The Representatives and Senators

- **The job**
  - Salary of $174,000 (2014) with retirement benefits
  - Office space in DC and at home with staff
  - Travel allowances and franking privileges (ability to send free mail)
  - Requires long hours, a lot of time away from family, and pressure from others to support their policies

- **Requirements**
  - Senate (100 members)
    - 30 years old
    - American citizen for nine years
    - Residents of the state they represent
  - House (435)
    - 25 years old
    - American citizen for 7 years
    - Residents of the state they represent

- **The problem?**
  - Lack of descriptive representation
    - Does not reflect the population of the US
    - In the population there are more women than men, lots of middle-aged and old people, and lots of ethnic and racial diversity. All of which is not proportionately represented in the makeup of Congress

Congressional Elections

- **The advantages of Incumbents**
  - Advertising
    - The goal is to be visible to your constituents
    - Frequent trips home, use of newsletters and technology
  - Credit claiming
    - Service to constituents through:
      - Case Work: specifically helping constituents get what they think they have a right to
      - Pork Barrel: federal projects, grants, etc. made available in a congressional district or state
  - Position Taking
    - Portray themselves as hard-working, dedicated individuals
    - Occasionally take a partisan stand on an issue
  - Weak opponents
Inexperienced in politics, unorganized, and underfunded
- Campaign Spending
  - Challengers need to raise large sums to defeat an incumbent
  - PACs give most of their money to incumbents

- The Role of Party Identification
  - Most members represent the majority party in their district, and most who identify with a party reliably vote for its candidates

- Defeating Incumbents
  - One tarnished by scandals or corruption becomes vulnerable to a challenger
    - Todd Akin (R) Missouri
  - Redistricting may weaken the incumbency advantage
  - Major political tidal wave may defeat incumbents
    - 2010 Congressional races?

- Open seats (no incumbent running)
  - Greater likelihood of competition
  - Most turnover occurs in open seats
    - Massachusetts senate race

- Stability and change
  - Incumbents provide stability in Congress
  - Change in Congress occurs less frequently through elections
  - Are term limits an answer?

Redistricting
- The process of redrawing district lines for congress
- Happens after every census (10 years)
- Methods of redistricting
  - Advisory commissions
  - Politician commissions
  - Independent commissions
  - State legislatures
- Federal rules of redistricting
  - Equal population
  - Equal representation for minorities but not based on race (Voting Rights Act of 1965)
    - Reynolds vs Sims
    - Baker vs Carr
  - Lines must be contiguous
- Gerrymandering
  - The process of redrawing a district to give a group an unfair advantage
How Congress is Organized to Make Policy

American Bicameralism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The House</th>
<th>Senate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>435 members</td>
<td>100 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 year terms of office</td>
<td>6 year terms of office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiates all revenue bills</td>
<td>Gives “advice and consent”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More influential on budget</td>
<td>More influential on foreign affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited debates</td>
<td>Unlimited debates (filibuster)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Rules Committee</td>
<td>Jury and trial of President if charges are brought to attention by the House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Filibuster
  - Only in Senate
  - Strategy whereby opponents of a piece of legislation try to talk a bill to death
    - Why is this possible: Senate has a tradition that allows unlimited debates on bills
  - Today, 60 members present and voting can stop a filibuster (3/5 ths)
    - “Super Majority”
    - Cloture
      - The procedure to stop a filibuster or prevent one from occurring

House of Representatives

- FAST!
- More institutionalized
  - More centralized
  - More hierarchal (first term members rarely do anything)
  - Less anarchic
- More party loyalty
  - Role of the speaker and whip

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker of the House</th>
<th>Majority Leader</th>
<th>Whip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elected by House members</td>
<td>Both parties have a majority leader</td>
<td>Tries to get assured votes in any way necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(majority party wins)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presides over the House</td>
<td>Ally of the speaker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major role in committee</td>
<td>Influences committee assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignments and legislation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd in line to presidency</td>
<td>Schedules bills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- House Rules Committee
  - Reviews bills before going to the full House for a vote
    - Sets date for debate
    - Rules for amending the bill
- Allots time for debate
  - Restricts the role of the minority party

