

Legislating our Lives, an Introduction to Congress  
by: Tracey Ghassaei



Image credit: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senate\\_of\\_the\\_Roman\\_Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senate_of_the_Roman_Republic)

(CRP note-This lesson requires searching local statistics prior to the lesson using links in the sources. )

A SENATE is a group of people in the LEGISLATURE, or GOVERNMENT. The name comes from the Roman *SENATUS*, an Assembly of ELDERS. The word *senex* meant "old man" in Latin. Many countries have an assembly named a senate, composed of elected or APPOINTED senators. The main duty of the senate is to pass LAWS.

Spell: SENATE Spell: GOVERNMENT Spell: ELDER

Which language gave us the word Senate? LATIN

What is another word for government? LEGISLATURE

What is the main duty of the senate? PASS LAWS

What are two ways lawmakers are chosen? ELECTED, APPOINTED:

Point to the Senator giving a speech in the picture above.

What words in English start with SEN and have something to do with old?  
SENIOR, SENILE

In the United States, we have a US Senate, with 2 people representing each state, and a House of REPRESENTATIVES, with the number of representatives determined by the state's population. The Senate has 100 members and the House, as it is known, currently has 435 members. These people meet in our CAPITAL city, WASHINGTON, DC and represent

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT

our states in the FEDERAL (national) government. Together, the members of the Senate and House of Representatives are called the CONGRESS. This word comes to us from the Latin *congressus*, meaning to come together or meet. When the senators and representatives come together, they make our laws.

Spell: CAPITAL Spell: FEDERAL Spell: REPRESENTATIVE

Senators and Representatives combined are called the \_\_\_\_\_  
CONGRESS

Which section of Congress has more members? HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

The number of Representatives is determined by the state's \_\_\_\_\_  
POPULATION

The Latin word *congressus* means \_\_\_\_\_ COME TOGETHER, MEET

A word meaning relating to the whole country is \_\_\_\_\_ FEDERAL, NATIONAL

How many states are in the United States? 50

How many more Representatives than Senators are there?  $435 - 100 = 335$

Find Washington, DC on the map. Now trace a path from your state to the capital.

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT



Image credit: <https://ontheworldmap.com/usa/usa-states-and-capitals-map.html>

Members of the House or Representatives, or lower house, serve for 2 year terms. Members of the Senate, or upper house, serve for 6 years. They can all be RE-ELECTED, as long as their CONSTITUENTS (voters) continue to vote for them. The elections are STAGGERED (spread out), so the whole group never changes at once. United States territories such as GUAM and PUERTO RICO do not send senators or representatives to Congress, but have a non-voting DELEGATE who attends and can PARTICIPATE on committees in the House. To run for Congress, a person must be at least 25 years old, be a citizen of the US and live in the state where they were elected. In the early years of our country, Senators also had to be rich and own land.

Spell: DELEGATE Spell: PARTICIPATE Spell: STAGGERED  
 The House of Representatives is considered the \_\_\_\_\_ LOWER HOUSE.  
 What do you call someone who votes for you? CONSTITUENT  
 Name a US territory that sends a Delegate. GUAM, PUERTO RICO

### Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT



Name one requirement to run for Congress. 25 YEARS OLD, CITIZEN, LIVE IN SAME STATE

Besides being rich and owning land, what other requirements do you think early US senators had? MALE, WHITE

How long do senators serve? 6 YEARS

Do you think there should be a limit on how many terms someone can serve? Why or why not?

The Powers of Congress are detailed in the first Article of the CONSTITUTION. The key RESPONSIBILITY is to debate and pass BILLS, which are proposals for new laws. To vote on the new laws, the House uses an electronic system with buttons that say “yea” (yes) and “nay” (no). Their brand new voting system has BRAILLE letters below the buttons to ACCOMMODATE sight impaired Representatives! The Senate votes by saying “yea” and “nay” out loud. Besides making laws, they regulate trade between states and with other countries, collect taxes, create courts, and make the rules for NATURALIZATION, or how to become a citizen. The Congress also has the power to declare war on another country.

Spell: BRAILLE Spell: ACCOMMODATE Spell: RESPONSIBILITY

Define a bill. A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW LAW

Where are the Powers of Congress listed? FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CONSTITUTION

What is it called when someone born outside of the US becomes a citizen? NATURALIZATION

Name two other powers of the Congress. REGULATE TRADE, COLLECT TAXES, CREATE COURTS, DECLARE WAR

How does one read Braille? TOUCHING THE LETTERS

What accommodations would you need if you were elected to Congress?

Each state in the United States also has a LEGISLATURE (government) to represent DISTRICTS within the state. Our state of \_\_\_\_\_ is divided into \_\_\_\_\_ districts. State legislators meet in the state capital to make laws for each state. While most states have a BICAMERAL, or two chamber legislatures, Nebraska has a unicameral legislature of just 49

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT

Senators. The names of the state legislatures vary – some are called General ASSEMBLY, House of Delegates, State Legislature, and some are called General Court. The duties of the state legislators are similar to those of the Congress- mainly to meet in COMMITTEES to decide on new laws.

Spell: DISTRICTS Spell: COMMITTEES Spell: ASSEMBLY

What word means two chambers? BICAMERAL

Which state has a unicameral legislature? NEBRASKA

State legislatures can also be called \_\_\_\_\_. GENERAL ASSEMBLY, GENERAL COURT, HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Where do our state legislators meet? \_\_\_\_\_ (name of state capital)

How many districts do we have in (state) \_\_\_\_\_?

Would you like to work in politics some day? Why or why not?

Even though our Senate was based on an ASSEMBLY of old men in Rome, women in all countries except VATICAN CITY are now able to vote and run for ELECTION in their local or federal governments. The US Congress is made up of about 20% women. Our state government has about \_\_\_\_\_%. Four countries in the world currently have equal participation of men and women in their federal governments. RWANDA ranks highest, with Cuba, Bolivia and UNITED ARAB EMIRATES also having at least 50% women in the federal government; Mexico and Nicaragua are close behind. However, more than a quarter of the countries in the world still have less than 10% representation by women in their governments.

Spell: ASSEMBLY Spell: ELECTION Spell: MEXICO

Where can women not vote or run for election? VATICAN CITY

What percent of the US Congress are men? 80%

Where is Rwanda? AFRICA

Name one country with equal or higher participation by women. RWANDA, CUBA, BOLIVIA, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Which part of the world currently has the most countries with equal participation? LATIN AMERICA

Where would you have guessed there to be more equal participation in government?

Creative writing- choose one:

Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT

A-You have just been elected to the House or Senate. What bill will you propose?

B-You suddenly find yourself back in 1789, with a seat in the brand new US Congress! Knowing what you do about the future, what changes, if any, would you propose for our country ?

## Sources

Search state legislatures:

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_United\\_States\\_state\\_legislatures](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_state_legislatures)

Search percentage of women in state government:

<https://statusofwomendata.org/explore-the-data/political-participation/additional-state-data/women-in-state-government/>

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_government](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_government)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress)

<http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

<https://votesmart.org/education/congress#.XZItmWZ7mM8>

<https://www.fedscoop.com/house-got-brand-new-electronic-voting-system-summer/>

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicameralism>

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebraska\\_Legislature](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebraska_Legislature)



Tracey Ghassaei is a practitioner in training in Z best cohort, Mother of a speller and strong S2C advocate. Her favorite fall activities include voting, baking pie, and writing lessons.

## Question Type Key

KNOWN – SEMI-OPEN – PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – MATH – OPEN - VAKT