker, Members' names are called alphabetically, and they respond by orally stating the name of the candidate they prefer.

## **29. What are the duties of the officers of the House?**

*The Clerk of the House*—The office has a broad range of legislative and administrative duties that include presiding at the opening of each new Congress, pending the election of the Speaker; receiving the credentials of the Members; taking all votes and certifying bill passage; performing the formal preparation of all legislation; and maintaining, printing, and distributing documents relating to legislative activity. A number of internal budgeting, disbursing, accounting, and housekeeping responsibilities are also assigned to the Clerk, as is the preparation and issuance of a quarterly Report of the Clerk of the House, which itemizes the official expenditures of the House (including those of committees and Members of the House).



*Sergeant at Arms*—This office enforces the rules of the House and maintains decorum during sessions of the House. The Sergeant at Arms also is in charge of the Mace, the symbol of legislative power and authority, and maintains the general security of the House buildings and the House wing of the Capitol. The Sergeant at Arms, the Senate Sergeant at Arms, and the Architect of the Capitol comprise the Capitol Police Board, which supervises the operation of the U.S. Capitol Police force, the security force of the Congress.

*Doorkeeper of the House*—The Doorkeeper makes physical arrangements for joint sessions and joint meetings of the Congress, announces messages from the President and the Senate, and announces the arrival of the President to address the Congress. Additionally, this officer supervises the doormen stationed at each entrance to the House floor and House gallery; supervises the pages; and operates the document room, which provides copies of House bills, laws, committee reports, and other documents to Members.

*Chaplain*—The Chaplain prepares and offers the convening prayer each day the House is in session, and provides pastoral services to Representatives, their families, and staff. The Chaplain also arranges, at the request of House Members, for guest chaplains to offer the opening prayer. The Chaplain is elected at the beginning of each Congress, but traditionally the election is not contested.

*Director of Non-Legislative and Financial Services*—Subject to the policy direction of the Committee on House Administration, the Director has operational and financial responsibility for functions assigned by resolution of the House. Included in this responsibility is the operation of the House Post Office and the Finance Office.

### **30. What are the duties of the Speaker?**

The Speaker presides over the House, appoints the chairmen to preside over the Committee of the Whole, appoints all special or select committees, appoints conference committees, has the power of recognition of Members to speak, and makes many important rulings and decisions in the House. The Speaker may vote, but usually does not, except in case of a tie. The Speaker and the Majority Leader determine the legislative agenda for the House, often confer with the President and with the Senate, and are regarded as spokesmen for the Administration if they and the President belong to the same political party.

### **31. Could a person other than an elected Representative in Congress serve as Speaker of the House?**

Technically, yes. There is no constitutional impediment to such a selection. The House is empowered to choose its Speaker and other officers without restriction. But this possibility is highly unlikely, and indeed, the Speaker has always been a Member of the House.

### **32. Who was the Speaker of the House of Representatives for the longest period of time?**

The late Honorable Sam Rayburn, of Texas, who was a Member of the House for 48 years and 8 months, served as Speaker for 17 years and 2 months. However, the record for longest continuous

service as Speaker is held by Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, of Massachusetts, who served consecutively for 10 years, thus surpassing John McCormack (8 years, 11 months, and 23 days); Champ Clark (7 years, 10 months, and 29 days); and Joseph G. Cannon (7 years, 3 months, and 24 days).

### 33. Who presides over the Senate?

The Constitution provides that "the Vice President of the United States shall be the President of the Senate" (Article I, section 3). As President of the Senate, the Vice President presides over the Senate, makes parliamentary rulings (which may be overturned by a majority vote of the Senate), and may cast tie-breaking votes. At first, Vice Presidents presided on a regular basis, but in recent years they are present in the chair only when a close vote is anticipated, or during major debates, or important ceremonial occasions (such as the swearing in of newly elected Senators, or during joint sessions). In the absence of the Vice President, the Senate elects a President pro tempore (president for the time being) to preside. In recent decades it has become traditional for this post to go to the senior Senator from the majority party. The President pro tempore assigns other members of the majority party to preside by rotation during each day's proceedings. These Senators and the President pro tempore retain their rights to vote on all issues before the body and to debate when they are not presiding.

### 34. Who are the officers of the Senate, how are they chosen, and what are their duties?

By resolution, the Senate elects five officers: the Secretary, Sergeant at Arms, Chaplain, Secretary for the Majority, and Secretary for the Minority.

