

The image shows the United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C. The central focus is the large, white, neoclassical dome topped with a statue. The building's facade is composed of numerous white columns and arches. In the foreground, there are several large trees with green and yellowing leaves, suggesting an autumn setting. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The word "Congress" is written in a large, black, serif font across the middle of the image, partially overlapping the dome and the sky.

Congress

Benefits of the Job

- Congressional Staff
 - Staff who serve individual members of Congress, committees, and party leaders
- Franking Privileges
 - Free use of mail system to communicate with constituent; machines duplicate a member's signature in real ink



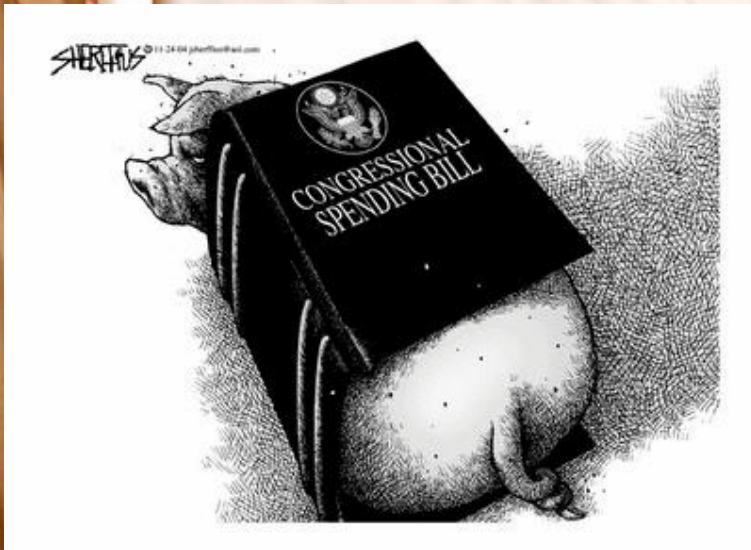
Who Serves in Congress?

- Congress is becoming less white and less male, although women and ethnic minorities are still underrepresented.
- Descriptive representation means that members have the same characteristics as constituents.
- Substantive representation means that members of Congress will represent their constituents' best interests.
- Incumbents are elected at much higher rates than challengers. This is called the incumbency advantage.

The Incumbency Advantage



- Advertising:
 - The goal is to be visible to voters.
 - Frequent trips home & newsletters are used.
- Credit Claiming:
 - Casework: providing help to individual constituents.
 - Pork Barrel: federal projects and grants that benefit a congressional district or state.
 - Earmark: a provision in a bill that benefits a particular group.



The Incumbency Advantage



- Position Taking:
 - Portray themselves as hard working, dedicated individuals.
 - Occasionally take a partisan stand on an issue.
- Weak Opponents:
 - Most opponents are inexperienced in politics.
 - Most opponents are unorganized and underfunded.

Incumbency in the House and Senate

- The House has a higher rate of incumbency reelection than the Senate
 - House members serve in small, often safe districts
 - House members serve two year terms.
 - House members run for reelection almost all of the time.

