How Congress Works Part 1:  
Structure and Organization

Purpose: The United States Congress, vested with the legislative authority of the federal government, is a mammoth institution of five hundred and thirty five voting members. Yet, how Congress gets the business of the American people done is often a mystery. In the first of two lesson plans on how Congress works, students will explore the “nuts and bolts” of the structure and organization including the role of party leadership positions as well as the function and purpose of legislative committees. This lesson may be used as a stand alone plan or in conjunction with How Congress Works Part II: The Legislative Process.

Objectives:
1. Students will evaluate the meaning and relevance of quotations about Congress.
2. Students will analyze the demographic data of Congress.
3. Students will compare and contrast the rules and culture of the House and the Senate.
4. Students will define the major party leadership positions in Congress and identify the current leaders.
5. Students will investigate the structure, purpose, and function of legislative committees.
6. Students will apply their knowledge of congressional committees by conducting a committee hearing role play.
7. Students will interpret and analyze political cartoons.

Key Words:
- appropriations
- caucus
- conference committee
- demographic profile
- hearing
- joint committee
- majority leader
- minority leader
- party whips
- President of the Senate
- President Pro Tempore
- rules committee
- select committee
- Speaker of the House
- standing committee
- standing committee

Materials:
1. Student handout: Quotes About Congress
2. Student handout: Demographic Profile: 110th Congress
3. Student handout: House v. Senate
4. Teacher key: House v. Senate
5. Overhead: House-Senate Differences
7. Teacher key: Scavenger Hunt: Party Leadership
8. Overhead: Congressional Committees Quotation
10. Student handout: Types of Committees
11. Teacher key: Types of Committees
12. Overhead: Types of Committees
13. Student handout: Making Connections: Congressional Committee Hearing Simulation
14. Student handout or overhead: Political Cartoons
15. Student handout: The Congress
16. Article: Republican Contract with America
17. Article: Congress Convenes with Democrats in Power
18. Student handout: Party Leadership and the Legislative Agenda in the House of Representatives

Procedure:

1. Warm-up: Analyzing Quotes About Congress – Pass out the student handout Quotes About Congress and divide the class into small groups. In their teams, students should discuss each quotation and address the questions below:
   a. What does the quote mean (i.e. your interpretation)?
   b. What does the author seem to think of Congress (i.e. what’s her/his bias)?
   c. What does the quote show us about how Congress works?

2. Think-Pair-Share: Who’s in Congress? (demographics) – How representative of us is the representative branch? Pass out the Demographic Profile: 110th Congress
   a. Write the term “demographics” on the board and ask students to define its meaning.
      demographics - selected population characteristics as used in government, marketing or opinion research; commonly-used demographics include race, age, level of education, gender, religion, political affiliation and occupation.
   b. Ask students to work with a partner or small group to analyze demographic data on the 110th Congress, and discuss the “Questions for Discussion.” Each individual member of the group should record her/his own answers.
   c. Bring students back into a full class discussion. Pose the following “big picture” questions:
      - Based on the demographic data provided, what generalizations can we make about the 110th Congress (record answers on the board)?
      - How representative of us is the representative branch?
      - Does it matter if members of Congress match up demographically with the general population? Defend your answer.
   Note: There is a less detailed slide on the Powers of Congress PowerPoint

3. Differences Between the House and Senate – Pass out the House v. Senate graphic organizer and project the slide/overhead House-Senate Differences.
   a. Briefly discuss the key differences between the House and Senate.
   b. Place students in small groups and ask them to brainstorm reasons behind each of these differences (Hint: students may consider the Founder’s intent in the Constitution as well as practicality and common sense).
   c. Have each group share their findings with the rest of the class.

