

# Chapter 11

## Congress

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

11.1 Characterize the backgrounds of members of Congress and assess their impact on the ability of members of Congress to represent average Americans.

11.2 Identify the principal factors influencing the outcomes of congressional elections.

11.3 Assess the roles of leaders, political parties, and committees in Congress.

11.4 Describe the process of lawmaking in Congress.

11.5 Describe the factors that influence how members of Congress make decisions.

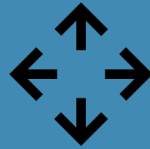
11.6 Assess Congress's role as a representative body and the impact of representation on the scope of government.



LEARNING  
OBJECTIVE  
11.1

**Characterize the backgrounds of members of Congress and assess their impact on the ability of members of Congress to represent average Americans.**

REPRESENTATIVES  
AND SENATORS



The Members



Why Aren't There  
More Women in  
Congress?

## THE MEMBERS

### Not a glamorous job, but there are perks

- Power
- \$174,000 annual salary
- Generous retirement and health benefits

### Constitutional requirements

- House: 25, citizen for 7 years
- Senate: 30, citizen for 9 years
- Reside in state
- 435 Representatives; 100 senators

# TABLE 11.1 A PORTRAIT OF THE 115TH CONGRESS (1 OF 3)

Characteristic	House (435 Total)	Senate (100 Total)
<b>Party</b>		
Democrat	195	48
Republican	240	52
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	352	79
Women	83	21
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Asian	10	2
African American	45	3
Hispanic	31	4
Native American	2	0
White and other	347	91

Characteristic	House (435 Total)	Senate (100 Total)
Average Age of Members		
Average age <sup>†</sup>	57 years	61 years
Religion <sup>†</sup>		
Protestant	56%	53%
Roman Catholic	31%	25%
Jewish	4%	9%
Other and unspecified	7%	10%

**TABLE II.1 A PORTRAIT OF THE  
115TH CONGRESS (2 OF 3)**

TABLE II.1 A  
 PORTRAIT OF THE  
 115TH CONGRESS  
 (3 OF 3)

- † Data for 114th Congress.
- \* Some members specify more than one occupation.
- **Source:** 115th Congress data based on press reports available a week after the November 8, 2016 elections. 114th Congress data compiled from "Demographics," *CQ Weekly*, November 6 2014, 58.

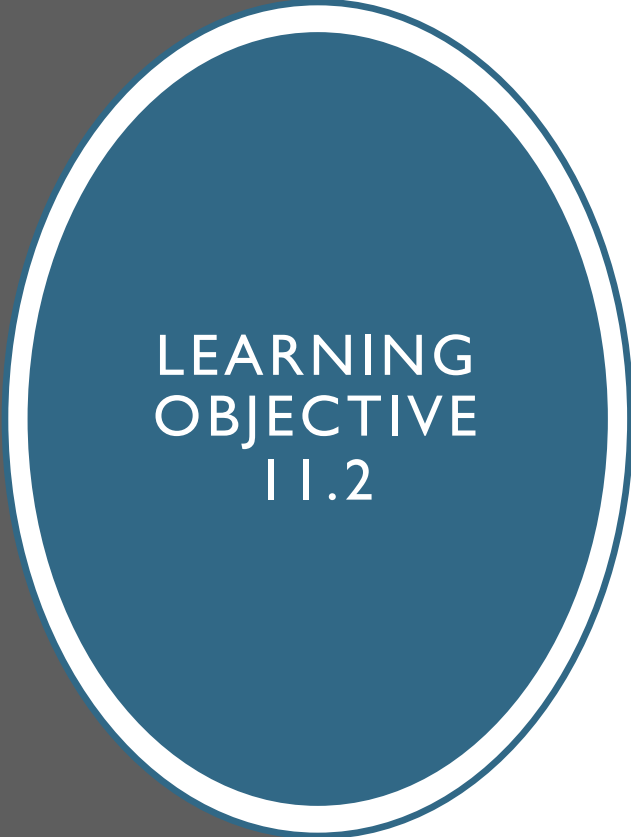
## Most Common Prior Occupation\*†

Public service/politics	62%	60%
Law	40%	60%
Business	53%	42%
Education	18%	25%



# WHY AREN'T THERE MORE WOMEN IN CONGRESS?

- Fewer women running
  - Childcare
  - Risk averse
- Bias
  - Must be more qualified



LEARNING  
OBJECTIVE  
11.2

**Identify the principal factors influencing the outcomes of congressional elections.**

# CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

Who Wins Elections?

