Congress:

Lecture 3

Paths to Power

Power

Party Leadership

The Twins…

Specialization

“Once assigned to a committee or subcommittee, a member is expected to specialize in its work and become an expert in that area”

Reciprocity

“Members look for guidance in voting on legislation outside their own committee’s field to members of the committee that specializes in it.”

Seniority

Unwritten, but very powerful rule

Length of time in office = level of seniority

Committee chairmen have historically been selected based on seniority

Lost some strength in the mid 70’s; now the party caucus can use appointments as rewards and punishment

These days party loyalty is also a major factor in appointments to plum positions

Caucus

A gathering of all members of the same party serving in the House or Senate

The Republican majority in the House calls its caucus the Republican Conference

The Caucus/Conference chooses the minority/majority leader and the whips

Not to be confused with Presidential caucuses

Many sub-groups have their own caucus

Congressional Caucuses

**Caucus**: an association of members of Congress created to advocate a political ideology or a regional or economic interest

**Intra-party caucuses**: members share a similar ideology

**Personal interest caucuses**: members share an interest in an issue

**Constituency caucuses**: established to represent groups, regions or both

Leadership Organization

**Institutional Leadership vs. Political Leadership**

**House**

**Speaker**

**Selected every two years**

* **Often serves for many years**
* **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Majority Leader**

* **Party Leader**
* **2nd in command**
* **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

http://clerk.house.gov/member\_info/leadership.aspx

**Senate**

**Majority Leader**

* **The person in charge**
* **Party Leader**
* **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**President Pro Tempore**

* **Honorary, based on seniority**
* **For the time being**
* **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Presiding Officer - Vice President**

* **Presides – but not often**
* **Breaks ties (6 months for Cheney)**
* **Joseph Biden (D) Delaware**
* **http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/senators/a\_three\_sections\_with\_teasers/leadership.htm**

Majority and Minority Leadership

Majority Leader – Political Leader

* ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ House; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Senate

Minority Leader – I’d be the boss if *WE* were in charge

* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ House; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Senate

Whips – coordinate party positions

Name comes from English fox-hunting

“Whipper-in” keeps dogs from running away

Counts votes

Keeps votes in line

Count noses and twist arms

Party Loyalty

80%!

Mavericks: members who show less loyalty to their party and do not abide by informal rules

Now, not a single chairman in either side believes they are there because of the leadership. (Dick Army)

The Floor

Calendars – list of bills scheduled for hearing or vote

Majority, Super Majority

The Well

C-Span

Filibusters

Unlimited debate

Used to slow down progress of a bill you don’t care for. Very effective late in session when time is short.

Senate Only (too many members in the House…)

Rule 22 requires 3/5th of the Senate (60) to invoke…

Cloture, which is a vote to end the debate.

Congressional Staff

Constituency service is a major task of members’ staff

Legislative functions of staff include devising proposals, negotiating agreements, organizing hearings, and meeting with lobbyists and administrators

Members’ staff consider themselves advocates of their employers

Staff

35,000 employees

Committee staff has declined in recent years.

Minimum personal staff: 18 full time, 4 part time in the House, no limit in the Senate but budget.

Wasserman: they “organize hearings, negotiate… research… speak with voters, and promote legislation.” They initiate policies and “sell” them to their bosses.

Elected Staff?

Clerk

Sergeant at Arms

Chaplain

Executive/Legislative Tension

Even if the House, the Senate and the President ALL come from the same party, and certainly if they do not,

Even if the President (and/or the Vice President) was recently part of the Legislative Branch,

Even if the President has a substantial mandate of public support,

They trust each other

“as far as I can throw ‘em…”

Other Powers

Advise and Consent:  
Confirming and Ratifying

The Senate Confirms the President’s Appointments

Judicial

Executive

Diplomatic

They can delegate the authority to fill certain “inferior” positions without confirmation

Again, committees do the work

A major component of checks and balances

The Senate Must Ratify all Treaties

Foreign Relations Committee

The Executive retains the power of initiative on this. (Can you say Kyoto?)

Oversight

We brought you into the world and we can take you out! (But they never do…)

Government Accountability Office(The GAO)

Examines governmental programs and departments

Looks for fiscal efficiency, consistency with legislative intent, and legality of operations

Analogous to Legislative Auditors at the state level

Investigation

Congress can investigate whatever it wishes!

Often viewed as a grandstanding, partisan activity

Oh yeah, this really helps with legislative/ executive tension!

Joe McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee

Impeachment

The House impeaches; the Senate holds the trial

Johnson 1868

Clinton 1998

Impeached but not convicted

Nixon 1974

Resigned instead of facing impeachment

Federal Judges can be (and have been) impeached (and convicted)

The War Powers Act

Congress has not used its constitutional power to declare war since 1941

Criticism of the President’s role in Vietnam led to the War Powers Act of 1973

The President may only commit troops abroad for a period of 60 days, (90 if including withdrawal)

Congress must approve a longer period

Nixon vetoed it, they over-rode the veto

Presidents don’t like it, but tend to go for some sort of authorizing resolution from Congress

Remember, no matter what, Congress still funds things!

Next:

INCUMBENCY AND REAPPORTIONMENT