*Secretary of the Senate*—As the Senate's chief administrative officer, the Secretary supervises a variety of offices and services to expedite the Senate's day-to-day operations. Reporting to the Secretary are the Parliamentarian, Bill Clerk, Enrolling Clerk, Executive Clerk, Journal Clerk, Legislative Clerk, Official Reporter of Debates, Curator, Historian, and Librarian. Among the other Senate agencies under the Secretary's jurisdiction are the Senate Disbursing Office, the Stationery Room (which sells supplies to Senate offices), the Document Room (which distributes documents of the Senate), the Public Records Office, the Daily Digest Office, and the Printing Services Office. The Secretary is responsible for the official certification of bills passed by the Senate, the administration of oaths, the receipt of registration of lobbyists, and Federal election law requirements for all Senate candidates.

*Sergeant at Arms*—The Sergeant at Arms is the Senate's chief law enforcement officer, having authority to enforce Senate rules and regulations in and around the Chamber and Senate office buildings, to locate absent Senators for a quorum, and, at the direction of the Senate, make arrests. (It was the Senate Sergeant at Arms who presented President Andrew Johnson in 1868 with notification of his impeachment trial in the Senate Chamber). As protocol officer, the Sergeant at Arms escorts the President and other heads of state when they visit the Capitol, leads formal processions

of the Senate during ceremonial events, and arranges funerals for Senators who die in office. The Sergeant at Arms also directs a multitude of operations, from computers to custodial services, and supervises varied support services such as the Senate Computer Center, Senate Service Department, the Capitol Police on the Senate side of the Capitol complex, the Senate Post Office, the Democratic and Republican cloakrooms, the Senate Telecommunications Office, the press galleries, doorkeepers, Senate page services, the Senate Placement Office, first aid offices, the Office of the Senate Photographer, the Senate Recording Studio, the Capitol Guide Service, elevator operators, office equipment services, custodial and building maintenance staff, and television operators in the Senate Chamber.

*Secretary for the Majority*—Generally nominated by the Majority Leader and approved by the Majority Conference, which includes all Senators of the majority party, the Secretary for the Majority oversees party activities in the Senate Chamber and the majority cloakroom. Specifically, the Secretary supervises telephone pages and messengers, organizes meetings of the Majority Conference, briefs Senators on votes and pending legislation, and conducts polls of Senators at the request of the party leadership.

*Secretary for the Minority*—The Secretary for the Minority generally is nominated by the Minority Leader and approved by the Conference of all minority Senators. The Secretary's duties are essentially identical to those of the majority party secretary.

*Chaplain*—Nominated in the Conference of majority party Senators, the Senate Chaplain is elected by the full Senate. The Chaplain prepares and offers the convening prayer each day the Senate is in session; provides pastoral services to Senators, their families and staffs; and schedules and instructs guest chaplains.

### **35. What are party Leaders?**

The political parties in the House and Senate elect Leaders to represent them on the floor, to advocate their policies and viewpoints, to coordinate their legislative efforts, and to help determine the schedule of legislative business. The Leaders serve as spokespersons for their parties and for the House and Senate as a whole. Since the framers of the Constitution did not anticipate political parties, these leadership posts are not defined in the Constitution but have evolved over time. The House, with its larger membership, required Majority and Minority Leaders in the 19th century to expedite legislative business and to keep their parties united. The Senate did not formally designate party floor leaders until the 1920s, although several caucus chairmen and committee chairmen had previously performed similar duties. In both Houses, the parties also elect assistant leaders, or "Whips." The Majority Leader is elected by the majority party conference (or caucus), the Minority Leader by the minority party conference. Third parties have rarely had enough members to need to elect their own leadership, and independents will generally join one of the larger party organizations to receive committee assignments. Majority and Minority Leaders receive a higher salary than other Members in recognition of their additional responsibilities.

### **36. Are the Majority Leaders elected by their respective Houses of Congress?**

No; rather, the members of the majority party in the House, meeting in caucus or conference, select the Majority Leader. The minority party members, in a similar meeting, select their Minority Leader. The majority and minority parties in the Senate also hold separate meetings to elect their leaders.

### **37. What are the duties of the "Whips" of the Congress?**

The Whips (of the majority and minority parties) keep track of all politically important legislation and endeavor to have all members of their parties present when important measures are to be voted upon. When a vote appears to be close, the Whips contact absent members of their party, advise them of the vote, and determine if they wish to "pair" their vote. The Whips assist the leadership in managing the party's legislative program on the floor of the Chambers and provide information to party members about important legislative-related matters. The authority of the Whips over party members is informal; in the U.S. Congress, Members frequently vote against the position supported by a majority of their party colleagues because of personal opposition, or because of the opposition evident in their constituencies. In most cases, the parties will take no disciplinary action against colleagues who vote against the party position.

