

# Congress at Work



### Why It's Important

**Serving You** Congress's primary responsibility is to make law. Members of Congress also make appointments to military academies, provide passes to visit the Capitol and the White House, and help citizens deal with the government bureaucracy.



To learn more about how Congress works and how to access its services, view the ***Democracy in Action*** Chapter 7 video lesson:

**Congress at Work**

GOVERNMENT

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**Chapter Overview** Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at [gov.glencoe.com](http://gov.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 7-Overview** to preview chapter information.

# How a Bill Becomes a Law

## Reader's Guide

### Key Terms

private bill, public bill, simple resolution, rider, hearing, veto, pocket veto

### Find Out

- Why is it easier to defeat legislation than to pass it?
- What are the positive and negative implications of the lengthy process through which all bills must go before becoming laws?

### Understanding Concepts

**Political Processes** Why does it take so long for Congress to pass legislation?

## COVER STORY

### Record Filibuster Fails

WASHINGTON, D.C., AUGUST 1957

The Senate passed a major civil rights bill tonight, despite the efforts of South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond to prevent it from coming to a vote. Thurmond took the floor yesterday evening and talked through the night. A glass of orange juice offered by another senator this morning refreshed Thurmond for several more hours, but by late this afternoon, he was leaning on his desk and mumbling. Finally, at 9:12 P.M., he sat down, having held the floor for more than 24 hours, the longest speech in Senate history. A short time later a vote was called, and the bill passed 60 to 18.



**Strom Thurmond sets a record**

In 1957 the Civil Rights Bill was one of many bills introduced. Unlike a majority of the bills introduced that year, and against the backdrop of a lengthy filibuster, it passed. During each 2-year term of Congress, thousands of bills are introduced—often numbering more than 10,000. Why are so many introduced? Congress, as the national legislature, is open to all Americans who want things from the government. The president, federal agencies, labor unions, business groups, and individual citizens all look to Congress to pass laws favorable to their various interests.

Of the thousands of bills introduced in each session, only a few hundred become laws. Most die in Congress, and some are vetoed by the president. If a bill is not passed before the end of a congressional term, it must be reintroduced in the next Congress to be given further consideration.

In this section you will find out how the law-making process actually works. First you will look at the different forms new legislation may take. Then you will learn about the steps a bill must go through in order to become a law.

## Types of Bills and Resolutions



Two types of bills are introduced in Congress. **Private bills** deal with individual people or places. They often involve people's claims against the government or their immigration problems. One such private bill waived immigration requirements so that an American woman could marry a man from Greece. Private bills used to account for a large number of the bills introduced in Congress. Lately, however, their numbers have declined. In a recent Congress, only about 230 of the 11,824 bills introduced were private bills.

On the other hand, **public bills** deal with general matters and apply to the entire nation. They are often controversial. Major public bills usually receive significant media coverage. They may involve such issues as raising or

lowering taxes, national health insurance, gun control, civil rights, or abortion. Major public bills account for about 30 percent of the bills passed in each term of Congress. They may be debated for months before they become law.

**Resolutions** Congress may also pass several types of resolutions to deal with unusual or temporary matters. A **simple resolution** covers matters affecting only one house of Congress and is passed by that house alone. If a new rule or procedure is needed, it is adopted in the form of a resolution. Because it is an internal matter, it does not have the force of law and is not sent to the president for signature.

**Joint Resolutions** When both houses pass a **joint resolution** the president's signature gives it the force of law. Joint resolutions may correct an error in an earlier law, for example, or appropriate money for a special purpose. Congress also uses joint resolutions to propose constitutional amendments, which do not require the president's signature.

**Concurrent Resolutions** Another type of resolution is a concurrent resolution. **Concurrent resolutions** cover matters requiring the action of

the House and Senate, but on which a law is not needed. A concurrent resolution, for example, may set the date for the adjournment of Congress, or it may express Congress's opinion about an issue. Both houses of Congress must pass concurrent resolutions. They do not require the president's signature, and they do not have the force of law.

**Riders** Bills and resolutions usually deal with only one subject, such as civil rights or veterans' benefits. Sometimes, however, a rider is attached to a bill. A **rider** is a provision on a subject other than the one covered in the bill. Lawmakers attach riders to bills that are likely to pass, although presidents have sometimes vetoed such bills because of a rider they did not like. Sometimes lawmakers attach many unrelated riders simply to benefit their constituents. Such a bill resembles a Christmas tree loaded with ornaments. "**Christmas tree**" bills sometimes pass because of the essential nature of the underlying bill.

**Why So Few Bills Become Laws** Less than 5 percent of all bills introduced in Congress become public laws. Why so few?

One reason is that the lawmaking process itself is very long and complicated. A congressional

## POLITICS and You

### Initiating Legislation

**H**ave you ever said, "There ought to be a law!" when observing an apparent injustice? Some acts of Congress originate with private individuals or groups. If you see a need for a law, you can write a bill and ask a representative or senator to introduce it for consideration.

Rarely, if ever, does a bill begin this way. However, a representative may agree to sponsor your bill. A sponsor will work to put your bill in the proper form for introduction. The sponsor may also make changes in your bill's content to increase its chances for passage.

After your bill is introduced, if you are considered an expert on the subject of the bill you may be asked to testify before a congressional

committee. You may also contact other members of Congress to request their support for your legislation. Finally, if Congress passes your bill, be prepared for an invitation to the White House to participate in the president's signing ceremony!



**Proposing a law**

## Participating IN GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY

**Writing Legislation** Most legislation springs from a problem that people cannot resolve themselves. Brainstorm to discover a problem that might be solved by national legislation and write a description of it.

study found that more than 100 specific steps may be involved in passing a law. Thus, at many points in the lawmaking process a bill can be delayed, killed, or changed. This process has two important implications. First, it means that groups that oppose a bill have an advantage over those that support it. Opponents can amend the bill or kill it at many steps along the way.

Second, because the lawmaking process has so many steps, sponsors of a bill must be willing to bargain and compromise with lawmakers and interest groups. Compromise is the only way to get support to move a bill from one step to the next. Without strong support, most major bills have little chance of becoming law. Moreover, bills that powerful interest groups oppose are not likely to be passed.

Another reason so few bills become law is that lawmakers sometimes introduce bills they know have no chance of ever becoming law. Members of Congress may introduce such bills to go on record in support of an idea or policy or simply to attract the attention of the news media. Members may also want to satisfy an important group from their state or district. Still another reason is to call attention to the need for new legislation in an area such as health care or highway safety. Introducing a bill can help lawmakers avoid criticism at reelection time. By introducing a bill, lawmakers can report that they have taken action on a particular problem. When the bill does not move forward, they can blame a committee or other lawmakers.

## Introducing a Bill



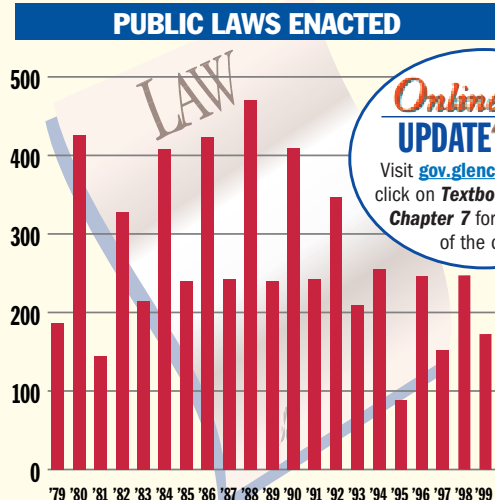
The Constitution sets forth only a few of the many steps a bill must go through to become law. The remaining steps have developed as Congress has grown in size and complexity and the number of bills has increased.

**How Bills Are Introduced** The first step in the legislative process is proposing and introducing a new bill. The ideas for new bills come from private citizens, interest groups, the president, or officials in the executive branch. Various people may write new bills, such as lawmakers or their staffs, lawyers from a Senate or House committee, a White House staff member, or even an interest



## Number of Bills That Become Law

**CLICK HERE**



## BILLS, ACTS, AND RESOLUTIONS

Congress	Measures Introduced			Measures Enacted		
	Bills	Joint Resolutions	Total	Public	Private	Total
96th	11,722	861	12,583	613	123	736
97th	10,582	908	11,490	473	56	529
98th	10,134	1,022	11,156	623	54	677
99th	8,697	1,188	9,885	664	24	688
100th	8,515	1,073	9,588	713	48	761
101st	9,257	1,095	10,352	650	16	666
102d	9,601	909	10,510	590	20	610
103d	7,883	661	8,544	465	8	473
104th	6,545	263	6,808	333	4	337
105th	7,532	200	7,732	394	10	404
106th	3,514	122	3,636	170	3	173

(1st session only)

### Critical Thinking

Approximately 5 percent of all measures introduced in Congress become policy—public or private. **Which session of Congress passed the most bills from 1979 to 1999?**

Sources: "Resumes of Congressional Activity," Thomas Web site: <[thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)>



**The Enacting Clause** Congress's main job is to pass laws. From the simplest to the most complex, a federal law must begin with the following words: "Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled . . . ." Without those words, known as the enacting clause, an act of Congress is just a piece of paper even though it has been, as required, passed in identical form by both the House and Senate and signed by the president.

group itself. Only a member of Congress, however, can introduce a bill in either house of Congress. Lawmakers who sponsor a major public bill usually try to find cosponsors to show that the bill has wide support.

