

RESOURCES ON THE U.S. CONGRESS: January 19, 2009 latest update

When researching the U.S. Congress, it is essential to know how to locate the most authoritative information available, including individual sites for representatives and where to find current U.S. legislation, either passed or just being considered.

The first part of this webliography is devoted to mega-sites, (or gateway sites,) where you will find the most valuable links to all aspects of the U.S. Congress.

APPENDIX I : gives information on Congressional Elections and the work of Congressional Committees.

APPENDIX II: Glossary of Legislative Terms.

LATEST INFORMATION ON THE U.S. CONGRESS:

New way to search Congressional information online for free!

Posted Friday, January 16, 2009 9:59 AM by ct286

GPO is pleased to announce that FDsys may be accessed through <<http://fdsys.gpo.gov>>. FDsys contains:

- * Congressional Bills
- * Congressional Documents
- * Congressional Hearings
- * Congressional Record
- * Congressional Reports
- * Federal Register
- * Public and Private Laws
- * Compilation of Presidential Documents

You might be used to searching for these documents through GPO Access. GPO Access is in the process of being migrated to GPO's Federal Digital System (FDsys), a process that will be complete in mid-2009. The migration is occurring on a collection-by-collection basis. The information on GPO Access will remain current and continue to be

available until migration is complete. Users will continue to be able to access all GPO Access content as described in the A-Z Resource List <<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/databases.html>>.

ASSESSING THE 100TH CONGRESS; ANTICIPATING THE 111TH CONGRESS: (Brookings Think Tank Publication)

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2009/0108_broken_branch_binder_mann/0108_broken_branch_binder_mann.pdf

PREVIEW OF THE 111th CONGRESS:

<http://fpc.state.gov/113265.htm>

James Thurber, Director, Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies, American University, Foreign Press Center Briefing, Washington, DC, December 16, 2008

MEMBERSHIP OF THE 111TH CONGRESS: A PROFILE.

[Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress]. December 31, 2008. http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/R40086_20081231.pdf [PDF format, 10 pages].

UNITED STATES: OUTLOOK FOR THE 111TH CONGRESS by Cynthia Berry, Alan Parver, Julius Hobson and Tim Perrin, Powell and Goldstein LLP, November 11/17/2008 – Web link:

<http://www.mondaq.com/article.asp?articleid=70038>

COMMUNICATING WITH CONGRESS:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE. Congressional Management

Foundation. December 15, 2008. After nearly 10 years of research, outreach, and study of the communications between citizens and Congress, Congressional Management Foundation shows recommendations for all stakeholders and suggests improvements to the structure and processes for managing congressional communications.

http://www.cmfweb.org/storage/cmfweb/documents/CMF_Pubs/cwc_recommendationsreport.pdf

ETHICS LAWS AND RULES FOR DEPARTING MEMBERS AND STAFF. Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, U.S.

House of Representatives. November 20, 2008. With the 110th Congress drawing to a close, we thought it would be helpful to highlight some of the ethics laws and rules that apply to departing Members and their staffs. Full Text:

http://ethics.house.gov//Media/PDF/pink_sheet_departing_members_staff_2008.pdf

NEW MEMBER PICTORIAL DIRECTORY. 111th Congress New Member Orientation. Web posted November 20, 2008. Images and basic bio info for new members of the U.S. Congress.

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/pictorial/111th/pdf/fulldoc.pdf>

THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN THE U.S. CONGRESS.

Congressional Research Service, RS20794, Library of Congress. Judy Schneider. Re-posted to web April 6, 2008. Initially posted in 2003, this report has been reposted in light of the current election season.

Congress divides its tasks among committees and subcommittees. Both the House and Senate have their own committee systems, which are similar but not identical. Within chamber guidelines, however, each committee adopts its own rules; thus, there is considerable variation among panels. This report provides a brief overview of the organization and operations of House and Senate committees.

http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RS20794_20030502.pdf

PAGES OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS: SELECTION, DUTIES, AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION. Mildred Amer. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service. For more than 150 years, messengers known as pages have served the United States Congress. Currently, approximately 100 young men and women from across the nation serve as pages at any given time. They carry documents between the House and Senate, Members' offices, committees, and the Library of Congress. They also prepare the House and Senate chambers for each day's business by distributing the Congressional Record and other documents related to the day's agenda. When Congress is in session, pages sit near the dais where they may be summoned by Members for assistance. Pages must be high school juniors and at least 16 years of age. In the current Congress there are 72 House pages, 48 of whom were selected by Republicans and 24 by