The Advantages of  
Incumbency

Defeating Incumbents

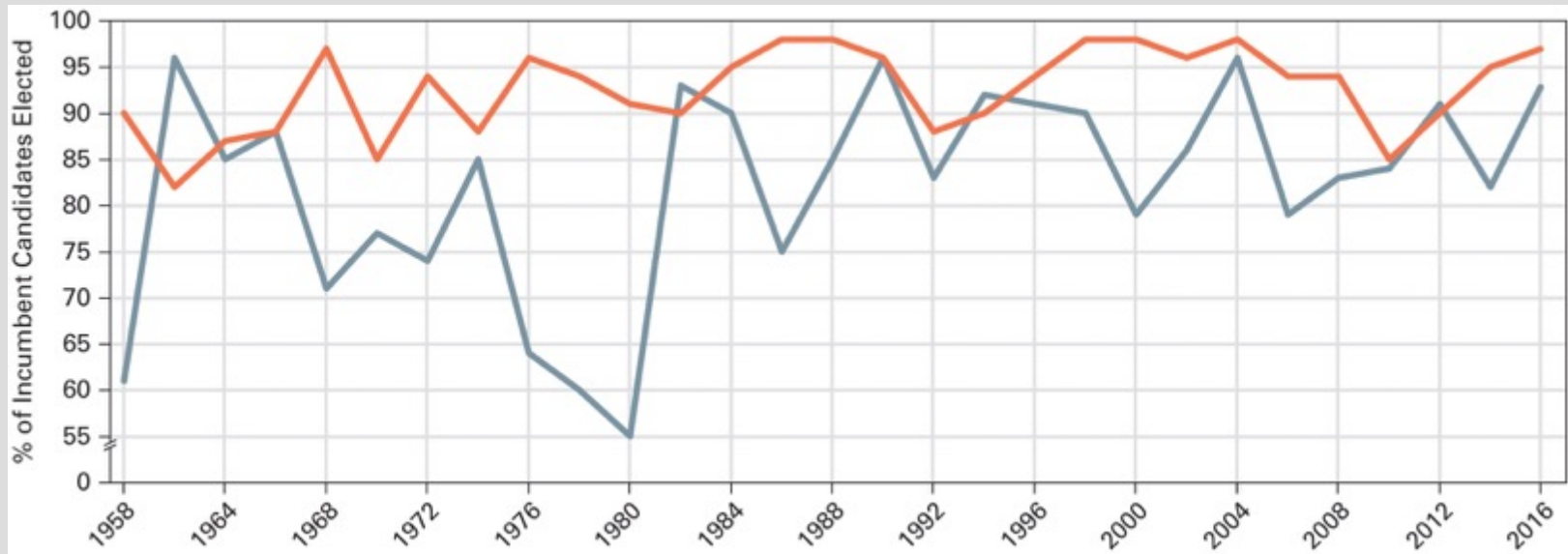
Open Seats

Stability and Change

## WHO WINS ELECTIONS?

- Incumbents
  - Over 90% win reelection in House
  - Senators do not have it as easy
- Incumbents perceive themselves as vulnerable
  - Hence fundraising and campaigning

# Figure 11.1 The Incumbency Factor in Congressional Elections



**Source:** Data compiled by the authors. Figure reflect incumbents running in both primary and general elections.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF INCUMBENCY

- ▣ Advertising
  - Constituent contact
- ▣ Credit claiming
  - Casework
  - Pork barrel projects
- ▣ Weak opponents
- ▣ Campaign spending
- ▣ Party identification



# THE BIG DIG

Because claiming credit may be important for reelection, members of Congress rarely pass up the opportunity to increase federal spending in their state or district. The early 2000s witnessed a surge in earmarks of expenditures for specific projects. The most expensive was the “Big Dig” in Boston, shown in progress in an aerial view here, which rerouted a principal highway so that it went through a 3.5-mile tunnel, rather than through the heart of the city.