To introduce a bill in the House, a representative simply drops the bill into the hopper, a box near the clerk's desk. To introduce a bill in the Senate, the presiding officer of the Senate must first recognize the senator who then formally presents the bill.

Bills introduced in the House and Senate are printed and distributed to lawmakers. Each bill is given a title and a number. The first bill introduced during a session of Congress in the Senate is designated as S.1, the second bill as S.2, and so forth. In the House, the first bill is H.R. 1, the second bill, H.R. 2, and so on. This process is the **first reading** of the bill.

**Committee Action** In each house of Congress, new bills are sent to the committees that deal with their subject matter. Committee chairpersons may, in turn, send the bill to a subcommittee. Under the chairperson's leadership, the committee can ignore the bill and simply let it die. This procedure is called "**pigeonholing**." Most bills die quietly this way. However, the committee also can kill the bill by a majority vote. The committee can recommend that the bill be adopted as it was introduced,

make changes, or completely rewrite the bill before sending it back to the House or Senate for further action.

The House and Senate almost always agree with a committee's decision on a bill. Committee members and staff are considered experts on the subject of the bill. If they do not think a bill should move ahead, other lawmakers are usually reluctant to disagree with them. Besides, all members of Congress are also members of various committees. They do not want the decisions of their own committees overturned or questioned, so they usually go along with the decisions other committees make. Time is also a serious factor. Lawmakers have heavy workloads and must depend on the judgment of their peers.

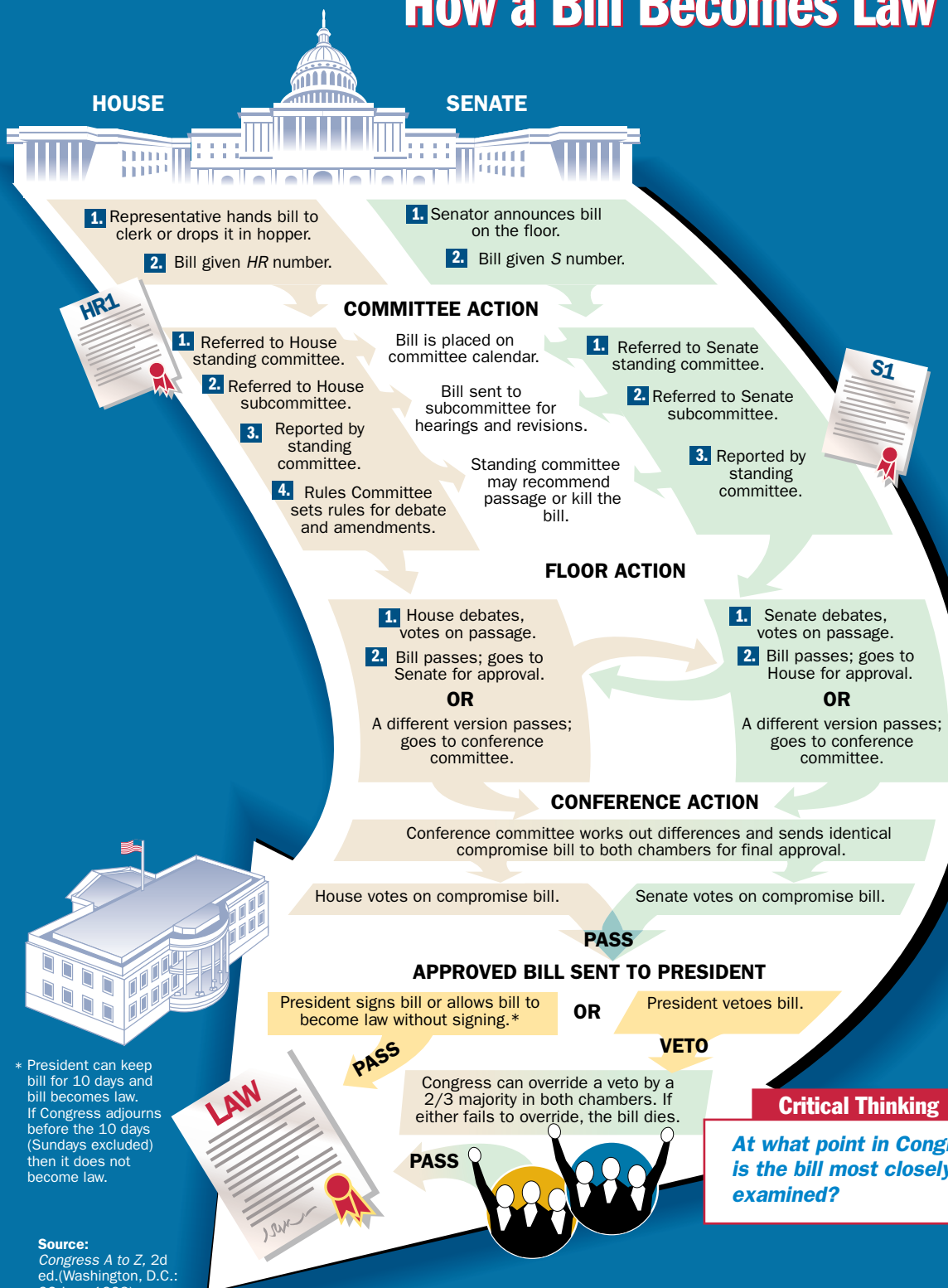
**Committee Hearings** When a committee decides to act on a bill, the committee (or subcommittee) will hold hearings on the bill. **Hearings** are sessions at which a committee listens to testimony from people interested in the bill. Witnesses who appear at the hearings may include experts on the subject of the bill, government officials, and representatives of interest groups concerned with the bill.

The hearings on a bill may last for as little as an hour or go on for many months. Hearings are supposed to be an opportunity for Congress to gather information on the bill. Most detailed information about the bill, however, comes from research done by the committee staff.

Hearings can be very important in their own right, though. Skillful chairpersons may use hearings to influence public opinion for or against a bill or to test the political acceptability of a bill. Hearings can also help focus public attention on a problem or give interest groups a chance to present their opinions. In addition, hearings are often the best point in the lawmaking process to influence a bill. It is during hearings that letters and telegrams from interested citizens can have their greatest impact on the bill.

After the hearings are completed, the committee meets in a markup session to decide what changes, if any, to make in the bill. In this type of session, committee members go through the bill section by section adopting changes they deem necessary to make the bill acceptable. A majority vote of the committee is required for all changes that are made to the bill.

# How a Bill Becomes Law



\* President can keep bill for 10 days and bill becomes law. If Congress adjourns before the 10 days (Sundays excluded) then it does not become law.

Source:  
Congress A to Z, 2d  
ed. (Washington, D.C.:  
CQ Inc., 1993).

## Voting Electronically



**Analyzing Votes** The electronic voting system in the House displays each representative's name and vote on the wall of the chamber. Representatives insert a plastic card in a box fastened to the chairs to vote "yea," "nay," or "present." ***When do you think a representative would vote "present"?***

**Reporting a Bill** When all the changes have been made, the committee votes either to kill the bill or to report it. To report the bill means to send it to the House or Senate for action. Along with the revised bill, the committee will send to the House or Senate a written report the committee staff has prepared. This report is important. It explains the committee's actions, describes the bill, lists the major changes the committee has made, and gives opinions on the bill. The report is often the only document available to lawmakers or their staffs as they decide how to vote on a bill. The committee report may recommend passage of the bill or it may report the bill unfavorably. Why would a committee report a bill but not recommend passage? This happens extremely rarely. A committee may believe the full House should have the opportunity to consider a bill even though the committee does not support it.

## Floor Action



The next important step in the lawmaking process is the debate on the bill on the floor of the House and Senate. Voting on the bill follows the debate. As you may recall, both houses have special procedures to schedule bills for floor action.

**Debating and Amending Bills** Usually, only a few lawmakers take part in floor debates. The pros and cons of the bill have been argued in the committee hearings and are already well known to those with a real interest in the bill. The floor debate over a bill, however, is the point where amendments can be added to a bill (unless the House has adopted a closed rule, which means no amendments may be adopted). During the floor debate, the bill receives its second reading. A clerk reads the bill section by section. After each section is read, amendments may be offered. Any lawmaker can propose an amendment to a bill during the floor debate.

Amendments range from the introduction of major changes in a bill to the correction of typographical errors. Opponents of the bill sometimes propose amendments to slow its progress through Congress or even to kill it. One strategy opponents use is to load it down with so many objectionable amendments that it loses support and dies. In both the House and the Senate amendments are added to a bill only if a majority of the members present approves them.

**Voting on Bills** After the floor debate, the bill, including any proposed changes, is ready for a

vote. A quorum, or a majority, of the members must be present. The House or Senate now receives the third reading of the bill. A vote on the bill is then taken. Passage of a bill requires a majority vote of all the members present.

