CHAPTER 12

Congress

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Politics in Action: Governing in Congress (pp. 363–364)
   A. Congress is the central policymaking branch and the principal representative branch.
   B. Congress’s tasks become more difficult each year.

II. The Representatives and Senators (pp. 364–367)
   A. The Job
   B. The Members
   C. Why Aren’t There More Women in Congress?

III. Congressional Elections (pp. 367–374)
   A. Who Wins Elections?
      1. **Incumbents** are individuals who already hold office.
      2. Incumbents usually win.
   B. The Advantages of Incumbents
      1. Advertising
      2. Credit Claiming
         a. **Casework** is helping constituents as individuals.
         b. The **pork barrel** is the mighty list of federal projects, grants, and contracts available to cities, businesses, colleges, and institutions.
      3. Position-Taking
      4. Weak Opponents
      5. Campaign Spending
   C. The Role of Party Identification
   D. Defeating Incumbents
   E. Open Seats
   F. Stability and Change

IV. How Congress Is Organized to Make Policy (pp. 374–385)
   A. American Bicameralism
      1. A **bicameral legislature** is a legislature divided into two houses.
      2. The House
         a. The House is more institutionalized and less anarchic than the Senate.
         b. The **House Rules Committee** reviews most bills coming from a House committee before they go to the full House.
      3. The Senate
         a. The Senate is less disciplined and centralized than the House.
b. **Filibusters** allow unlimited debate in the Senate until a vote for cloture halts a filibuster.

B. Congressional Leadership
   1. The House
      a. The **Speaker of the House** is the most important leadership position in the House.
      b. The **majority leader** is responsible for scheduling bills and rounding up votes on behalf of the party.
      c. The party **whips** carry the word to party troops and help round up votes on behalf of the party.
      d. The **minority leader** is responsible for party cohesion among the minority party members.
   2. The Senate
      a. The vice president of the United States is the president of the Senate.
      b. Power is widely dispersed in the Senate.
   3. Congressional Leadership in Perspective

C. The Committees and Subcommittees
   1. Types of committees
      a. **Standing committees** are formed to handle bills in different policy areas.
      b. **Joint committees** exist in a few policy areas and are composed of both House and Senate members.
      c. **Conference committees** are formed when the Senate and House pass a particular bill in different forms.
      d. **Select committees** are appointed for a specific purpose.
   2. The Committees at Work: Legislation and Oversight
      a. All bills go through a committee that has considerable power over the fate of the bill.
      b. **Legislative oversight** is the process of monitoring the bureaucracy and its administration of policy, usually handled through hearings.
   3. Getting on a Committee
   4. Getting Ahead on the Committee: Chairs and the Seniority System
      a. **Committee chairs** are the most important influencers of the committee agenda.
      b. The **seniority system** is the general rule for selecting chairs, but there are exceptions.

D. Caucuses: The Informal Organization of Congress
   1. A **caucus** is a grouping of members of Congress who share some interest or characteristic.
   2. The explosion of caucuses has made the representation of interests in Congress a more direct process.

E. Congressional Staff
   1. Personal Staff
   2. Committee Staff
   3. Staff Agencies
      a. Congressional Research Service
b. General Accounting Office
c. Congressional Budget Office

V. The Congressional Process (pp. 385–391)
A. Introduction
   1. A bill is a proposed law, drafted in precise, legal language.
   2. Congress has many rules and procedures for passing bills.
B. Presidents and Congress: Partners and Protagonists
   1. The president is often called the chief legislator.
   2. Presidential leadership in Congress is at the margins as a facilitator.
C. Party, Constituency, and Ideology
   1. Party Influence
   2. Polarized Politics
   3. Constituency versus Ideology
D. Lobbyists and Interest Groups

VI. Understanding Congress (pp. 392–394)
A. Congress and Democracy
   1. Representativeness versus Effectiveness
B. Congress and the Scope of Government

VII. Summary (p. 394)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying Chapter 12, you should be able to:

1. Describe the characteristics of our senators and representatives, and the nature of their jobs.
2. Explain what factors have the greatest influence in congressional elections.
3. Explain the structure of power and leadership in the United States Congress, and the role of committees.
4. Identify what members of Congress do and discuss the congressional process and the many influences on legislative decision making.
5. Evaluate Congress in terms of American democracy and the scope of government.
The following exercises will help you meet these objectives:

Objective 1: Describe the characteristics of our senators and representatives, and the nature of their jobs.

1. List seven perks members of Congress receive.
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.
   6.
   7.

2. Describe a "typical" member of Congress in terms of the following categories.
   Sex:
   Race:
   Age:
   Religion:
   Prior Occupation:
   Wealth:

3. What is the difference between descriptive and substantive representation?
   Descriptive:
   Substantive:
4. Give two reasons why women are less likely to run for Congress than men.
   1.
   