4. Scavenger Hunt: The Organization of Congress – Party Leadership - Handout the Scavenger Hunt: Party Leadership graphic organizer. Place students into small teams, and ask them to research the current leader, her/his party and state as well as a description of the major roles and responsibilities associated with each position.
   - Optional Activity: Assign each team a particular leadership position and have them present their findings to the class.
What Do Congressional Committees Do? – This activity introduces students to the structure, purpose and work of legislative committees. Teachers may choose to use the How Congress Works PowerPoint and/or overhead slides.

a. Project via PowerPoint or overhead slide the Congressional Committee Quotation. Ask students to explain what Wilson meant in the quote (Sample response: The speeches or dramatic debates on the floor of Congress are often for show put on for the public’s benefit; whereas the real nuts-and-bolts work of Congress takes place in legislative committees.)

b. Project via PowerPoint or overhead slide Congressional Committees: Function & Purpose. Discuss each function and ask students to brainstorm examples for each. Sample Responses:
   - Consider or “mark-up” bills - Senate Judiciary Committee drafts the USA PATRIOT Act
   - Maintain oversight of executive agencies - House Armed Services Committee considers funding for the Iraq War
   - Conduct Investigations - Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee investigates the failures of government response before, during and after Hurricane Katrina

c. Distribute the Types of Committees student handout and project via PowerPoint or overhead

   Long Version:
   - Divide the class into five teams: 1) Standing Committees, 2) Subcommittees, 3) Select Committees, 4) Joint Committees, and 5) Conference Committees.
   - Using their textbooks and online sources, ask students to describe the assigned committee and provide several examples from each chamber.

   Online Resources:
   - [http://www.house.gov/house/CommitteeWWW.shtml](http://www.house.gov/house/CommitteeWWW.shtml)
   - [http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/committees/d_three_sections_with_teasers/committees_home.htm](http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/committees/d_three_sections_with_teasers/committees_home.htm)
   - [http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate/sclinks.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate/sclinks.html)

   - Students may then present their research to the whole class OR you may divide the class again into at least 5 groups with one member of the original teams in each new group. Students will then teach the other group members about the types of congressional committees.

   Short Version:
   - Project the How Congress Works PowerPoint or Types of Committees overhead and have students discuss the information and fill in their graphic organizer.

Making Connections: Congressional Committee Hearing Simulation - In this activity, students will apply their knowledge of the work of Committees. Then conduct the simulation.

Wrap Up: Political Cartoons - Break students into groups. Give each group a cartoon, have them analyze and present. Or you may choose to project the political cartoons via overhead or PowerPoint.

Ask students to interpret the cartoon:

a. Describe what’s going on in the political cartoon (Who? What? When? Where?)
b. Identify any symbols (ex: an elephant to represent the Republican Party) portrayed in the cartoon and analyze what they represent.
c. What is the artist’s message in the cartoon? What do you think is its purpose?
d. Do you agree or disagree with the cartoonist's message? Explain your answer.
e. In what ways does this cartoon inform us about how Congress works (ex: party leadership, committee function)?

Appendix: How Congress Works Part I PowerPoint – a resource for teachers that includes many of the important content elements of the lesson.

Extension Activities:
1. The Congress, A Ken Burns Documentary – This film by Ken Burns does an excellent job documenting the history and evolution of Congress as it delves into the institution’s inner workings as well as the influence of political parties and influential members.
   a. Pass out The Congress student handout and show the Ken Burns documentary.
   b. Class discussion questions after the film:
      - In what ways has Congress changed over the last 200 years?
      - How important have party leaders (ex: Speakers of the House, Majority/Minority leaders) been to the operation of and policymaking of Congress over the years?
      - How does the current Congress and its leaders compare with those in the past six eras?
   Note: The Congress is available for purchase through the websites below:
      http://www.shoppbs.org/home/index.jsp
      http://www.bestprices.com/cgi-bin/vlink/841887051422IE.html?id=3tkaszD9

2. Party Leaders and the Legislative Agenda: Republican Contract with America and the Democratic Agenda in 2007 - This activity highlights two momentous events in the House of Representatives in the last decade: the Republican Party’s reemergence as the majority party in 1994 and the Democratic Party’s momentous recapturing the majority in 2006, both as a result of victories in midterm elections. Students will be asked to evaluate the power and influence of party leaders in the House and evaluate the majority party’s legislative agenda.
   a. Ask students to read the articles Republican Contract with America and Congress Convenes with Democrats in Power.
   c. Place students in small groups and ask them to discuss the corresponding questions.
   d. Class Debriefing Questions:
      - In what ways is the legislative agenda laid out by the Republicans and Speaker Newt Gingrich in 1995 similar to that of the Democrats and Speaker Nancy Pelosi in 2007?
      - In what ways are these legislative agendas different?
      - Why do you think that party leaders in the Senate did not adopt such ambitious agendas for their prospective parties in 1995 and 2007? What does that tell us about differences between the House and Senate?
Quotes about Congress

Directions – Your team will analyze the quotations below and address the following questions: a) What does it mean (i.e. your interpretation)? b) What does the author seem to think of Congress (i.e. what’s her/his bias)? c) What does the quote show us about how Congress works?