Democrats. The House page program is administered by the Office of the Clerk and supervised by the House Page Board, chaired by Representative John Shimkus (R-IL). Members of the Page Board include Representatives Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) and Dale Kildee (D-MI), as well as the Clerk and the Sergeant at Arms of the House. There are 30 Senate pages, 18 of whom were selected by the Republicans and 12 by the Democrats. The Senate Sergeant at Arms supervises the Senate page program
<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/98-758.pdf>

OPENCONGRESS

<http://www.opencongress.org/>

Open Congress brings together official government information with news and blog coverage to give you the real story behind what's happening in Congress. OpenCongress is a free, open-source, non-profit, and non-partisan web resource with a mission to help make Congress more transparent and to encourage civic engagement. OpenCongress is a joint project of the Sunlight Foundation and the Participatory Politics Foundation.

IMPORTANT GATEWAY SITES:

CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS AND HOW THEY WORK:

Includes Information on the 2008 Congressional Elections:
<http://fpc.state.gov/fpc/c21361.htm>

CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS: LAW LIBRARY OF CONGRESS <http://www.loc.gov/law/find/hearings.html>

Recently, the Law Library of Congress and Google teamed up on a collaborative pilot project to digitize the Law Library's entire collection of 75,000 volumes of printed Congressional Hearings. For those who might not be familiar with these hearings, they typically contain testimony from members of Congress, interest groups, and policy experts. The intent of this initial digitization project is to produce text-readable versions of these hearings and to make them available as quickly as possible. Currently, the site contains three thematic collections that cover hearings on the U.S. Census, freedom of information, and immigration

CONGRESSLINE: CONGRESS AND MONEY

[CongressLine: Congress and Money](#) – This Web Site examines how the appropriations process this year has provided a multitude of interesting examples of the wide variety of tools available to Congress and the federal government for appropriating money, beyond just the ordinary appropriations bills in Congress.

<http://www.llrx.com/congress/congressandmoney.htm>

HOW TO CONTACT THE U.S. CONGRESS

<http://www.visi.com/juan/congress/>

Contacting the Congress is a very up-to-date database of congressional contact information for the 110th Congress. As of August 29, 2008, there are 539 email addresses (of which 519 are Web-based email home pages), and 539 web-based home pages known for the 540 members of the 110th Congress. Traditional ground mail addresses are available for all current members of Congress.

UC Berkeley Library's CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH TUTORIALS [Macromedia Flash Player]

<http://sunsite3.berkeley.edu/wikis/congresearch/>

Making a clear and direct path through the vast amount of Congressional materials can be quite a chore, even for the most seasoned and experienced researcher. Fortunately, the University of California at Berkeley Library has created these fine Congressional tutorials. Designed to help users locate materials both online and in the library, these tutorials are in the form of short Flash-enabled videos. Most of the tutorials last about two minutes, and they include "Find a Bill", "How Do I Contact My Representative?", "Find Congressional Debate", and "Find a Hearing". After viewing one (or more) of these tutorials, users can also make their way to the "What's going on in Congress right now?" area to stay on top of the various activities of this important legislative body.

Other useful gateway sites are:

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHIES:

<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/congbibs/>

This site contains comprehensive lists of Hearings, Prints, and Publications Printed by the Senate, 1983 to present

and: Lists of House Committee Meetings Recorded in the *Congressional Record's* Daily Digest, 1985 to present

CONGRESS VOTES DATABASE FROM THE WASHINGTON POST: <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/congress/>

This site lets you browse every vote in the U.S. Congress since 1991

One of the best of these gateway sites is the **University of Michigan Documents Center:** <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/federal.html>

This is a well-organized central clearinghouse for USG, foreign governments, and NGO documents.