The Majority and Minority Whips in the House and Senate are elected by party members in that Chamber. In the House, with its larger number of members, the Majority and Minority Whips appoint deputy whips to assist them in their activities. In addition, the House Democrats elect a number of "zone whips," chosen by Democrats from particular regions of the country to assist in the informational activities of the party leadership.

### **38. What are party caucuses or party conferences and party committees?**

A party caucus or conference is the name given to a meeting, whether regular or specially called, of all party members in the House or Senate. The term "caucus" or "conference" can also mean the organization of all party members in the House or Senate. House Democrats refer to their organization as the Democratic Caucus. Senate Democrats and House and Senate Republicans call their three organizations "party conferences." The party caucus or conference officially elects party floor leaders, the party whips, and nominates each party's candidates for the Speakership or President pro tempore and other officers in the House or Senate. The chairs of the party conferences and other subordinate party leaders are elected by vote of the conference or caucus at the beginning of each Congress. Regular caucus or conference meetings provide a forum in which party leaders and rank-and-file party members can discuss party policy, pending legislative issues, and other matters of mutual concern.

The party caucus or conference also traditionally establishes party committees with specialized functions. Party committees generally nominate party members to serve on the various committees

of the House or Senate, subject to approval by the caucus or conference. Party policy committees generally discuss party positions on pending legislation. Majority party steering committees (the minority party traditionally has none) generally plan the schedule of Chamber action on pending legislation. Party research committees conduct studies on broad policy questions, generally before committees of the House or Senate begin action on legislation. Party campaign committees provide research and strategy assistance to party candidates for election to the House or Senate. The chairs of party committees are generally elected by the party caucus or conference; the exception is the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee which is chaired by the Speaker of the House (when the Democrats are in the majority) or by the Democratic floor leader (when they are in the minority).

The caucus or conference may also decide to appoint "task forces" to perform research on a new policy proposal, or to assist the formal leadership in developing a party position on important legislation. These "task forces" are traditionally disbanded once their work has been completed.

### **39. What are caucuses, legislative service organizations, and other similar groups?**

Nonofficial "congressional member organizations" (CMOs), commonly called caucuses, are voluntary organizations of Members of Congress which have no explicit basis or direct recognition in House, Senate or party rules. Caucuses may serve any of several functions (or combination thereof), including: compiling, analyzing and distributing information; developing and mobilizing support for legislative proposals; advocating positions and issues; and providing representation for specific elements in national as well as Members' constituencies. The oldest existing caucus is the Democratic Study Group (DSG), which was organized in 1958. The DSG's success in providing its members with information and meeting its group goals in part has led other House and Senate members to organize additional caucuses. At least 121 CMOs are now operating, among them the Republican Study Committee, the Environmental and Energy Study Conference, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, the Congressional Rural Caucus, the Congressional Steel Caucus, and the Senate Drug Enforcement Caucus.

The term "legislative service organization" (LSO) refers to a particular category of House and bicameral congressional member organizations that meet criteria set out in Committee on House Administration regulations and that have been formally certified. (The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration does not accord any comparable recognition to Senate groups). This status allows each LSO to receive allotments from respective Member's clerk hire and official expense allowances and provides an opportunity for separate staff and office space. Currently, there are 30 LSOs, but not all of them have separate offices and permanent staff or require financial support from their members; i.e., dues, research assessment, or subscription fees. Legislative service organizations may be difficult and time-consuming to fund and to regu-

late, and may exacerbate already limited office space problems. Consequently, no caucus has been granted LSO status since 1984. Each LSO is required to make quarterly reports disclosing its finances and is prohibited from accepting noncongressional funds to support its operations.

**40. What services are officially available to Members and to committees to assist them in the performance of their legislative duties?**

Research assistance is available both from congressional staff and from legislative branch agencies created to assist Members, committees, and their staffs.

Senators and Representatives are allocated funds to hire personal staff to assist them in performance of their legislative and constituent work. Committees are entitled to professional and clerical staff, by statute, and they may have additional employees pursuant to specific requests that are approved by the respective Houses.

