

Congress (1): Representation ("the Electoral Connection")

Module 7, Lecture 1

Shifting Gears: The *Branches* of Government (Discussions of the President and the Courts Will Follow Similar Pattern)

Resources at the disposal of each branch of government

- **Constituency**: connections between each branch of government and the citizenry (*broader than definition used in text*)
- **Organization**—structure of the branch of government so that it can serve its constituencies

Overview: Balance of Power Between Congress and the President

- 19th Century: Congress dominant
 - President viewed as chief clerk
- 20th Century (particularly 1933-1960s): President dominant
 - The rise of the social welfare state and the national security state
 - Federal government's role shifted to providing goods and services
- Today: Conflict between Congress and President with neither dominant
 - "Divided Government" (different parties controlling different branches of government) the norm
 - Hyper-partisan behavior in Congress (and presidents seeking to "triangulate")

House & Senate: Differences in Representation

- Bicameral system (two chambers)
 - Each state has two Senators
 - Representation in the House determined by state population
- Different models of representation
 - Senate: states, with long terms
 - House: districts, with short terms
 - Leadership has more power in the House
 - More (though declining) evidence of bipartisanship in the Senate

Representation

- Notions of representation
 - Sociological: representative shares characteristics, background and interests with constituents
 - Agency: representative has incentives to act in the constituents' interests
- Many members of Congress seek to represent people outside of their constituencies
 - Raise money outside their districts
 - May hope to be elected in the future by a different constituency
 - Geography only a part of the story

Women and Minority Representation in the U.S. Congress

FIGURE 3-1 Women, African Americans, and Latinos in the U.S. Congress, 1971-2016

Growing racial and ethnic diversity in Congress
Number of nonwhite House and Senate members by race/ethnicity

Year	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American
1979	38	10	10	10
1989	41	11	11	11
1999	43	12	12	12
2009	45	13	13	13
2014	47	14	14	14
2015	48	15	15	15
2016	49	16	16	16

Note: The data do not include nonvoting delegates or commissioners. Figures represent the makeup of Congress on the first day of the session. Asian includes Pacific Islanders. For the 112th Congress, Sen. Kamala Harris is included in both Asian and Black categories and Rep. Adriano Espaillat is included in both Hispanic and Black categories.
Source: CQ Roll Call, Congressional Research Service, Brookings Institution.
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Drawing Districts

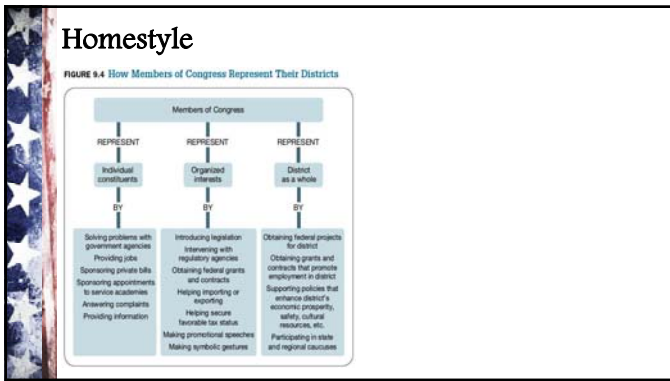
- Reapportionment (remember concept of single-member plurality elections)
 - Vast majority of incumbents in safe seats represent districts where the majority of voters are from the same party as they are
 - The critical election in these districts is the primary
 - Gerrymandering: Redrawing legislative district boundary lines to provide political advantage or disadvantage
 - California's Citizens Reapportionment Commission
- Districts are drawn tactically = gerrymandering
 - Incumbency protection
 - Partisan gerrymandering
 - Majority-minority districts

The Original Gerrymander

Elbridge Gerry

How do Members of Congress Maintain their Connections to Constituencies? The "Electoral Connection"

- Incumbency
 - Members of Congress have many tools to keep them in office
 - Constituency services
 - Name recognition and title
- Homestyle
 - Direct Patronage
 - Pork-barrel spending
 - Patronage
 - Some local and state elected officials have jobs to offer to constituents
 - Constituent services
 - Private bills



The U.S. Congress in Comparative Perspective: Unique Relative to Other National Legislative Bodies

- It can say “yes” and “no”
- It has independent resources to compete with the Executive
- It governs
 - It must act for government to exist
 - It shapes the outcome of bills
 - It regulates the implementation of laws (oversight)
- It retains autonomous powers over the other branches

In Sum

- Power of Congress – and particularly the House of Representatives – is connection to the people
 - House of Representatives designed to be the “people’s house”
- Connection to the electorate mediated by redistricting (and by party)
- Members of Congress have autonomous powers to connect with constituencies
- Congress is unique among legislative bodies globally