⊆ **Most comprehensive information about the U.S. Congress available:** <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/federal.html>

- ⊆ **Under Legislation tab, can consult specific information on Bill Drafting, Bills, Committee Calendars, Congressional Research Service, Debates, Floor Calendars, Floor Votes, Hearings, News, Politics. Comprehensive Research Guides.**
- ⊆ **Provides a valuable Legislative Histories Tutorial.**
- ⊆ **Comprehensive Congressional Directories, Committees and Congressional emails for all members.**

Another excellent gateway site is the little known National Archives Virtual Reference Desk :

<http://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/congressional.html>

This site provides:

- ⊆ **A painstaking analysis and discussion of the U.S. Legislative Process**
- ⊆ **Latest Congressional Directory**
- ⊆ **Pictorial Directory of Congress**
- ⊆ **A discussion of all other major research/reference sites for the U.S. Congress**

Two official web sites are those of the U.S. Senate
<www.senate.gov>

- ⊃ **Contains a list of Senators by State**
- ⊃ **The Reference tab has a Virtual Reference Desk giving general information on the Senate, the legislative branch and the Federal Government in general.**
- ⊃ **All standing Senate committees are listed with a complete list of membership.**
- ⊃ **Legislation tab – Clicking on Active Legislation will give you a list of current bills (public laws, still in committee, drafts) receiving legislative or media attention. These are listed alphabetically by popular title or by general subject. Updated weekly when senate is in session. Can receive updates via your email account. Easy way to find out what legislation has been recently passed or is being considered on any topic.**
- ⊃ **How to Tab: is the most valuable of all. Here you will locate information on how to find bills, committee reports, conference reports, laws, acts, statutes, congressional voting patterns and more generally, how to efficiently use specific US government sites and databases.**
- ⊃ **U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations with full-text of hearings, press releases and legislation at:**
<http://foreign.senate.gov>
- ⊃ **Overall, this redesigned web site is just superlative.**

And the **U.S House of Representatives**: www.house.gov site is the official site for the U.S. Congress. Here you will find:

- ⊃ **list of Web Sites and biographical information for individual Congress people (representatives)**
- ⊃ **extensive listing of House Committees, with members and schedules**
- ⊃ **Access to the U.S. Code, with extensive search features**
- ⊃ **Finding a U.S. Bill or Law, with links to the Thomas and Library of Congress Web Sites.**
- ⊃ **Details and Procedures for the Legislative Process**
- ⊃ **Finding Congressional Voting Information and Patterns**
- ⊃ **Congress members listed by state or by name**
- ⊃ **Comprehensive search features throughout**

- ⊆ **Extensive Links to related government web sites at:**
<http://www.house.gov/house/govsites.html>

Other useful gateway sites are:

Federal Government Web Servers

<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/gov/fedgov.html> (Louisiana State University.)

A service in partnership with the US Government Printing Office.

Provides access to more than 1100 USG web sites.

USA.GOV <http://www.usa.gov/>. USA.Gov is intended to be your first resource to find government information on the Internet, with topics ranging from business and economy to money and benefits to science and technology - and everything in between. Links to over 30 million web pages by topic.

- ⊆ **Provides a Citizens and Consumers guide to the Congress (under the Legislative Branch link) with access to the web pages of each representative.**
- ⊆ **A Spanish Language** version of the First Gov Web Site is also available at: <http://www.espanol.gov>
- ⊆ **Other Spanish language versions of US Government and International Web Sites available at:** <http://library.nevada.edu/govpub/>
- ⊆ and <http://www.odl.state.ok.us/usinfo/topiclists/us-spanish.htm>

GovSpot <http://govspot.com> a well-organized portal to useful government information.

- ⊆ **Under Legislative Branch, links are provided to the Speaker of the House, the Majority Leader and the Democratic Leader.**
- ⊆ **A Reference Guide provides further guides and histories for the U.S. Congress.**

GPO Access <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/> The Government Printing Office (GPO) has responsibility for the electronic availability of a wide variety of USG information. This is a searchable site for the full-text of documents such as the **US Code, Code of Federal Regulations, the Federal Budget** and a wide variety of other resources.

- ⊆ **Under Legislative Resources, view Congressional Bills, Congressional Record, Public and Private Laws and the U.S. Code.**
- ⊆ **An A-Z Resource provides a very comprehensive list of official Federal Resources.**
- ⊆ **Also view the latest Congressional Directory.**

Virtual Reference Desk for the U.S. Government (lists Documents published by Government Agency, by Subject and by Title:)

<http://www.virtualref.com/govdocs/>

- ⊆ **Provides Government Documents by Subject (look at Congress, for example)**
- ⊆ **Government Documents by Title**
- ⊆ **Government Documents by Agency**

