

U. S. Congress

- Parties matter a lot
 - preferences of representatives
 - legislative strategies
 - majority versus minority party
- Committees matter a lot
 - 95% of legislation dies here
 - content of legislation
- House and Senate differences matter a lot

Weakness of Congressional Party

- Undisciplined parties
 - ties to geographic districts
 - no control over renomination
- Independent committee power

Changing Strength of Parties

- 1880-1910 strong Speakers
 - Thomas B. “Boss” Reed
 - Joseph G. “Czar” Cannon
- 1940-1960 weak and factionalized parties
- Since 1970s stronger parties
 - changing rules
 - more distinctive and cohesive parties

Reed

Cannon

Majority versus Minority Party

- Majority party determines control of leadership positions

House	Senate
232 (53%) Republican	55 Republicans
202 (49%) Democrat	44 Democrats
1 (.2%) independent	1 independent

109th Congress (2005-2006)

Majority Party Status: U.S. House

Source: MicroCase, file = History, variables = 16) %DEM HOUSE,
70) %REP HOUSE, 68) HSE-OTH

Powers of Majority Party

- All committee chairs
- More influence over legislative agenda
- More tools for strategy
- Minority party status most onerous in House

Party Leadership in the House

Roles:
Scheduling & Rules
Party Spokesperson
Strategy

Speaker of
the House
J. Dennis
Haskert (R. IL)
<http://speaker.house.gov/>

Majority Leader
John Boehner (R. OH)
<http://www.majorityleader.gov/>

Minority Leader
Nancy Pelosi (D. CA)
<http://democraticleader.house.gov/>

Constitutional Leadership of the Senate

Vice President
Dick Cheney

Breaks tied votes

President pro tempore
Ted Stevens (Alaska)

Most senior member of majority
Party – 36 years

Rarely oversees Senate floor

Actual Leadership of Senate

Majority Leader
Bill Frist (R. TN)

<http://republican.senate.gov/>

Minority Leader
Harry Reid (D. NV)

<http://democrat.senate.gov/index3.html>

Other Party Leadership Posts

- Whips
- Chair of party caucus
- Chair of policy and strategy committees
- Chair of congressional campaign committees

Power of Leadership

- Persuasion & coalition building
- Elected leader
- Willingness of members to follow
- More information
- House - control of Rules Committee

Party Caucus

- Elect party leadership
- Confirm selection of members to standing committees
- Too large for most policy and strategy

Committees in Congress

- Formulate legislation
- Kill 95% of all proposed legislation
- Such strong committee role is rare

Types of Committees

- Standing committees
 - permanent
 - legislative writing
 - subcommittees
- Select or Special Committees
- Joint Committees
- Conference Committees

House	Senate	
Agriculture	Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry	109th Congress
Appropriations	Appropriations	
Armed Services	Armed Services	
Budget	Budget	
Education & the Workforce	Health, Education, Labor, & Pension	
Energy & Commerce	Commerce, Science & Transportation Energy & Natural Resources	
Financial Services	Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs	
Government Reform		
Homeland Security	Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs	
House Administration		
International Relations	Foreign Relations	Standing Committees
Judiciary	Judiciary	
Resources	Environment & Public Works	
Rules	Rules & Administration	
Science		
Small Business	Small Business & Entrepreneurship	
Standards of Official Conduct		
Transportation & Infrastructure		
Veterans' Affairs	Veterans Affairs	
Ways & Means	Finance Indian Affairs	

Committee Assignment & Leadership

- Members appointed by party
- Members ask for committees to
 - help reelection
 - write good policy
 - power in Washington
- Chairs selected by modified seniority system

Committee Assignments of Arizona Senators

John McCain

Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
 Committee on Armed Services
 Committee on Indian Affairs (chair)

Jon Kyl

Committee on Finance
 Subcommittee on Taxation & IRS Oversight (chair)
 Committee on Judiciary

Committee Assignments of Arizona Representatives

Jim Kolbe, 8th District
 Republican

Committee on Appropriations

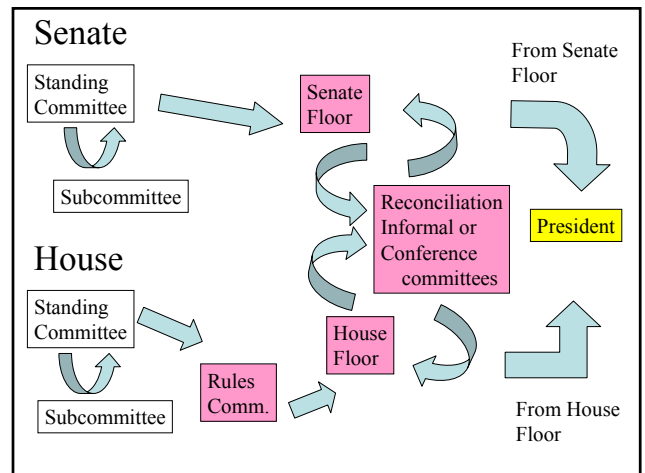
Subcommittee chair:
 Foreign Operations, Export Financing & Related Programs

Raul Grijalva, 7th District
 Democrat

Committee on Education and Workforce
 Committee on Resources

Legislative Process

- Incremental legislation
- Coalition building
- Easier to kill legislation
- Multistage process
 - Committees
 - Floor action
 - Reconciliation of House & Senate versions
 - Presidential decision



House and Senate Differences

House	Senate
Subcommittees	Full committee
Controlled Debate	Uncontrolled Debate Filibuster Cloture
Limited amendments	Nongermane amendments

How Legislators Vote

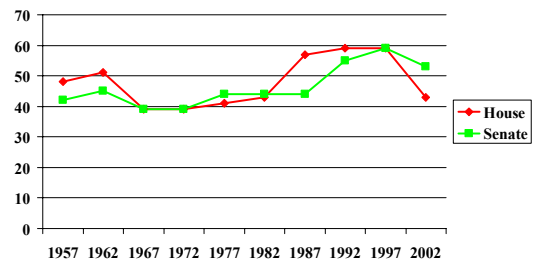
- Too many to be fully informed
- Cue taking
- Contact from party, constituents, lobbyists, administration, legislative staff
- 2/3rds party line votes

Example of Party Line Vote:

Bill to Increase Minimum Wage, 106th Congress

Vote	Democrat	Republican	Total
Increase	97%	37%	66%
No change	3%	63%	34%
Number	207	216	423

Party Line Votes



Note: Points represent 5-year averages

Increase in Party-Line Voting

- More cohesive parties
- Demise of the “conservative coalition”

Why Parties in All Democratic Legislatures?

- Stable majority for legislation
 - reduces time for coalition building
 - decreases likelihood of cycling majorities

Uniqueness of U.S. Legislative Parties

- Weaker than in European parliaments
- Most legislation needs some bipartisan support
- Autonomous committees write legislation
- Parties slightly less important in Senate than in House

Odds and Ends

- Congressional pay - \$158,100
- websites:
 - <http://www.house.gov>
 - <http://www.senate.gov>
 - <http://thomas.loc.gov/>
 - <http://www.azleg.state.az.us>
- Best coverage
 - Congressional Quarterly Weekly Reports
 - C-SPAN