CHAPTER 11

CONGRESS

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. The Representatives and Senators (pp. 338-341)
   A. The Job
   B. The Members

II. Congressional Elections (pp. 341-349)
   A. Who Wins Elections?
      1. **Incumbents** are individuals who already hold office.
      2. Incumbents usually win.
   B. The Advantages of Incumbents
      1. Advertising
      2. Credit Claiming
         a. **Casework** is helping constituents as individuals.
         b. **Pork barrel** is the mighty list of federal projects, grants, and contracts available to cities, businesses, colleges, and institutions.
      3. Position-Taking
      4. Weak Opponents
      5. Campaign Spending
   C. The Role of Party Identification
   D. Defeating Incumbents
   E. Open Seats
   F. Stability and Change

III. How Congress Is Organized to Make Policy (pp. 349-369)
   A. American Bicameralism
      1. A **bicameral legislature** is a legislature divided into two houses.
      2. The House
         a. The House is more institutionalized and less anarchic than the Senate.
         b. The **House Rules Committee** reviews most bills coming from a House committee before they go to the full House.
      3. The Senate
         a. The Senate is less disciplined and centralized than the House.
         b. **Filibusters** allow unlimited debate in the Senate until a vote for cloture halts a filibuster.
   B. Congressional Leadership
1. The House
   a. The Speaker of the House is the most important leadership position in the House.
   b. The majority leader is responsible for scheduling bills and rounding up votes on behalf of the party.
   c. The party whips carry the word to party troops and help round up votes on behalf of the party.
   d. The minority leader is responsible for party cohesion among the minority party members.

2. The Senate
   a. The vice president of the United States is the president of the Senate.
   b. Power is widely dispersed in the Senate.

3. Congressional Leadership in Perspective
   C. The Committees and Subcommittees
      1. Types of Committees
         a. Standing committees are formed to handle bills in different policy areas.
         b. Joint committees exist in a few policy areas and are composed of both House and Senate members.
         c. Conference committees are formed when the Senate and House pass a particular bill in different forms.
         d. Select committees are appointed for a specific purpose.

2. The Committees at Work: Legislation and Oversight
   a. All bills go through a committee that has considerable power over the fate of the bill.
   b. Legislative oversight is the process of monitoring the bureaucracy and its administration of policy.

3. Getting on a Committee
4. Getting Ahead on the Committee: Chairs and the Seniority System
   a. Committee chairs are the most important influencers of the committee agenda.
   b. The seniority system is the general rule for selecting chairs, but there are exceptions.

D. Caucuses: The Informal Organization of Congress
   1. A caucus is a grouping of members of Congress who share some interest or characteristic.
   2. The explosion of caucuses has made the representation of interests in Congress a more direct process.

E. Congressional Staff
   1. Personal Staff
   2. Committee Staff
   3. Staff Agencies (Congressional Research Service, General Accounting Office, and Congressional Budget Office)

204
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying Chapter 11, you should be able to:

1. Describe the characteristics of our senators and representatives and the nature of their jobs.

2. Explain what factors have the greatest influence in congressional elections.

3. Explain the structure of power and leadership in the U.S. Congress and the role of committees.

4. Identify what members of Congress do and discuss the congressional process and the many influences on legislative decision making.

5. Evaluate Congress in terms of American democracy, congressional reforms, and the scope of government.

The following exercises will help you meet these objectives:

Objective 1: Describe the characteristics of our senators and representatives and the nature of their jobs.

1. List seven perks members of Congress receive.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

2. Describe a “typical” member of Congress in terms of the following categories.
   Sex:
   Race:
   Age:
   Religion:
   Prior Occupation:
   Wealth:

3. What is the difference between descriptive and substantive representation?
   Descriptive:

   Substantive:
Objective 2: Explain what factors have the greatest influence in congressional elections.

1. List and explain five advantages incumbents have over their opponents in congressional elections.
   
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.

2. What is the difference between casework and pork barrel?
   
   Casework:
   
   Pork barrel:

3. What are the main criticisms of PACs?

4. List and explain three ways that an incumbent might be defeated.
   
   1.
   2.
   3.
Objective 3: Explain the structure of power and leadership in the U.S. Congress, and the role of committees.