Ben's Guide to US Government for Kids

Although it is designed for young people (you can select the age group) and teachers, this site is useful for all adults. It provides introductory information about the essentials of the US Government with links to sites giving more detail. It is written in easy to understand English. This is particularly useful in countries where English might not be the primary language, or for contacts wanting easy-to-digest information on the structure of the US Government. Available at

<http://bensguide.gpo.gov>

- ⊆ **Has a very informative section “How Laws are Made” which follows the legislative process from beginning to finish.**

CRS (Congressional Research Service) Reports. Authoritative, timely and **exhaustively researched** reports covering all topics relating to areas of national, domestic and global concern for which Congress might enact future legislation. These sites list CRS Reports:

<http://italy.usembassy.gov/policy/crs/>
and <http://www.thememoryhole.org/crs/> and
<http://www.ncseonline.org/NLE/CRS/> and
<http://www.fpc.state.gov>

Thomas: U.S. Legislative Information on the Internet:

<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Legislation and activities of the 101st to the 111th Congress, gathered together and maintained by the Library of Congress. Includes complete texts of all Bills, committee reports, and the Congressional Record, in an easy to use format. **Public Laws and Bill Summary and Status are provided for the 93rd to the 110th Congress.**

GOVERNMENT SEARCH ENGINE: Google Uncle Sam

<http://www.google.com/ig/usgov>

A very precise search engine limiting search results to .gov and .mil websites.

LEGAL PORTALS:

An impressive legal portal with texts of U.S. Supreme Court decisions and U.S laws and legislation is provided by <http://findlaw.com> and www.llrx.com

The Cornell University's Legal Information Institute at <http://www.law.cornell.edu/> also provides detailed information on U.S. laws and legislation by topic.

Finding Legislation on the U.S. CONGRESS: <http://thomas.loc.gov>
Allows researchers to locate specific bills or legislation through multiple congresses.

Finding U.S. and Congressional Legislation: A Tutorial from the US SENATE web site:
http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/g_three_sections_with_tasers/legislative_home.htm

CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE PRINTS: a highly useful tool for finding rules of specific congressional committees:

CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE PRINTS:

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cprints/>

and consult also:

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cprints/110cat.html>

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cprints/browse.html>

SPECIFIC STUDY CENTERS FOR THE U.S. CONGRESS:

The Center on Congress: <http://congress.indiana.edu/>

Publications Center (for free brochures on Congress):

http://congress.indiana.edu/learn_about/feature/booklets.html

Dirksen Congressional Center:

<http://www.dirksencongressionalcenter.org>

The Dirksen Congressional Center is a non-partisan organization seeking to improve civic engagement by promoting a better understanding of Congress and its leaders through archival, research, and educational programs. The Center is named for Everett McKinley Dirksen who served in the U.S. House, the U.S. Senate and as Minority Leader of the Senate from 1959 until 1969.

Includes a segment called Congress in the Classroom Online:

<http://moodle.congressclass.org/>

SPECIFIC STUDIES ON THE U.S. CONGRESS:

Black Americans in Congress: An Historical Survey

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/cdocuments/hd108-224/index.html>

Govtrack: Tracking the 110th U.S Congress: <http://govtrack.us/>

GovTrack.us is a tool to keep tabs on the U.S. Congress. Use [feeds](#) or [research](#) pending and past legislation. GovTrack is a [community & open source project](#).

**The Intersection of Money and Politics by the Sunlight Foundation:
Special Studies on the U.S. Congress:** <http://maplight.org/>

The Committee System in the U.S. Congress. [Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress April 6, 2008]

http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RS20794_20030502.pdf

Monitoring Congress: A Revolution in Access:

<http://www.llrx.com/features/monitoringcongress.htm>

Locate other specific studies by using the embedded search engine within:
www.llrx.com

Congressional Oversight: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/97-936.pdf>

Congressional Oversight of Intelligence:

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/intel/RL32525.pdf>

Federalism, State Sovereignty, and the Constitution: Basis and Limits of Congressional Power. CRS report, updated February 1, 2008

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL30315.pdf>

Secret Sessions of Congress: A Brief Historical Overview.

[Congressional Research Service, RS20145, Library of Congress].

Mildred Amer. March 14, 2008.

http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RS20145_20070530.pdf [pdf format, 6 pages]

“Secret” or “closed door” sessions of the House of Representatives and Senate are held periodically to discuss business, including impeachment deliberations, deemed to require confidentiality and secrecy.