1. “And the thing about my jokes is, they don’t hurt anybody. You can take ’em or leave ’em - you can say they’re funny or they’re terrible or they’re good, or whatever, but you can just pass ’em by. But with Congress, every time they make a joke, it’s a law! And every time they make a law, it's a joke!”
   ~ Will Rogers (1879-1935), journalist, humorist and social commentator

2. “I have wondered at times what the Ten Commandments would have looked like if Moses had run them through the US congress”
   ~ Ronald Reagan (1911-2004), movie actor, 40th President

3. “If the present Congress errs in too much talking, how can it be otherwise in a body to which the people send one hundred and fifty lawyers, whose trade it is to question everything, yield nothing, and talk by the hour?”
   ~ Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), author, statesman, 3rd President

4. “Congress is functioning the way the Founding Fathers intended - not very well. They understood that if you move too quickly, our democracy will be less responsible to the majority. . . . I don't think it's the function of Congress to function well. It should drag its heels on the way to decision.”
   ~ Barber B. Conable, Jr. (1922-2003), U.S. Congressman, president of the World Bank

5. “You see, in Washington they have these bodies, Senate and the House of Representatives. That is for the convenience of the visitors. If there is nothing funny happening in one, there is sure to be in the other, and in case one body passes a good bill, why, the other can see it in time and kill it.”
   ~ Will Rogers (1879-1935), journalist, humorist and social commentator

6. “Congress is continually appointing fact-finding committees, when what we really need are some fact-facing committees.”
   ~ Roger Allen (1957- ), science fiction author

7. “Can any of you seriously say the Bill of Rights could get through Congress today? It wouldn't even get out of committee.”
   ~ F. Lee Bailey (1933- ), former defense attorney (defended O.J. Simpson prior to his disbarment)

8. “Reader, suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself.”
   ~ Mark Twain (1835-1910), American humorist, satirist and writer

9. “Congress is so strange. A man gets up to speak and says nothing. Nobody listens - and then everybody disagrees.”
   ~ Boris Marshalov (1902-67), Russian observer

10. “They say women talk too much. If you have worked in Congress you know that the filibuster was invented by men.”
    ~ Clare Boothe Luce (1903-87), journalist, playwright social activist politician
Demographic Profile: 110th Congress

Directions: Use the profiles of the House of Representatives, the Senate and the general population in the chart to help you in answering the questions that follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Categories</th>
<th>House of Representatives</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>General Population (1995 stats)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party Association:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>233 (54%)</td>
<td>49 (49%)</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>202 (46%)</td>
<td>49 (49%)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median Age:</strong></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>30.9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestants</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>&gt;1% (1)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/None</td>
<td>&gt;1% (1)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>10% (42)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>6% (4)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>&gt;1% (4)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Americans</td>
<td>&gt;1% (1)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Military Service:</strong></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10% (approximate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>*41%</td>
<td>*Combined House &amp; Senate – 2001 data</td>
<td>*0.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Businesspersons</td>
<td>*36%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Officials</td>
<td>*36%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>*18%</td>
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Questions for Discussion

1. Identify at least six characteristics of a typical representative in the 110th Congress based on the data above.

2. List three groups of people who might have reason to question whether or not the Congress adequately represents their interests. Explain each.