## JOURNAL PROMPT 11.2: THE ADVANTAGES OF INCUMBENCY

**Should we have public funding of congressional campaigns so candidates would spend less time raising money and be less beholden to donors?**



## DEFEATING INCUMBENTS

### Why does anyone challenge incumbents

- Challengers can be naïve

### Challengers can receive unexpected help

- Incumbent scandal
- Redistricting
- Wave elections

## OPEN SEATS

- ▣ Vacant seat means no incumbent running
  - Most turnover occurs here

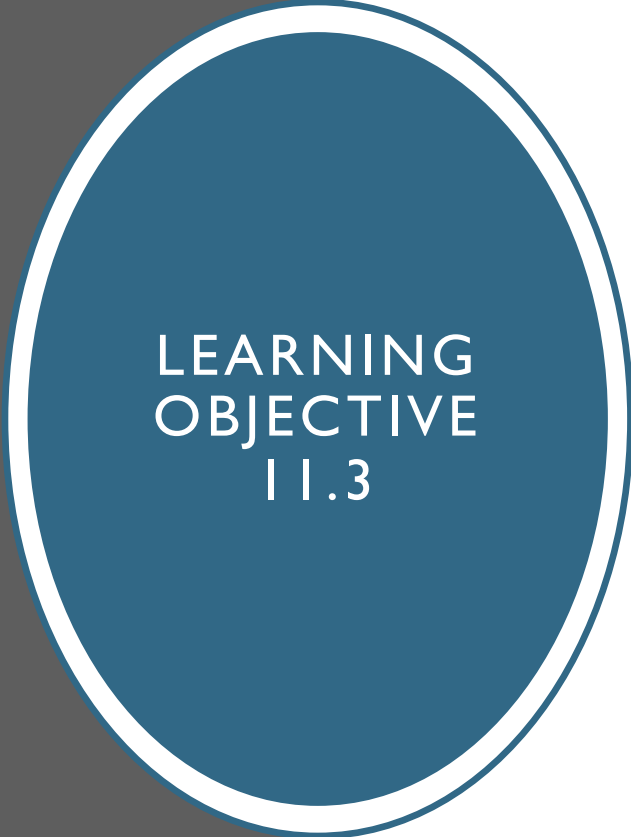


# STABILITY AND CHANGE

## Stability from incumbency

- Development of expertise

Term limits?



LEARNING  
OBJECTIVE  
11.3

**Assess the roles of leaders,  
political parties, and committees  
in Congress.**

HOW  
CONGRESS IS  
ORGANIZED TO  
MAKE POLICY

American Bicameralism

Congressional Leadership

The Committees and  
Subcommittees

Caucuses: The Informal  
Organization of Congress

Congressional Staff

# AMERICAN BICAMERALISM

## Bicameral legislature

- Bills must pass both houses
- Checks and balances
- Result of Connecticut Compromise

## The House

- More institutionalized  
Rules Committee

## The Senate

- Less centralized and less  
disciplined

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>House of Representatives</b>	<b>Senate</b>
Constitutional powers	Initiates all revenue bills	Confirms many presidential nominations
	Passes all articles of impeachment	Tries impeached officials Approves treaties
Membership	435 members	100 members
Term of office	2 years	6 years
Constituencies	Usually smaller	Usually larger
Centralization of power	More centralized; stronger leadership	Less centralized; weaker leadership
Political prestige	Less prestige	More prestige
Role in policymaking	More influential on budget; more specialized	More influential on foreign affairs; less specialized
Turnover	Small	Moderate
Role of seniority	More important in determining power	Less important in determining power
Procedures	Limited debate; limits on floor amendments allowed	Unlimited debate

## TABLE 11.2 HOUSE VERSUS SENATE: SOME KEY DIFFERENCES

## CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP (1 OF 2)

Chosen by party

The House

- Speaker of the House
- Majority and minority leaders
- Whips

The Senate

- Vice president
- Majority leader

Congressional leadership in  
perspective





CONGRESSIONAL  
LEADERSHIP (2 OF 2)

