



Basic Facts About

Congress



The Constitution

- Article I sets up Congress
 - Section 1 gives Congress power to legislate
 - Section 2 Sets up House of Representatives
 - Section 3 Sets up the Senate
 - Section 4 gives states the responsibilities for elections
 - Section 5 sets out powers and duties of Congress
 - Section 6 sets Rights and disabilities of members
 - Section 7 describes the legislative process
 - Section 8 lists powers of Congress
 - Section 9 lists powers denied Congress
 - Section 10 lists powers denied the states

Basic facts you need to know:

- Congress is bi-cameral (2 houses)
 - House of Representatives (435 members.... This number is set by Congress through legislation... it is not set by the Constitution)
 - Senate (100 members.... 2 per state X 50 states = 100)
- Congress has terms and sessions
 - Based upon House of Representatives
 - Term – 2 years
 - Session – 1 year (2 sessions = 1 term)
 - Present Congress is 116th (the 116th term)

Requirements to serve in Congress

- House of Representatives
 - Age: 25 or older
 - Citizen of US for at least 7 years
 - Live in the state/district that elects them*
- Senate
 - Age: 30 years or older
 - Citizen of the US for at least 9 years
 - Live in the state that elects them*



House of Representatives

- Speaker of the House
 - Chosen by the H of R
 - Since parties have taken over, the Speaker is chosen by the party in power
 - Extremely powerful; controls committee assignments

Senate

- Vice President
 - Constitution gives VPOTUS one job – preside over the Senate
 - Can only vote if there is a tie
 - Modern VPOTUS only goes to Senate when there is to be a vote in which a tie would have to be broken
- President Pro Tempore (pro tem)
 - Presides over the senate when VPOTUS is not there (vast majority of the time)
 - President pro tem is chose from the majority party in the senate
 - Important position but not nearly as powerful as majority leader
 - Other than running the general assembly of the senate, this position is NOT like Speaker of the House.

Powers of Congress

Art 1 Sec 8

- Tax
- Pay debts
- Borrow money
- Regulate commerce w/ foreign nations & the states
- citizenship and bankruptcy
- Coin money
- Determine punishment for counterfeiting
- Establish post offices
- Copyright and patents
- Define & punish piracy
- Raise & support a military
- Call up the militia
- Organize & support militias
- Necessary & proper clause

Powers denied Congress

Art 1 Sec 9

- No stopping importation of slaves for 20 years
- No bill of attainder or ex post facto laws
- No direct taxation (income tax)
- No export tax
- No tariff between states
- No money spent without a bill passed to spend it
- No title of nobility to be given nor accepted by members of government

Powers denied the States

- States may not enter into treaties with foreign nations; coin money; pass bills of attainder/ex post facto laws; grant titles of nobility
- States may not tax imports or exports; if states do, then all \$ goes to the US Treasury
- States may not keep troops or a navy during times of peace (unless approved by Congress)