3. Identify and explain several differences between the make-up of Congress and the general public.

4. How important is it to elect someone of the same statistical profile as the majority in the district in order to gain good representation? Provide pros and cons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>Reason(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# House v. Senate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>Reason(s) [Examples Below]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>435 members; 2 yr terms</td>
<td>100 members; 6 yr terms</td>
<td>• House closer to the people with representation based on population and 2 yr terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Senate smaller, more deliberative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low turnover</td>
<td>Moderate turnover</td>
<td>• Incumbents win re-election over 90% of the time in the House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Senate races are state-wide and more competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker bill referral hard to</td>
<td>Referral decisions easily</td>
<td>• Difficult for individual members to challenge the Speaker of the House; members limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenge</td>
<td>challenged</td>
<td>• Members of the Senate more independent operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling/rules controlled</td>
<td>Scheduling/rules agreed to by</td>
<td>• House - majority party tightly controls Leadership and Rules with little minority party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by majority party; powerful</td>
<td>majority &amp; minority leaders</td>
<td>• Senate – much more cooperation between parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate limited to 1 hour</td>
<td>Unlimited debate unless</td>
<td>• Impractical with 435 members to have unlimited debate in the House; nothing would get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cloture invoked</td>
<td>• Senate has only 100 members; more time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members policy specialists</td>
<td>Members policy generalists</td>
<td>• House – in order to get re-elected, members must become experts in policies that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Senators represent diverse interest of an entire state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizes tax &amp; revenue</td>
<td>Emphasizes foreign policy</td>
<td>• All tax and revenue bills must originate in the House; much of public policy decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policy</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Senate “advice and consent” of ambassadors, cabinet; ratify treaties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More formal &amp; impersonal</td>
<td>More informal &amp; personal</td>
<td>• House much bigger, need strict rules to be efficient; members 1 of 435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Senate smaller, more collegial; members 1 of only 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## House-Senate Differences

<table>
<thead>
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<th><strong>House</strong></th>
<th><strong>Senate</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>435 members; 2 year terms</td>
<td>100 members; 6 year terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low turnover</td>
<td>Moderate turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker bill referral hard to challenge</td>
<td>Referral decisions easily challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling/rules controlled by majority party; powerful Rules Committee</td>
<td>Scheduling/rules agreed to by majority &amp; minority leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate limited to 1 hour</td>
<td>Unlimited debate unless cloture invoked</td>
</tr>
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<td>Members policy specialists</td>
<td>Members policy generalists</td>
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<td>Emphasizes foreign policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More formal &amp; impersonal</td>
<td>More informal &amp; personal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Directions** – Your task is to research the major leadership positions in the House and Senate and include the following information in the table below: 1) identify the current leader, her/his party and state, 2) briefly describe the major roles and responsibilities of each position. The websites below are excellent resources:

http://www.congresslink.org/print_basics_110leaders.htm
http://www.ncsl.org/programs/leaders/LRDRoles.htm#pos
http://www.congresslink.org/print_basics_leadershippositions.htm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name(s)</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**House of Representatives**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Position</th>
<th>Current Leader</th>
<th>Roles/Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senate President of the Senate</td>
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<tr>
<td>House Majority Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>House Minority Leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Senate Majority Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>House Majority Whip</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senate Minority Whip</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senate Minority Whip</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
"Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work."

- Woodrow Wilson (1885)
CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES:
FUNCTION & PURPOSE

#1: Consider Bills
(“mark-up” bills)

#2: Oversight of Executive

#3: Conduct Investigations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>House Examples</th>
<th>Senate Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcommittee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Select or Special Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint Committee</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Committee</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Online Resources:
http://www.house.gov/house/CommitteeWWW.shtml
http://clerk.house.gov/committee_info/index.html
http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/committees/d_three_sections_with_teasers/committees_home.htm
http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/ senate/sclinks.html
# Types of Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>House Examples</th>
<th>Senate Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Standing Committee      | Permanent panel with full legislative functions and oversight responsibilities | ● Appropriations – charged with setting specific expenditures for the federal government  
                           |                                                                          | ● Armed Services – oversees US military & Dept. of Defense   
                           |                                                                          | ● Rules – the “traffic cop” of the HR, determines under what rules bills will come to the floor  
                           |                                                                          | ● Foreign Relations – provides foreign policy leadership and considers important treaties   
                           |                                                                          | ● Ways & Means – jurisdiction over all taxes, tariffs and revenue raising measures          | ● Judiciary – conducts hearings and makes confirmation recommendations to the full Senate re: presidential appointments to the federal bench |
| Subcommittee            | Formed to tackle very specific tasks within the jurisdiction of the full committees | ● Livestock, Dairy & Poultry Subcommittee (Agriculture Committee)             | ● National Parks Subcommittee (Energy & Natural Resources Committee) |
                           |                                                                          | ● Early Childhood, Elementary & Secondary Education Subcommittee (Education & Labor Committee) | ● Clean Air & Nuclear Safety Subcommittee (Environment & Public Works Committee) |
                           |                                                                          | ● Space & Aeronautics Subcommittee (Science & Technology Committee)            | ● Health Care Subcommittee (Finance Committee) |
| Select or Special Committee | Groups appointed for a limited purpose and limited duration            | ● Select Committee on Energy Independence & Global Warming                   | ● Select Committee on Ethics  
                           |                                                                          | ● Select Committee on Intelligence                                             | ● Select Committee on Intelligence |
| Joint Committee         | Includes members of both chambers to conduct studies or perform housekeeping tasks | ● Joint Economic Committee                                                 | ● Joint Economic Committee  
                           |                                                                          | ● Joint Committee on Printing                                                  | ● Joint Committee on Printing   
                           |                                                                          | ● Joint Committee on Taxation                                                   | ● Joint Committee on Taxation    |
| Conference Committee    | Includes members of House & Senate to work out differences between similar bills | Conference committees formed as needed                                      | Conference committees formed as needed |

