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#1

- How many lawmakers are elected to both Houses of Congress?
- Which Article of the Constitution describes the powers of Congress?

#2

- How long are Congressional terms?
- What Congress are we in now (in 2015)?

#3

- How are Congressional terms divided?
- What are circumstances when both Houses meet together?

Terms of Congress

- The Framers of the Constitution wanted Congress to be more powerful than other branches
- Each term of Congress starts on January 3 of odd numbered years
- Sessions last from January to November or December
- Both gather together to hear the President's State of the Union address

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Terms of Congress

- Current Senators are Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul
- Current Representative is Ed Whitfield
- Serve in a bicameral legislature
- This was a result of the Great Compromise

Bicameral Legislature: HOUSE

- Largest body at 435 members, allotted by population, for 2 year terms
- The census every 10 years provides to the adjustment of members per state
- Each state is divided into congressional districts which are drawn up by the state legislatures
- Gerrymandering occurs when state legislatures draw up odd shaped districts to favor one party or the other

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Bicameral Legislature: SENATE

- Has 100 members, 2 from each state
- Do not represent a district but rather the entire state
- Serve 6 year terms
- Elections are staggered so that only 1/3 of the Senate is elected every two years.

Congressional Leaders

- Majority party in each house is the political party that has the most members
- Minority party is the one that has less
- The majority party selects the Speaker of the House, who then must be voted in by the full House
- In the Senate, the majority party selects the President Pro Tempore who is the ceremonial leader of the Senate

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Congressional Leaders

- The Speaker of the House is in charge of legislation in the House, leads floor debates and also is 3rd in line for President
- Floor Leaders have most influence in both Houses
- They try to push bills and sway voters from each political party
- Party Whips help the Floor Leaders and keep track of where party members stand on bills

Types of Committees

- Committees help to divide the work of the Houses in Congress
- Permanent Committees are those that continue work from session to session, like education and commerce
- Most are divided into subcommittees that deal with more specific issues
- Both Houses also have select committees that are created to do a specific job for a limited time

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Types of Committees

- There are 4 Joint Committees that include members of both Houses
- These cover Economic policy, Government Printing Office, Taxation, and the Library of Congress
- A Conference Committee is temporary
- It helps the House and Senate agree to details on a proposed law

Committee Assignments

- Congressmen try to get assigned to important committees they can influence
- Leaders decide who goes where based on preference, experience, loyalty, and seniority
- Those serving longest in Congress usually get the preferred spots or chairperson of the committee
- Chairpersons are very powerful and can decide what bills are studied or voted on