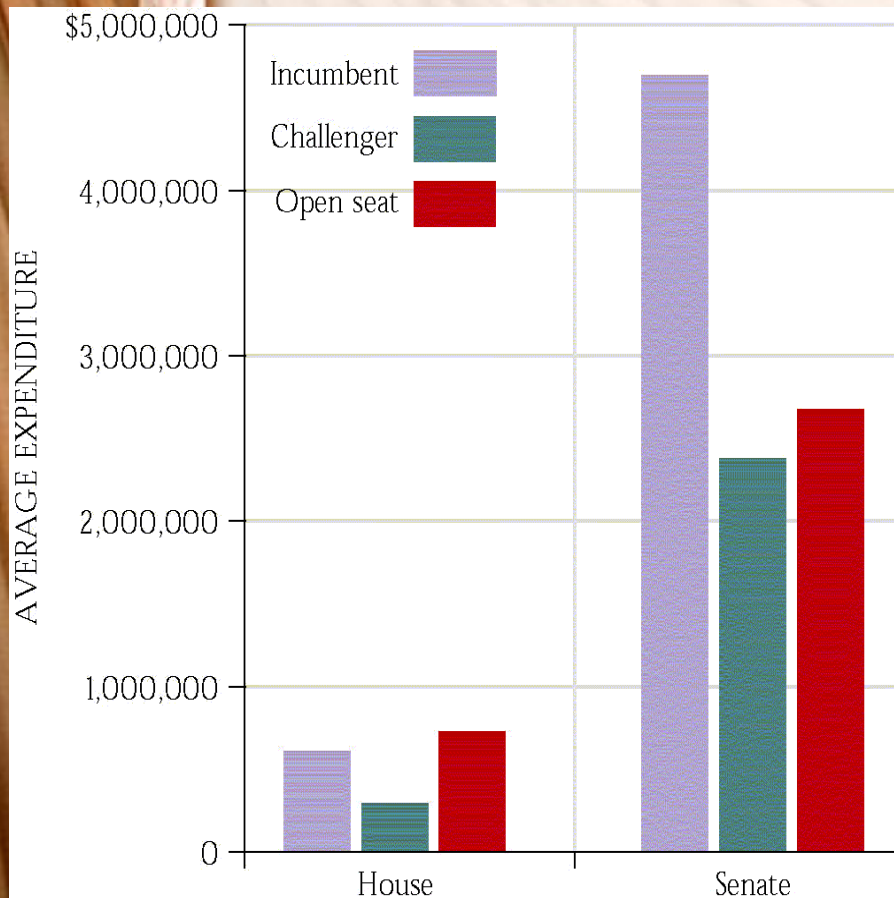
Why Incumbents Sometimes Lose

- Incumbents may become involved in a scandal.
- Incumbents may be redistricted out of their seat and may face another incumbent in their new district.
- Redistricting may cause a seat to become competitive.
- There might be a “throw the bums out” sentiment.

Redistricting

- Redistricting means changing the district boundaries so that population groups are even based on the census.
- States may gain or lose seats. This is called reapportionment.
- Districts may be “cracked” (where a line is drawn to divide a group) or “packed” (where a group is put into a single district).

Spending in Congressional Elections



- Open seats are expensive.
- PACs contribute directly to candidates.
- 527s and 501(c)(3)s spend independently.
- Spending lots of money does not guarantee a win.

How Congress is Organized to Make Policy

- Bicameral: A two house legislature



■ The House

- 435 members, 2 year terms of office.
- Initiates all revenue bills, more influential on budget.
- Limited debates.

■ The Senate

- 100 members, 6 year terms of office.
- More influential on appointments and foreign affairs.
- Unlimited debates, including the **filibuster** to talk a bill to death.

HOUSE-SENATE DIFFERENCES

HOUSE

- Debate limited to 1 hour
- Members policy specialists
- Emphasizes tax & revenue policy
- More formal & impersonal

SENATE

- Unlimited debate
- Filibuster
- Cloture requires a vote of 60 Members
- policy generalists
- Emphasizes foreign policy
- More informal & personal



How Congress is Organized to Make Policy



● The House

- Lead by Speaker of the House- elected by House members.
- Major role in committee assignments and legislation.
- Majority leader, minority leader, and whips

● The Senate

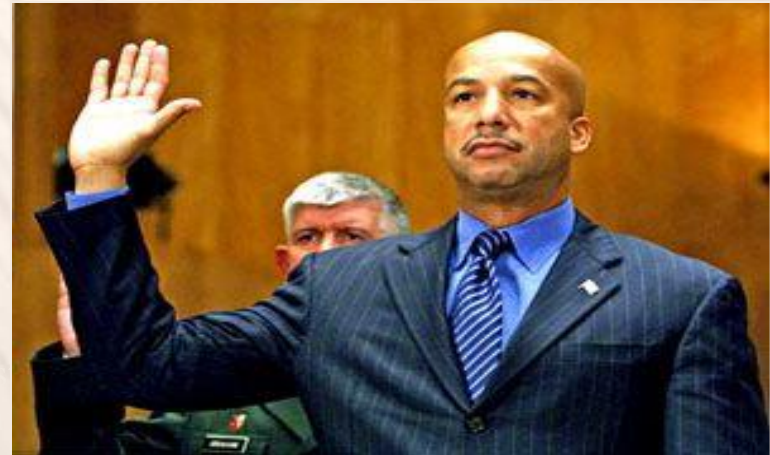
- Officially lead by Vice President.
- Really lead by Majority Leader- chosen by party members.
- Minority leader and whips



"Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work."