House members vote on a bill in one of three ways. The first is a **voice vote**, in which members together call out “Aye” or “No.” The Speaker determines which side has the most voice votes. The second way of voting is by a **standing vote**, or **division vote**, in which those in favor of the bill stand and are counted, then those opposed stand and are counted. The third method is a recorded vote, in which members’ votes are recorded electronically. Their votes are flashed on large display panels in the House chamber. This method, used since 1973, saves the House many hours of time that it took for roll-call votes in each session.

The Senate has three methods of voting. These methods include a voice vote, a standing vote, and a roll call. The voice vote and the standing vote are the same as in the House. In a **roll-call vote**, senators respond “Aye” or “No” as their names are called in alphabetical order. Roll-call votes are recorded and over the years have become increasingly common.

## Final Steps in Passing Bills



To become law a bill must pass both houses of Congress in identical form. A bill passed in the House of Representatives often differs somewhat from a bill on the same subject passed in the Senate.

**Conference Committee Action** Often, one house will accept the version of a bill the other house has passed. At times, however, the bill must go to a conference committee made up of senators and representatives to work out differences between the versions. The members of the conference committee are called **conferees** or managers.

They usually come from the House and Senate committees that handled the bill originally.

The conferees work out the differences between the two bills by bargaining and arranging compromises. Conference committees rarely kill a bill. The conference committee is supposed to consider only the parts of a bill on which there is disagreement. In actual practice, however, the members of the committee sometimes make important changes in the bill or add provisions neither the House nor Senate previously considered. A majority of the members of the conference committee from each house drafts the final compromise bill, called a **conference report**. Once it is accepted, the bill can be submitted to each house of Congress for final action.



Seal of the U.S. Congress

**Presidential Action on Bills** Article I<sup>1</sup> of the Constitution states that:

“Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it becomes a Law, be presented to the President of the United States. . . .”

—Article I, Section 7

After both houses of Congress have approved a bill in identical form, it is sent to the president. The president may take any one of several actions. First, the president may sign the bill, and it will become law. Second, the president may keep the bill for 10 days without signing it. If Congress is in session, the bill will become law without the president’s signature. This rarely happens. Presidents may use this procedure if they approve of most of the provisions of a bill but object to others. By letting the bill become law without a signature, the president indicates dissatisfaction with these provisions. Most of the time, however, presidents sign the bills that Congress sends them.



See the following footnoted materials in the **Reference Handbook**:  
1. *The Constitution*, pages 774–799.



**Vetoing Bills** The president can also reject a bill in two ways. First, the president may veto a bill. In a **veto** the president refuses to sign the bill and returns it to the house of Congress in which it originated. The president also includes reasons for the veto. Second, the president may kill a bill passed during the last 10 days Congress is in session simply by refusing to act on it. This veto is called a **pocket veto**. Because Congress is no longer in session, it cannot override the veto and the bill dies.

**Line-Item Veto** In 1984, President Reagan suggested a constitutional amendment that would give a president the same veto power that many governors have. These governors may veto specific provisions (lines or items) of a bill while accepting the main part of the legislation. Bill Clinton announced his support of a line-item veto in the 1992 presidential campaign. To sidestep the need for an amendment, Congress passed an enhanced rescission bill in 1996. Essentially a line-item veto for spending and tax issues, this bill allowed Congress to override a line-item veto by two-thirds majority vote of both houses.



### Landmark Cases

**Clinton v. City of New York** President Clinton first used the new veto power in August 1997. When the president canceled a provision of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and parts of the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, two parties filed suit.

New York and several local hospitals challenged the veto because it reduced Medicaid funding for New York state. The Snake River Potato Growers of Idaho challenged the veto of a tax break in the Taxpayer Relief Act. On appeal, the Supreme Court ruled in *Clinton v. City of New York* (1998) that the Line Item Veto Act was unconstitutional because it “authorizes the president to effect the repeal of laws for his own policy reasons without observing the procedures set out in Article I, [Section] 7.”



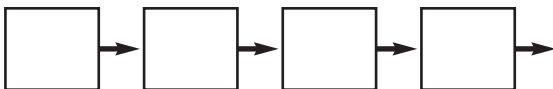
**Congressional Override of a Veto** Congress can override a president’s veto with a two-thirds vote in both houses. If Congress overrides the veto, the bill becomes law. Congress does not override vetoes very often because it is usually difficult to get the necessary two-thirds vote in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Opponents of a bill need to have only one-third of the members present and voting plus one additional vote in either the Senate or the House to uphold a veto.

**Registering Laws** After a bill becomes law, it is registered with the National Archives and Records Service. This process includes identifying it as a public or private law and assigning it a number that identifies the Congress that passed the bill and the number of the law for that term. For example, Public Law 187 under the 105th Congress is registered as PL 105-187. This law is then added to the United States Code of current federal laws.

## Section 1 Assessment

### Checking for Understanding

- 1. Main Idea** Create a flow chart to indicate the major stages by which a bill becomes a law. Which stage do you think is most important?



- 2. Define** private bill, public bill, simple resolution, rider, hearing, veto, pocket veto.
- 3. Identify** voice vote, standing vote, roll-call vote.
- 4.** Why do so few bills actually become laws?

### Critical Thinking

- 5. Drawing Conclusions** Is it possible for all members of Congress to keep abreast of all bills under consideration? Support your answer.

### Concepts IN ACTION

**Political Processes** Imagine that you are asked to help younger children learn how laws are made in the United States. Create a poster, using cartoonlike illustrations, to show how a bill becomes a law.

# Taxing and Spending Bills

## Reader's Guide

### Key Terms

tax, closed rule, appropriation, authorization bill, entitlement

### Find Out

- What authority does Congress have over how the national government will raise and spend money?
- What is the procedure whereby Congress provides money to the executive agencies and departments?

### Understanding Concepts

**Public Policy** When Congress votes to begin a government program, what process is followed to fund that program?

## COVER STORY

### Wasteful Spending!

WASHINGTON, D.C., 1985

Senator William Proxmire awarded the National Institutes of Health his Golden Fleece Award for a grant it gave a Utah researcher to study hexes put on arm wrestlers. "It's \$160,000 of the taxpayers' money down the drain," Proxmire maintains. The senator launched the Golden Fleece Award in 1975 to call public attention to wasteful government spending. The first went to the National Science Foundation for spending \$84,000 to find out why people fall in love. Other notable past "winners" include the Department of Agriculture for a \$46,000 study of the length of time it takes to cook breakfast.



Arm wrestlers

Today, running the national government costs more than \$1.2 trillion a year. The Constitution gives Congress the authority to decide where this money will come from and in what ways it will be spent. Passing laws to raise and spend money for the national government is one of the most important jobs of Congress. The government could not operate successfully without money to carry out its many programs and services.

## Making Decisions About Taxes



The national government gets most of the money it needs to keep the government functioning from taxes. **Taxes** are money that people and businesses pay to support the government. The Constitution states:

“The Congress shall have the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States. . . .”

—Article I, Section 8

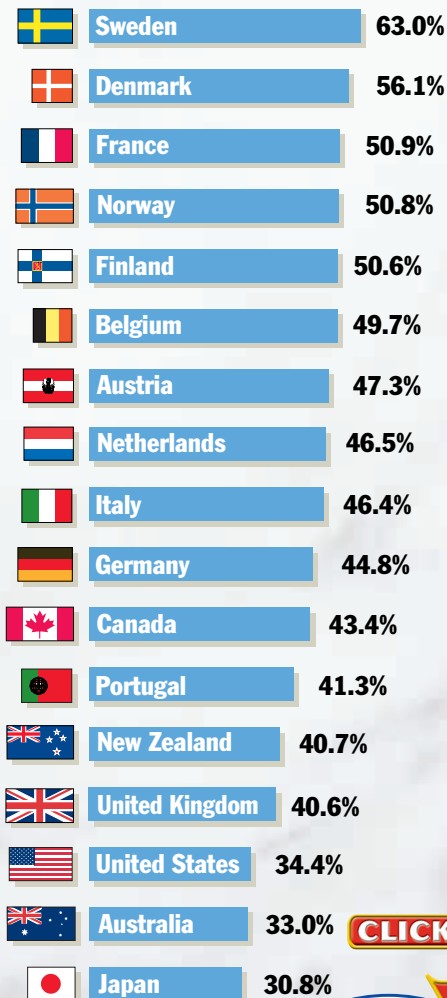
## The House's Power Over Revenue Bills

The Constitution gives the House of Representatives the exclusive power to start all revenue measures. Almost all important work on tax laws occurs in the House **Ways and Means Committee**. The Ways and Means Committee decides whether to go along with presidential requests for tax cuts or increases. It also makes the numerous rules and regulations that determine who will pay how much tax. Some of these rulings are very simple while others are more complex. This committee, for example, influences how much of a tax deduction parents are allowed on their income tax for each child living at home. It also decides what kind of tax benefit businesses can claim for building new factories.



