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

Majority versus Minority Party

- Majority party determines control of leadership positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Senate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>232 (53%) Republican</td>
<td>55 Republicans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>202 (49%) Democrat</td>
<td>44 Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (.2%) independent</td>
<td>1 independent</td>
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</table>

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

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

Senate
- Standing Committee
  - Subcommittee
  - Senate Floor
  - Reconciliation
  - Informal or Conference committees
  - President

House
- Standing Committee
  - Subcommittee
  - House Floor
  - Rules Committee
  - From House Floor
  - From Senate Floor
### House and Senate Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Senate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subcommittees</td>
<td>Full committee</td>
<td>Full committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled Debate</td>
<td>Uncontrolled Debate</td>
<td>Uncontrolled Debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited amendments</td>
<td>Nongermane amendments</td>
<td>Nongermane amendments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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.senate.gov
  - http://thomas.loc.gov/
  - http://www.azleg.state.az.us
- Best coverage
  - Congressional Quarterly Weekly Reports
  - C-SPAN