1. What are the main functions of the House Rules Committee?

2. List four formal powers of the Speaker of the House.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 

3. List the four types of congressional committees.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 

4. What is meant by legislative oversight?

5. How does the seniority system work?

6. What is the difference between the personal staff and the committee staff?
7. List three congressional staff agencies.
   1.
   2.
   3.

Objective 4: Identify what members of Congress do, and discuss the congressional process and the many influences on legislative decision making.

1. Draw a diagram of how a bill becomes a law.

2. List the 10 times a president must usually win in order to hope for final passage of his or her proposed legislation.
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.
   6.
   7.
8.

9.

10.

3. What is the difference among trustees, instructed delegates, and politicos?

Trustees:

Instructed delegates:

Politicos:

4. List three ways Congress can frustrate the activities of lobbyists.

1.

2.

3.

Objective 5: Evaluate Congress in terms of American democracy, congressional reforms, and the scope of government.

1. Explain the dilemma between representativeness and effectiveness in Congress.

2. How does the organization of Congress contribute to the expanding scope of government?
KEY TERMS

Identify and describe:

incumbents

casework

pork barrel

bicameral legislature

House Rules Committee

filibuster

Speaker of the House

majority leader

minority leader

standing committees
joint committees

conference committees

select committees

legislative oversight

committee chairs

seniority system

caucus

bill

*Compare and contrast:*

casework and pork barrel

majority leader and minority leader

standing committees and select committees
joint committees and conference committees

committee chairs and seniority system

Name that term:

1. They usually win congressional elections.
   ______________________

2. Two houses.
   ______________________

3. Unlimited debate in the U.S. Senate.
   ______________________

4. Reviews most of the bills coming from a House committee before they go to the full House.
   ______________________

5. He or she exercises substantial control over which bills get assigned to which committees in the House.
   ______________________

6. This monitoring process is handled mainly through congressional hearings.
   ______________________

7. A grouping of members of Congress sharing some interest.
   ______________________

8. A proposed law drafted in precise, legal language.
   ______________________
USING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Investigate one or more of the members of Congress from your state or congressional district. Find out about their membership on congressional committees and their leadership positions. Also find out whether or not one of your members might be called a policy entrepreneur, because much of his or her political capital is invested in a particular cause or issue. See how well your representatives are doing in the media, whether or not they have achieved a reputation for servicing their constituency and representing it adequately in Washington. Do your representatives tend to act as trustees, delegates, or politicos on particular issues? Profile your representatives or senators in terms of how well they seem to be performing their many duties.

2. Study the legislative history of a particular law in a particular policy area. Trace the law from its original sources to its enactment. Try to find out when and where the bill originated, where its support came from (the president, interest groups, etc.), how it was altered by congressional committees, who voted for it, and whether or not the president actually signed it into law. Assess how long the process took from beginning to end and how much the law changed during the process. How did the final product compare with the original intent? Evaluate the legislative process in terms of this particular law and your perspective on how the system works.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Check ☑ the correct answer:

1. Over the course of American history, Congress has been the true center of power in Washington.
   □ True
   □ False

2. The foremost attraction to a congressperson’s job is
   □ a. power.
   □ b. money.
   □ c. easy work.
   □ d. leisure time.
3. Members of Congress use their virtually unlimited franking privileges to
   □ a. pay staff salaries.
   □ b. travel to their home state.
   □ c. communicate with constituents.
   □ d. get research services from the Library of Congress.

4. Who of the following would NOT be allowed to take a seat in the Senate?
   □ a. someone who was a citizen for 10 years
   □ b. someone who had been a resident of his or her state for only one year
   □ c. a 28-year-old
   □ d. all of the above

5. Which of the following statements concerning members of Congress is FALSE?
   □ a. The dominant occupation of members of Congress is law.
   □ b. There are only two African Americans in the Senate.
   □ c. Proportionately, women are well-represented in Congress today.
   □ d. Most members of Congress share the beliefs and attitudes of a large proportion of their constituents.

6. Most members of Congress are better at substantive representation than descriptive representation.
   □ True
   □ False

7. The single most important advantage when running for Congress is being
   □ a. photogenic.
   □ b. an incumbent.
   □ c. better funded than the opponent.
   □ d. a challenger.

8. Which of the following is NOT a reason for greater competition for senatorial seats in Congress?
   □ a. Senators have less personal contact with their constituents.
   □ b. Senators have more visibility and media coverage.
   □ c. An entire state is usually less diverse than a single congressional district.
   □ d. Senators tend to draw more visible challengers.