# THE COMMITTEES AND SUBCOMMITTEES

## Four types of committees

- Standing committees
- Joint committees
- Conference committees
- Select committees

## Getting on a committee

- Constituent needs
- Appealing to leadership

## Committee chairs and the seniority system

## CAUCUSES: THE INFORMAL ORGANIZATION OF CONGRESS

- ▣ As important as formal structure
- ▣ Dominated by caucuses
  - Nearly 500 caucuses today
  - Made representation more direct in Congress
  - Goal is to promote a variety of interests
  - Examples: Black Caucus, Hispanic Caucus, and Sunbelt Caucus



# THE HISPANIC CAUCUS

## CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

### Personal staff

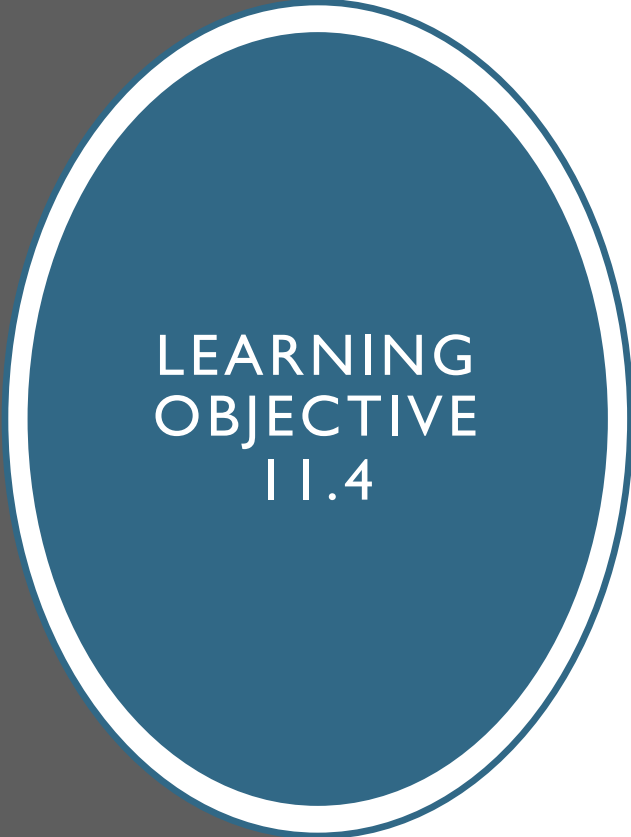
- Casework
- Legislative functions

### Committee staff

- 2,000 staff members
- Legislative oversight

### Staff agencies

- Congressional Research Service (CRS)
- Government Accountability Office (GAO)
- Congressional Budget Office (CBO)