Authority for the two chambers to hold these secret sessions appears in Article I, Section 5, of the Constitution. Both the House and the Senate have supplemented this clause through rules and precedents

Free Access to the Audio/Video Congressional Record since 2006:

<http://metavid.ucsc.edu/> (University of California at Santa Cruz)

Senate Confirmation Process: A Brief Overview. CRS report, updated March 27, 2008

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/104729.pdf>

The Congressional Research Service and the American Legislative Process. CRS report, updated March 19, 2008

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/104728.pdf>

Foreign Aid Reform: Issues for Congress and Policy Options. CRS report, updated January 2008

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/104295.pdf>

EXAMPLES OF FREE FULL TEXT ACCESS TO THESES AND DISSERTATIONS ON THE U.S. CONGRESS (FULL TEXT):

From The University of Maryland Dissertation Site

(<http://www.lib.umd.edu/drum>)

[Sovereigns or Servants - Presidential Relations with Congress in Domestic and Foreign Policy](#)

[The Culture Wars and the Agenda of the U.S. Congress](#)

[Women's Words: Gender and Speechmaking in Congress](#)

From M.I.T. (<http://dspace.mit.edu>)

2001	Influence and information in U.S. bureaucracy : how agencies, congress, and interest groups use federal advisory committees	<i>Karty, Kevin Dean, 1973-</i>
19-Jun-2005	Speakership Elections and Control of the U.S. House: 1839â"1859	<i>Stewart, Charles</i>
19-Jun-2005	The Development of the Senate Committee System, 1789â"1879	<i>Stewart, Charles; Canon, David</i>
19-Jun-2005	Committee Hierarchy and Assignments in the U.S. Congress: Testing Theories of Legislative Organization, 1789-1946	<i>Stewart, Charles; Canon, David</i>
19-Jun-2005	More than Just a Mouthpiece: The House Clerk as Party Operative, 1789-1870	<i>Stewart, Charles; Jenkins, Jeffery</i>
19-Jun-	The Inefficient Secret: Organizing for	<i>Stewart,</i>

2005	Business in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789â€”1861	<i>Charles</i>
Nov-1999	A game of climate chicken : can EPA regulate greenhouse gases before the U.S. Senate ratifies the Kyoto Protocol?	-

Reading the Public: How Members of Congress Develop Their Impressions of Public Opinion on National Security

Authors: Rosner, Jeremy David

Type: Dissertation

Sponsors: Digital Repository at the University of Maryland
University of Maryland (College Park, Md.)

FULL RECORD <https://drum.umd.edu/dspace/bitstream/1903/7271/1/umi-umd-4671.pdf>

Issue Date: 31-Jul-2007

Abstract: To "represent" literally means to present again. For members of Congress, that means presenting again the views their constituents have presented to them. But how do members of Congress determine what those views are? How does a member of Congress read the public, in particular, on questions of national security, where the stakes are particularly high, but where average citizens may be silent, inattentive, or deferential to policy makers? The current study examines this question - how members of Congress develop their impressions of public opinion on national security issues - through a process of inter-views and participant observation with members of Congress and their staff. It examines the information-gathering methods of eight members - six representatives and two senators - as well as their chiefs of staff, focusing in particular on three case studies: the Iraq war, especially congressional votes during 2005-2007; the sale of six American port operations to the Dubai Port...

URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/1903/7271>

By IRO STEPHEN PERRY,

LAST REVISED February 1, 2009

E-MAIL: perrystephen@fastmail.fm

APPENDIX I:

CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS:

(The House and Senate are both central to lawmaking but have different election means: the following article is taken from the U.S. Department of State publication USA Elections in Brief.)

Elections for the U.S. Congress can be as competitive and important as those for president. This is because of the central role that Congress plays in making laws.

Unlike a parliamentary system where the chief executive comes from the parliament, the American system, as noted, separates the legislature and the presidency. Presidents and legislators are elected separately. Although a sitting president may propose laws to Congress, they have to be drafted in Congress by his allies within that institution, and must be passed by the Congress before being sent back to the president for his signature. The House and Senate are legally and politically independent of the will of the president.

