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POLITICS: THE JOBS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPS

The Congress of the United States consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives which means the USA is bi-cambial. The Congress of the United States was created by Article I, Section 1, of the Constitution, adopted by the Constitutional Convention on September 17, 1787.

The Senate is composed of 100 Members, 2 from each State, who are elected to serve for a term of 6 years. Senators were originally chosen by the State legislatures. This procedure was changed by the 17th amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1913, which made the election of Senators a function of the people. There are three classes of Senators, and a new class is elected every 2 years.

The House of Representatives comprises 435 Representatives. The number representing each State is determined by population, but every State is entitled to at least one Representative. For example Alaska only has 1 representative where California has the most in the USA. Members are elected by the people for 2-year terms, all terms running for the same period.

Both the Senators and the Representatives must be residents of the State from which they are chosen. In addition, a Senator must be at least 30 years of age and must have been a citizen of the United States for at least 9 years; a Representative must be at least 25 years of age and must have been a citizen for at least 7 years.

Under the Constitution, the Senate is granted certain powers that the House of Representatives don't have. The Senate approves or disapproves certain Presidential appointments by majority vote, for example there was a huge possibility that the Senate were going to disapprove of Harriet Miars recommended by president Bush, which is why she inevitably pulled out of her nominee of being a member of the supreme court. The Senate are also in power of the treaties that must be concurred by a two-thirds vote.

The Vice President of the United States is the Presiding Officer of the Senate; in his absence the duties are taken over by a President pro tempore, elected by that body, or someone designated by him. The Presiding Officer of the House of Representatives, the Speaker, is elected by the House; he may designate any Member of the House to act in his absence.

On the other hand The House of Representatives is granted the power of originating all bills for the raising of revenue. The House leadership is structured essentially the same as the Senate, with the Members in the political parties responsible for the election of their respective leader and whips. The elected officers of the House of Representatives include the Clerk, the Sergeant at Arms, and the Chaplain.

Both Houses of Congress act in impeachment proceedings, which, according to the Constitution, may be instituted against the President, Vice President, and all civil officers of the United States. The House of Representatives has the sole power of impeachment, and the Senate has the sole power to try impeachments.

All bills and joint resolutions must pass both the House of Representatives and the Senate and must be signed by the President, except those proposing a constitutional amendment, in order to become law, or be passed over the President's veto by a two-thirds vote of both Houses of Congress.

The work of preparing and considering legislation is done largely by committees of both Houses of Congress. There are 16 standing committees in the Senate and 19 in the House of Representatives. In addition, there are select committees in each House and various congressional commissions and joint committees composed of Members of both Houses. Each House may also appoint special investigating committees.

The membership of the standing committees of each House is chosen by a vote of the entire body; members of other committees are appointed under the provisions of the measure establishing them.

Each bill and resolution is usually referred to the appropriate committee, which may report a bill out in its original form, favorably or unfavorably, recommend amendments, or allow the proposed legislation to die in committee without action.

Together the House of Representatives and the Senate play very important roles combined and in there separate chambers.