

LESSON 11

Congress

LESSON ASSIGNMENTS

Pay very close attention when watching the video program. Review the video objectives and be prepared to record possible answers, in abbreviated form, as you view the video. The titles and numbers of the textbook chapters may differ from the video program. Keep in mind that the video program examines contemporary examples to illustrate your government in action. An attempt is made to show how you can participate in the political arena and bring about changes in the political process.

Video:

“Congress,” from the series, *Voices in Democracy: United States Government*.

Activities:

One or more activities may be assigned to this lesson. Refer to your syllabus.

OVERVIEW

This lesson examines the U.S. Congress. The impact of the 1994 congressional elections, which resulted in Republican majorities in Congress, are discussed. The lesson then evaluates some of the conflicts and crises with which Congress has dealt—sometimes successfully and sometimes not. We also examine the ability of Congress to adapt and reform itself. The lesson discusses the varied roles that Congress plays in the public policy process, and it explores the different and often conflicting roles of representation that a member of Congress may follow. Finally, this lesson examines the structure and function of the committee system and the congressional leadership in both houses of Congress and their impact on the legislative process.

LESSON GOAL

Understand the relationship between government, politics, and power in the United States democracy and the roles that people can play to affect policy and action.

VIDEO OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are designed to assist you in identifying the most significant aspects of the video segment of this lesson. You should take succinct notes while viewing the video.

1. Compare the makeup of Congress with the United States population as a whole.
2. Explain the leadership structure of Congress and the operation of congressional committees.
9. Describe the various roles a member of Congress must play.

WEB ACTIVITIES

These activities are not required unless your teacher assigns them. They are offered as suggestions to help you learn more about the material presented in this lesson.

Visit <http://www.clerkweb.house.gov>, the Office of the Clerk of Congress web page, find out the following information:

How many members of the Senate and the House are

Democrats? _____

Republicans? _____

Independents? _____

How many women currently serve in

the Senate? _____

the House? _____

What is the current salary of members of Congress?

Contact your representative in the House or Senate through their homepages at: <http://www.house.gov> and www.senate.gov. You may also e-mail your representative regardless of whether he or she has a Web page at: <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>. If you do not know your district number or representative's name, you may obtain the information at this site by providing your zip-plus-4 number. If you are particularly interested in another representative or senator, you may gather information about that person.

- Find out which committees the representative is on and what issues are being debated in the committee hearings.
- Is the representative a member of the majority or minority party?
- Who is the committee chair?
- What position does the representative take on the issues being debated in that committee?
- Write a report about the make-up of the House and Senate. Include a discussion about your representative's committee assignments, issues being debated, and his or her voting stands.

PRACTICE TEST

After watching the video and reviewing the objectives, you should be able to complete the following Practice Test. When you have completed the Practice Test, turn to the Answer Key to score your answers.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Select the single best answer.

1. Oklahoma Representative J.C. Watts states a person running for elective office should be motivated for all the following reasons EXCEPT...
 - A. getting involved in public service
 - B. trying to make a difference
 - C. getting elected for the salary
 - D. feeling like one can make a difference
2. The chair of a congressional standing committee is determined by the...
 - A. speaker
 - B. majority leader
 - C. majority party
 - D. minority party
3. Representative Tom DeLay, the majority whip, plays two roles: one is a national role and the second is to...
 - A. secure a leadership role
 - B. represent the people of one's district and state
 - C. earn an appointment by the major political party
 - D. influence legislation for the special interest groups
4. Rounding up the votes to pass the legislation that the majority party in Congress wants is the principle job of the...
 - A. minority whip
 - B. majority whip
 - C. committee chair
 - D. speaker
5. Members of the House of Representatives and Senate do far more than...
 - A. their counterparts in the Executive Branch
 - B. is expected of the Judicial Branch
 - C. all the civil servants in the bureaucracy
 - D. make laws

ESSAY/PROBLEM QUESTIONS

6. Does Congress reflect the population of the United States as a whole? Explain your answer. Describe your Congress member and the Senators from your state.
7. Describe the varied activities in which a member of Congress may be participating.
8. How can citizens become involved in the legislative process? Explain the activities available to influence that process. Give examples.

ANSWER KEY

The following provides the answers and references for the practice test questions. Video objectives are referenced using the following abbreviation: V=Video Objectives.

1. A Ref: V 2 (Video)
2. C Ref: V 2 (Video)
3. B Ref: V 2 (Video)
4. B Ref: V 2 (Video)
5. D Ref: V 3 (Video)
6. Ref: V 1 (Video)
7. Ref: V 2 (Video)
8. Ref: V 3 (Video)