Congressional Sessions

- Each term of Congress has two sessions.
- Each session lasts until Congress votes to adjourn.
Membership of the House

- Members must be at least 25 years old, citizens for at least 7 years and residents of their states.
Membership of the House

- Members serve for 2-year terms.
- The number of representatives from each state is determined by the census population count every 10 years.
Membership of the House

• State legislatures set up congressional districts after the census count – one representative for each district.
Membership of the Senate

- Senators must be at least 30 years old, citizens for at least 9 years, and residents of their state.
Membership of the Senate

• Senators serve for 6-year terms.
• 1/3 are elected every two years.
• Each state elects two senators.
Membership of the Senate

- The Senate and the House set members’ salaries, and receive numerous benefits such as business trips, tax breaks, and healthy pensions.
Both House and Senate members enjoy immunity from arrest, in cases not involving felony or treason.
Membership of the Senate

- House and Senate members cannot be sued for liability while Congress is in session.
Membership of the Senate

- Both the Senate and the House may refuse a position to any member or they may expel members.
• Nearly half the members of Congress are lawyers.
The Members of Congress

• White, middle-aged male members are being joined by members reflecting the ethnic, racial, and gender makeup of the general population.
The Members of Congress

• Most incumbent, or returning, members of Congress win reelection to office because they are well known and can raise money easier.
The Members of Congress

- Many incumbent members also represent districts gerrymandered in favor of their parties.
• When your row is called, grab your book and open to page 128. Members of Congress spend part of their time working for reelection. Which house has a greater percentage of its time remaining for legislative work? **WHY?**
Rules for Lawmaking

• Each house of Congress has complex rules to help members conduct business.
Rules for Lawmaking

• Congress carries out most of its work by committees. Because of its large size, committee work is more important in the House.
Rules for Lawmaking

• Party membership guides Congress its work, since the majority party in each house controls the committees.
House Leadership

• The Speaker of the House is leader of the majority party and has great power and influence over its members.
House Leadership

• Floor leaders of both the majority and minority party schedule the work of the House and push bills through committees.
Journal

* When your row is called, grab your textbook from the shelf and open to page 132.
* The Speaker of the House follows the vice president in the line of presidential succession. Do you support or object to this plan? **EXPLAIN!**
Lawmaking in the House

- Members attend House floor sessions to vote on legislation.
Lawmaking in the House

- All laws begin as bills introduced in the House, then go to committee.
Lawmaking in the House

• If approved, the bill is then put on the proper calendar, listing the order in which it is to be debated on the House floor.
Lawmaking in the House

• The House Rules Committee receives all bills approved by the various committees.
Lawmaking in the House

• The Rules Committee determines which bills will be considered by the full House and places them on the House Calendar.
Lawmaking in the House

• The Rules Committee sends bills to the floor, for all the House members to vote on.
Journal

• When is your math class of the called or Congress done textbook? Is the shelf and open to page 135.
Chapter 5
The Organization of Congress

Section 3

The Senate
The Senate at Work

• The Senate has fewer rules than the House. Senators have more freedom to express their views and are less subject to party discipline.
The Senate at Work

- The atmosphere in the Senate is more informal than in the House.
The Senate at Work

• The vice president presides over the Senate but has little power.
The Senate at Work

- The President Pro Tempore often presides.
The Senate at Work

The Senate majority floor leader is that party’s leader responsible for guiding bills through the Senate.
The Senate at Work

- The minority leader develops criticisms of the majority party.
The Senate at Work

- Majority and minority whips assist floor leaders.
Lawmaking in the Senate

• Senate leaders control the flow of bills to committees and to the floor for debate.
Lawmaking in the Senate

- The Senate has only two calendars: Calendar of General Order and the Executive Calendar.
Lawmaking in the Senate

- A filibuster – unlimited debate on a bill to defeat it – can be ended only by a 3/5 vote.
Lawmaking in the Senate

• In recent years a two-track procedural system has weakened the filibuster as a legislative weapon.
Lawmaking in the Senate

• The majority party controls the flow of legislative work in the Senate.
Journal

• Why are procedures more informal in the Senate than in the House of Representatives?
Purpose of Committees

- Committees ease Congressional workload by dividing work among small groups.
Purpose of Committees

• Committees allow members to discuss and select the most important bills Congress will consider.
Kinds of Committees

• Standing committees deal with certain issues continuing from one Congress to the next.
  • Judiciary Committee
Kinds of Committees

• Subcommittees handle special subcategories of standing committees’ work, and also continue from one Congress to the next.
  
• Social Security
Kinds of Committees

• Select committees are special committees created in both houses of Congress for one term to study a specific topic.
  • 9/11 Commission
Kinds of Committees

- Joint Committees – members from both Houses.
- Taxation
- Conference Committees – temporary committees set up to resolve differences in the House and Senate version of a bill.
Choosing Members

• Assigning members to various committees is a key decision in the organization of Congress.
Choosing Members

- Membership on certain committees...
  1. Helps members build reputations and increase their chances for reelection.
  2. Gives members a chance to influence important national legislation.
  3. Enables members to influence other members since those committees deal with issues that are important to all members.
Choosing Members

• In both houses, parties assign members to the standing committees

• Party leaders and chairpersons of the standing committees are the most important members of Congress.
Choosing Members

- Standing committee chairpersons make key decisions about the work of their committees, though their power has decreased.
Journal

- When your row is called, grab your textbook from the shelf and open to page 141.

- Members of Congress who have served the longest often head key committees and have an important voice in passing legislation. Do you think this seniority system helps Congress to operate more effectively? **EXPLAIN!**
Chapter 5
The Organization of Congress
Section 5
Staff & Support Agencies
Congressional Staff Role

• Lawmakers rely on their staffs to help with many congressional duties.

• As congressional workloads have increased, staff duties have become increasingly important as well.
Congressional Staff Growth

• Prior to 1946, Congress had NO staff aids. Recently, increased complexity has resulted in much larger staffs.
Congressional Staff Growth

- Congressional staffs provide expert help on key issues and help members better serve their constituents’ demands.
Personal Staff

- Members’ staffs are divided between Washington, D.C., and the home office.
Personal Staff

- Administrative assistants run offices, create schedules and give advice on political matters.
Personal Staff

- Legislative assistants keep lawmakers informed of bills, committee work and write speeches.
Support Agencies

- The Library of Congress provides information and requests by Congress.
Support Agencies

• The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) coordinates budget-making, studies presidential budget proposals, and tracks spending.
Support Agencies

• The General Accounting Office (GAO) monitors spending by Congress.
• The Government Printing Office handles all documents printed by and for the federal government.