LEARNING  
OBJECTIVE  
11.4

**Describe the process of lawmaking  
in Congress.**



# THE LAWMAKING PROCESS

Agenda Setting

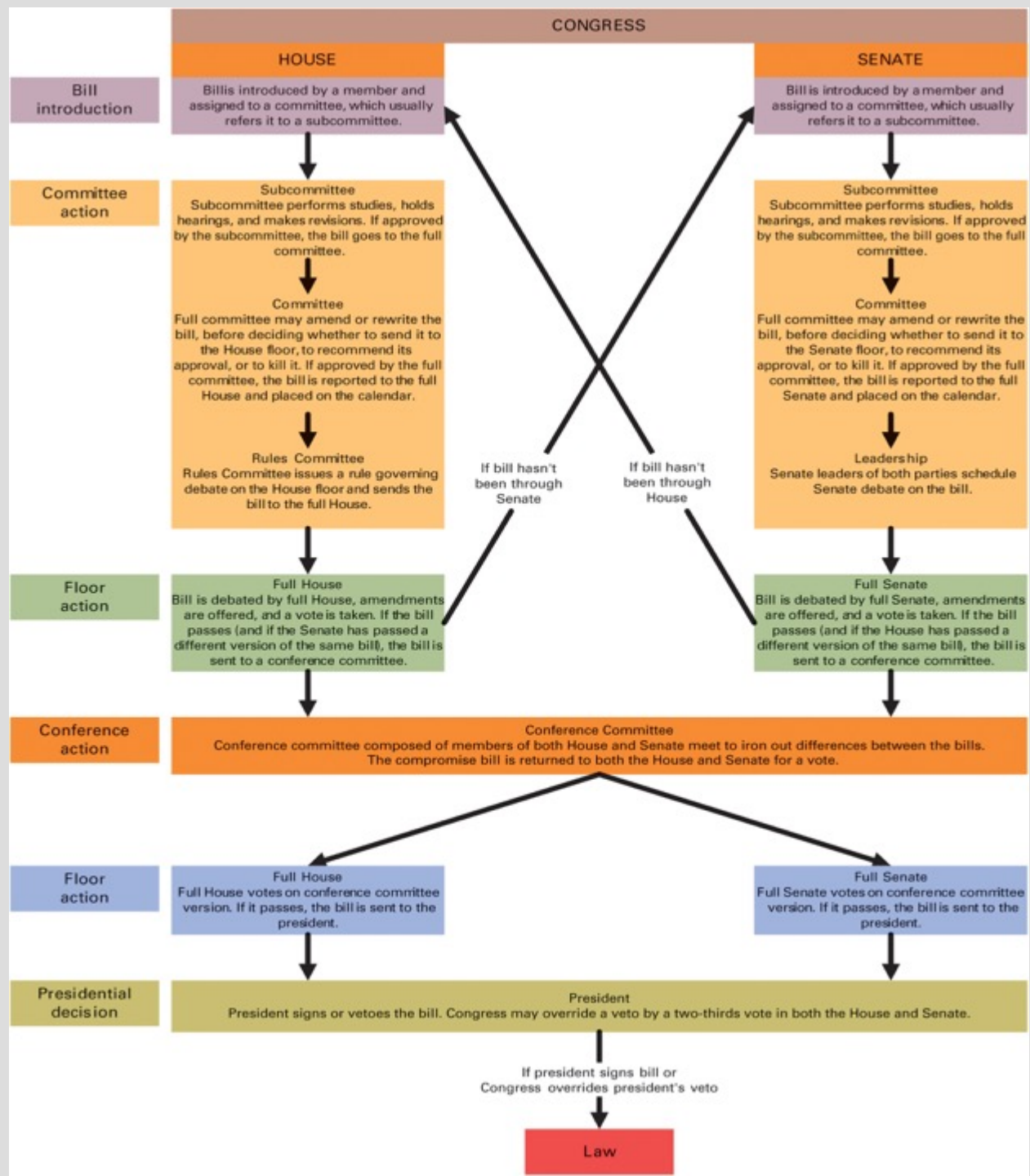
The Committees at Work:  
Legislation

The Committees at Work:  
Oversight

Floor Debate and the Filibuster

Unorthodox Lawmaking

# FIGURE 11.2 HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW





# AGENDA SETTING

House and  
Senate set their  
own agendas

House Rules  
Committee

Hastert Rule

THE  
COMMITTEES  
AT WORK:  
LEGISLATION

## The committees at work: legislation

- Bills go first to standing committee
- Bills referred to subcommittee

Only bills with favorable  
reports get full consideration

Floor managers

THE  
COMMITTEES  
AT WORK:  
OVERSIGHT

## Legislative oversight

- Grown in size and complexity

## Keeping tabs on the executive branch

- Tracking the implementation of public policy

## Little incentive for members of Congress

Majority party determines oversight agenda



HOUSE OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
COMMITTEE

MR. ISSA  
CHAIRMAN

COURT

## FLOOR DEBATE AND THE FILIBUSTER

### The filibuster

- Allows for unlimited debate
- Talking a bill to death

### Cloture

- Takes 60 votes to end debate

### Questions about democracy

- Tool of the minority
- Recent rule changes

## RAND PAUL DRONE FILIBUSTER



The goal of a filibuster is to prevent the Senate from voting on a bill favored by majority of senators. Senators may also use filibusters to call attention to a policy. Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky protested U.S. drone policy by trying to block a vote to confirm John Brennan as director of the CIA. He finally walked off the Senate floor after speaking for nearly 13 hours.

