

**CHAPTER SUMMARY** \* \* \* \* \* **CHAPTER 5** \* \* \*

# The Organization of Congress

**★ CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP** \*\*\*\*\*

The United States Congress has two chambers—the House of Representatives and the Senate. Each Congress meets for one two-year term divided into two one-year sessions. Representatives serve two-year terms; senators serve six-year terms.

The 100 senators are elected by all the voters in their state. The 435 seats in the House are divided among the states based on population. Every state has at least one seat. Every 10 years the number of seats for each state is recalculated based on census figures—a process called reapportionment. States may then redistrict, or change election district boundaries. Occasionally the majority party in state legislatures has abused this power by gerrymandering—using voter registration information to draw districts for political advantage. The Supreme Court has ruled gerrymandering unconstitutional.

Members of Congress have constitutional immunity from arrest or lawsuits arising from their

Qualifications for Representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be at least 25 years old</li> <li>• Must be citizens for at least 7 years</li> <li>• All members of Congress must legally reside in the state that elects them.</li> </ul>
Qualifications for Senators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be at least 30 years old</li> <li>• Must be citizens for at least 9 years</li> <li>• All members of Congress must legally reside in the state that elects them.</li> </ul>

duties, but legislators can censure, or formally disapprove, a member's actions. In serious cases, such as treason or bribery, they can expel a member by a two-thirds vote.

**★ THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE** \*\*\*\*\*

Both the House and Senate have complex rules and leadership structures. In each chamber, precedents, or past rulings, guide the way business is conducted. The House's large size makes complex rules necessary. Each term, members introduce thousands of bills and resolutions, but only about 10 to 20 percent of them ever go to the full House for a vote. Still, legislation must move quickly once it reaches the floor, so House rules allow its leaders to make key decisions without consulting other members. Committees do most legislative work because they have more time to study and shape bills. To serve the interests of constituents in their districts, many representatives specialize in issues important to those constituents. Serving on the right committees gives representatives enormous influence.

At the start of each session, the majority party in the House meets in caucus, or closed meeting, to select the Speaker of the House—the presiding

officer and most dominant leader. The speaker appoints committee chairs, which allows the majority party to control the flow of legislation. The speaker also follows the vice president in the line of succession to the presidency. The speaker's top assistant, the majority leader, helps plan and move forward that party's legislative program. House bills appear on one of five calendars, or schedules, that are organized by subject and arranged in the order in which they will be considered. Representatives called *whips* help the majority leader organize party members.

The most powerful committee in the House, the Rules Committee, serves as a "traffic officer." After a committee approves a bill, it usually goes to the Rules Committee, which can move it ahead quickly, hold it back, or stop it completely. The Rules Committee also rules on jurisdictional disputes among other committees.

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## Chapter 5 Summary continued

### ★ THE SENATE \*\*\*\*\*

Although the Senate leadership structure parallels that of the House, Senate leaders have less power. The vice president presides but may not debate issues or vote except to break a tie. In the vice president's absence, a senior majority party member presides as the Senate's president *pro tempore* (for a time). Majority and minority floor leaders are the most important officers. Each works to further his or her

party's legislative program, and together they plan the Senate's agenda. As in the House, whips assist them. The Senate has no rules committee. Bills reach the Senate floor by unanimous consent of the members. Because unlimited debate is usually allowed, one or more senators may filibuster, or try to prevent a vote by stalling until a majority of the Senate abandons the bill or agrees to modify it.

### ★ CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES \*\*\*\*\*

Congressional committees and subcommittees do the detailed, daily work of considering proposed legislation. The committee system allows members of Congress to

- divide their complex workload
- become specialists on certain issues
- select, from bills proposed, those that merit further consideration
- hold hearings to help inform the public

Each political party's representation on a committee roughly equals the percentage of its seats in the House or Senate. Chairs of standing committees are extremely powerful. Historically, the member of the majority party with the longest uninterrupted service on a committee became its chair, but recent rules changes have weakened this seniority system.

COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS	
Standing Committees	oversee bills dealing with certain issues
Select Committees	study one issue and report their findings
Joint Committees	made up of members from both houses
Conference Committees	work out the differences when the House and Senate pass conflicting versions of the same bill

### ★ STAFF AND SUPPORT AGENCIES \*\*\*\*\*

The workload of the modern Congress is so massive and complicated that lawmakers employ thousands of trained staff members. Personal staff work directly for individual Congress members.

- **Administrative assistants** oversee schedules.
- **Legislative assistants** conduct research, draft bills, and write speeches.
- **Caseworkers** handle constituent's requests.

Committees and subcommittees also hire experts. Some lawmakers are concerned that unelected staffers have too much influence; they have sought to trim congressional staff.

Four important support agencies also help Congress carry out its responsibilities:

- The **Library of Congress** maintains almost 100 million items and administers copyright law.
- The **Congressional Budget Office** coordinates the budget-making work of Congress.
- The **General Accounting Office** oversees spending.
- The **Government Printing Office**, the world's largest multipurpose printing plant, prints materials for the entire federal government.

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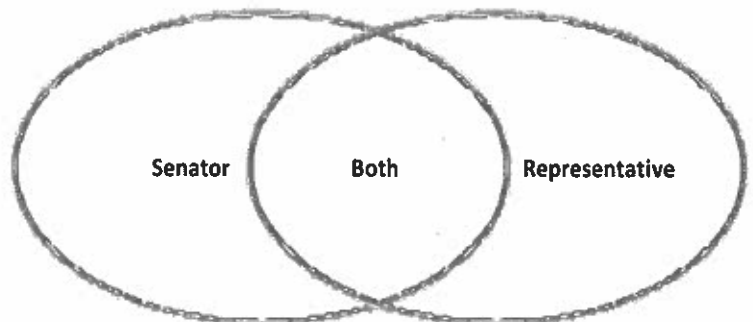
## The Organization of Congress

★ **DIRECTIONS** In the space provided, write the word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

1. The United States Congress is made up of two chambers: the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is the process by which the government recalculates the number of House seats to which each state is entitled.
3. The rules of the House of Representatives allow its leaders to make \_\_\_\_\_ without consulting other members.
4. At the start of each congressional session, the representatives in the majority party meet in caucus to select the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ Committee has the power to move House bills ahead quickly, hold them back, or stop them completely.
6. To \_\_\_\_\_ means to stall the legislative process and prevent a vote.
7. In both the House and the Senate \_\_\_\_\_ do the detailed, daily work of considering proposed legislation.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ committees study one issue and report their findings.
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ presides over the Senate but does not debate issues or vote except to break a tie.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ conduct research, draft bills, and write speeches.

**Organizing Information** Examine the following diagram and study the list of characteristics associated with representatives and senators. Write the letter of each item in the appropriate space.

- a. elected to a six-year term
- b. must be at least 30 years of age
- c. makes laws for the nation
- d. elected to a two-year term
- e. must reside in the state represented
- f. must be at least 25 years of age
- g. elected from a district
- h. elected statewide
- i. may serve on a joint committee



**Critical Thinking** Answer the following question on a separate sheet of paper.

11. Which of the four support agencies do you think is most important and why?

**CHAPTER SUMMARY** \* \* \* \* \* **CHAPTER 6** \* \* \* \* \*

**Development of Congressional Powers**

**★ CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS** \*\*\*\*\*

Article I, Section 8, Clauses 1–18 of the Constitution describes the legislative powers of Congress. Among the most important of these 18 enumerated powers are the following:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Taxing and Spending Power</b> allows Congress to levy taxes and provide for the general welfare. All revenue bills, or laws for raising money, must originate in the House of Representatives. Through usage, or established practices, Congress has developed the appropriations process—the rules by which it authorizes federal agencies to spend money.</li> <li>• <b>Other Money Powers</b> allow Congress to borrow money to help pay the operating costs of government, to coin and regulate the value of money, and to punish counterfeiters.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Commerce Power</b> authorizes Congress to regulate both interstate and foreign commerce. Supreme Court rulings that broadly interpret the term “commerce” have allowed Congress to regulate working conditions and prohibit discrimination nationwide.</li> <li>• <b>Foreign Policy Powers</b> include the power to approve treaties and to declare war.</li> <li>• <b>Other Legislative Powers</b> include the power to make all laws that are “necessary and proper”; this elastic clause gives Congress implied powers and allows Congress to expand its powers as the nation grows.</li> </ul> |
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The Constitution also gives Congress nonlegislative powers. Among these are the following:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If no presidential candidate receives a majority of the electoral votes, the House of Representatives chooses the president from among the three candidates with the most electoral votes.</li> <li>• The Senate has the power to approve presidential appointments.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congress has the power to remove any member of the executive or judicial branches from office for serious misconduct.</li> <li>• Congress shares with state legislatures the power to propose constitutional amendments.</li> </ul> |
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**★ INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT** \*\*\*\*\*