Resources:
- [http://www.house.gov/house/CommitteeWWW.shtml](http://www.house.gov/house/CommitteeWWW.shtml)
- [http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/committees/d_three_sections_with_teasers/committees_home.htm](http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/committees/d_three_sections_with_teasers/committees_home.htm)
- [http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate/sclinks.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate/sclinks.html)
Types of Committees

- **Standing Committees** - permanent panel with full legislative functions and oversight responsibilities
  - **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
Making Connections
Congressional Committee Hearing Simulation

Directions: This lesson enables students to actively participate in a simulation of a congressional committee hearing. Each member of the class takes on the role of a committee member or witness.

Simulation: Congressional Committee Hearing

Stage 1: Pre-simulation
1. As a class, choose a particular issue/topic to be investigated by your committee [the teacher may also choose the issue].
   a. The issue/topic may be national in scope and currently in the news (ex: Iraq War, global climate change)
   b. Or students may choose an issue that is directly relevant to their community or school (ex: No Child Left Behind and high stakes testing, school funding)
2. Choose an appropriate House or Senate committee that would be concerned about this issue (ex: Iraq War – Senate Armed Services Committee; global climate change – House Select Committee on Energy Independence & Global Warming

Stage 2: Preparation Phase
1. Students choose or are assigned roles.
   Simulation Roles:
   a. Committee members
      i. House roles – each student declares her/his state, district and party affiliation
      ii. Senate roles – each student declares her/his state and party affiliation
   b. “Experts” in the field (need at least one from each side of the issue) – ex: scientist, intelligence expert
   c. Concerned citizens affected by the issue (students create the character) – ex: family member of soldiers, parent of school age student
   d. Government official – ex: Secretary of Defense, director of the EPA
   e. Interest group representatives from both sides (optional) – ex: Defense of the Family, National Education Association
2. Majority party elects committee chairperson; minority party elects its senior member.
3. Students may need to conduct preliminary research related to their roles.

Stage 3: Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing
1. The Chair calls the committee to order.
2. Witnesses called to testify are sworn in.
3. The Chair recognizes members to ask questions to the witnesses (limit one question per member).
4. Committee makes recommendations for how the chamber should proceed on the issue.

Stage 4: Simulation Debriefing – full class discussion
1. What was realistic about this simulation and what was not?
2. How did the committee ultimately make its recommendation?
3. What generalizations can you make about the work of Congressional committees based upon this simulation?
Political Cartoon #1

Title: Resolution
Date: 12/28/06
Artist: Bob Gorrell
Source: http://www.gorrellart.com/

f. Describe what’s going on in the political cartoon (Who? What? When? Where?)?
g. Identify any symbols (ex: an elephant to represent the Republican Party) portrayed in the cartoon and analyze what they represent.
h. What is the artist’s message in the cartoon? What do you think is its purpose?
i. Do you agree or disagree with the cartoonist's message? Explain your answer.
j. In what ways does this cartoon inform us about how Congress works (ex: party leadership, committee function, legislative process)?
1. Describe what’s going on in the political cartoon (Who? What? When? Where?).

2. Identify any symbols (ex: an elephant to represent the Republican Party) portrayed in the cartoon and analyze what they represent.

3. What is the artist’s message in the cartoon? What do you think is its purpose?

4. Do you agree or disagree with the cartoonist's message? Explain your answer.

5. In what ways does this cartoon inform us about how Congress works (ex: party leadership, committee function, legislative process)?

