

LESSON 13

Congress and the President

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 and the President,” 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 explores the relationship between Congress and the president. The 1994 election provides an illustration of the contemporary conflict between these two branches as they struggle for dominance in the policy-making arena. We examine the various roles played by Congress and the president and identify the separate and overlapping powers enjoyed by both in the legislative process. And we examine more closely the historical conflict that has often surfaced due to these shared powers.

In particular, we examine the struggle over the budget and sending of troops to battle. Although a cooperative relationship is desired, conflict is more likely, especially when we have one political party dominating Congress and the President from the other major party. When each of these two branches of government are controlled by different political parties, we call it a divided government. And we have had a divided government for most of the last 50 years.

LESSON GOAL

Examine the strategy and powers that are unique to the president and to Congress as they interact with each other addressing the nations business.

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. Explain possible philosophical conflicts between a president of one political party and a congressional majority of another party.
2. Using the example of the 1995-96 government shut down, explain the conflict between the president and Congress that usually develops with the budgeting process.
3. Describe the frequent conflict between the president and Congress over the deployment of military troops.

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 the Library of Congress at <http://thomas.loc.gov>. and find out how many bills the president vetoed during the current session of Congress. (Hint: Look under “Bill Summary and Status” for the current session, then go through the “List of Vetoed Bills” link).

- List each bill that was vetoed and give a very brief description of the content of the bill.
- Describe what the action, if any, Congress has taken since the bill was vetoed.

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. One of the biggest battles in 1997 between Congress and President Clinton was over...
 - A. how to balance the budget
 - B. trade with Eastern Europe
 - C. the question of negotiations with Iran
 - D. where to build the Clinton Presidential Library
2. The House Republicans wanted to balance the budget by changing the Constitution, but President Clinton and many Democrats feared a constitutional change would...
 - A. encourage an onslaught of constitutional changes
 - B. diminish their chances of winning a majority in 1998
 - C. prevent compromise on most congressional issues
 - D. limit Congress from borrowing money in a time of crisis
3. The government was shut down twice during 1995-96 for the same reason: Republicans in Congress favored their version of a balanced budget which the President opposed, and twice the president...
 - A. ignored the Republican-backed budget bill
 - B. vetoed the Republican-backed budget bill
 - C. called a press conference to deride the Republicans
 - D. closed the White House to the public
4. Legislation that calls for the president to notify Congress when he deploys combat troops is called the...
 - A. Budget Impoundment and Control Act
 - B. Military Weapons Buildup Act
 - C. War Powers Act
 - D. Presidential Disclosure Act
5. In 1990, President George Bush, sending half a million troops into the Persian Gulf to force Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait, used his power as...
 - A. Chief Negotiator
 - B. Commander-in-Chief
 - C. Chief Executive
 - D. Supreme Treaty Analyst

ESSAY/PROBLEM QUESTIONS

6. Would you support or oppose a balanced budget amendment? Why or why not?
7. In the 1995-96 government shutdown, whose side would you have supported, President Clinton or congressional Republicans? Why?

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