## COMPARING Governments

### Taxes as a Percent of GDP



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999* (Washington, D.C.: 1999).

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UPDATE**

Visit [gov.glencoe.com](http://gov.glencoe.com) and click on **Textbook Updates—Chapter 7** for an update of the data.

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**Critical Thinking** Most of the countries listed have higher tax rates than the United States. What can you conclude about the public services these governments provide?

For many years the committee's tax bills were debated on the House floor under a closed rule. A **closed rule** forbids members to offer any amendments to a bill from the floor. This rule meant that only members of the Ways and Means Committee could have a direct hand in writing a tax bill.

Other House members accepted this closed-rule procedure on tax bills for several reasons. House leaders claimed that tax bills were too complicated to be easily understood outside the committee. Leaders also warned that representatives could come under great pressure from special interests if tax bills could be revised from the floor. Floor amendments, they argued, might upset the fair and balanced legislation recommended by the committee.

In the 1970s House members revolted against the Ways and Means Committee. In 1973 the House allowed members to amend a tax bill on the floor. In 1974 it forced Chairperson Wilbur Mills to resign following a personal scandal. Critics charged that tax bills soon became a collection of amendments written to please special interests.


In the Senate no closed rule exists, and tax bills often do become collections of amendments. Many tax bills are amended so often on the Senate floor they become "Christmas tree" bills similar to appropriations bills that include many riders.

**The Senate's Role in Tax Legislation** All tax bills start in the House. Article I, Section 7,<sup>1</sup> of the Constitution, however, says, "The Senate may propose . . . amendments. . ." Because of this provision, the Senate often tries to change tax bills the House has passed. As a result, many people view the Senate as the place where interest groups can get House tax provisions they do not like changed or eliminated.

The Senate Committee on Finance has primary responsibility for dealing with tax matters. Like the House Ways and Means Committee, the Senate Finance Committee is powerful. Although the Senate Finance Committee has subcommittees, the full committee does most of the work on tax bills. As a result, the chairperson of the Finance Committee is an extremely important figure.

See the following footnoted materials in the *Reference Handbook*:  
1. The Constitution, pages 774–799.

## Appropriating Money


 In addition to passing tax laws to raise money, Congress has another important power over government spending. The power of **appropriation**, or approval of government spending, is a congressional responsibility. In Article I, Section 9, the Constitution states, “No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in consequence of [except by] appropriations made by law.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, Congress must pass laws to appropriate money for the federal government. Congress’s approval is needed before departments and agencies of the executive branch such as the Department of Defense or the Federal Communications Commission can actually spend money.

### How Congress Appropriates Money

Congress follows a two-step procedure in appropriating money—an authorization bill and an appropriations bill. Suppose the president signs a bill to build recreational facilities in the inner cities.

This first step in the legislation is an authorization bill. An **authorization bill** sets up a federal program and specifies how much money may be appropriated for that program. For example, one provision of this law limits the amount of money that can be spent on the program to \$30 million a year. The recreation bill also specifies that the Department of **Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** will administer the program. HUD, however, does not yet actually have any money to carry out the program.

The second step in the appropriations procedure comes when HUD requests that Congress provide the \$30 million. This kind of bill is an **appropriations bill** and provides the money needed to carry out the many laws Congress has passed. HUD’s request for the \$30 million for the recreational facilities will be only one small item in the multibillion-dollar budget HUD will send to Congress for that year. HUD’s budget, in turn, will be part of the president’s total annual budget for the executive branch. Each year the president presents his budget to Congress. There the appropriations committees create their own appropriations bills. Congress might decide to

 See the following footnoted materials in the *Reference Handbook*:  
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## Managing the Nation’s Purse

**Congressional Funding** An artist, commissioned by the Works Progress Administration, depicted California’s multi-ethnic workforce. In the mid-1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt convinced Congress to appropriate funds to a relief program for the unemployed. WPA artists created hundreds of pieces documenting the times. **Why must agency heads testify before Congress to receive funding?**

**Former head of the National Endowment for the Arts, Jane Alexander, testifies before the Senate Labor Committee.**





grant HUD only \$15 million to carry out the building program. Next year, HUD would have to ask for another appropriation to continue the program.

**The Appropriations Committees** The House and Senate appropriations committees and their subcommittees handle appropriations bills. Both the House and Senate appropriations committees have 13 subcommittees that deal with the same policy areas in each house. Thus, the same appropriations subcommittees in the House of Representatives and the Senate would review the HUD budget, including its recreational facility program as presented.

Every year heads of departments and agencies and program directors testify before the House and Senate appropriations subcommittees about their budgets. During the budget hearings, these officials explain why they need the money they have requested. Each year agency officials must return to Congress to request the money they need to operate in the coming year. In this way lawmakers have a chance to become familiar with the federal agencies and their programs.

Appropriations subcommittees often develop close relationships with certain agencies and projects that they tend to favor in appropriating funds. In addition, powerful interest groups try hard to influence Congress and the appropriations subcommittees to give these agencies all the money they request.

**Uncontrollable Expenditures** The House and Senate appropriations committees, however, do not have a voice in all the current spending of the federal government. By previous legislation, some of which established many long-standing programs, about 70 percent of the money the federal government spends each year is already committed to certain uses and, therefore, not controlled by these

committees. These expenditures are termed **uncontrollables** because the government is legally committed to spend this money. Such required spending includes Social Security payments, interest on the national debt, and federal contracts that already are in force. Some of these expenditures are known as **entitlements** because they are social programs that continue from one year to the next.

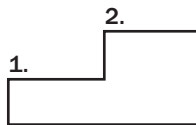


**A Social Security card**

## Section 2 Assessment

### Checking for Understanding

- 1. Main Idea** Using a graphic organizer like the one to the right, show the two-step procedure that Congress follows when appropriating money.
- 2. Define** tax, closed rule, appropriation, authorization bill, entitlement.
- 3. Identify** Ways and Means Committee, HUD.
- 4.** What control does the House Ways and Means Committee exert over presidential requests for changes in tax laws?



### Critical Thinking

- 5. Synthesizing Information** Do you think Congress should have the power both to raise and to spend money? Support your answer.

### Concepts IN ACTION

**Public Policy** Using the library or the Internet, research the major categories of revenue and expenditure in the current federal budget. Find out what amounts of money the government plans to raise and spend in each category. Create an illustrated report or series of graphs and charts.

# Skills

## Critical Thinking

### Analyzing Information

**T**o analyze information, you must determine its accuracy and reliability. Biased information may contain factual errors, be incomplete, or be distorted by propaganda techniques.

#### Learning the Skill

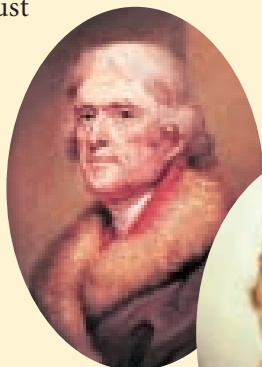
To analyze the information you encounter, follow these five steps:

1. Determine the purpose and nature of the information.
2. Determine if the information is from a primary or secondary source.
3. Evaluate the reliability of the source.
4. Determine what evidence the author presents.
5. Compare the information with other sources to see if they support or contradict each other.

#### Practicing the Skill

Read the excerpt below. It defines the nature of the Senate. Then answer the questions that follow.

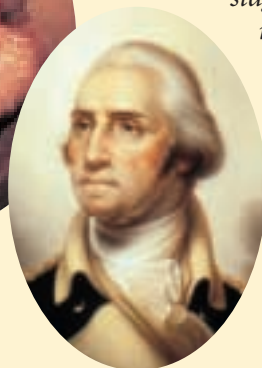
“In the classic anecdote about the origins of the Senate, Thomas Jefferson—in France during the Constitutional Convention—asked George Washington about the purpose of the new Senate. ‘Why,’ asked Washington, ‘did you pour that coffee into your saucer?’ ‘To cool it,’ Jefferson replied. ‘Even so,’ responded Washington, ‘we pour legislation into the senatorial saucer to cool it.’ That the Senate was intended to be the more deliberative and reasoning of the two chambers is well known. In designing the Senate, the Framers chose institutional



Thomas Jefferson

*features with an eye to restraining any ill-considered or rash legislation passed by the popularly elected House. With its smaller size, longer terms, older members, staggered elections by state legislative elite, and exclusive power to advise and consent on treaties and nominations, the Senate was expected to act ‘with more coolness, with more system and with more wisdom, than the popular branch.’ ”*

—from *Politics or Principle*, Sarah A. Binder and Steven S. Smith



George Washington

1. What subject are the authors addressing?
2. Is it a primary or secondary source?
3. Do you think the source is reliable? Why?
4. What evidence do the authors offer to support their viewpoint?
5. What other places or sources would you check to verify the accuracy of this article?

#### Application Activity

Look through the letters to the editor in your local newspaper. Prepare a short report analyzing one of the letters. Summarize the context of the article, the writer’s motivation, point of view, and possible bias.



The **Glencoe Skillbuilder Interactive Workbook, Level 2** provides instruction and practice in key social studies skills.