Legislative Committees: Function & Purpose

Oversight Hearings: Members of the bureaucracy are called by congressional committees to testify about matters investigated by the committee.



Legislative Committees: Function & Purpose

Consider bills: Committees may send bills to the floor, kill them, or amend them.



How Congress is Organized to Make Policy

- Four types of committees:
 - Standing committees: subject matter committees handle different policy areas.
 - Joint committees: Made up of House & Senate members.
 - Conference committees: resolve differences in House and Senate bills.
 - Select committees: created for a specific purpose.



Some Important Committees

- House Rules Committee: assigns “rules” to bills, including whether debate will be allowed.
- House Appropriations Committee: sets funds for specific projects and programs.
- House Ways and Means Committee: considers tax bills
- Senate Finance Committee: considers tax bills

How Congress is Organized to Make Policy

- The Committees and Subcommittees
 - Getting on a Committee
 - Members want to get on the right committee.
 - Members want committee assignments that will help them get reelected and gain influence.
 - New members express their committee preferences to the party leaders.
 - Support of the party is important in getting on the right committee.
 - Parties make an effort to grant requested committee assignments.
 - A **discharge petition** is used to bring a bill to the whole House or Senate, without a report by a committee. This is used to bypass committee chairs who have refused to consider a bill or are stalling a bill in committee.

How Congress is Organized to Make Policy

- Getting Ahead on the Committee: Chairs and the Seniority System.
 - The chair is the most important position for controlling legislation.
 - Seniority on the committee is a general rule, and members may choose the chair of their committee.
 - Majority party always gets chairman
 - Committee numbers will reflect the percentage of Democrats and Republicans in the body as a whole.



How Congress is Organized to Make Policy



- Caucus: A group of members of Congress sharing some interest or characteristic.
- Caucuses pressure for committee meetings and hearings and for votes on bills.
- Caucuses can be more effective than lobbyists.

How Congress is Organized to Make Policy

- **Congressional Staff**
 - Personal staff: Work for the member. Mainly providing constituent service, but help research and write bills.
 - Committee staff: organize hearings, research & write legislation, target of lobbyists.
 - Staff Agencies: CRS, GAO, CBO provide specific information to Congress.



The Congressional Process

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

In a typical year, more than 5,000 bills are introduced in Congress. But only about 150 of them become law.

The diagram below shows a bill going through the House and Senate at the same time. That can happen. But often, a bill is passed by one house of Congress,

then goes to the other for action.

After a bill passes both houses, it goes to the President, who either can approve or **veto** (reject) it. If the President vetoes a bill, it still can become law—if two thirds of the House and the Senate vote to override it. This rarely happens.



■ Legislation:

- **Bill:** A proposed law.
- Anyone can draft a bill, but only members of Congress can introduce them.
- More rules in the House than in the Senate.
- Party leaders play a vital role in steering bills through both houses.
- Countless influences on the legislative process, including interest groups, caucuses, the president, and leadership.

Logrolling

- Logrolling means exchanging votes for favors.
- “I’ll vote for your bill if you vote for my bill.”



I MOVE THAT OUR NEW YEAR'S
RESOLUTION BE TO WORK
TOGETHER IN A NEW SPIRIT OF
BIPARTISANSHIP!



WHAT'S YOUR
ANGLE?!

SOUNDS LIKE
A POLITICAL
TRICK!

THIS CALLS
FOR A
HEARING!