Over the years Congress has developed additional powers that are inherent in government but are not mentioned in the Constitution. These inherent powers fall into one of two categories: the power to investigate and oversight powers. The congressional power to investigate has been important in American politics since 1792. The key elements of investigative power include the following:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A standing committee or a select committee may conduct investigations.</li> <li>• The most frequent results of investigations include new legislation, changes in a government program, or removal of officials from office.</li> <li>• Congress, like the courts, has the power to issue subpoenas.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Witnesses who refuse to testify, or otherwise fail to cooperate, can be held in contempt, that is, charged with willful obstruction of Congress.</li> <li>• Congressional committees can require witnesses to testify under oath. Untruthful witnesses can be prosecuted for perjury, or lying under oath.</li> </ul> |
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## Chapter 6 Summary continued

### INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT *(continued)*

- In 1957 the Supreme Court ruled that Congress, like the courts, must respect the constitutional rights of witnesses, including the right not to give evidence against themselves.

Congressional committees often sidestep the Supreme Court decision by granting witnesses immunity. Immunity is freedom from prosecution for witnesses whose testimony ties them to illegal acts.

Congressional committees use oversight powers to check the effectiveness of the executive branch in administering the law in areas under their jurisdiction.

The legislative branch has three methods of exercising oversight powers:

- Lawmakers routinely ask congressional support agencies, such as the General Accounting Office, to study the workings of an executive agency.
- Congress may use its appropriations process to expand, cut back, or eliminate programs when it reviews the federal budget each year.
- Congress requires executive agencies to submit reports on their activities.

In the past Congress wrote provisions into certain laws that allowed it to review and cancel the actions of executive agencies charged with carrying out those laws. In 1983 the Supreme Court ruled that these legislative vetoes violated the principle of separation of powers.

### ★ CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT

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Cooperation between the president and Congress is essential if government is to work effectively. However, recent presidents have found it hard to work with Congress for several reasons:

- **Different Constituencies** A national electorate chooses presidents; individual states and congressional districts elect members of Congress. The difference in constituencies may lead to conflicting ideas about what public policies are desirable.
- **Checks and Balances** The powers that the president and Congress have to counteract each other can create an adversarial relationship often described as the "President vs. Congress."
- **Party Politics** In recent decades the president's party rarely has controlled both houses of Congress. Partisan political differences increase conflicts and impede the legislative process.

Throughout American history the balance of power between Congress and the president has shifted back and forth. Between 1933 and the mid-1970s,

Congress offered little opposition when presidents exercised broad "emergency powers" to deal with crises. Since then Congress has taken action to reassert its authority and to gain new influence, such as the following two examples:

- **The 1974 Budget Impoundment and Control Act** increased the congressional role in planning the federal budget. The law also prohibits the president from impounding—refusing to spend—money appropriated for programs unless both houses of Congress agree.
- **The 1976 National Emergencies Act** requires presidents to notify Congress before declaring a national emergency and gives Congress the power to end a state of emergency at any time by a majority vote of both houses.

An important new presidential power took effect in 1997. The line-item veto allowed presidents to veto spending on specific items in an appropriations bill while letting the rest become law. The line-item veto was immediately challenged in court, and the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional in 1998.