9. Most congressional incumbents have a strong feeling of vulnerability.
   □ True
   □ False
10. Incumbents do well in congressional elections because of
   □ a. voter awareness of how members of Congress vote on important policy decisions.
   □ b. presidential coattails.
   □ c. favorable economic conditions.
   □ d. advertising, credit-claiming, and position-taking.

11. For members of Congress, the principal goal of advertising is
   □ a. raising money.
   □ b. convincing other members to support their positions.
   □ c. visibility.
   □ d. avoiding constituents.

12. Issues play a greater role in House elections than in Senate elections.
   □ True
   □ False

13. Challengers usually spend more money on an election campaign than do incumbents.
   □ True
   □ False

14. Which of the following statements about PACs is FALSE?
   □ a. PACs contribute about 25% of the funds raised by candidates for Congress.
   □ b. PACs sometimes make contributions after the election.
   □ c. Challengers receive more PAC money than incumbents.
   □ d. PACs make contributions to candidates because they want access to policymakers.

15. PACs will often give money to the winning candidate even if they supported his or her opponent during the election.
   □ True
   □ False

16. Money in congressional campaigns is more important to
   □ a. incumbents.
   □ b. challengers.
   □ c. members of the House.
   □ d. members from safe seats.
17. Which of the following is NOT an incumbency advantage?
   □ a. credit-claiming
   □ b. position-taking on issues important to the constituency
   □ c. weak opponents
   □ d. scandal or a charge of corruption

18. When a state loses population, reapportionment is likely to favor the state’s minority party.
   □ True
   □ False

19. Safe seats in Congress make it more difficult for citizens to “send a message to Washington.”
   □ True
   □ False

20. A bicameral legislature is one that
   □ a. uses committees.
   □ b. has two houses.
   □ c. is elected.
   □ d. holds biannual sessions.

21. (bonus) The only state that does not have a bicameral legislature is
   □ a. California.
   □ b. Texas.
   □ c. Rhode Island.
   □ d. Nebraska.

22. The House of Representatives
   □ a. is more centralized than the Senate.
   □ b. is less hierarchical than the Senate.
   □ c. is more likely to have party-line voting.
   □ d. has fewer leaders than the Senate.

23. The House Rules Committee
   □ a. reviews most bills coming from a House committee.
   □ b. schedules bills on the calendar.
   □ c. allotds time for debating bills.
   □ d. all of the above
24. Setting the legislative agenda in the Senate is the responsibility of
   □ a. the Rules Committee.
   □ b. the president of the Senate.
   □ c. party leaders.
   □ d. the minority leader.

25. Which of the following statements about filibusters is FALSE?
   □ a. They are used in both houses.
   □ b. They can tie up the legislative agenda.
   □ c. They are used to talk a bill to death.
   □ d. Rules adopted over the years make it easier to close off debate.

26. Which of the following is NOT one of the roles of the Speaker of the House?
   □ a. presiding over the House when it is in session
   □ b. making committee assignments and appointing leaders
   □ c. serving as vice president of the United States
   □ d. influencing the assignment of bills to committees

27. Which of the following is NOT among the roles of the House majority leader?
   □ a. being the Speaker’s principal party ally
   □ b. scheduling bills in the House
   □ c. rounding up votes along with the party whips
   □ d. presiding over the House when it is in session

28. Vice presidents usually ignore their senatorial chores, leaving power in the Senate up to party leaders.
   □ True
   □ False

29. (bonus) Who referred to himself as the “Majority Pleader”?
   □ a. President Ronald Reagan
   □ b. Vice President Dan Quayle
   □ c. Senator Robert Dole
   □ d. House Speaker Tip O’Neill

30. Members from both the House and Senate belong to
   □ a. standing committees.
   □ b. joint committees.
   □ c. conference committees.
   □ d. both b. and c.
31. The Senate committee that looked into Watergate was a
   □ a. standing committee.
   □ b. joint committee.
   □ c. conference committee.
   □ d. select committee.

32. Which of the following statements about committees is FALSE?
   □ a. A committee’s work is done when the marked-up bill is submitted to the full House or Senate.
   □ b. Committee members often serve as floor managers.
   □ c. Some standing committee members later become members of conference committees.
   □ d. Legislative oversight keeps committee members busy monitoring bureaucratic agencies.