Artist: R.J. Matson, New York Observer & Roll Call
Date: 1/18/07
Source: http://www.cagle.com
Title: Senator Reid Can Handle the Truth
Artist: RJ Matson
Date: 6/18/07  
Source: http://www.politicalcartoons.com

1. Describe what’s going on in the political cartoon (Who? What? When? Where?)

2. Identify any symbols (ex: an elephant to represent the Republican Party) portrayed in the cartoon and analyze what they represent.

3. What is the artist’s message in the cartoon? What do you think is its purpose?

4. Do you agree or disagree with the cartoonist's message? Explain your answer.

5. In what ways does this cartoon inform us about how Congress works (ex: party leadership, committee function, legislative process)?
1. Briefly analyze and provide context for the following quotes re: Congress:
   - “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.” (James Madison)
   - Congress is “the engine of democracy.”
   - Congress takes up “the business of compromise”
   - “Lawyers, always lawyers”
   - Congress is “the great commanding theater of this nation” (Thomas Jefferson)
   - “Stronger than all the armies on earth is an idea whose time has come. The time has come for equal opportunity” (Sen. Everett Dirkson)

2. Chronicle the evolution of Congress (include the important people, events actions of Congress):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. The Builders (1789-1820)</th>
<th>II. The Progressives (1900-1917)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II. The Debaters (1820-1870)</td>
<td>V. “There It Is” (1917-1945)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. The Bosses (1870-1900)</td>
<td>I. The Managers (postwar era)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. In the last twenty years, an analyst of Congress states: “The danger to Congress is the weakening of the two party system.” Discuss why this is true.
REPUBLICAN CONTRACT WITH AMERICA

As Republican Members of the House of Representatives and as citizens seeking to join that body we propose not just to change its policies, but even more important, to restore the bonds of trust between the people and their elected representatives.

That is why, in this era of official evasion and posturing, we offer instead a detailed agenda for national renewal, a written commitment with no fine print.

This year's election offers the chance, after four decades of one-party control, to bring to the House a new majority that will transform the way Congress works. That historic change would be the end of government that is too big, too intrusive, and too easy with the public's money. It can be the beginning of a Congress that respects the values and shares the faith of the American family.

Like Lincoln, our first Republican president, we intend to act "with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right." To restore accountability to Congress. To end its cycle of scandal and disgrace. To make us all proud again of the way free people govern themselves.

On the first day of the 104th Congress, the new Republican majority will immediately pass the following major reforms, aimed at restoring the faith and trust of the American people in their government:

- **FIRST**, require all laws that apply to the rest of the country also apply equally to the Congress;
- **SECOND**, select a major, independent auditing firm to conduct a comprehensive audit of Congress for waste, fraud or abuse;
- **THIRD**, cut the number of House committees, and cut committee staff by one-third;
- **FOURTH**, limit the terms of all committee chairs;
- **FIFTH**, ban the casting of proxy votes in committee;
- **SIXTH**, require committee meetings to be open to the public;
- **SEVENTH**, require a three-fifths majority vote to pass a tax increase;
- **EIGHTH**, guarantee an honest accounting of our Federal Budget by implementing zero base-line budgeting.

Thereafter, within the first 100 days of the 104th Congress, we shall bring to the House Floor the following bills, each to be given full and open debate, each to be given a clear and fair vote and each to be immediately available this day for public inspection and scrutiny.

1. **THE FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT**: A balanced budget/tax limitation amendment and a legislative line-item veto to restore fiscal responsibility to an out-of-control Congress, requiring them to live under the same budget constraints as families and businesses.

2. **THE TAKING BACK OUR STREETS ACT**: An anti-crime package including stronger truth-in-sentencing, "good faith" exclusionary rule exemptions, effective death penalty provisions, and cuts in social spending from this summer's "crime" bill to fund prison construction and additional law enforcement to keep people secure in their neighborhoods and kids safe in their schools.

3. **THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT**: Discourage illegitimacy and teen pregnancy by prohibiting welfare to minor mothers and denying increased AFDC for additional children while on welfare,
cut spending for welfare programs, and enact a tough two-years-and-out provision with work requirements to promote individual responsibility.