   2.

Objective 2: Explain what factors have the greatest influence in congressional elections.

1. List and explain five advantages incumbents have over their opponents in congressional elections.
   1.
   
   2.
   
   3.
   
   4.
   
   5.

2. What is the difference between casework and pork barrel?
   
   Casework:
   
   Pork barrel:

3. What are the main criticisms of political action committees?

4. List and explain three ways that an incumbent might be defeated.
   1.
   
   2.
   
   3.
5. List three criticisms of term limitations.

1.

2.

3.

Objective 3: Explain the structure of power and leadership in the United States Congress, and the role of committees.

1. What are the main functions of the House Rules Committee?

2. List four formal powers of the Speaker of the House.

1.

2.

3.

4.

3. List the four types of congressional committees.

1.

2.

3.

4.
4. What is legislative oversight?

5. How does the seniority system work?

6. What is the difference between the personal staff and the committee staff?

7. List three congressional staff agencies.
   1.
   2.
   3.

Objective 4: Identify what members of Congress do and discuss the congressional process and the many influences on legislative decision making.

1. Draw a diagram of how a bill becomes a law.

2. List the ten times a president must usually win in order to hope for final passage of his or her proposed legislation.
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.
3. Give two reasons why the congressional parties have become more ideologically polarized.
   1.

   2.

4. What is the difference between trustees, instructed delegates, and politicos?
   Trustees:

   Instructed Delegates:

   Politicos:

5. List three ways Congress can frustrate the activities of lobbyists.
   1.

   2.

   3.
Objective 5: Evaluate Congress in terms of American democracy and the scope of government.

1. Present the arguments of supporters and critics on the effectiveness of Congress.
   
   Supporters:
   
   Critics:
   
2. How does the organization of Congress contribute to the expanding scope of government?

**KEY TERMS**

*Identify and describe:*

- incumbents

- casework

- pork barrel

- bicameral legislature

- House Rules Committee

- filibuster

- Speaker of the House
majority leader

whips

minority leader

standing committees

joint committees

conference committees

select committees

legislative oversight

committee chairs

seniority system

caucus

bill
Compare and contrast:

casework and pork barrel

majority leader, minority leader, and whips

standing committees and select committees

joint committees and conference committees

committee chairs and seniority system

Name that term:

1. They usually win congressional elections.

_________________________

2. This describes the two house structure of Congress.

_________________________

3. This is unlimited debate in the U.S. Senate.

_________________________

4. This group reviews most of the bills coming from a House committee before they go to the full House.

_________________________

5. He or she exercises substantial control over which bills get assigned to which committees in the House.

_________________________
6. This monitoring process is handled mainly through congressional hearings.

_________________________

7. This is a grouping of members of Congress sharing some interest.

_________________________

8. This is a proposed law, drafted in precise, legal language.

_________________________

USING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Investigate one or more of the members of Congress from your state or congressional district. Find out about their membership on congressional committees and their leadership positions. Also find out whether or not one of your members might be considered a policy entrepreneur and why. See how well your representatives are doing in the media, and whether or not they have achieved a reputation for servicing their constituency and representing it adequately in Washington. Do your representatives tend to act as trustees, delegates, or politicos on particular issues? Profile your representatives or senators in terms of how well they seem to be performing their many duties.

2. Study the legislative history of a particular law in a particular policy area. Trace the law from its original sources to its enactment. Try to find out when and where the bill originated, where its support came from (the president, interest groups, etc.), how it was altered by congressional committees, who voted for it, and whether or not the president actually signed it into law. Assess how long the process took from beginning to end and how much the law changed during the process. How did the final product compare with the original intent? Evaluate the legislative process in terms of this particular law and your perspective on how the system works.
MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the correct answer:

1. The United States House of Representatives has ______ members.
   a. 638
   b. 100
   c. 435
   d. 80
   e. 535

2. The Constitution specifies that members of the House must be _____ years of age; senators must be_____ years of age.
   a. 25; 35
   b. 35; 45
   c. 18; 25
   d. 30; 50
   e. 25; 30

3. Descriptive representation refers to
   a. representing the interests of groups.
   b. serving constituents through pork barrel projects.
   c. representing constituents by mirroring their personal, politically relevant characteristics.
   d. living in the geographical area of one’s constituents.
   e. All of the above

4. Which of the following statements about Political Action Committees (PACs) is FALSE?
   a. PACs contribute about one-fourth of the funds raised by candidates for Congress.
   b. PACs sometimes make contributions after an election.
   c. Challengers receive more PAC money than incumbents.
   d. PACs make contributions to candidates because they want access to policymakers.
   e. None of the above

5. Which of the following is NOT one of the three primary activities that members of Congress engage in to increase the probability of their reelection?
   a. Advertising
   b. Credit claiming
   c. Position taking
   d. Oversight
   e. None of the above; oversight is a form of position taking.
6. Members of Congress use their virtually unlimited franking privileges to
   a. pay staff salaries.
   b. travel to their home states and districts.
   c. hire interns.
   d. communicate with constituents.
   e. get research services from the Library of Congress.