Within Congress, party discipline is less strictly observed in the American system than in parliamentary systems. It is fairly easy for members of Congress to vote on policies as they think best, including what they think best for winning their own reelection. As a result, congressional leaders must put together a winning coalition one member at a time, rather than count on automatic support from highly disciplined parties. This makes every congressional legislative victory difficult to obtain. Thus, Congressional elections are important to the nation, as Congress is powerful, and difficult to predict; and so are individual congressmen.

House and Senate Differences

The House and the Senate have nearly equal powers, but their means of election are quite different. The founders of the American Republic intended members of the House of Representatives to be close to the public, reflecting the public's wishes and ambitions. Therefore, the Founders designed the House to be relatively large in order to

accommodate many members from small legislative districts, and to have frequent (two-year) elections. Originally, a two-year term was considered by some to be too long. In the days when transportation was by horse, a two-year term in Washington could keep a congressman away from his constituents for two years. Today, the concern is that elections every two years force congressmen to fly back to their districts every weekend or so to shore up political support.

Each House seat represents a unique geographic constituency, and, as noted above, every member is elected as sole representative from that district by plurality rule. Each of the 50 states is assured of at least one seat in the House, with the rest allocated to the states according to population. Alaska, for example, has a very small population and therefore holds only one seat in the House. California is the mostly highly populated state and holds 53 seats. Following each decennial census, the number of seats assigned to a state is recalculated to account for changes in state populations during the past 10 years, and state legislatures redesign congressional district boundaries within states to reflect changes in the number of seats assigned to the state or population shifts within the state.

The Senate was designed for its members to represent larger constituencies - the entire state - and to provide equal representation to that body of each state, regardless of population. Thus small states possess as much influence (two senators) as large states in the Senate.

Senators were originally selected by the state legislatures. It was not until enactment of the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1913 that senators were directly elected by their state's voters. Every state has two senators elected for staggered six-year terms, with one-third of the Senate seats up for reelection every two years. A senator is chosen by plurality vote of the state electorate.

Loyalty to Party or Person

In the past, congressional elections tended to be "party centered," as many voters held long-term loyalties toward one political party or the other and tended to vote along party lines for Congress. The individual

personalities and performances of office-holders may have only marginally added to or subtracted from voter support. In recent decades, the views and personalities of individual candidates have become more central to electoral politics and have somewhat diminished the importance of party loyalties.

Indeed, since the 1960s, national elections have become increasingly candidate-centered. The growth of the media and the Internet, the importance of aggressive campaign fundraising, constant opinion polls, and other aspects of modern campaigning have made the voter more aware of the candidate as an individual. As a result, voters tend to weigh individual candidate's strengths and weaknesses along with party loyalties in deciding whom to support. The establishment of broad-based public education in the early 20th century and of higher education after World War II has also made voters more confident of their own judgment; and less reliant on party cues with respect to ballot choices.

In this context of candidate-centered elections, incumbent members of Congress fare very well, with reelection rates well above 90 percent. This is partly due to often bland media coverage of Congress, and particularly coverage of individual members by local media in their states or congressional districts. With this generally favorable media exposure and daily involvement with public policy issues - and individuals and groups that seek to influence policy - incumbents also tend to raise far greater sums of money with which to campaign. For these reasons and more, incumbents who run for reelection are very likely to win, no matter which party they belong to.

(America.gov is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State Web site

<http://america.gov>

Congressional Committees the Workhorses of Legislative Process

(Chairmanship changes from 110th Congress few, but significant)

By Ralph Dannheisser Special Correspondent

Washington - Public attention tends to focus on floor activity of the full House and Senate, but much congressional business is conducted in the committees and subcommittees of the two legislative chambers.

A student named Woodrow Wilson, later elected to two terms as president of the United States, pointed this out more than a century ago.

In his doctoral dissertation, *Congressional Government*, published in 1885, Wilson wrote, "It is not far from the truth to say that Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee rooms is Congress at work."

The committee system is based on the premise that no one can be an expert on the full range of issues that come before the Congress. The Senate and House of Representatives divide their legislative, oversight and internal administrative tasks among dozens of specialized committees, each of which focuses on carefully defined areas. Each chamber allocates those subject areas somewhat differently, and among a different number of committees.

The system includes several joint House-Senate committees as well. There even is a committee on the committee structure itself: the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress. In 1993, Representative Norman Mineta, who later served as President Clinton's secretary of commerce and President George W. Bush's secretary of transportation, noted the importance of the system.