# Influencing Congress

## Reader's Guide

### Key Terms

lobbyist, lobbying

### Find Out

- How closely should the votes of members of Congress reflect the opinions of their constituents?
- What factors must a member of Congress weigh when deciding whether to support the views of an interest group or of the president?

### Understanding Concepts

**Political Processes** What specific groups and individuals influence the legislators' decisions?

## COVER STORY

### Senator Saves Johnson

WASHINGTON, D.C., MAY 1868

The refusal of Senator Edmund G. Ross to side with other Senate Republicans has saved President Andrew Johnson from being removed from office. Only one vote short of what they needed to convict Johnson of the impeachment charges brought against him, Republicans' pressure on the freshman senator from Kansas had been intense. By refusing to vote with 35 other Republicans, Ross has knowingly put his Senate career on the line. "I almost literally looked down into my open grave," he said of his vote. Political observers agree with the senator's assessment and do not expect him to be reelected to a second term.



Senator Edmund Ross

Like Senator Ross, members of Congress must constantly make difficult decisions. They decide which policies they will support and when to yield or not to yield to political pressures. They must also decide how to vote on controversial issues and when to make speeches explaining their views. In a single session, members may cast votes on a thousand issues. By their speeches and actions they influence the direction of government policies and help shape the public's views about a particular bill or about an issue that is before Congress. Who influences the lawmakers?

## Influences on Lawmakers

A great many factors influence a lawmaker's decisions. One factor is the lawmaker's personality. Some members of Congress, for example, are by nature more willing to take risks when making a choice. Sometimes the very nature of the issue determines the factors that will influence lawmakers most. For example, concerning a controversial issue such as gun control, a lawmaker may pay close attention to the voters back home, no matter what his or her own beliefs may be. On issues that have little direct effect on their home states or districts, most lawmakers are likely to rely on their own beliefs or on the advice and opinions of other lawmakers.

Congressional staff members also influence lawmakers' decisions in Congress. They can do this in several ways. One way is by controlling the information on which lawmakers base their decisions. Another way is by setting the agendas for individual lawmakers and for congressional committees that may favor a certain point of view.

Thus, many factors affect a lawmaker's decision on any given issue. Most lawmakers agree that the most important influences on their decision making are the concerns of voters back home, their own political parties, the president, and special-interest groups.

## The Influence of Voters



The political careers of all lawmakers depend upon how the voters back home feel about lawmakers' job performance. Only very unusual lawmakers would regularly vote against the wishes of the people in their home states or districts.

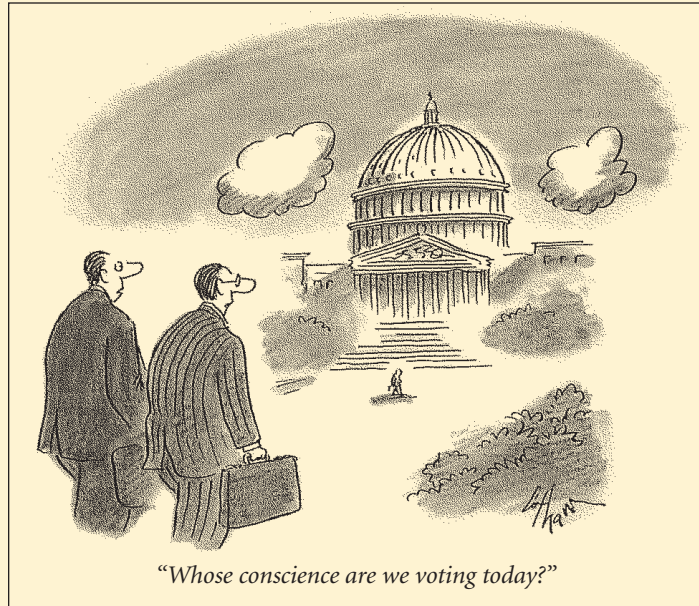
**What Voters Expect** Experienced lawmakers know that their constituents expect them to pay a great deal of attention to their state or district. Most people expect their representatives to put the needs of their district ahead of the needs of the nation. What if a conflict arises between what the lawmaker believes should be done and what the people in the district want? In a national opinion survey, most people said their lawmaker should “follow what people in the district want.”

The voting behavior of most members of Congress reflects the results of this survey. On issues that affect their constituents' daily lives, such as civil rights and social welfare, lawmakers generally go along with the voters' preferences. In contrast, on issues where constituents have less information or interest, such as foreign affairs, lawmakers often make up their own minds.

Voters say they want their lawmakers to follow constituents' wishes on the issues and enact laws that reflect their needs and opinions. Most voters, however, do not take the trouble to find out how their senators and representatives cast their votes in Congress. Sometimes voters are not even aware of all the issues lawmakers must decide and vote on. Why, then, is the way lawmakers vote so important to their chance of reelection?

In an election campaign, the candidate from the other party and opposing interest groups will bring up the lawmaker's voting record. They may demand that the lawmaker explain votes that turned out to be unpopular back home. The opposite is also true. A legislator running for reelection may call attention to his or her votes on certain measures in order to attract constituents' support.

## Influencing Policy Makers



**Influencing Government** Lawmakers represent the citizens of their districts and their own political parties. At election time, these groups will hold lawmakers accountable for their votes. **What does the cartoonist seem to be saying about who influences a legislator's vote?**

As a result, voters who might otherwise not know how the lawmaker voted are told how well he or she “paid attention to the folks back home.” The margin between a candidate's victory and defeat may be only a few thousand votes. Consequently, a small group of voters on either side—those who were unhappy with a lawmaker's voting record and those who strongly supported that record—could mean the difference between the candidate's victory and defeat. As a result, lawmakers try to find out what the voters back home are concerned about well before an election.

**Learning What Voters Want** Most lawmakers use several methods to try to keep track of their constituents' opinions. One method is to make frequent trips home to learn the local voters' concerns. Members of the House of Representatives make dozens of trips to their home districts each year. During these trips they will try to speak with as many voters as possible about the issues concerning them.






## Voting Along Party Lines

**Political Processes** Political parties greatly influence legislators' voting decisions. *How may congressional party leaders persuade lawmakers to support the party position?*

In addition, staff members usually screen the lawmaker's mail to learn what issues concern voters the most. Many lawmakers also send questionnaires to their constituents asking for their opinions on various issues. Near election time lawmakers often hire professional pollsters to conduct opinion surveys among the voters of their districts.

Finally, all lawmakers pay close attention to the ideas of their rain-or-shine supporters—those people who work in candidates' campaigns, contribute money, and help ensure their reelection. As one lawmaker put it, "Everybody needs some groups which are strongly for him." These supporters also help lawmakers keep in touch with what is going on back home.

## The Influence of Parties

 Almost every member of Congress is either a Republican or a Democrat. Both political parties generally take stands on major issues and come out for or against specific legislation. Political party identification is one of the most important influences on a lawmaker's voting behavior. In most cases knowing which political party members of Congress belong to will help predict how they will vote on major issues. Political party membership often will indicate how a lawmaker votes better than knowing almost anything else about him or her.

**Party Voting** On major bills most Democrats tend to vote together, as do most Republicans. In the House of Representatives, members vote with their party about two-thirds of the time. Senators, who are generally more independent than House members, are less likely to follow their party's position.

Party voting is much stronger on some issues than on others. On issues relating to government intervention in the economy, party members tend to vote the same way. Party voting is also strong on farm issues and fairly strong on social-welfare issues. Party voting is much weaker on foreign policy issues because the two parties often do not have very fixed positions on international questions. On certain other issues, such as dams and water projects, party position is often less influential than local or regional voter preferences in determining how a legislator votes.

**The Importance of Parties** One reason Republicans or Democrats vote with their parties is that members of each party are likely to share the same general beliefs about public policy. As a group, Democratic lawmakers are more likely than Republicans to favor social-welfare programs, job programs through public works, tax laws that help people with lower incomes, and government regulation of business. Taken as a group, Republican members of Congress are likely to support less spending for government programs, local and state solutions to problems rather than solutions by the national government, and policies that favor business and higher-income groups.

Another reason for party voting is that most lawmakers simply do not have strong opinions about every issue on which they vote. They do not know enough about every issue to make informed decisions based on all the important details of all the bills on which they must vote. Consequently, they often seek advice on how to vote from other lawmakers who know more about the issue. According to one senator:

*“When it comes to voting, an individual will rely heavily not only on the judgment of staff members, but also on a select number of senators whose knowledge he has come to respect and whose general perspectives [views] he shares.”*

—Senator Wendell Ford

On some issues party leaders pressure members to vote for the party's position. Often, party leaders support the president's program if the president is a member of the same party. On the other hand, leaders of the opposing party may vote against the president's program and seek to turn such opposition into a political issue. Congressional party leaders such as the Senate majority leader or the Speaker of the House usually use the power of persuasion. These leaders do not expect to get their way all the time. But they do work hard to influence lawmakers to support the party's position on key issues. Gaining the support of party members is one of the main jobs of a party leader. Very few issues are unaffected by political party affiliation.

