

# Study Guide



## Chapter 6, Section 3

For use with textbook pages 151–155

### Representing the People



#### KEY TERMS

**franking privilege** the right of members of Congress to send work-related mail without paying postage (page 152)

**lobbyist** person hired by private groups to influence government decision-makers (page 152)

**casework** the help in dealing with the federal government that members of Congress provide to people from their home district or state who request it (page 154)

**pork-barrel project** a government project or grant that primarily benefits a particular home district or state (page 155)

#### DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

What kind of help do you think members of Congress might need to do their work? Do you think working in Congress would be interesting? Why do you think so?

The last section discussed the powers of Congress. This section describes the staff that Congress employs to help with its work.

#### ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the chart below to help you take notes. Staffs and agencies help Congress do its work. Describe the functions of the staff and agencies listed in the chart.

Staff/Agency	Function
Personal Staffs	1.
Committee Staffs	2.
Library of Congress	3.
Congressional Research Service	4.
General Accounting Office	5.
Congressional Budget Office	6.

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## Chapter 6, Section 3 (continued)

### READ TO LEARN

- **Requirements and Benefits of Congress** *(page 151)*

The Constitution lists the qualifications needed to be a member of Congress. Senators must be at least 30 years old, live in the state they represent, and have been a U.S. citizen for at least 9 years before being elected. Members of the House of Representatives must be at least 25 years old, live in the state they represent, and have been a U.S. citizen for at least seven years. Almost half of the members of Congress are lawyers and most have college degrees. Most are active in community organizations. Most have held offices at the state or local level.

Senators and representatives receive an annual salary of \$150,000. They receive free office space and trips to their home. They can send job-related mail without paying postage. This is called the **franking privilege**. Members of Congress also have immunity in certain situations. This lets them say and do what they believe is right without the fear of interference from outsiders. Immunity, however, does not mean that they can break the law.

7. What are some benefits that members of Congress receive?

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- **Congressional Staff: Behind-the-Scenes Helpers**

*(page 152)*

Members of Congress hire full-time workers to help them with their workload. Members of Congress hire a personal staff, which runs an office in Washington, D.C., and offices in the congressional member's home district. The workers collect information about new bills to be discussed in Congress. They write speeches, handle requests from voters, and deal with reporters and **lobbyists**. These are people hired by private groups to influence government decision makers. Staff workers also work for the reelection of the congressional member.

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## Chapter 6, Section 3 (continued)

In addition to a personal staff, members of Congress hire students from their home to work as interns and pages. Interns generally help with research. Pages deliver messages and run errands.

Congressional committees also hire a staff. These workers are generally experts on special topics such as health care or taxes. Committee staff members do much of the lawmaking work of Congress. They draft bills, gather information, set up committee hearings, and work with lobbyists.

Several agencies also help Congress do its work. The Library of Congress is an important source of information for Congress and its staff. The Library of Congress has a copy of every book published in the United States. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is part of the Library of Congress. It researches facts and clarifies arguments for and against proposed bills. The CRS also keeps track of every bill before Congress. The General Accounting Office (GAO) reviews the spending activities of Congress. It studies federal programs and suggests way of improving the government's financial performance. The GAO staffers prepare reports and testify before committees to make sure taxes are spent wisely. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) gives Congress information for making budget decisions. The CBO estimates the costs and economic effects of programs. It helps Congress set up and stick to a budget plan.

**8.** What does the CBO do?

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• **Members of Congress at Work** (page 153)

Congress does its work in sessions that start January 3 and continue most of the year. Members of Congress perform three basic jobs. The best-known job is making laws. Members write and introduce bills, work in committees, listen to arguments for and against a bill, and vote on the floor of the House or Senate.

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Members of Congress act as troubleshooters for people from their home state or district who ask for help in dealing with the federal government. This help is called **casework**. Congress receives thousands of requests through letters or e-mails. The senator's or representative's office staff handles most requests for help. Staff workers contact the appropriate federal agency to get information and ask for action.

Members of Congress protect the interests of their state or district. They also work to give their state or district a share in the money the federal government spends each year. Government projects and grants that primarily benefit the home district or state are known as **pork-barrel projects**.

9. What are three jobs that members of Congress perform?

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