"Much of the real legislative work that is done day in and day out is done in the committees, and if that were not so, Congress simply would not be able to function," Mineta said.

The committee chairman, a senior member of the majority party chosen for the job by his or her party colleagues, exercises great influence over what legislation the panel will consider, what legislation it will send on to the full House or Senate floor for further action, and when it will do so.

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP IN THE 111TH CONGRESS

With the Democrats remaining in control of the House and Senate, the 111th Congress brings few changes in the lineup of committee chairmen and chairwomen. But those changes are significant because they uproot the most senior member in each chamber.

Robert Byrd (Democrat, West Virginia) the most senior senator, has reluctantly stepped down from his post as chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee. The 91-year-old Byrd, the longest-serving senator in U.S. history - he began his 51st year in January - has become increasingly frail in recent years. He is being replaced as chairman by Senator Daniel Inouye, 84.

Working through 12 subcommittees, the Appropriations Committee writes the legislation that annually allocates federal funds to the numerous government departments, agencies and organizations.

Representative David Obey of Wisconsin remains chairman of the committee's House counterpart.

The major change on the House side is on the Energy and Commerce Committee, where Representative Henry Waxman of California wrested the chairmanship from Representative John Dingell of Michigan via a 137-122 vote of fellow House Democrats. Dingell, first elected to the House in 1955, is due to become the longest-serving member in history on February 14.

The change in chairmanship could presage major policy changes: In his challenge to Dingell, who has been uncompromisingly protective of his state's automobile industry, Waxman stressed his own desire to pursue legislation on alternative energy, climate change and related issues.

The nation's deepening economic crisis, and developing plans for a second stimulus package that could reach a trillion dollars in expenditures, focus particular attention on the House and Senate committees that share, with Appropriations, jurisdiction over aspects of the economy and financial system.

On the House side, Charles Rangel of New York continues in charge of the Ways and Means Committee, which has responsibility for all tax and tariff measures as well as bills on entitlement programs including Social Security and Medicare. It will have a major role in drafting the economic recovery package that Rangel said January 15 would "provide relief to all communities and all sectors of the American economy."

Also remaining as chairmen are John Spratt of South Carolina at the Budget Committee, whose function is to help guide the work of the spending and tax committees by writing an overall annual budget plan, and Barney Frank of Massachusetts at Financial Services, which handles such currently critical areas as banking, insurance, securities and real estate.

In the Senate, key chairmen continuing in their roles include Max Baucus of Montana, Finance; Kent Conrad of North Dakota, Budget; and Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs.

Joseph Biden's election as vice president brings a change in the Senate with regard to foreign affairs legislation.

His resignation as Delaware's senior senator creates a vacancy in the chairmanship of the Foreign Relations Committee. Dodd, next in seniority, would normally have risen to the chairmanship. But, because he chose to retain his leadership of the banking panel, John Kerry of Massachusetts has become the new chairman.

Representative Howard Berman of California remains Foreign Affairs Committee chairman in the House.

Issues related to wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will also focus attention on the Armed Services Committees in the two chambers. Carl Levin of Michigan retains the chairmanship in the Senate, as does Ike Skelton of Missouri in the House.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov/>)

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF LEGISLATIVE TERMS:

Glossary of Legislative Terms

Advice and Consent - In this constitutionally mandated process, international treaties and presidential nominations for executive and judicial posts must be confirmed by the Senate and take effect only when the Senate approves them by a two-thirds vote.

Amendment - A change or a proposed change to the text of a bill or law.

Appropriation - The provision of funds through an annual appropriations act or a permanent law for federal agencies to make payments out of the Treasury for specified purposes.

Authorization - A law that establishes or continues one or more federal agencies or programs, sets the terms and conditions under which they operate, authorizes the enactment of appropriations and specifies how appropriated funds can be used.

Bill - A proposed law. It can address either matters of general interest (public bill) or narrow interest (private bill), such as individual immigration cases or private claims against the federal government.

Budget resolution - A concurrent resolution that sets forth the congressional budget. It establishes various budget totals, divides spending totals into functional categories and may include reconciliation instructions to designated House or Senate committees.

Caucus - An informal organization of senators or representatives created to discuss issues of mutual concern. Caucuses can be organized based on regional, political or ideological, ethnic or economic issues.

