

Legislative Branch

Congress



POWERS OF CONGRESS

- **AUTHORITY FROM ARTICLE 1: Sec 8**
- **Powers of Congress are primary powers of the federal government**
- **In a Republic- 1st branch of government**

Powers of Congress

- **Collect taxes**
- **Regulate commerce**
- **Create armed forces**
- **Coin money**
- **Declare war, ETC.**
- **“necessary and proper” clause-**

STRUCTURE OF CONGRESS

- **BICAMERAL- TWO CHAMBER**
 - **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**
 - **SENATE**

House of Representatives

- **435 members**
- **two-year terms**
- **highly structured**
- **limited debate**
- **initiates appropriations bills**
- **initiates impeachment**

Senate

- **100 members, six-year terms**
- **loosely structured, more elitist**
- **nearly unlimited debate**
- **filibusters stopped by *cloture vote* (60 senators once 16 Senators sign petition)**
- **approves presidential appointments by majority vote and treaties by a 2/3 vote**
- **conducts impeachment trials**

Party Leadership in Congress

The Majority party chooses committee and subcommittee chairs and thereby controls nation's policy agenda.

- Most committee seats reflect distribution of parties in chamber**
- Majority leader/minority leader/whips in each chamber.**

Power Positions

- **SPEAKER of HOUSE** chosen by the majority party; Constitution requires
 - most powerful job in House and Congress.
- **SENATE MAJORITY LEADER** - most powerful position in the Senate.
- **VICE PRESIDENT = Pres. of Senate**
 - **LEAST** powerful-- votes to break a tie.

Committees in Congress

- Committees **draft legislation** and **oversee** the executive branch.
- Backbone of system -- **Standing Committees** for major policy areas
 - Subcommittees address specific policies and programs
- **Conference committees** —members of both chambers work out differences in legislation passed separately by each chamber.

Standing Committees of the 106th Congress

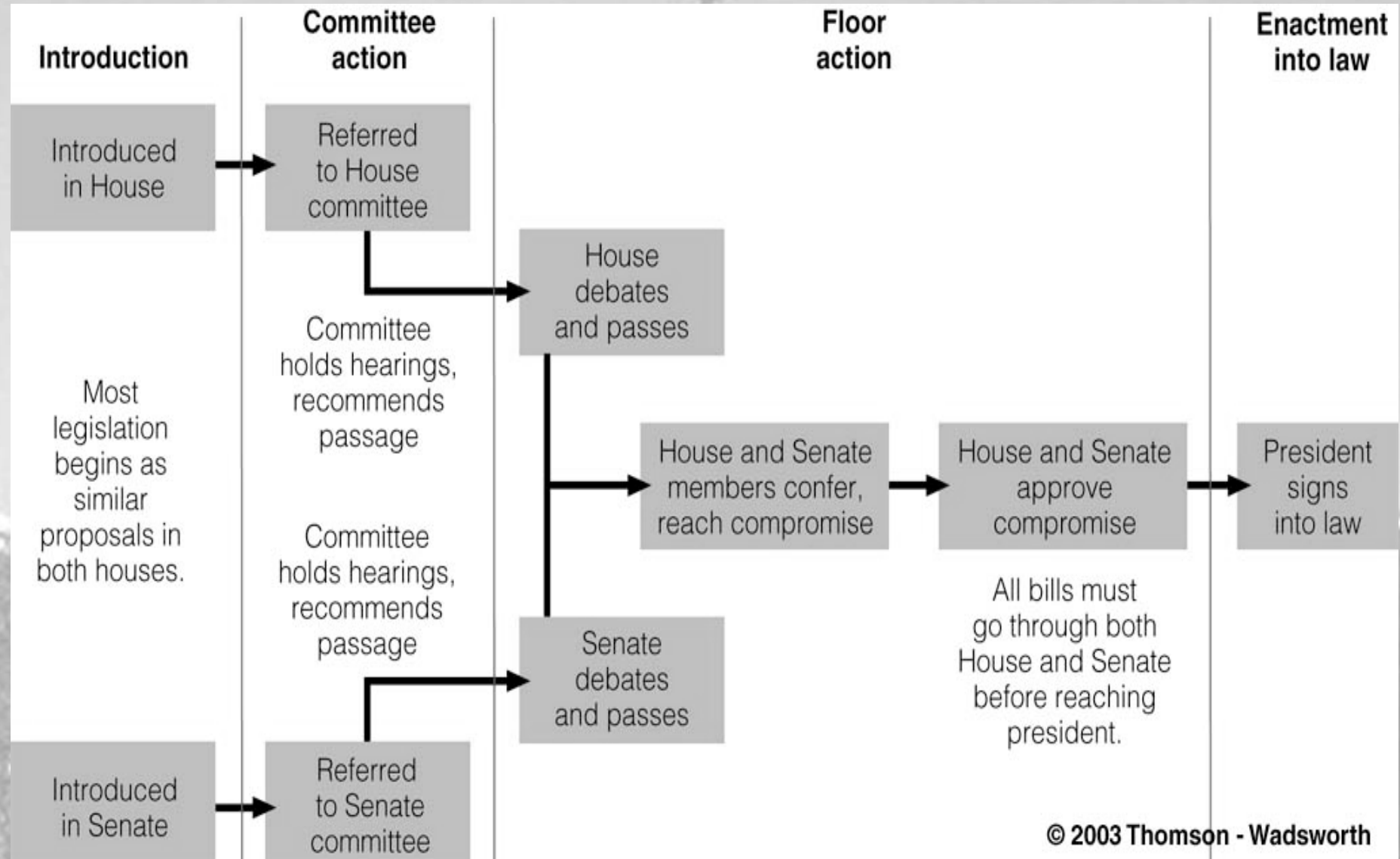
Senate Committees	House Committees
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry	Agriculture
Appropriations	Appropriations
Armed Services	Armed Services
Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs	Banking and Financial Services
Budget	Budget
Commerce, Science, and Transportation	Commerce
Energy and Natural Resources	Education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