Title: Resolution
Date: 12/28/06

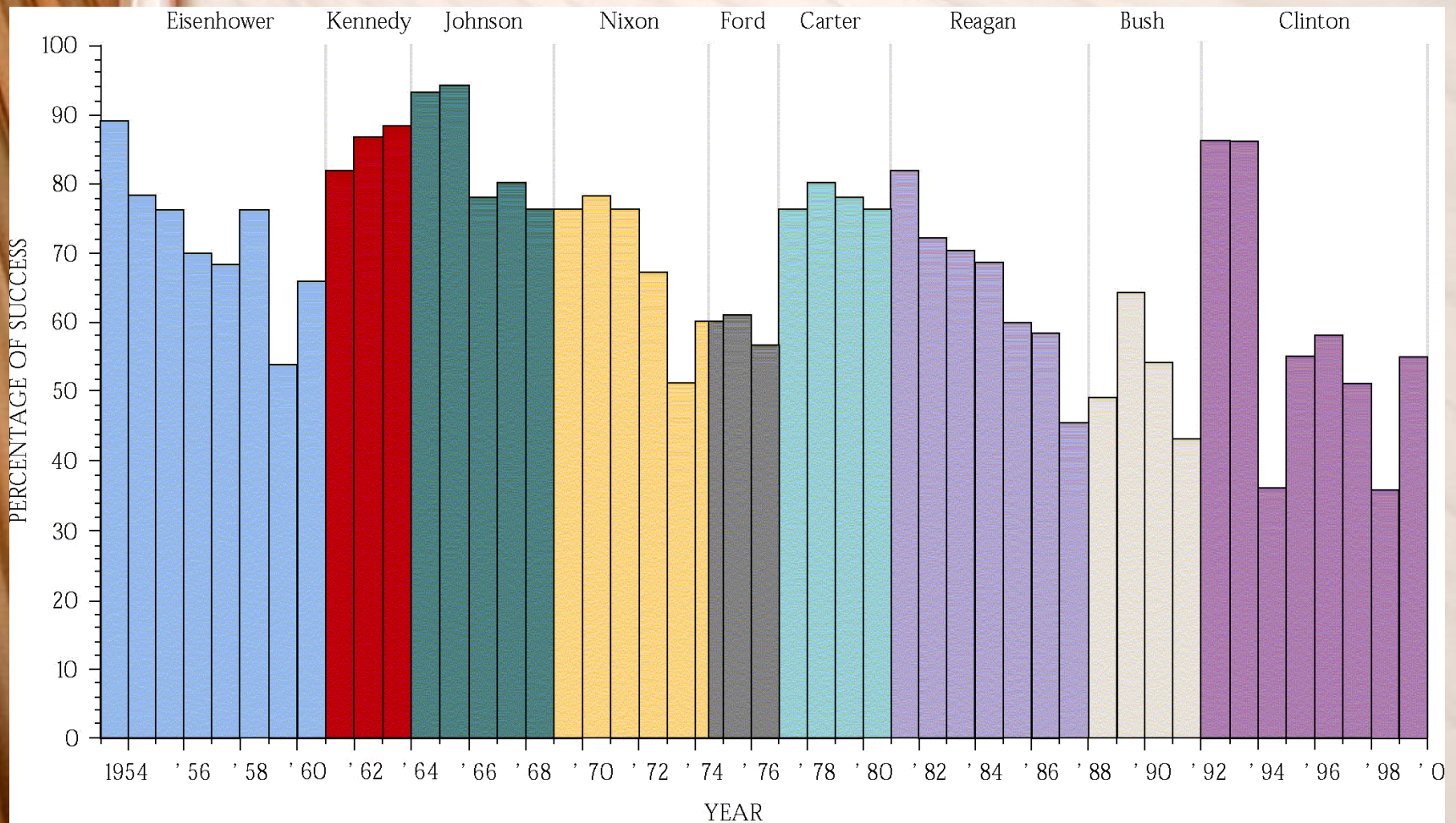
Artist: Bob Gorrell
Source: <http://www.gorrellart.com/>

The Congressional Process

- Presidents and Congress: Partners and Antagonists
 - Presidents have many resources to influence Congress, including electoral support.
 - In order to “win” in Congress, the president must win several battles in each house.
 - Presidents have the power of veto to ultimately influence legislation.



The Congressional Process



The Congressional Process



- Party, Constituency, and Ideology
 - Party Influence: Party leaders cannot force party members to vote a particular way, but they can promise electoral support and committee memberships.
 - The Instructed Delegate role is that members of Congress should use their best judgment.
 - The Representative role is that members of Congress should vote in accordance with their constituents' wishes (if they can figure out what they are).

The Congressional Process

- Lobbyists and Interest Groups
 - There are over 26 lobbyists for every member of Congress- the bigger the issue, the more lobbyists will be working on it.
 - Lobbyists can be ignored, shunned and even regulated by Congress.
 - Ultimately, it is a combination of lobbyists and others that influence members of Congress.

