

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The House of Representatives

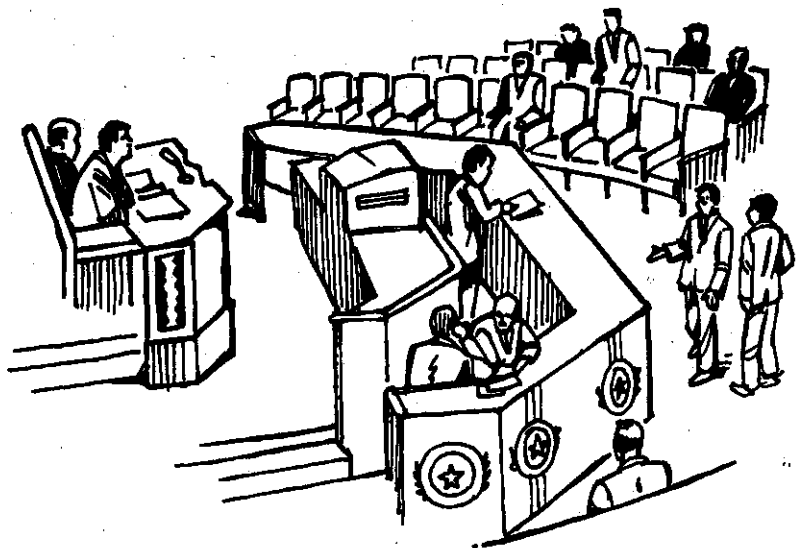
(See Article I, Section 2)

The largest house of Congress is the House of Representatives. There are 435 representatives in the House. The number of representatives a state has is based on the number of people, or population, in the state. There is one representative for every 500,000 people. So if a state has two million people, that state would be able to send four representatives to Washington, D.C.

The term of office for a representative is two years. In order to stay in office, he or she must be reelected every two years.

To find out how many people are in a state, the government conducts a *census*, or count of the people, every ten years. The first census was conducted in 1790. When will the next census occur?

In order to be a representative, there are certain requirements to be met. A representative must be at least 25 years old, must be a citizen of the United States for at least seven years, and must live in the state from which he or she is elected.



The speaker's podium in the House of Representatives' chamber.

Within the House, there are several leaders. The Speaker of the House is the presiding officer. The Speaker is selected by the members of the House and is usually a member of the majority party. The Speaker of the House is second in line to take over the presidency, after the Vice President, in the event of an emergency.

The House of Representatives has the sole power to begin *impeachment* proceedings against a government official. To impeach is to accuse an official of some wrongdoing or misuse of power. The House begins the process by accusing the official, but the trial is carried out by the Senate. More about impeachment will be discussed in later chapters.

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The House of Representatives
≈ Challenges ≈

1. Define:

Census: _____

Impeach: _____

2. How many representatives are there in the House of Representatives? _____

3. How many representatives does your state send to Washington, D.C.? _____

4. When was the last census taken in the United States? _____

When will the next census be taken? _____

5. What was the population of the United States at the last census? _____

6. What are the three qualifications to be a representative?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

7. What is the title of the presiding officer of the House? _____

8. The House begins the impeachment process by doing what? _____

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Senate

(See Article I, Section 3)

The other house that makes up the Congress is the Senate. The Senate is the smaller of the two groups, with only 100 members. These people are known as senators. Each state, regardless of how big or small, has two senators. Currently there are 50 states, so we have 100 senators in Washington, D.C.

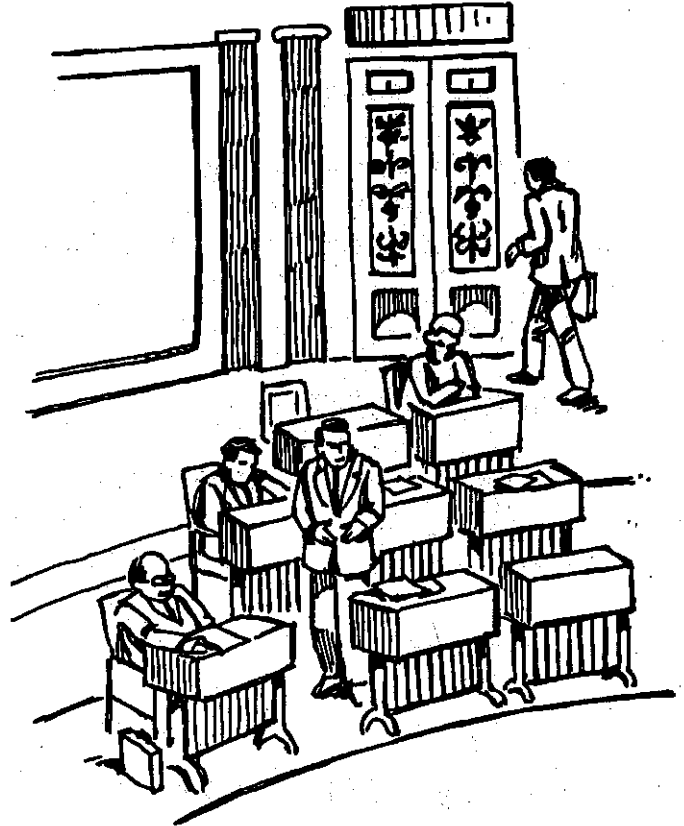
Each senator is elected for a six-year term, but every two years, one third of the senate is up for reelection. For example, in 1992, 33 senators were elected for six-year terms. In 1994, 33 others will be elected, and in 1996, 34 will be elected. This way, there is never an entirely new group of senators; there will always be some experienced senators to guide the newcomers.

According to the original Constitution, the senators were chosen by their state legislatures, but in 1913, the Seventeenth Amendment changed this and allowed the people to elect their senators directly.

In order to be a senator there are certain requirements that must be met. A senator must be at least 30 years old, a citizen of the United States for at least nine years, and live in the state he or she represents.

The Senate also has certain leaders. The Vice President of the United States is in charge of all meetings of the Senate. He can only vote in the event of a tie between the senators. If the Vice President is absent, the senators choose an alternate presiding officer known as the president pro tempore (temporary president). The president pro tempore is third in line to take over the presidency in the event of an emergency.

With regards to the impeachment process mentioned in the last lesson, the Senate acts as the jury and tries any impeachment cases. When the House of Representatives accuses an official of a crime, the Senate decides whether or not the official is guilty. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court acts as the judge. Two thirds of the senators present must find the official guilty in order to remove him or her from office.



Senators at their desks in the U.S. Senate chamber.

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Senate
≈ **Challenges** ≈

1. What are the names of the two houses of Congress? _____

2. How many senators does each state send to Washington? _____

3. What is the total number of senators today? _____

4. What is the term of office of a senator? _____

5. What is the term of office of a representative? _____

6. What are the three requirements to be a senator?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

7. What are the titles of the two presiding officers of the Senate? _____

8. What does the Senate do during the impeachment process? _____