Additional support is provided by legislative branch agencies. The Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress provides both committees and individual Members with information, research, and analysis on a wide range of subjects. The General Accounting Office assists committees and Members in fulfilling oversight and program evaluation responsibilities. The Office of Technology Assessment analyzes the impact of technology on public policy. The Congressional Budget Office provides specialized fiscal and budgetary analyses and cost estimates of Government agencies, programs, and operations.

Each Chamber has an Office of Legislative Counsel to assist individual Members, committees, and staff in the drafting of legislation or in drafting amendments to bills, and both House maintain legislative libraries. Finally, each House has technical staff charged with providing computer services and automated systems services.

**41. Do the Members of the House have individual seats on the Chamber floor?**

No. They did until the 63d Congress (1913), but now Members may sit where they choose. Democrats occupy the east side of the Chamber, on the Speaker's right; Republicans sit across the main aisle, on the Speaker's left. Two tables each on the Democratic and Republican sides of the aisle are reserved for committee leaders during debate on a bill reported from their committee and for party leaders.

**42. Do Senators have individuals seats assigned them?**

Yes. The individual seats are numbered and assigned on request of Senators in order of their seniority. Democrats occupy the west side of the Chamber on the Vice President's right; Republicans sit across the main aisle to the Vice President's left. There is no set rule for seating of "Independents." By custom, the Majority and Minority Leaders occupy the front row seats on either side of the aisle, and the Majority and Minority Whips occupy the seats immediately next to their party's leader.

**43. May the Secretary of State or any other Cabinet officer appear on the floor of either House to answer questions?**

No. Cabinet officers frequently testify before House and Senate committees and subcommittees, but they may not appear on the floor of either Chamber to respond publicly to Members' questions. There have been proposals to permit such a "question period" by amending congressional rules, but they have not been approved.

**44. Are visitors allowed to listen to the proceedings of Congress?**

Visitors are allowed to listen to and watch the proceedings of the House and Senate from visitors' galleries in each House. Tour guides bring groups of visitors briefly into the House and Senate galleries. Visitors who wish to observe House and Senate floor sessions for longer periods of time without interruption must obtain gallery passes, available without prior notice in the offices of their Senator or Representative.

All visitors must abide by certain rules and maintain proper decorum. They are not allowed to take radios, cameras, or umbrellas into either Chamber and they may not read, write, or take notes while inside. Visitors in the galleries are subject to control and supervision by the presiding officers of the House and Senate as well as doorkeepers stationed beside each entrance to the galleries. Unless there is a rare closed meeting of either House, visitors are allowed whenever Congress is in session.

Most committee hearings and meetings are also open to the public. Committees generally meet in rooms set aside for their use in the congressional office buildings and no visitors' passes are required, although audience space may be limited to accommodate congressional staff, executive branch officials, and journalists. Under certain circumstances specified in House and Senate Rules, committees may vote to close hearings or meetings to the public.

Special space is available in the galleries for accredited journalists who are not subject to the prohibition on writing and taking notes. Since 1979, proceedings of the House have been accessible to the news media for television or radio broadcast. Senate sessions have been available for television and radio broadcast since 1986. Any committee hearing or meeting open to the public can also be broadcast on radio or television, subject to administrative control by the individual committee.

**45. Are the proceedings of Congress published and preserved?**

Each House, by constitutional requirement, keeps a Journal of its proceedings. The Senate maintains and publishes a legislative journal and an executive journal. The latter contains proceedings related to the Senate's responsibilities for approving treaties and nominations. When the Senate sits as a court of impeachment, it keeps a separate journal of its proceedings. The Executive Journal is published annually.

The Journals do not report debates, they only report the bare parliamentary proceedings of each Chamber. In addition, the House Journal contains minimal information about actions taken by the House when meeting as a Committee of the Whole, because

any action taken there is not official unless and until it is ratified by the full House.

For a public record of the debates, there have been a succession of reports, overlapping in part, as follows: *Annals of Congress* (1789-1824), *Register of Debates* (1824-37), *Congressional Globe* (1833-73), and finally and currently the *Congressional Record* (1873 to the present).

The *Congressional Record* contains a record, taken stenographically, of everything said on the floor of both Houses, including roll-call votes on all questions. Members are permitted to edit and revise the transcripts of their spoken remarks. An appendix contains material not spoken on the floor but inserted by permission—the so-called “extensions of remarks.” It also carries a brief resume of the congressional activities of the previous day, as well as a future legislative program and a list of scheduled committee hearings.

Since 1979 in the House and 1986 in the Senate, floor sessions have been televised. Videotape copies of House and Senate Chamber activities are preserved and available for research use at the Library of Congress and at the National Archives.