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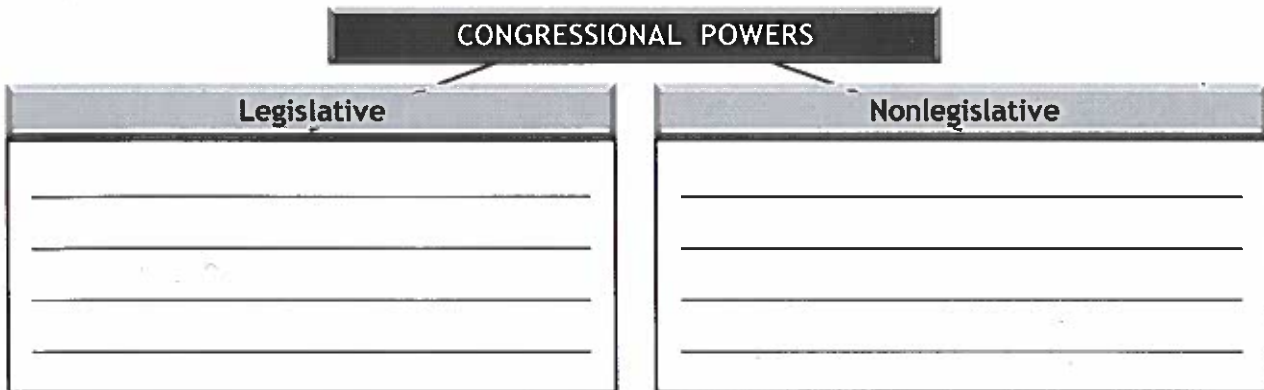
**Development of Congressional Powers**

★ **DIRECTIONS** In the space provided, write the word(s) that best completes the sentence.

1. The power to make all laws that are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ gives Congress implied powers not enumerated elsewhere.
2. A standing or a select committee of Congress may exercise the inherent power to \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is freedom from prosecution for witnesses whose testimony ties them to illegal acts.
4. Congressional committees use \_\_\_\_\_ powers to check how the administrative branch is administering laws.
5. The system of checks and balances can create an adversarial relationship described as the \_\_\_\_\_ vs. \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The president cannot \_\_\_\_\_—refuse to spend—money appropriated for programs unless Congress agrees.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ requires presidents to notify Congress before declaring a national emergency.

**Organizing Information** Complete a diagram of congressional legislative and nonlegislative powers by writing the following items under the appropriate headings:

- to levy taxes
- to approve presidential appointments
- to make necessary and proper laws
- to regulate commerce
- to impeach
- to borrow money
- to break Electoral College deadlocks
- to propose constitutional amendments



**Critical Thinking** Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

8. Why do you think legislative vetoes violated the constitutional principle of separation of powers?
9. The term “gridlock” describes what sometimes happens when one political party occupies the White House and the other controls Congress. Explain how the term applies to this situation.

**CHAPTER SUMMARY** \* \* \* \* \* **CHAPTER 7** \* \* \*

## Congress at Work

**★ HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW** \*\*\*\*\*

Members of Congress introduce thousands of bills—draft proposals—in every session. Less than 10 percent of the bills that are introduced survive the complicated process required to become a law.

- **Introducing a Bill** Representatives can introduce bills by dropping them into the hopper, a box near the House clerk’s desk. Senators must formally present a bill after being recognized by the presiding officer.
- **Committee Action** In each chamber new bills are first sent to committees where most die from inaction. If the committee decides to act on a bill, it holds hearings at which interested parties can testify. The committee then revises the bill and decides by majority vote whether it should be “killed” or reported—sent to the floor with a recommendation.
- **Floor Action** Lawmakers almost always agree with the committee recommendation. Floor debates generally focus on amendments which any lawmaker can offer. Riders are amendments on a subject other than the one covered by the bill.
- **Conference Committee Action** Both chambers must pass a bill in identical form before it can be sent to the president. A joint committee, known as a conference committee, works out the details of any compromises needed to achieve that end.
- **Presidential Action** The president can sign a bill, making it law. He can take no action for 10 days, and, if Congress is in session, the bill becomes law without the president’s signature. The president can also veto a bill, forcing Congress to override his rejection by a two-thirds vote of each chamber.

In addition to bills, Congress also passes resolutions to cover routine matters for which a law is not needed or to express its opinion on a particular matter.

**★ TAXING AND SPENDING BILLS** \*\*\*\*\*

The House Ways and Means Committee makes the rules on tax rates, deductions, and benefits. A closed rule once forbade members to offer amendments to tax bills during floor debate. Critics charge that, after the closed rule was abandoned in 1975, tax bills became a collection of amendments written to please special interests.