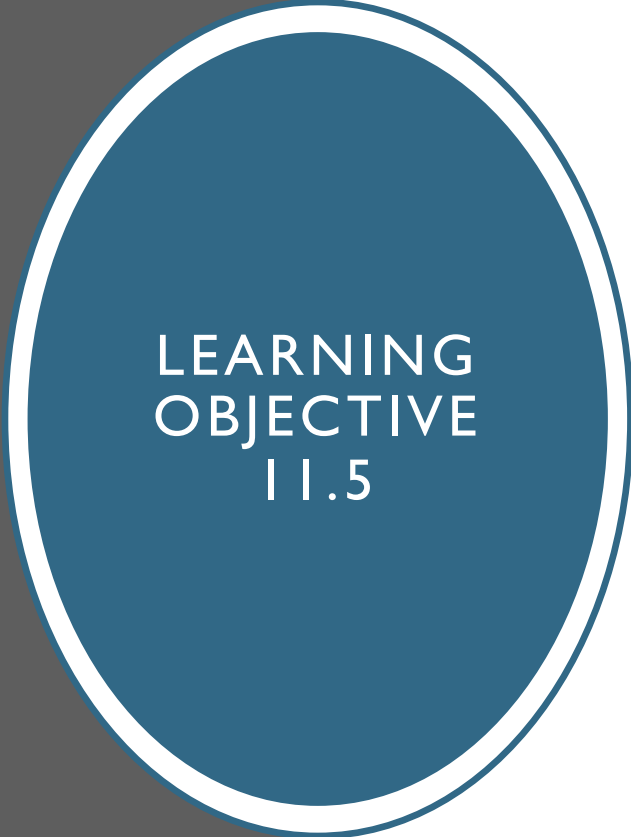
## UNORTHODOX LEGISLATING

Legislating has become more difficult

### Methods of coping

- Party leaders get involved earlier and more deeply
- Multiple legislative referrals
- Special rules from the House Rules Committee
- Omnibus legislation

House party leaders have more leverage



LEARNING  
OBJECTIVE  
11.5

**Describe the factors that influence how members of Congress make decisions.**



INFLUENCES ON  
CONGRESSIONAL  
DECISION  
MAKING

Presidents and Congress:  
Partners and  
Protagonists

Party, Ideology, and  
Constituency

Lobbyists and Interest  
Groups

# PRESIDENTS AND CONGRESS: PARTNERS AND PROTAGONISTS

- ▣ President's legislative agenda
  - Persuade Congress
  - Work at the margins but usually win
  - Yet Congress is quite independent