## Other Influences on Congress



Although voter preferences and political parties strongly influence the decisions of lawmakers, two other influences are often equally strong: the president and interest groups.

**The Influence of the President** All presidents try to influence Congress to pass the laws

that the president and his party support. Some presidents work harder than others at gaining support in Congress, and some are more successful in getting Congress to pass their programs.

Members of Congress have often complained that presidents have more ways to influence legislation and policy than do lawmakers. Presidents can appear on television to try to influence public opinion and put pressure on Congress. In late 1990 and early 1991, for example, President Bush deployed United States troops to Saudi Arabia. Twenty-four weeks of military buildup followed, in which the United States government attempted to force Iraq out of Kuwait. Congress let the president take the lead in responding to Iraq. President Bush took every opportunity to express his views in the press and on television. With growing public support for military action behind the president, Congress voted to approve military action in the Persian Gulf. Presidential influence, in this instance of policy making, had tremendous influence.

Presidents may also use their powers to influence individual members of Congress. They can give or withhold support of lawmakers. In the mid-1960s, for example, Senator Frank Church of Idaho criticized President Lyndon Johnson's conduct of the

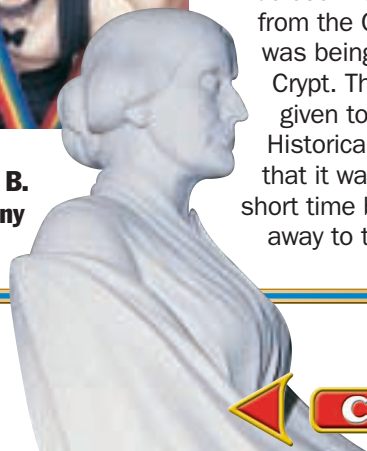
## We the People

### Making a Difference

#### Arlys Endres



Susan B. Anthony



While she may not be employed as a lobbyist or a member of a political action committee, Arlys Endres of Phoenix, Arizona, has already made her mark in the hallowed halls of Congress. In 1996, when she was 10 years old, Arlys wrote a school report on suffragist Susan B. Anthony. She was later dismayed to discover that a statue honoring Anthony and two other suffragists, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, had been removed from the Capitol Rotunda, and was being stored in the Capitol Crypt. The statue had been given to Congress in 1921. Historical records indicated that it was on display for only a short time before it was whisked away to the Capitol basement.

Arlys wanted to convince Congress to display the statue. She discovered a national effort led by female members of Congress to raise money to reinstall the statue. Arlys mailed at least 2,000 letters to round up supporters and donations. She also went on a door-to-door fund-raising campaign.

In all, Arlys helped raise almost \$2,000. Her efforts also took her to Washington, D.C., to see the statue and speak at a "Raise the Statue" rally. Her campaign did not go unnoticed by national legislators. The United States Congress unanimously voted to reinstall the statue in the Capitol Rotunda and promised to leave it on display for at least a year.

Vietnam War. To support his viewpoint, Church showed President Johnson a newspaper column written by journalist Walter Lippmann criticizing the war. “All right,” Johnson said, “the next time you need a dam for Idaho, you go ask Walter Lippmann.”

Since the early 1900s, many presidents have tried to increase their influence over Congress and the lawmaking process, and they have succeeded. In more recent years Congress has taken steps to limit the president’s influence, letting Congress remain a more autonomous legislative body.

**The Influence of Interest Groups** The representatives of interest groups, called **lobbyists**, are another important influence on Congress. Lobbyists try to convince members of Congress to support policies favored by the groups they represent. Their efforts to persuade officials to support their point of view is called **lobbying**. The largest and most powerful lobbies have their own buildings and full-time professional staffs in the nation’s capital.

Lobbyists represent a wide variety of interests such as business organizations, labor unions, doctors, lawyers, education groups, minority groups, and environmental organizations. In addition, lobbyists work for groups that sometimes form to support or to oppose a specific issue.

Lobbyists use various methods to influence members of Congress. They provide lawmakers with information about policies they support or oppose. They visit lawmakers in their offices or in

the lobbies of the Capitol and try to persuade them to support their position. They encourage citizens to write to members of Congress on the issues they favor or oppose.

Interest groups and their lobbyists also focus their attention on congressional committees. For example, farm groups concentrate their attention on influencing the committees responsible for laws on agriculture. Labor unions focus their effort on committees dealing with labor legislation and the economy.

**Political Action Committees** Some observers believe that the importance of individual lobbyists has declined in recent years as political action committees, known as **PACs**, have dramatically increased in number and influence with lawmakers. PACs are political fund-raising organizations established by corporations, labor unions, and other special-interest groups. PAC funds come from voluntary contributions by employees, stockholders, and union members. A PAC uses its funds to support lawmakers who favor the PAC’s positions on issues.

**CLICK HERE**

**GOVERNMENT**  
*Online*

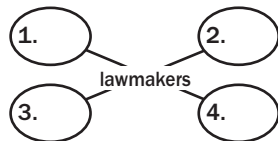


**Student Web Activity** Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at [gov.glencoe.com](http://gov.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 7—Student Web Activities** for an activity about influencing Congress.

## Section 3 Assessment

### Checking for Understanding

- 1. Main Idea** Using a graphic organizer like the one to the right, identify four ways lawmakers can keep in touch with voters’ opinions.



- 2. Define** lobbyist, lobbying.
- 3. Identify** PAC.
- 4.** On which type of issues do lawmakers tend to pay less attention to voter opinion?
- 5.** What influence does the president have on Congress?

### Critical Thinking

- 6. Making Inferences** Why do some people think that PACs now have more influence over members of Congress and the process of congressional legislation than do individual lobbyists?

## Concepts IN ACTION

**Political Processes** Contact a special-interest group to request literature on the group’s purpose and activities. Summarize how the group attempts to influence legislators. Post the literature and summary on a bulletin-board display.



## SPACE STATION: WHAT SHOULD CONGRESS DO?

*In 1984 the National Aeronautics and Space Administration proposed to build a space station as a long-term project that would provide valuable knowledge and be a way station for trips to other planets or the moon. The project provided additional justification for another major project, the space shuttle.*



### COST-CONSCIOUS GOVERNMENT

This original vision, as proposed in 1984, was soon questioned because the government had become more cost conscious. By late 1996 President Clinton confirmed that the manned mission to Mars project was dead. Instead, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration began preparing a vast armada of robots to send to the red planet. In 1997, the first robot landed on Mars and sent back dramatic images and extensive data. It collected most of the data that human explorers could collect, at a fraction of the cost. A human mission would have cost \$500 billion. NASA builds each of its automated probes for far less money. Some scientists argue that the original plans for a manned space station also should be abandoned because they are no longer relevant.

### HUMANS IN SPACE

Arguments supporting the development of a manned station include the notion that the space station is an inspiring international project that will allow the world's most talented space scientists to keep active until human exploration of space is feasible. Some experts say that it will keep former Soviet scientists away from dangerous employers. The lucrative construction contracts from the United States and other countries further support pursuing a manned station. Scientists also plan to use the station for biological experiments. United States leadership in this area would be questioned if America backed out.

### Debating the Issue

### WOULD YOU VOTE FOR OR AGAINST THE FUNDING BILL?

Assume you are a member of Congress who will vote on funding for a manned space station. Your home district has research companies that might benefit from government contracts if the station were built. However, you were elected on a pledge to reduce unnecessary government spending. The proposed budget is for \$94 billion over a 15-year period.

#### KEY ISSUES

- ✓ What are the benefits and costs of a manned space station?

- ✓ Could the same benefits be gained at less cost by another method?
- ✓ How will your decision affect your constituents? Your nation?

**Debate** Discuss the issue in class. Allow time for two people on either side of the issue to prepare short speeches to present to the class.

**Vote** Make your decision for or against the funding bill. Then have the class vote and record the results. Discuss the outcome of the vote.



# Helping Constituents

## Reader's Guide

### Key Terms

casework, pork-barrel legislation, logrolling

### Find Out

- Why do legislators spend much of their time helping their constituents?
- How do the organization and methods of Congress contribute to pork-barrel legislation?

### Understanding Concepts

**Federalism** How does the need to weigh the interests of their constituents affect national policy decisions by members of Congress?

## COVER STORY

### Chasing Federal Money

WASHINGTON, D.C., MARCH 1997

Displaying a photo of a fiery auto crash on Interstate 35 in downtown Austin, Texas, Representative Lloyd Doggett called for federal help in building a bypass around the city. Doggett wants the House to change the way it distributes federal gasoline taxes among the states. Currently Texas receives just 77 cents of each dollar it contributes in gasoline taxes. Under the Texan's plan, that would increase to 95 cents. The idea angers legislators from northeastern states, which currently receive more of the tax money. New York representative Susan Molinari thinks Texas gets its share of federal money in other areas. "The extra six billion defense dollars that go to Texas, kiss it good-by," she said.