7. Federal grants and contracts that members of Congress try to obtain for their constituents
   are collectively referred to as
   a. pork barrel.
   b. casework.
   c. public service.
   d. perquisites.
   e. affirmative action.

8. In *U.S. Term Limits, Inc. et. al. v. Thorton et. al.*, the Supreme Court ruled that
   a. state-imposed term limits were constitutional.
   b. state-imposed term limits were unconstitutional.
   c. states were required to limit the terms of members of Congress.
   d. state-imposed term limits were constitutional, but only if they permitted members
      of Congress to serve at least three consecutive terms.
   e. state-imposed term limits were constitutional, but only if they permitted members
      of Congress to serve at least four consecutive terms.

9. A bicameral legislature is one that
   a. uses committees.
   b. has two houses.
   c. is elected.
   d. holds biennial sessions.
   e. is reelected every two years.

10. Articles of impeachment must be passed by
    a. either the House or the Senate.
    b. both the House and the Senate.
    c. the Senate.
    d. the House.
    e. the Supreme Court.

11. Setting the legislative agenda in the Senate is the responsibility of
    a. the Rules committee.
    b. the president of the Senate.
    c. party leaders.
    d. the minority leader.
    e. the Speaker.
12. What is the vice president’s only constitutionally defined job?
   a. President of the Senate
   b. Majority leader
   c. Party whip
   d. Minority leader
   e. Speaker of the House

13. Which of the following is an example of a House standing committee?
   a. Agriculture
   b. Armed Services
   c. Judiciary
   d. Ways and Means
   e. All of the above

14. Members of Congress seek committees that will help them achieve each of the following goals EXCEPT
   a. reelection.
   b. influence in Congress.
   c. a salary increase.
   d. opportunities to make policy in areas they think are important.
   e. opportunities to make policy in areas important to their constituents.

15. Congressional reforms of the 1970s
   a. professionalized the operation of Congress and made it much more efficient.
   b. decentralized power and democratized Congress.
   c. were aimed at rooting out scandal and corruption.
   d. ended the two-party monopoly of Congress and brought new parties into Congress.
   e. All of the above

16. Personal staff help members of Congress with
   a. constituent problems.
   b. drafting legislation.
   c. negotiating agreements.
   d. All of the above
   e. None of the above

17. The Government Accountability Office (GAO)
   a. performs oversight functions by reviewing the activities of the executive branch to ensure it is complying with congressional intent.
   b. sets government standards for accounting, provides legal opinions, and settles claims against the government.
   c. analyzes the president’s budget and makes economic projections about the performance of the economy.
   d. Both a and b
   e. All of the above
18. Successful presidential leadership of Congress requires
   a. Congress and the president to belong to the same political party.
   b. the president to act as a facilitator, working at the margins of coalition building.
   c. a powerful president able to convince members of Congress to follow his policy program.
   d. presidents to successfully lobby members of Congress to vote for the president’s program.
   e. strict control over the president’s party members.

19. When voting on labor issues,
   a. Democrats lean toward the side of unions.
   b. Republicans lean toward the side of unions.
   c. Democrats lean toward the side of business.
   d. Republicans lean toward the side of business.
   e. Both a and d

20. The English politician and philosopher Edmund Burke favored the concept of legislators as ________, using their best judgment to make policy in the interests of the people.
    a. constituent robots
    b. trustees
    c. instructed delegates
    d. politicos
    e. judges

TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

Circle the correct answer:

1. The typical member of the House of Representatives serves on six committees and subcommittees; the typical senator is a member of ten committees. T / F

2. There are 535 members of Congress. T / F

3. House incumbents tend to be more vulnerable in election contests than Senate incumbents. T / F

4. Helping a constituent obtain a Social Security check is a form of casework. T / F

5. The House of Representatives is more institutionalized, centralized, and hierarchical than the Senate. T / F

6. The Rules Committee is unique to the House. T / F

7. The most powerful leader in Congress is the Speaker of the House. T / F

8. Select committees have membership drawn from both houses of Congress. T / F