## PARTY, IDEOLOGY, AND CONSTITUENCY

### Party influence

- Economic and social welfare policies

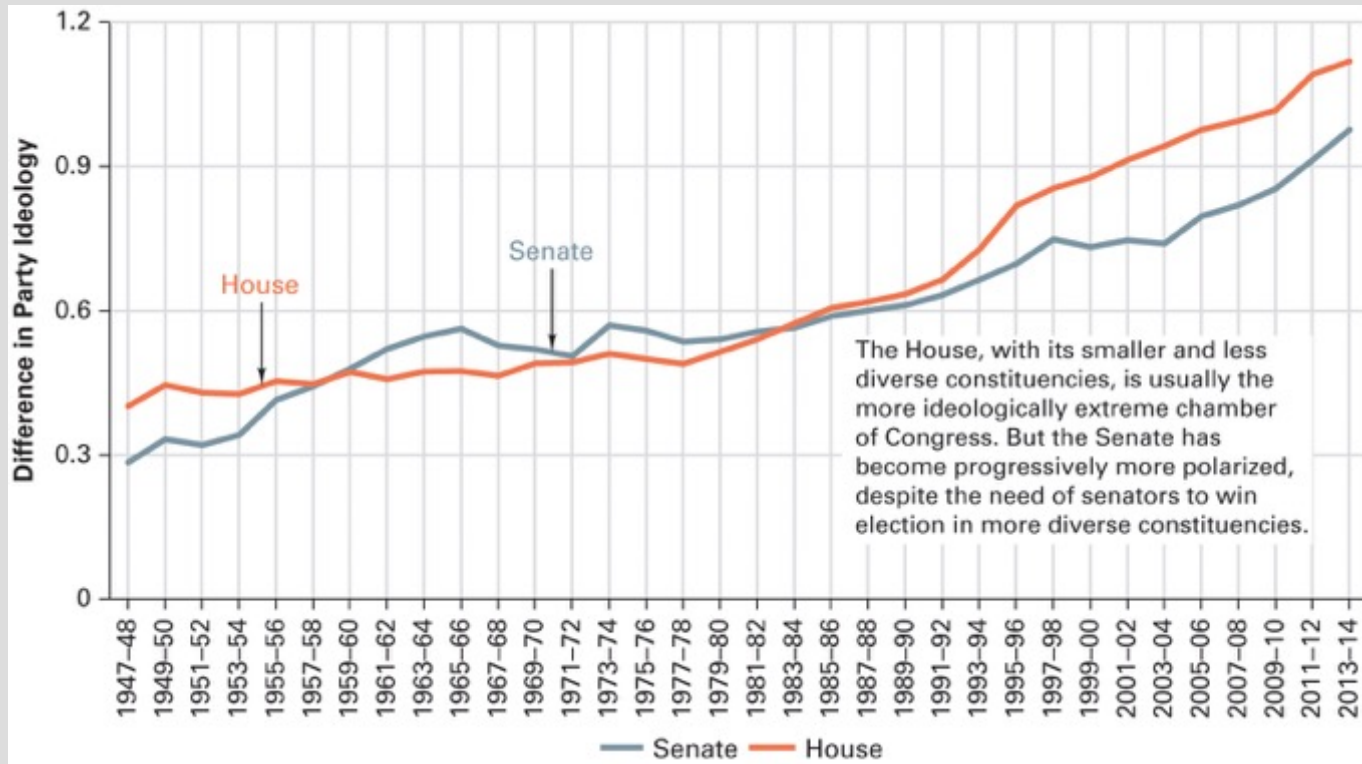
### Ideology and polarized politics

- Parties more internally homogeneous
- Less likelihood of compromise

### Constituency opinion versus member ideology

- Trustees versus instructed delegates

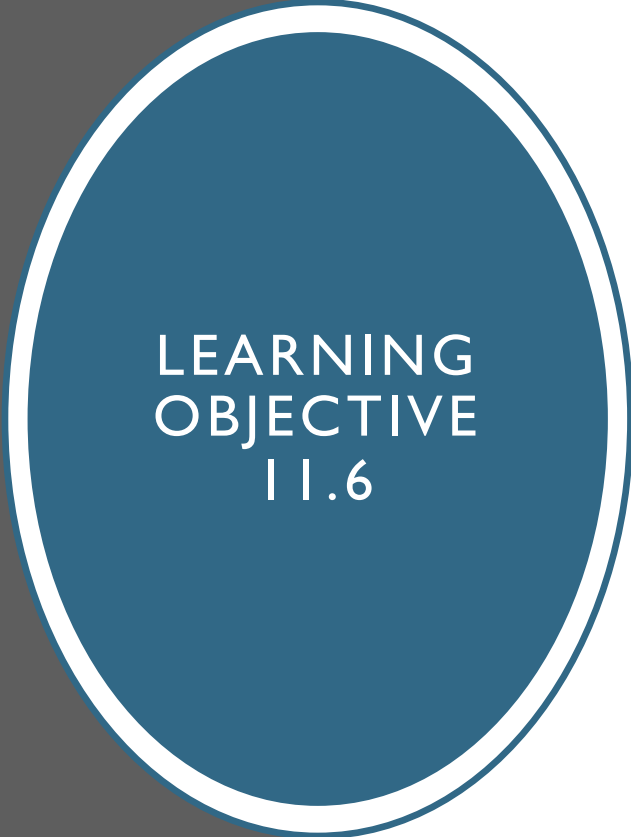
# Figure 11.3 Increasing Polarization in Congress



**Source:** Authors' calculation of data from Keith Poole, "The Polarization of Congressional Parties," *Voteview*, January 30, 2016.

