

6-3

Requirements/Benefits

- Thousands of people work full time for Congress to keep it going
- To be a Senator, you must be 30 years old
- Live in the state you represent
- Have been a US citizen for the previous nine years
- To be a member of the House, you must be at least 25 years old

Requirements/Benefits

- You must live in the state that you represent
- Have been a US citizen for at least the last seven years
- Most are lawyers, have college degrees
- Most have been active in local clubs, groups and served in elected office before
- Currently (2015), Senators and Representatives earn \$174,000 a year

6-3

Requirements/Benefits

- Other benefits include free office space, parking, trips to home state
- Job related mail can be sent free of charge, the franking privilege
- Senators and Representatives also have immunity in some situations
- To say and do what they feel is right in upholding their office and representing their constituents
- This does not mean they can break the law though

Personal Staff

- Professional staff handle the office work and schedules of Congressmen
- They also hire college students as interns to gain experience and help with research or daily activities
- Staffers usually are the ones who deal with the media or lobbyists who try to influence government work and laws

6-3

Committee Staff

- Staff members are usually experts on special topics like taxes, military, or healthcare
- They do the day to day work of writing bills and gathering information
- They work for the committee, not for a specific lawmaker

Support Services

- Congressional Research Service (CRS) with the Library of Congress looks up facts and tracks arguments
- General Accounting Office (GAO) reviews the spending activities of federal agencies
- Congressional Budget Office (CBO) provides Congress with information and analysis for making budgetary decisions or how much new laws cost

6-3

Lawmaking

- Main task of Congress
- Members write and introduce bills
- Most importantly they listen to the input of the people either for or against bills
- They also must be present to vote on any bills in a house

Casework

- Many constituents ask Representatives or Senators to help them out with a problem
- This is called casework
- Most of these come in the form of mail or email
- Congress usually gets over 80,000 emails per day

6-3

Casework

- Most issues deal with solving an issue with a bureaucracy
- More like a customer service with government issues
- Some are requests for job assistance, letters of recommendation, or even flags to be flown over the Capitol
- Most requests are handled by the staffers and not the Congressman themselves

Helping the District or State

- Large aspect of a Congressman's job is to protect the interests of their district or state
- They attempt to pass bills that will assist their constituents
- Bills they support are local in nature, such as ensuring local industries stay strong
- They also try to influence new construction of dams, post offices, transit systems, or military bases

6-3

Helping the District or State

- The federal budget runs in the trillions each year
- Congressmen attempt to pass pork-barrel projects
- These projects bring in money and jobs specifically to their district
- In recent years, these types of projects have been slightly scaled back because of excessive spending

Pork Barrel Projects

- 1981-\$6,000 Army report on how to buy Worcestershire Sauce
- 2003-\$190 million bridge to nowhere in Alaska
- 1974-\$84,000 federal study to find out why people fall in love
- \$19 million to study gas emissions from cow flatulence