Texas state seal

Representative Doggett's experience mirrors what many seasoned lawmakers have learned—they are expected to do more in Washington, D.C., for their constituents than debate great issues. To be reelected, lawmakers must spend much of their time on two other important tasks. First, they must act as problem solvers for voters who have difficulties with departments or agencies of the federal government. Second, they must make sure that their district or state gets its share of federal money, projects such as new post offices, highways, and contracts.

These two duties are not new to members of Congress, but in recent years these duties have become increasingly important. As the national government has grown, they have become a time-consuming part of the lawmaker's job.

## Handling Problems



All lawmakers today are involved with casework. Helping constituents with problems is called **casework**. One House member put it this way, "Rightly or wrongly, we have become the link between the frustrated citizen and the very involved federal government in citizens' lives. . . . We continually use more and more of our staff time to handle citizens' complaints."

**Many Different Requests** Lawmakers respond to thousands of requests from voters for help in dealing with executive agencies. Typical requests include: (1) A soldier would like the Army to move him to a base close to home because his parents are ill. (2) A local businessperson claims the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is treating her business unfairly. She would like to meet with top FTC officials. (3) A veteran has had his GI life insurance policy cancelled by a government agency. The agency says the veteran failed to fill out and return a certain form. The veteran says he never got the form, but he wants the life insurance. (4) A

new high school graduate would like help finding a government job in Washington.

Many lawmakers complain that although voters say they want less government they demand more services from their members of Congress. Sometimes voters make unreasonable requests or ask for help that a lawmaker is unwilling to deliver. A representative from New York, for example, was asked to fix a speeding ticket. Another member received a call asking what the lawmaker was going to do about the shortage of snow shovels at a local hardware store during a blizzard.

**Who Handles Casework** All lawmakers have staff members called **caseworkers** to handle the problems of their constituents. In most instances the caseworkers are able to handle the requests for help themselves. Sometimes the problem can be solved with a simple question from a caseworker to the agency involved. At other times, however, the senator or representative may have to get directly involved. One representative explained, “When nothing else is working and the staff feels they’ve had it with the bureaucracy, then I step in.”

**Purposes of Casework** Why do lawmakers spend so much of their time on casework? Lawmakers are involved in casework because it serves three important purposes. First, casework helps lawmakers get reelected. Lawmakers know that helping voters with problems is part of what they can do for the people in their states or districts. “I learned soon after coming to Washington,” a Missouri lawmaker once said, “that it was just as important to get a certain document for somebody back home as for some European diplomat—really, more important, because that little guy back home votes.”

As a result, many lawmakers actually look for casework. One lawmaker, for example, regularly sent invitations to almost 7,000 voters in his district asking them to bring their problems to a town meeting his staff runs. Today lawmakers may encourage voters to communicate with them by electronic mail. Many representatives have vans that drive through their districts as mobile offices to keep watch on problems back home.

Second, casework is one way in which Congress oversees the executive branch. Casework brings problems with federal programs to the attention of members of Congress. It provides op-


portunities for lawmakers and their staffs to get a closer look at how well the executive branch is handling such federal programs as Social Security, veterans’ benefits, or workers’ compensation.

Third, casework provides a way for the average citizen to cope with the huge national government. In the years before the national government grew so large, most citizens with a problem turned to their local politicians—called ward heelers—for help. One member of Congress explained that:

“In the old days, you had the ward heeler who cemented himself in the community by taking care of everyone. Now the Congressman plays the role of ward heeler—wending his way through bureaucracy, helping to cut through red tape and confusion.”

—Sam Rayburn

## Helping the District or State

 Besides providing services for their constituents, members of Congress also try to bring federal government projects and money to their districts and states. Lawmakers do this in three ways: (1) through pork-barrel legislation; (2) through winning federal grants and contracts; and (3) through keeping federal projects.

**Public Works Legislation** Every year, through **public works bills**, Congress appropriates billions of dollars for a variety of local projects. These projects may include such things as post offices, dams, military bases, harbor and river improvements, federally funded highways, veterans’ hospitals, pollution-treatment centers, and mass-transit system projects.

Such government projects can bring jobs and money into a state or district. For example, Senator Robert Byrd’s pet project, the Appalachian Regional Commission, oversaw more than a billion dollars worth of government spending in its first three years. Beginning in 1989, Byrd used his position as chair of the Appropriations Committee to transplant federal agencies into his home state of West Virginia. For example, agencies or divisions of the FBI, CIA, Internal Revenue Service, and even the Coast Guard were moved from Washington to Byrd’s state.

## Protecting Their Districts



**Constituent Services** Although Representative Ronald Dellums, who chaired the House Armed Services Commission, maintained that defense funds could be better used to help the disadvantaged, when defense cuts hit close to home, he fought them. In 1993 Dellums challenged the closing of the Alameda Naval Air Station in his California district. *Why would Dellums oppose the closing of the Alameda Naval Air Station despite his criticism of military spending?*

When Congress passes laws to appropriate money for such local federal projects, it is often called **pork-barrel legislation**. The idea is that a member of Congress has dipped into the “pork barrel” (the federal treasury) and pulled out a piece of “fat” (a federal project for his or her district). Sometimes such legislation draws criticism. Referring to Robert Byrd’s project, a Maryland congresswoman claimed she was “afraid to go to sleep at night for fear of waking up and finding another agency has been moved to West Virginia.”

More often, lawmakers take the “You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours” approach to public works legislation. Believing that getting federal projects for the home state is a key part of their job, they usually help each other. Such agreements by two or more lawmakers to support each other’s bills is called **logrolling**.

**Winning Grants and Contracts** Lawmakers also try to make sure their districts or states get their fair share of the available federal grants and contracts which are funded through the national budget. A senator from Colorado put it this way, “If a program is to be established, the state of Colorado should get its fair share.”

Federal grants and contracts are very important to lawmakers and their districts or states. These contracts are a vital source of money and jobs and can radically affect the economy of a state. Every year federal agencies such as the Department of Defense spend billions of dollars to carry out hundreds of government projects and programs. For example, when the Air Force decided to locate a new project at one of its bases in Utah, almost 1,000 jobs and millions of dollars came into the state. Lawmakers often compete for such valuable

federal grants or contracts. For example, several other states wanted the Air Force project, but Utah's lawmakers won the prize for their state.

**Behind the Scenes** Lawmakers do not have the direct control over grants and contracts that they do over pork-barrel legislation. Instead, agencies of the executive branch such as the Department of Defense or the Department of Labor award federal grants and contracts. Lawmakers, however, may try to influence agency decisions in several ways. They may pressure agency officials to give a favorable hearing to their state's requests. Lawmakers may also encourage their constituents to write, telephone, or E-mail agency officials in order to make their requests or needs known. If problems come up when someone from the state is arranging a grant or contract, congressional members may step in to help.

Many lawmakers assign one or more of their staff members to act as specialists in contracts and grants. These staff members become experts on how individuals, businesses, and local governments can qualify for federal money. They will help

## Distributing the Pork



**Congressional Politics** This 1963 cartoon illustrates the pressures for a lawmaker to “bring home the bacon” to his or her congressional district. *What kinds of projects receive “pork” handouts from Congress?*

constituents apply for contracts and grants. The lawmakers' job is to make sure federal grants and contracts keep coming into their state or district.

## Section 4 Assessment

### Checking for Understanding

- 1. Main Idea** Using a graphic organizer like the one below, explain how allocation of grants and contracts is different from pork-barrel legislation.

grants/contracts	
pork	

- 2. Define** casework, pork-barrel legislation, logrolling.
- 3. Identify** caseworker, public works bill.
- 4.** Why do lawmakers get involved in casework?
- 5.** List three ways lawmakers bring federal projects to their states.
- 6.** Which branch of government awards federal grants and contracts?

### Critical Thinking

- 7. Drawing Conclusions** Why do you think the size of the lawmakers' staff has increased in recent years?

## Concepts IN ACTION

**Federalism** Look through several editions of your local paper to find examples of federal money spent in your state or community. Present your findings in the form of a radio news broadcast. Your broadcast should explain how the pork-barrel legislation benefited your state or local community.





# DEMOCRACY WORKSHOP IN ACTION

## From a Bill to a Law

*In Chapter 7 you learned that thousands of bills are introduced in Congress each year, yet only a handful become law. In this activity, you will take a bill through the process to create your own law. The activity will help you to understand the lawmaking process in both houses of Congress and demonstrate the role that compromise plays in getting a bill passed. You may want to reread pages 181–188 before you begin.*

### Setting Up the Workshop

- 1 For this activity you will need pencils, paper, a receptacle for drawing names, and access to a copy machine. If available, you can also use blank transparencies and an overhead projector.
- 2 Use the lottery method to divide the class into the following three groups:
  - Group 1** Witnesses to testify at hearings (six members)
  - Group 2** One-half the remainder of the class to be representatives and one-half to be senators
  - Group 3** Three students from the Senate group and three students from the House group to act as official recorders to keep track of the wording of bills and alterations to the bills throughout the lawmaking process

### STEP 1 ★ ★ ★ ★

#### Introducing a Bill

Work as a class to develop a list of three proposals for change or improvements in your classroom environment. These proposals might deal with the arrangement of seating, the use of the bulletin board, orderliness of materials on shelves, room decorations, and so on.