Congress uses a two-step procedure to approve the spending of government revenues.

- An authorization bill sets up a federal program, specifies how much money may be allocated for the operation of that program, and designates which executive branch agency will administer the program.
- An appropriations bill provides the money needed to operate the program in response to a budget request from the administering agency.

Appropriations committees in each chamber review the appropriations bills. These committees hear testimony from executive agency directors, set a final budget figure for the program, and report the bill to the floor. The final appropriation is almost always less than the amount in the agency’s budget request.

Appropriations committees have no authority over money that the government is legally committed to spending each year because of previous legislation, for example, Social Security payments. These uncontrollables account for 70 percent of all government expenditures. Some uncontrollables are called entitlements because they are for continuing social programs.

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## Chapter 7 Summary continued

### ★ INFLUENCING CONGRESS

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Many factors influence a lawmaker's decision on any given issue. Most lawmakers agree that the most important influences are the voters, their political parties, the president, and special interest groups.

- **Voters** Most people expect lawmakers to (1) put the needs of their district ahead of national interests and (2) place the wishes of the people above their own judgment. Most congressional voting records reflect those expectations.
  - **Political Parties** Representatives vote the party line more than 70 percent of the time; however, senators are more independent. Party influence on congressional voting is strongest on issues related to the economy and social welfare. Party voting is weaker on international issues.
  - **The President** Presidents put pressure on Congress through televised addresses designed to sway public opinion for or against legislation.
- They can also use their powers to influence a vote by giving or withholding approval for federal projects, such as dams, that benefit a member's constituents.
- **Interest Groups** Individuals, known as lobbyists, try to persuade government officials to support the policies favored by particular interest groups. Encouraging citizens to write letters supporting or opposing legislation that will affect an interest group is one of the lobbyist's most effective tools. In recent years interest groups have also set up Political Action Committees (PACs), political fund-raising groups to influence Congress. PACs use the funds that they raise to support or oppose candidates during elections.

### ★ HELPING CONSTITUENTS

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To win reelection a member of Congress must (1) help voters with problems related to government programs or services and (2) bring federal money for projects to the home state or district. All lawmakers employ caseworkers who work to resolve difficulties that constituents are having with programs such as social security, veterans' benefits, and workers' compensation. Members of Congress have two methods by which they bring federal money to the areas they represent:

- Lawmakers propose public works bills which appropriate money for various local projects such as dams, highways, and mass transit systems. Critics call this method pork-barrel legislation, implying that lawmakers dip into the federal treasury and pull out pieces of fat for their constituents. Often lawmakers agree in advance to vote for each other's public works bills. Critics call this practice logrolling.
- Lawmakers compete among each other for grants and contracts of federal projects to be awarded to their state or district. Staff members show local individuals, businesses, and governments how to qualify. The lawmakers try to influence agency officials who approve the projects.



**CHAPTER SUMMARY** \* \* \* \* \*

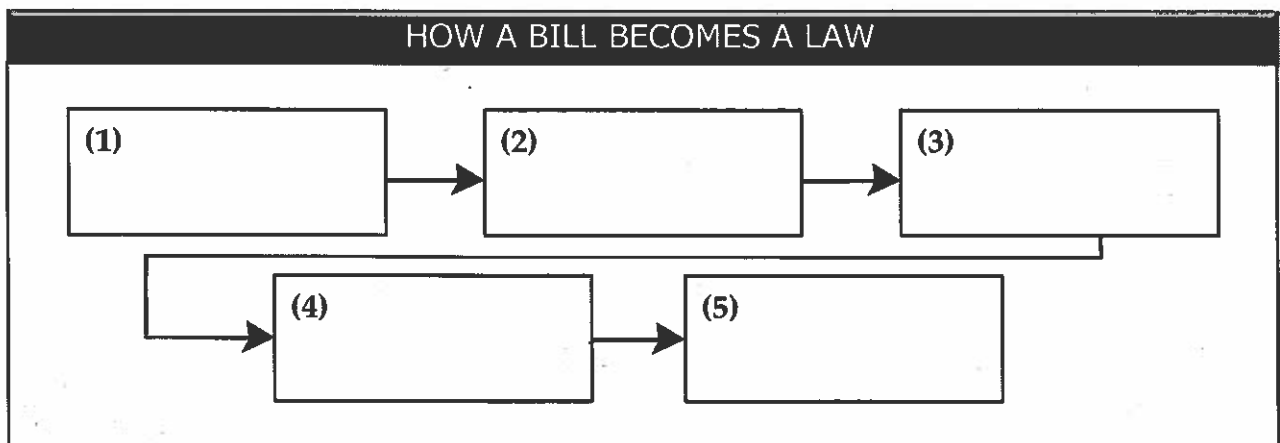
CHAPTER  
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## Congress at Work

