



HOW CONGRESS WORKS: STRUCTURE & ORGANIZATION



I. House-Senate Differences

HOUSE	SENATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 435 members • Very formal with lots of rules • 2 year terms • 100% members up for re-election • Policy Specialists • Speaker of the House <u>very</u> powerful • Scheduling/rules controlled by majority party • Debate limited to 1 hour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 members • Very informal chamber • 6 year terms • 1/3 members up for re-election • Policy Generalists • Scheduling/rules agreed to by majority & minority leaders • Filibuster – delay tactic (usually long speech) to prevent a floor vote on a bill • Unlimited floor debate unless cloture invoked

II. Party Leadership – See *House Leadership* and *Senate Leadership* Charts

III. Types of Committees

- **Standing Committees** - Permanent committees in Congress to which bills are referred
 - **Subcommittees** – formed to tackle very specific tasks within the jurisdiction of the full committees
- **Select or Special Committees** - groups appointed for a limited purpose and limited duration
- **Joint Committees** - includes members of both chambers to conduct studies or perform housekeeping tasks
- **Conference Committee** - includes members of House & Senate to work out differences between similar bills

IV. House Standing Committees

Examples:

- a) *Appropriations* – Committee (both House and Senate) that grants federal funding to government programs and other legislation
- b) Ways & Means – Deals with tax policy (example federal income tax)
- c) Rules

V. House Rules Committee

a) Acts as Traffic Cop for bills from committee

b) **Functions of the HRC:**

1. Place bills on calendar for floor debate
2. Set time limits for debate
3. Decides whether amendments may be added to the bill during floor debate
 - “open rule” - amendments may be added
 - “closed rule” - no amendments

VI. Senate Standing Committee

a) **Armed Services** - military

b) **Finance** – taxes, social security

c) **Judiciary** – vets presidential appointments to the court

VII. Legislative Committees: Function & Purpose

1. Consider bill (“mark-up” bills)
2. Maintain oversight of executive agencies
3. Conduct investigations