## LOBBYISTS AND INTEREST GROUPS

- ▣ D.C. is crawling with lobbyists
  - 12,000 of them
  - Spent \$3 billion in 2015
  - Former members of Congress
- ▣ How lobbyists persuade
  - Provide policy information
  - Provide promises of money
  - Ghostwrite legislation
  - Status quo usually wins
- ▣ Disclosure requirements



LEARNING  
OBJECTIVE  
11.6

**Assess Congress's role as a representative body and the impact of representation on the scope of government.**

UNDERSTANDING  
CONGRESS

Congress and  
Democracy

Congress and  
the Scope of  
Government

# CONGRESS AND DEMOCRACY

Democracy  
depends upon  
successful  
representation

Congress  
unrepresentative

- Members are elites
- Leadership chosen, not elected
- Senate based on states, not population

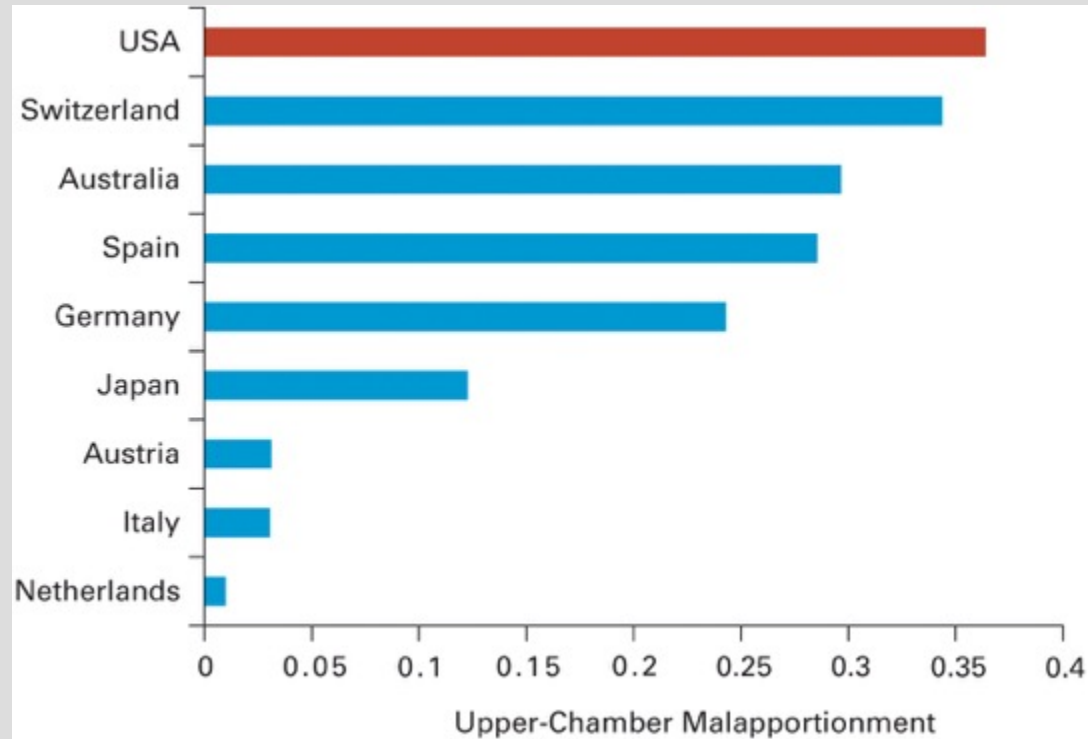
Obstacles to good  
representation

- Constituent service
- Reelection campaigns

Representativeness  
versus effectiveness



# Figure 11.4 Malapportionment in the Upper House



**Source:** David Samuels and Richard Snyder, “The Value of a Vote: Malapportionment in Comparative Perspective,” *British Journal of Political Science* 31 (October 2001), 662.

CONGRESS  
AND THE  
SCOPE OF  
GOVERNMENT

Does size of  
government increase  
to please public?

- Pork barrel spending

Contradictory  
preferences

- Against large government,  
for individual programs

## JOURNAL PROMPT 11.6: CONGRESS AND DEMOCRACY

**In your opinion, is the high degree of malapportionment in the Senate a problem for American democracy? Why or why not?**

## SHARED WRITING II

**Gridlock results when the parties in Congress are highly polarized. How can Americans break that logjam so that Congress can deal with pressing problems in the country?**