Have the recorders from the House and the Senate write down each suggestion in the form of a bill for that house. Number the bills appropriately as explained in the text on page 184.

### STEP 2 ★ ★ ★ ★

#### Moving to Committee

**Groups 2 and 3** Senators and representatives should adjourn to separate areas of the classroom. Each house should choose its leader—Speaker of the House, and president pro tem of the Senate. The recorders should then read the text of their three bills out loud. If a copy machine

is available, provide a copy of each bill to each member and to the witnesses who were chosen at the beginning of the activity.

The leader of each house should appoint each member to one of three committees. The leader will give each committee one bill for which it will be responsible. Each committee should choose a recorder to keep track of the progress and changes made to the bill. Members of each committee should also select a chairperson for their committee. The chairperson will be responsible for organizing the agenda for the committee meeting, assigning tasks, presiding over the meeting, and conducting votes.

Each committee's task will be to:

1. hold a hearing to hear witnesses in favor of and opposed to the bill
2. make changes to the bill to make it more acceptable
3. prepare a written report on the bill and move it to the floor for a final vote or, if committee members decide that their bill should not be moved to the floor, pigeonhole the bill by a majority vote

### STEP 3 ★ ★ ★ ★

## Calling Witnesses

### Groups 1, 2, and 3

The chairperson for each committee should call for a hearing and invite one witness to present his or her opinion on the bill. Committee members should be prepared to ask witnesses questions about their knowledge of the subject and reasons for supporting or opposing the bill.



**A bill must be dropped into the House hopper to be considered for legislative action.**

**Actor-director Christopher Reeve testified before a Senate Labor subcommittee to increase funding for neurological and communication disorders research.**



**CONTENTS**

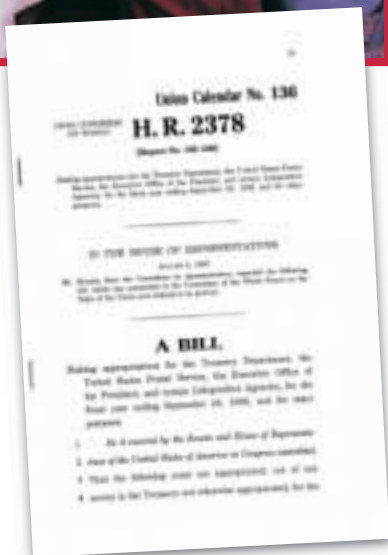
# DEMOCRACY

## WORKSHOP

# IN ACTION



Step 3



A House bill

**Group 1** Before the hearing, the witnesses should meet to divide up the bills being introduced. Each witness should be prepared to support or oppose passage of one bill at the committee hearing.

## STEP 4 ★ ★ ★ ★

### Committee Action

**Groups 1, 2, and 3** After the hearing, the committee should meet in a markup session to go through the bill line by line and decide what changes should be made. Committee members should be prepared to present their suggestions for change in a convincing manner. Votes should be taken on all of the changes.

When all changes have been made, the committee should vote to either kill the bill or report it to Congress. To report the bill, the committee must make a written copy of the final revised bill to send to the House or Senate and prepare a report that includes the following:

1. a description of the bill
2. an explanation of the committee's actions
3. major changes made in committee
4. opinions on the bill

## STEP 5 ★ ★ ★ ★

### Floor Action

**Groups 1, 2, and 3** Once the committees have prepared their reports, the bills are ready for floor action. The members of all three committees should now reconvene as the Senate or House to hold debate on each bill. The leader of each house should preside over the debate, allowing one person at a time to speak. Changes (amendments) can still be made to the bills if a majority of members vote to do so.



## STEP 6 ★ ★ ★ ★

### Taking a Vote

After the debate on each bill, it is time for the final vote. Each house should take a vote of its members to determine if the bill will pass or be defeated in its amended form. A roll call of each person's vote should be recorded.

## STEP 7 ★ ★ ★ ★

### Conference Committee

If a different version of a bill passes in both the House and Senate, leaders of Congress should organize a conference committee with three members from each house. This committee should iron out the differences between the House and the Senate versions of the bill and present a compromise to be voted on in both houses.

## STEP 8 ★ ★ ★ ★

### Presenting the Bill

Each bill that passes through both houses should be forwarded to the president (teacher) for action in written form. If the president vetoes a bill, the House and Senate may vote again to override the veto, or let the veto stand.



### ★ Summary Activity ★

Choose a spokesperson to read the bills that have survived. On an overhead projector, display the original form of each bill in each house, along with the final versions. You may want to hold a class discussion on the following questions.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What improvements were made by the changes in each bill?
2. If any of the bills were killed in committee, why did this happen?
3. What disagreements in your committee were resolved by compromise?
4. How much effect did the testimony of witnesses have on the final bill?
5. At what point in the lawmaking process is a bill most likely to be changed the most?
6. Could this system be made more efficient? How?



## Chapter 7

# Assessment and Activities

CLICK HERE

### GOVERNMENT

Online



**Self-Check Quiz** Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at [gov.glencoe.com](http://gov.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 7–Self-Check Quizzes** to prepare for the chapter test.

## Reviewing Key Terms

Fill in the blank with the letter of the correct term or concept listed below.

- |                |                            |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| a. tax         | f. closed rule             |
| b. rider       | g. authorization bills     |
| c. hearing     | h. entitlements            |
| d. pocket veto | i. casework                |
| e. lobbyist    | j. pork-barrel legislation |

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is money that citizens and businesses pay to support the government.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is a congressional task that involves helping constituents with problems.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an often controversial provision tacked on to a bill pertaining to a different subject.
4. Interest on the national debt and Social Security payments are examples of \_\_\_\_\_.

## Current Events JOURNAL

**Special Interests** Look for newspaper or newsmagazine articles about rallies, demonstrations, boycotts, or activities sponsored by special-interest groups. Write a summary of the article and express your opinion about the activity.

5. A person who represents a special-interest group to Congress and other government officials is known as a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Witnesses usually offer testimony in a committee \_\_\_\_\_ regarding a specific bill.
7. Under a \_\_\_\_\_, House members were forbidden to offer amendments to tax bills from the floor.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is when Congress passes laws to appropriate money for local federal projects.
9. The president gives a \_\_\_\_\_ by not signing a bill during the last 10 days Congress is in session.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ set up federal programs and specify how much money may be appropriated for those programs.

## Recalling Facts

1. Describe the two types of bills that may be introduced and three types of resolutions that may be passed in Congress.
2. What are four actions a president may take on a bill?
3. What role does the House Ways and Means Committee play in tax legislation?
4. What means do lawmakers use to bring federal projects or money to their states or districts?
5. What factors influence lawmakers when they consider legislation?
6. When are members of Congress most likely to vote with their political party?
7. How do lobbyists influence lawmakers?
8. What key tool do lawmakers use to secure the passage of public works legislation?

## Understanding Concepts

1. **Public Policy** What procedure is Congress supposed to use to fund its programs and control its expenses?
2. **Political Processes** Do you think lawmakers' activities would be different if there were no special-interest groups? Explain your answer.
3. **Federalism** In your opinion, what is the most important purpose of casework for constituents in a representative's home state?

CONTENTS

# Chapter 7

## Critical Thinking

1. **Making Inferences** Use the graphic organizer below to show three characteristics that help a bill make its way through the lawmaking process.



2. **Drawing Conclusions** Why is Congress reluctant to appropriate the full amount of money an agency requests?
3. **Synthesizing Information** Which legislative task is more important—casework or winning federal projects? Support your opinion.

## Cooperative Learning Activity

**Passing a Bill** Organize the class into three groups. Two will be special-interest groups on opposite sides of an issue. The third group will be lawmakers. Each special-interest group should try to persuade the lawmakers to pass a bill favoring its point of view. The lawmakers must then write the bill.

## Skill Practice Activity

**Analyzing Information** Reread the quote from Senator Wendell Ford on page 196 and answer the questions that follow.

1. What subject is Ford addressing?
2. Is it a primary source?
3. Does Ford offer any evidence that supports his position?
4. Do you think the information is reliable?
5. What evidence would you use to support Ford's position?

## Interpreting Political Cartoons Activity

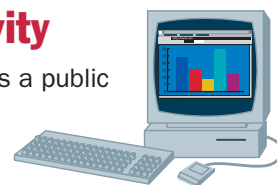


*"Someone called from a Political Inaction Committee to speak to you on behalf of apathetic voters. He said he might call back."*

1. What is the "Political Inaction Committee" referred to in the cartoon?
2. How is the "Political Inaction Committee" different from other interest groups?
3. Why is this situation unrealistic?

## Technology Activity

**Using the Internet** C-Span is a public service that broadcasts daily sessions of the House and Senate. Use the Internet to locate C-Span's World Wide Web home page for a television schedule. Watch one of these congressional proceedings. Summarize what you see for the class.



## Participating in Local Government

Obtain a copy of a bill considered in your state from your state representative or senator. Decide what changes you would suggest in the bill. Forward these suggestions to your representative or senator and ask for a response.

