

The Legislative Branch



The Capitol Building

The legislative branch of the U.S. government is called Congress. Congress has two parts, the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress meets in the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, DC.

Congress makes federal laws. Members of Congress can propose an idea for a new law. This is called a bill. After both the Senate and the House of Representatives pass the bill, it goes

to the President. If the President agrees, he or she can sign the bill. Then it becomes law. If the President does not agree, he or she can veto it. If the President vetoes the bill, Congress can decide to vote again to override the veto. Congress can also make changes to the bill and send it back to the President for approval.

Who is in each part of the U.S. Congress?

U.S. Senate

100 members

Two members from each state



U.S. House of Representatives

435 voting members

Number of members depends on state's population

Answer these Civics Test questions.

1. Name one branch or part of the government. _____
2. Who makes federal laws? _____
3. What are the two parts of the U.S. Congress? _____

The U.S. Senate



*The Senators of the 109th Congress.
Courtesy of the U.S. Senate Photo Studio.*

The U.S. Senate has 100 members. There are two members from each state. Senators represent all people of the state. Senators are elected every six years. There is no limit on the number of terms they can serve. The Vice President of the United States is the leader of the Senate. The Vice President attends important ceremonies in the Senate and votes when there is a tie.

The Senate has several special tasks. The Senate is responsible for approving the President's nominations for Cabinet members, U.S. Supreme

Court justices, and other important positions. The Senate must approve any treaty the president makes with other countries. Only the Senate can hold a trial for a government official who commits a crime against the country.

Requirements for U.S. Senators

- Age 30 or older
- A U.S. citizen for at least 9 years
- A resident of the state



Check the names of your state's Senators right before your naturalization test at www.senate.gov.

Answer these Civics Test questions.

1. How many U.S. Senators are there? _____
2. We elect a U.S. Senator for how many years? _____
3. Who is one of your state's U.S. Senators now? _____
4. Who does a U.S. Senator represent? _____

The U.S. House of Representatives

The U.S. House of Representatives has 435 voting members. Representatives are elected for two years. There is no limit on how many terms they can serve.

The House has several special duties. Only representatives can introduce laws about taxes. They can decide if a government official should be put on trial before the Senate if he or she commits a crime against the country. This process is called impeachment.

Each member represents an area in a state called a district. The number of representatives from each state depends on the population of the state.

Requirements for U.S. Representatives

- Age 25 or older
- A U.S. citizen for at least 7 years
- A resident of the state

California has a large population so it has many representatives. Alaska has a smaller population so it has fewer representatives.

The top official is called the Speaker of the House of Representatives. If the President and Vice President can no longer serve, the Speaker of the House of Representatives becomes President. The current Speaker of the House is Paul D. Ryan.



*Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.
Courtesy of the Office of U.S. Representative Paul D. Ryan.*



Check the names of your Representative and the Speaker of the House right before your naturalization test at www.house.gov and www.speaker.gov.

Answer these Civics Test questions.

1. The House of Representatives has how many voting members? _____
2. We elect a U.S. Representative for how many years? _____
3. Name your U.S. Representative. _____
4. Why do some states have more Representatives than other states? _____
5. If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?

6. What is the name of the Speaker of the House of Representatives now? _____