★ **DIRECTIONS** In the space provided, write the word(s) that best completes the sentences.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ are amendments on a subject other than the one covered by a bill.
2. Congress passes \_\_\_\_\_ to cover routine matters for which a law is not needed or to express an opinion.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ rule forbade members of Congress to offer amendments on the floor during debate.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ bills set up federal programs and designate which executive agency will administer them.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ bills provide the money needed to operate a program in response to a budget request.
6. The term \_\_\_\_\_ refers to money already committed to spending because of previous legislation.
7. Lawmakers employ \_\_\_\_\_ to resolve problems that constituents are having with the federal government.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ bills appropriate money for local projects; \_\_\_\_\_ legislation describes the abuse of this process.

**Organizing Information** Examine the following diagram and study the list of steps in the process a bill must follow to become a law. Write each step in the correct order on the flowchart.



- Floor Action
- Committee Action
- Introducing a Bill
- Presidential Action
- Conference Committee Action

**Critical Thinking** Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

9. Why do you think a congressional committee would “report” a bill to the floor of Congress with a negative recommendation rather than “kill” it in committee?
10. Why do you think senators can be more independent than representatives on party line votes?

# CHAPTER SUMMARY CHAPTER 8

## The Presidency

### ★ PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

The Constitution requires the president and the vice president to be (1) natural-born citizens of the United States; (2) at least 35 years of age; and (3) residents of the United States for at least 14 years before taking office. Informal requirements for the presidency include:

- **Experience** A background in politics is important.
- **Money** Election campaigns cost millions of dollars.

- **Moderate Political Beliefs** Candidates with extreme views are not as successful as those with moderate beliefs.
- **Personal Characteristics** Most presidents have been middle-class, married, Protestant, male, and white.

Congress determines what salary and benefits the president receives each year, including:

Monetary Compensation	Benefits (at no cost)	Retirement Benefits
• Salary \$400,000 per year	• Medical and dental coverage	• Pension \$191,300 per year
• Official Expense Account \$50,000 per year	• Secret Service protection	• Office Help Allowance up to \$96,000 per year
• Travel Allowance \$100,000 per year	• Official residence with household staff	• Free office space and mailing services

The vice president has the following duties:

- presides over the Senate; votes to break ties;
- helps decide whether the president is disabled and acts as president if that happens.

Recent presidents have tried to give the vice president greater responsibilities, including representing

the president overseas and serving on advisory councils. In addition, the Twenty-fifth Amendment specifies that:

- the vice president shall fill the vacancy in the event the president dies, becomes disabled, or resigns;
- the president shall fill a vice-presidential vacancy by appointment with approval by Congress.

### ★ ELECTING THE PRESIDENT

The Framers of the Constitution set up an Electoral College to choose a president. The number of electors from each state is equal to the number of its senators and representatives. At first the people did not participate directly; every state devised its own method of choosing electors. But in the 1820s political parties in each state began choosing electors by popular vote. Each party places the candidate's name on the ballot, but the vote is actually for electors. By tradition electors almost always vote for the candidate who receives the largest number of popular votes in a state. Most states, however, do not legally require electors to do so.

Critics say that the system has major weaknesses, including:

- The winner-take-all rule that usually awards every electoral vote in a state to the candidate with the most popular votes makes it possible for a candidate to win the popular vote nationwide but lose in the electoral balloting, as happened in 1824, 1876, 1888, and 2000.
- A strong third-party candidate could win enough electoral votes to prevent any candidate from receiving a majority. That candidate could then force major party candidates to bargain for support in the Electoral College.

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