



Knowledge Organiser : Congress

Subject Specific Vocabulary	Short-hand definitions
Congressional Caucus	Grouping in House/Senate or cross chamber of like minded reps. House Freedom caucus
Filibuster	Senate procedure that allows bills to be timed out. Blocked by cloture
Divided/Unified Govt	Divided: president not in control of one or both houses, Unifoed controls both
Gridlock	Consequence of divided govt. Sclerotic govt, breakdown in BP
Incumbency	The phenomenon of members of House and Senate being relected - over 90%
Iron Triangles	Unofficial barriers to president: Federal Agencies, Pressure groups, Leg committees that can delay presidential action
Unanimous Consent	Procedure in Senate to can be slimmed down but can be objected by one Senator leading to filibuster. (Because there is not unanimous consent

Key question 1: How well does Congress perform its representative function

See Question planner on representation function

Key question 2: What is the legislative process?

Bills must pass identically through both chambers.

1. Introduction
2. Committee Stage
3. Timetabling
4. Floor Debate and vote on passage
5. Conference committee (optional)
6. Presidential Action

What are its strengths?

The aim of the founding fathers was to make the process challenging to avoid domination by one group and to force bipartisanship. Designed to allow only law that was necessary to be passed for the states to allow considerable legislative autonomy. Only 2-3% of bills becoming law this is a success.

When there is bipartisanship (LB Johnson) 84/87 bills passed

Major legislation is passed. Patient protection and Affordable Care Act

Only necessary law is passed. – Jefferson ‘that which governs least, governs best’

Can pass emergency legislation – CARES Act 2020, BiPartisan Safer

Communities Act (min age SAs to 21, safe storage-14R H, 15R S

Can reject legislation proposed by executive



Knowledge Dump 1

Election cycles and
issues

Knowledge Dump 2

What are the
concurrent powers

Knowledge Dump 3

What are the exclusive
powers of House and
Senate



<p>Evaluate the view that congressional oversight of the president is ineffective?</p>
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<p>Evaluate the view that Congress is a broken branch of government?</p>
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<p>Key question 2: What are the weaknesses of the legislative function?</p> <p>What are its weaknesses?</p> <p>Concurrent powers of both houses means that in an era of hyper partisanship very little legislation emerges – 2-3% of bills – ‘Do Harm Congress’</p> <p>Filibuster in Senate means supermajority needed to pass legislation expressly against wishes of Madison</p> <p>Too much power in hands of House Speaker and Majority Leader in the Senate</p> <p>Greater use of Closed Rules means legislation cannot be improved</p> <p>Pork barrelling is a waste of resources</p> <p>United govt sees little scrutiny, divided govt sees gridlock. Second COVID Relief Act floundered</p> <p>Presidential vetoes rarely overturned</p>
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Point from the specification