Cloture - A procedure by which the Senate can vote to limit debate, and thereby overcome a filibuster. Under the cloture rule, the Senate may

limit consideration of a pending matter to 30 additional hours if three-fifths of the full Senate (normally 60 votes) concurs.

Committees - Subsidiary organizations of the House and the Senate established for the purpose of considering legislation, conducting hearings and investigations or carrying out other assignments as instructed by the House or Senate.

Conference committee - A committee composed of senators and representatives named to work out differences between same-subject bills passed by both chambers. Any compromise reached must be approved by the Senate and House.

Continuing resolution - A joint resolution enacted by Congress to provide budget authority for federal agencies and programs to continue in operation until the regular appropriations acts are enacted.

Earmark - An inclusion to a law by a member of Congress to specify funds for a particular purpose, bypassing executive branch merit-based or competitive allocation processes or otherwise limiting the ability of the executive branch to manage aspects of funds allocation.

Expenditures - The actual spending of money (rather than the permission to spend given in appropriation bills). The executive branch makes expenditures; Congress votes appropriations. The two are rarely identical in any fiscal year because expenditures often represent money appropriated in previous years.

Filibuster - An informal term used in the Senate to describe an attempt to block or delay action on a bill or other matter by lengthy debate, numerous procedural motions or other obstructive actions. It can be stopped only by a three-fifths cloture vote of the senators present and voting.

Hold - An informal practice used in the Senate by which a senator informs his or her floor leader that he or she does not wish a particular bill or other measure to reach the floor for consideration. The majority leader need not follow the senator's wishes, but

understands that the opposing senator could filibuster any motion to consider the measure.

Joint committee - Committees that include members from both chambers of Congress. Joint committees usually are established with narrow jurisdictions and normally lack authority to report legislation. Chairmanship usually alternates between the House and Senate members from Congress to Congress.

Majority leader - The leader of the majority party in either the House or the Senate. In the House, the majority leader is second in command to the speaker. In the Senate, the majority leader and minority leader serve as the chief speakers for their parties and manage and schedule the legislative and executive business of the Senate.

Mark up - The process by which congressional committees and subcommittees debate, amend and rewrite proposed legislation in a section-by-section review.

Minority leader - The leader of the minority party in either the House or the Senate. In the Senate, the majority leader and minority leader serve as the chief speakers for their parties and manage and schedule the legislative and executive business of the Senate.

Oversight - Committee review of the activities of a federal agency or program.

President pro tempore (or pro tem) - A constitutionally recognized officer of the Senate who presides over the chamber in the absence of the vice president. The president pro tempore ("for a time") is elected by the Senate and is, by custom, the senator of the majority party who has the longest record of continuous service.

Ranking member - Member of the majority party on a committee who ranks first in seniority after the chairman/chairwoman.

Ranking minority member - Member of a committee who has the highest rank

on the minority party's side.

Report - A committee's written record of its actions and views on a bill. Committee reports discuss and explain the purpose of measures and contain other related information. The term also may refer to the action taken by a committee to submit its recommendations to the House or the Senate.

Resolution - A formal statement of a decision or opinion by the House or Senate or both. A simple resolution is made by one chamber and generally deals with that chamber's rules or prerogatives. A concurrent resolution is presented in both chambers and usually expresses a congressional view on a matter not within congressional jurisdiction. A joint resolution requires approval in both chambers and goes to the president for approval. Simple and concurrent resolutions do not go to the president.

Roll-Call vote - Senators vote as their names are called by the clerk. Representatives electronically record their votes. Each House member has a card to insert at voting stations and a running count of votes is displayed. Roll-call votes and recorded teller votes are the only votes for which a public record is made of how individual members of Congress voted.

Speaker of the House of Representatives - This representative presides over the House of Representatives. Each party separately elects a candidate for speaker and then nominates its candidate before the entire House. Typically, the majority party's candidate wins in a House vote. The person who holds this post is next in line of succession to the presidency after the vice president.

Table - A motion to table seeks to put aside a bill and remove it from consideration. Adopting a motion to table eliminates any possibility a bill will be enacted.

Veto - A president's refusal to approve a bill or joint resolution, preventing its enactment into law. A veto can be overturned only by a two-thirds vote in both the Senate and the House.

Whip - Assistants to the floor leaders who are elected by their party conferences. The majority and minority whips (and their assistants) are responsible for mobilizing votes within their parties on major issues. In the absence of a party floor leader, the whip often serves as acting floor leader.

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