4. THE FAMILY REINFORCEMENT ACT: Child support enforcement, tax incentives for adoption, strengthening rights of parents in their children’s education, stronger child pornography laws, and an elderly dependent care tax credit to reinforce the central role of families in American society.

5. THE AMERICAN DREAM RESTORATION ACT: A $500 per child tax credit, begin repeal of the marriage tax penalty, and creation of American Dream Savings Accounts to provide middle class tax relief.

6. THE NATIONAL SECURITY RESTORATION ACT: No U.S. troops under U.N. command and restoration of the essential parts of our national security funding to strengthen our national defense and maintain our credibility around the world.

7. THE SENIOR CITIZENS FAIRNESS ACT: Raise the Social Security earnings limit which currently forces seniors out of the work force, repeal the 1993 tax hikes on Social Security benefits and provide tax incentives for private long-term care insurance to let Older Americans keep more of what they have earned over the years.

8. THE JOB CREATION AND WAGE ENHANCEMENT ACT: Small business incentives, capital gains cut and indexation, neutral cost recovery, risk assessment/cost-benefit analysis, strengthening the Regulatory Flexibility Act and unfunded mandate reform to create jobs and raise worker wages.

9. THE COMMON SENSE LEGAL REFORM ACT: "Loser pays" laws, reasonable limits on punitive damages and reform of product liability laws to stem the endless tide of litigation.

10. THE CITIZEN LEGISLATURE ACT: A first-ever vote on term limits to replace career politicians with citizen legislators.

Further, we will instruct the House Budget Committee to report to the floor and we will work to enact additional budget savings, beyond the budget cuts specifically included in the legislation described above, to ensure that the Federal budget deficit will be less than it would have been without the enactment of these bills.

Respecting the judgment of our fellow citizens as we seek their mandate for reform, we hereby pledge our names to this Contract with America.

Note: This document, authored by Newt Gingrich, Tom Delay and other prominent House Republicans, was released by the Republican party during the 1994 Congressional campaign. The Contract with America became the legislative agenda of the GOP when it took control of the House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years at the beginning of the 104th Congress.

Source: http://www.house.gov/house/Contract/CONTRACT.html
Democrats formally took control of Congress today, as the House and Senate convened with newly elected Democratic majorities and set their sights on quick passage of ethics legislation.

Among the lawmakers being sworn in today was Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA.), the first woman to serve as speaker of the House. She pledged this morning to stick to an ambitious plan to push through legislation on several fronts during the first 100 hours the House is in session. Besides cracking down on what they have called a "culture of corruption" in Washington, House Democrats plan to pass bills raising the minimum wage and promoting stem cell research, among other measures.

In the Senate, where Harry M. Reid (D-NV.) took over as the new majority leader, lawmakers from both parties attended a joint caucus this morning in an effort to set a bipartisan tone before the official opening of the 110th Congress. Reid's office said the meeting was "an opportunity to break through the partisan gridlock that has gripped Washington in recent years."

As the midday oath-taking got underway in the Senate, Vice President Cheney began swearing in senators in groups of four on the Senate floor. Among the first to take their oaths was Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-WV.), 89, who will serve as president pro tempore of the Senate, making him third in the line of succession to the presidency.

Also sworn in by Cheney was Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.), a prospective presidential candidate in the 2008 elections.

In the House, which also convened at noon, Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.), chairman of the body's Democratic Caucus, introduced Pelosi as the party's candidate for speaker of the House. Rep. Adam H. Putnam (R-FL.), chairman of the House Republican Conference, formally nominated Rep. John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) for the same position. The ensuing roll-call vote was considered a formality, with the Democrats holding a 233-202 majority in the House as a result of the November midterm elections.

Indeed, Pelosi was subsequently elected speaker by precisely that margin in a straight party-line vote, with Boehner becoming the new House minority leader. As she awaited the results of the lengthy roll call, Pelosi held her youngest grandchild in her arms while greeting lawmakers who came up to congratulate her. After the vote, Democrats gave her a sustained ovation.

In the Senate, Democrats hold a 51-49 edge, including two independents who caucus with the party. Among those in attendance for the oath-taking was former president Bill Clinton, who startled reporters when he swept through the Senate press gallery on his way to the men's room, Washington Post staff writer Lois Romano reported.

