Congress at Work

Chapter 7
Legislative Branch = Make Laws
Chapter 7 Section 1

How a Bill Becomes a Law

Legislative Branch = Make Laws
(Public Policy)
The *political process* is the interaction and exchange of ideas between different groups that make up society. This include private citizens, interest groups, lobbyists, and representatives within the government.

*Public policy* is the end result of this exchange, being an approach to a particular issue that impacts society. Most often this takes the form of legislation, though it can also be things like executive actions, resolutions, position statements, etc.
Legislation: 2 Types

1. Bills
2. Resolution
Types of Bills: 2 Types

1. Private
   Individual people or places
   Ex. Claims against government or person’s immigration problem

2. Public
   General matters and apply to the entire nation
   Controversial because they touch many people
   Ex. tax cuts, health care, civil rights
Earmarks aka Pork Barrel Projects

• Way that members of Congress specify that some part of a funding bill will go toward a certain purpose

• Pet projects that appeal to constituents (district or state-wide)

• Banned by Congress in 2011 but still slipped into bills
Rider

- Attached to a bill likely to pass
- Provision on a subject other than the one covered in the bill
- Can cause a president to veto a bill

- Omnibus Bill: different from regular bill because it provides for many things at the same time; has main subject (budget) but concurrently addresses many other subjects
Types of Resolutions

• Make policy on unusual or temporary matters

• Three kinds:

1. Simple: matters affecting only 1 house of Congress and is passed by that house alone
Ex. New rule or procedure in either house

2. Joint: passed in same form by both houses
   Has force of law when signed by president
Ex. Constitutional amendment; Correct mistake in earlier law or appropriate money for special purpose

3. Concurrent: actions of both houses; law not needed
Ex. Adjourning Congress
Why so few bills become law

- Bill creation long and complicated
- Sponsors must be willing to compromise
- Bill sometimes introduced as a symbolic gesture
  - Show may support for a policy, attract media attention, satisfy a group of supporters
How a Bill Becomes a Law

**HOUSE**
- Representative hands bill to Clerk or clerk's assistant.
- Bill goes to Appropriations Committee.
- Referral to House Committee.
- Senate Committee approves bill.
- Senate Committee sends bill to House for passage.
- House passes bill.
- Senate passes bill.
- Conference Committee works out differences and sends identical compromise bill to both chambers for final approval.
- House votes on compromise bill.
- Senate votes on compromise bill.

**SENATE**
- Senator announces bill on the floor.
- Bill goes to Appropriations Committee.
- Referral to Senate Committee.
- Senate Committee approves bill.
- Senate passes bill.
- Conference Committee works out differences and sends identical compromise bill to both chambers for final approval.
- House votes on compromise bill.
- Senate votes on compromise bill.

**Floor Action**
- House passes bill.
- Senate passes bill.
- Conference Committee works out differences and sends identical compromise bill to both chambers for final approval.
- House votes on compromise bill.
- Senate votes on compromise bill.

**Approved Bill Sent to President**
- President signs bill or allows bill to become law without signing.
- President vetos bill.
- Congress can override a veto by a two-thirds majority in both chambers. If either fails to override, the bill dies.

**Critical Thinking**
At what point in Congress is a bill most closely examined?
# Standing Committees of Congress

## House Committees
- Agriculture
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- Budget
- Education and Labor
- Energy and Commerce
- Financial Services
- Foreign Affairs
- Homeland Security
- House Administration
- Judiciary
- Natural Resources
- Oversight and Government
- Rules
- Science and Technology
- Small Business
- Standards of Official Conduct
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Veterans Affairs
- Ways and Means

## Senate Committees
- Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
- Budget
- Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Environment and Public Works
- Finance
- Foreign Relations
- Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
- Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
- Judiciary
- Rules and Administration
- Small Business and Entrepreneurship
- Veterans Affairs

## Subcommittees
- Health
- Income Security and Family Support
- Oversight
- Select Revenue Measures
- Social Security
- Trade

Sources: [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov); [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)
How a Bill Becomes a Law

• Registering Law
Bill becomes law and registered with National Archives and Records Service
Labeled private or public
Numbered (Ex. PL105-187)
http://www.archives.gov/

• Tracking Legislation on the Internet
THOMAS http://thomas.loc.gov/
Congressional Quarterly www.cq.com
Roll Call http://www.rollcall.com/
How a bill becomes a law in Ohio
Ohio General Assembly

Legislative Process similar to Congress
Bills come from lawmakers, public and interest groups
Process carried out through committee

Direct Legislation
Initiative
Referendum
Initiative (Legislative Initiative)

Voters propose Constitutional Amendments and laws

Qualified voters sign petition in favor of proposal

Proposal directly to ballot for approval or rejection by the people (voters)

Nov 2015-Legalization of Marijuana
Referendum

Legislative measures referred to voters for final approval

Mandatory Referendum—proposed Constitutional Amendments must be submitted to electorate

Optimal Referendum—the legislature refers measure to voters “hot button” or controversial issues

Popular Referendum—people demand by petition that a measure passed by Legislature be referred to popular vote for final approval

2011 Issue 2 rejected in Ohio; ballot referendum on S B 5 to restrict unions
Taxing and Spending Bills

Chapter 7 Section 2
Most of government revenue is from taxes

Revenue-income from taxes

Taxes-money that people and businesses pay to support the government
House of Representatives and Revenue Bills

- All revenue bills start in the House
- Almost all work on tax law occurs in the Ways and Means Committee
- Decides whether to go along with presidential requests for tax cuts or increases
- Makes rules for who will pay how much tax
- Influences tax deductions for parents or benefits for businesses
House of Representatives and Revenue Bills

- Tax bill used to be debated under closed rule

- Closed Rule: forbids amendments to bill from the floor

- Only members of Ways and Means have direct hand in writing bill

- 1973: amendments from floor allowed
Senate and Revenue Bills

• No closed rule
• Amendments allowed
• Perception of more special interest influence
• Committee on Finance deals with tax matters
Appropriating Money

• Appropriation—approval of government spending belongs to Congress

• Congress must pass laws to appropriate money

• Approve spending before departments and agencies of executive branch can spend money
How Congress Appropriates Money

Two-step procedure

1. Authorization Bill: sets up federal program and specifies how much money can be appropriated for it

Ex. bill to build recreational facility in inner cities; limit of $30 million can be spent per year; administered by Dept of Housing and Urban Affairs (HUD)

2. Appropriation Bill: when request is made to receive money that was authorized to run federal program

Ex. HUD requests money that has been authorized for rec facilities
Creating the Federal Budget

Federal agencies send their money requests to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

The OMB reviews agency requests and melds them into the President's budget. In January or February, the President sends his budget to Congress.

Congress reviews budget, enacts several appropriations measures.

The President signs funding measures. OR The President vetoes one or more funding measures. If Congress cannot get a 2/3 majority to override veto, Congress and the President must reach a compromise to resolve the dispute(s).