**Senate Leadership**

- The Senate
  - Formally lead by Vice President
  - Really led by the Majority leader – chosen by party members
  - Assisted by Whips
  - Must work with minority leader
- President pro Tempore of the Senate
  - Highest ranking Senator
    - Elected by the Senate
    - Typically the longest serving member of the majority party
  - 3rd in line to presidency
  - Honorary position

**How Congress is Organized to Make Policy**

- Committees and Subcommittees
  - **Standing Committees**: Separate subject-matter committees in each house of Congress that handle bills in different policy areas.
  - **Joint Committees**: Congressional committees on a few subject-matter areas with membership in drawn from both houses.
  - **Select Committees**: Congressional Committees appointed for a specific purpose, such as the Watergate investigation
  - **Conference Committees**: Congressional committees formed when the Senate and the House pass a particular bill in different forms, Party leadership appoints members from each house to iron out the differences and bring back a single bill
- The committees at work: legislation and oversight
  - Legislation
    - Committees work on 11,000 bills every session (only about 8% of bills pass)
    - Some hold hearings and “mark up” meetings
  - Legislative Oversight
    - Monitoring of the bureaucracy and its administration of policy through committee hearings
    - As publicity value of receiving credit for controlling spending has increased, so too has oversight grown
    - Oversight usually takes place after a catastrophe
- Getting on a committee
  - Members want committee assignments that will help them get reelected, gain influence, and make policy
  - New members express their committee preferences to the party leaders
  - Those who have supported their party’s leadership are favored in the selection process
• Parties try to grant committee preferences
  • Getting ahead on the committee
    o Committee Chair: The most important influencers of the congressional agenda.
      ▪ They play dominant roles in scheduling hearings, hiring staff, appointing
        subcommittees, and managing committee bills when they are brought before
        the full House
    o Most chairs are selected according to seniority system
      ▪ Members who have served on the committee the longest and whose party
        controlled Congress become Chair
  • Caucuses: the informal organization of Congress
    o Caucus: a group of members of Congress sharing some interest or characteristic
    o About 300 caucuses
    o Caucuses pressure for committee meetings and hearings and for votes on bills
    o Caucuses can be more effective than lobbyists
  • Congressional Staff
    o Personal Staff: work for the member, mainly providing constituent service, but help with
      legislation too
    o Committee Staff: organize hearings, research and write legislation. Target of lobbyists
    o Staff Agencies: CRS, GAO, CBO provide specific information to Congress

The Congressional Process
• Legislation
  o Bill: a proposed law
  o Anyone can draft a bill, but only members of Congress can introduce them
  o More rules in the House than in the Senate
  o Party leaders play a vital role in steering bills through both houses, but less in the Senate
  o Countless influences on the legislative process
• Presidents and Congress: Partners and Protagonists
  o Presidents attempt to persuade Congress that what they want is what Congress wants
  o Presidents have many resources to influence Congress
  o But to succeed, the president must win at least 10 times
  o Ultimately, presidential leadership of Congress is at the margins
• Party, Constituency, Ideology
  o Party influence
    ▪ Party leaders cannot force party members to vote a particular way, but many do
      vote along party lines
  o Constituency versus ideology
    ▪ Prime determinant of member’s vote on most issues is ideology
    ▪ On most issues that are not salient, legislators may ignore constituent opinion
    ▪ But on controversial issues, members are wise to heed constituent opinion
• Lobbyists and interest groups
  o There are 35,000 registered lobbyists trying to influence Congress – the bigger the issues, the more lobbyists working on it
  o Lobbyists try to influence legislators’ votes
  o Lobbyists can be ignored, shunned, and even regulated by Congress
  o Ultimately it is a combination of lobbyists and others (constituents) that influence legislators’ votes

**Understanding Congress**

• Congress and Democracy
  o Leadership and committee assignments are not representative
  o Congress does try to respond to what the people want, but some argue it could do a better job
  o Members of congress are responsive to the people, if the people make it clear what they want

• Congress and the Scope of Government
  o The more policies Congress works on, the more ways it can serve their constituencies
  o The more programs Congress creates, the bigger the government gets
  o Contradiction in public opinion: everybody wants government programs cut, but not their programs

**Summary**

• Know how Congress makes policy
• Describe the incumbency advantage
• Know how Congress is structurally complex
• Know how president, parties, constituents, lobbyists, and interest groups all effect a legislators’ vote choices