Looking pleased when reporters jumped up to follow him to the men's room door, an ebullient Clinton quipped, "I came here to apply for a job -- you got an opening?" After emerging from the restroom, he said he was on hand for "Hillary's swearing in," but he demurred when queried about when she would announce her candidacy for president.

"Ask her," said Clinton, who then acknowledged that he liked the idea of becoming first spouse. "This is definitely a great day" for the Senate, he said in response to another question.

After this morning's joint Democratic-Republican caucus in the Old Senate Chamber, Reid, 67, said he and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY.), the new Senate minority leader, "believe this is a new day in Washington." He said the first order of business would be bipartisan legislation to reform lobbying practices, a bill he said was "long overdue and absolutely necessary."
Next will be legislation to raise the minimum wage, he said, "and Senator McConnell and I are working to see if we can offer something together on that issue."

McConnell, 64, said the joint caucus "was a chance for many of our members to express some of their quiet frustrations, that we get past the level of partisanship that we've witnessed in recent years and develop stronger personal relationships."

At a swearing-in ceremony for officers of the Congressional Black Caucus, Pelosi, 66, an Italian American mother of five and grandmother of six, pledged to lead the House in a "new direction" toward ending child poverty, strengthening the middle class and improving access to education and health care.

"We are going to make children the centerpiece of this Congress," she said.

Pelosi also vowed to work for full representation in Congress for the District of Columbia, which currently has a delegate in the House who can participate in debate and vote in committee but cannot vote on the House floor.

"This is where so much of the energy for change will begin, as we go through . . . our first 100 hours," Pelosi told the Congressional Black Caucus. "One hundred hours to make this the most honest and open Congress in history; 100 hours to raise the minimum wage, to reduce the cost of college for our students, to make health care more affordable, to make our country safer; 100 hours to promote stem cell research; 100 hours to do that all in a fiscally sound way that does not heap mountains of debt onto future generations, but instead gives future generations what our country is all about: opportunity."

Following the swearing-in ceremony on the House floor, Pelosi and other Democrats planned to celebrate this evening at a concert in Washington's National Building Museum. The $1,000-a-ticket event, hosted by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, features performances by such singers as Tony Bennett and Carole King.

In their first act as the House majority, Democrats said they would introduce a package of rule changes to ban gifts and trips from lobbyists, restrict privately funded junkets and begin to sever the cozy relations between lobbyists and lawmakers that scandalized the last Congress, Washington Post staff writers Jonathan Weisman and Jeffrey H. Birnbaum reported.

But a number of loopholes in the proposal have led ethics watchdogs to complain that lobbying groups would still be able to finance lawmakers' travel as long as those funds were channeled through a nonprofit foundation. In addition, almost all banned perks would still be permitted if given in the context of a campaign fundraiser.

The changes would bar House members or employees from knowingly accepting gifts or travel from a registered lobbyist, foreign agent or lobbyist's client, and lawmakers would no longer be allowed to fly on corporate jets. Congressional travel financed by outside groups would have to be preapproved by the ethics committee and immediately disclosed to the public.

In another set of changes to be voted on in the House tomorrow, lawmakers' pet projects -- known as "earmarks" -- would have to be claimed by their sponsors, who would have to specify who benefits. That measure would apply not only to spending bills but also to tax measures and policy legislation, which in recent years have been larded with narrowly targeted provisions.


**Party Leadership and the Legislative Agenda in the House of Representatives**

*The Republican Contract with America (1994)*

*Congress Convenes with Democrats in Power (2007)*

**Directions:** Discuss the questions below in your group and attach each member’s thesis/bias work to the group evaluation.

1. Identify the thesis [main idea] of each of the two articles.

2. Analyze the philosophy behind, and the specific reforms and bills embodied in, the Republican Contract with America and later amplified by the new GOP majority in the 104th Congress in 1995. Using specific examples, evaluate the success of each of these proposals.

3. Identify and evaluate the merits of principal legislative initiatives of the House Democrats’ “first 100 hours” of the 110th Congress in 2007.
   - How successful do you think Democrats will be in getting these initiatives passed in the Senate and signed by President Bush?

4. Identify similarities and differences between the Republican Contract with America (1994) and the Democrats First 100 Hours (2007).

5. What generalizations can you make about the influence and power of party leaders in the House of Representatives over the legislative agenda of their prospective parties?