#### **46. What are joint sessions and joint meetings?**

Congress holds joint sessions to receive addresses (State of the Union and other addresses) from the President and to count electoral ballots for President and Vice President. Congress also holds joint meetings to receive addresses from such dignitaries as foreign heads of state or heads of governments or from distinguished American citizens.

Of the two types of gatherings, the joint session is the more formal and typically occurs upon adoption of a concurrent resolution passed by both Houses of Congress. The joint meeting, however, typically occurs when each of the two Houses adopts a unanimous consent agreement to recess to meet with the other legislative body. Since 1809, the prevailing practice has been to hold joint sessions and joint meetings in the Hall of the House of Representatives, the larger of the two Chambers.

Except for the first inauguration in 1789, in which the Congress convened in joint session to inaugurate President George Washington, these special occasions have occurred outside of the regular legislative calendars. Occasionally one chamber will convene a legislative session prior to attending the ceremony, but unless both do so and subsequently adjourn to attend the ceremony, the inauguration is not a joint session.

#### **47. What provisions are made for offices for Members and committees of the Congress?**

The Capitol Hill office complex includes offices for House and Senate leaders and officers and for certain important committees in the Capitol building itself, plus five House office buildings and three Senate office buildings, plus additional rented space in commercial office buildings near the Union Station, north of the Capitol.



The three main House office buildings are located on Independence Avenue, south of the Capitol. Proceeding from East to West, the three buildings are the Cannon House Office Building, completed in 1908; the Longworth House Office Building, completed in 1933; and the Rayburn House Office Building, completed in 1965. The buildings are named for the Speakers of the House at the time the construction of the buildings was authorized. In these buildings are located the personal offices of each Member of the House, as well as the main offices of House standing committees. Two additional buildings were purchased in 1957 and 1975 respectively for use by the House for additional office space. The first building, on C Street behind the Cannon Office Building, was renamed the Thomas P. O'Neill House Office Building in 1990. In addition to space for House committee and subcommittee staff, the building (a former hotel) is now also the site of the House Page School Dormitory. The second building, on D Street SW, was renamed in 1990 the Gerald R. Ford House Office Building. Before becoming Vice President and President, Mr. Ford was House Republican Leader from 1965-73, and he is the first person not to have been Speaker to have a House office building named after him.

The Senate office buildings are located on Constitution Avenue, northeast of the Capitol. The buildings were completed in 1909, 1958, and 1982, and are named in honor of influential 20th Century Senators: Richard B. Russell (D., GA), Everett M. Dirksen (R., IL), and Philip A. Hart (D., MI), respectively.

In addition to office space in Washington, DC, Representatives and Senators are entitled to rent office space in their Districts or States at public expense.

**48. Are there opportunities in the Congress to work as a volunteer, as a paid intern, or as part of an educational program?**

Every year, large numbers of college students and other people work for Members of Congress as volunteers, as interns, or as part of an on-going educational program. Many colleges and universities award academic credit for congressional work, and a number of national professional associations (among them, the American Political Science Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Science) sponsor a competitive, mid-career congressional fellowship appointment for interested organization members. The executive branch sponsors a Legis Fellows program, for mid-career Federal executives who wish to learn more about congressional operations. Congressmen, as well, receive supplementary staffing funds to permit the appointment (generally during the summer) of a Lyndon B. Johnson Congressional Intern (normally reserved for recent college graduates and teachers), and a Senior Citizen Intern. The officers of the House and Senate, along with several of the congressional support agencies, sponsor orientation programs for these congressional interns and fellows to acquaint them with congressional operations and with public policy research techniques.

**49. Who are congressional pages? What are their duties and responsibilities? What facilities does Congress provide for them?**

Congressional pages are boys and girls, numbering about 100, who are in their third year of high school, and who serve primarily as messengers in the House and Senate.

The page program in the House is supervised by the House Page Board and administered by the House Doorkeeper. In the Senate, the party secretaries and the Sergeant at Arms have responsibility for the administration of the program. In addition, there is supervised housing for pages in the Thomas P. O'Neill House Office Building.

The House and Senate each have page schools located in the Library of Congress. The House operates its own school, hiring its own teachers, while the Board of Education of the District of Columbia manages the Senate page school. The college preparatory curriculum includes additional programs, trips, and resources using facilities in Washington, DC. Typically, the page schools meet during the mornings so that pages will be available for work during Chamber sessions later in the day.