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Committees in Congress

- **Joint committees** have members from both the House and Senate but typically don't draft legislation – e.g. oversee Library of Congress
- **Special and select** committees deal with an issue or scandal for a specified period of time e.g. Iran-Contra, Watergate were special committees

How Bill Becomes an Act of Congress



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The President's Role

- **approves or vetoes acts of Congress**
- **seeks to initiate or influence content of legislation**
- **provides annual budget, ‘State of the Union’, and state of the environment**
- **can help or hinder a bill**

Table 9.2 Divided Control of the Government, 1969–2002 © 2003 Thomson - Wadsworth

Years	Divided or Unified Government	President	Control of White House	Control of Congress
1969–1976	Divided	Nixon / Ford	Republican	Democratic
1977–1980	Unified	Carter	Democratic	Democratic
1981–1986	Divided	Reagan	Republican	Senate: Republican House: Democratic
1987–1988	Divided	Reagan	Republican	Democratic
1989–1992	Divided	George Bush	Republican	Democratic
1993–1994	Unified	Clinton	Democratic	Democratic
1995–2000	Divided	Clinton	Democratic	Republican
2001–2002	Unified	George W. Bush	Republican	Senate: Democratic House: Republican ^a

Congress and Elections

Reelection is fundamental goal

Therefore --spend **time** in the district

--use **free mailing** privilege

--provide benefits (**pork barrel**)

--perform **casework**

--identify and take popular positions

**Very few incumbents lose-dislike Congress
but not representatives!**

Table 9.3 Seats Lost by Incumbents, 1980–2000

	Senate			House		
	D	R	Total	D	R	Total
1980	9	0	9	27	3	30
1982	1	1	2	1	22	23
1984	1	2	3	13	3	16
1986	0	7	7	1	5	6
1988	1	3	4	2	4	6
1990	0	1	1	6	9	15
1992	2	2	4	16	8	24
1994	2	0	2	34	0	34
1996	0	1	1	3	17	20
1998	1	2	3	1	5	6
2000	1	5	6	2	4	6