33. The process of monitoring the bureaucracy and its administration of policy is called
   □ a. filibustering.
   □ b. oversight.
   □ c. caucus.
   □ d. legislating.

34. Oversight does not give Congress any real power to pressure agencies to comply with their wishes.
   □ True
   □ False

35. Incentives for increasing oversight activities include
   □ a. the increasing size and complexity of government.
   □ b. tight budgets.
   □ c. charges that the executive branch had become too powerful.
   □ d. all of the above

36. Members seek committees that will help them achieve all of the following goals EXCEPT
   □ a. re-election.
   □ b. influence in Congress.
   □ c. more PAC money.
   □ d. the opportunity to make policy in areas they think are important.

37. Committee chairs play a dominant role in
   □ a. scheduling hearings.
   □ b. hiring staff.
   □ c. appointing subcommittees.
   □ d. all of the above
38. The seniority system is
☐ a. based on party loyalty.
☐ b. based on competence.
☐ c. still the general rule for selecting committee chairs.
☐ d. no longer used.

39. The caucus is
☐ a. the basis of the committee structure in Congress.
☐ b. an informal group of members of Congress.
☐ c. a formal group of members of Congress based strictly on party affiliation.
☐ d. an interest group outside of Congress.

40. Personal staff help members of Congress with
☐ a. constituent problems.
☐ b. drafting legislation.
☐ c. negotiating agreements.
☐ d. all of the above

41. Bills can be formally submitted for consideration by
☐ a. the president.
☐ b. members of Congress.
☐ c. interest groups.
☐ d. all of the above

42. Which of the following statements about presidents is FALSE?
☐ a. They lobby through their congressional liaison office.
☐ b. They have many resources to use in influencing Congress.
☐ c. They are designated as the chief legislator by the Constitution.
☐ d. They are both partners and antagonists with Congress.

43. George Edwards points out that presidential leadership of Congress is
☐ a. at the margins.
☐ b. insignificant.
☐ c. at an all-time high.
☐ d. totally dominant.

44. Differences between the parties in Congress are sharpest on questions of social welfare and economic policy.
☐ True
☐ False
45. Edmund Burke favored the concept of a legislator as
   □ a. instructed delegate.
   □ b. constituent.
   □ c. trustee.
   □ d. politico.

46. The greatest way for constituents to influence members of Congress is to
   □ a. answer public opinion polls.
   □ b. write to them.
   □ c. vote for candidates who match their positions.
   □ d. join a single-issue group.

47. Which of the following statements is FALSE?
   □ a. It is difficult even for well-intentioned legislators to know what people want.
   □ b. Legislators whose votes are out of step with the views of their constituents are rarely re-elected.
   □ c. On obscure issues, legislators can safely ignore constituency opinion.
   □ d. On a typical issue, the prime determinant of a congressional member’s vote is personal ideology.

48. Which of the following statements about lobbying is FALSE?
   □ a. Lobbyists can be a formidable force in Washington.
   □ b. Lobbyists can provide members of Congress with information and campaign contributions.
   □ c. Congress has not attempted to regulate lobbyists.
   □ d. Members of Congress can ignore lobbyists.

49. John Kingdon found that no single influence was important enough to determine a congressperson’s votes.
   □ True
   □ False

50. Which of the following statements about Congress is FALSE?
   □ a. Some aspects of Congress are very unrepresentative.
   □ b. Citizens have a direct role in determining leadership in Congress.
   □ c. Congress does not callously disregard people’s opinions.
   □ d. Legislators find it hard to know what constituents want.

51. Critics of Congress argue that congressional reforms have made Congress responsive to so many interests that policy is uncoordinated and fragmented.
   □ True
   □ False
Constituency service may provide members of Congress the incentive to tolerate, and even expand, big government.
☐ True
☐ False

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. What is the congressperson’s job like? What are the characteristics of members of Congress?

2. What is the effect of incumbency in congressional elections? What other factors are associated with congressional electoral success?

3. What is the role of money in congressional campaigns? Assess the influence of interest groups and PACs on members of Congress.

4. How do the House of Representatives and the Senate differ? How does the structure of leadership differ between the two?

5. Describe the committee system in Congress. What are the different roles of committees in the legislative process?

6. How does a bill become a law? What factors influence the legislative process and how does their influence differ?

7. Is Congress representative in its membership and its policymaking role? What structures and reforms have affected its representation function?