

# The Legislative Branch

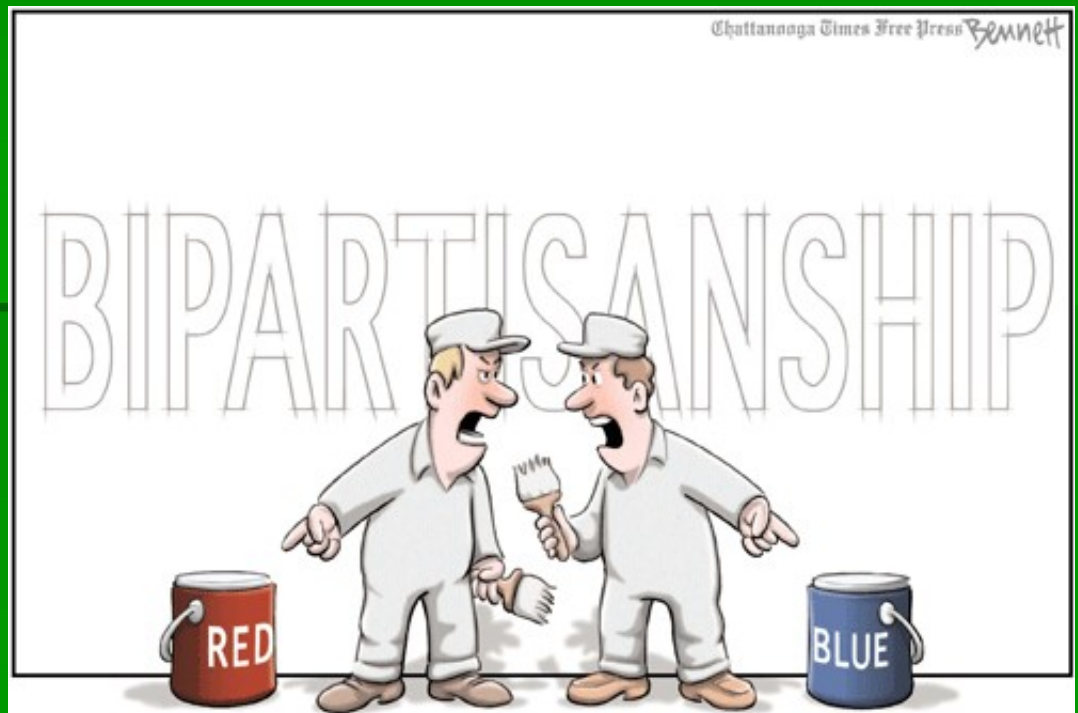
# **The Legislative Branch**

---

## **Basic Relationships**

# Basic Relationships

## 1. Party affiliation – party-line “crossover”



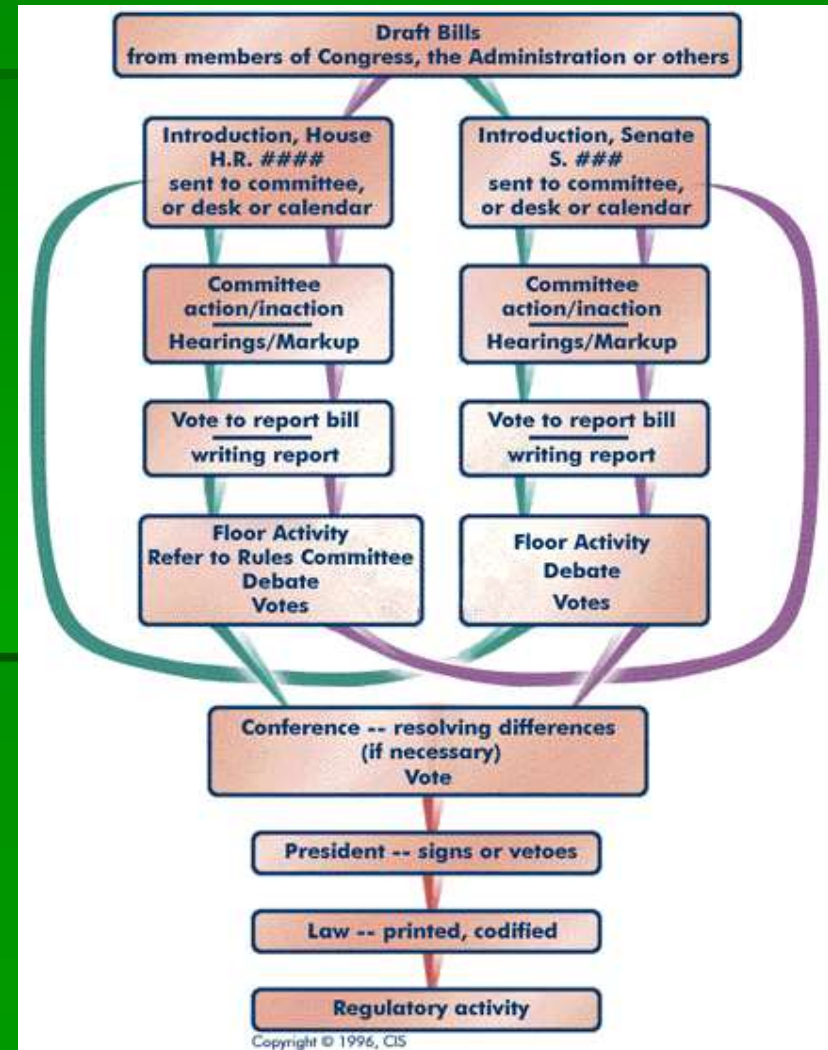
# Basic Relationships

## 2. Seniority – leadership positions on committees



# Basic Relationships

3. Procedure –  
very difficult;  
described as  
an “obstacle  
course”



# **The Legislative Branch**

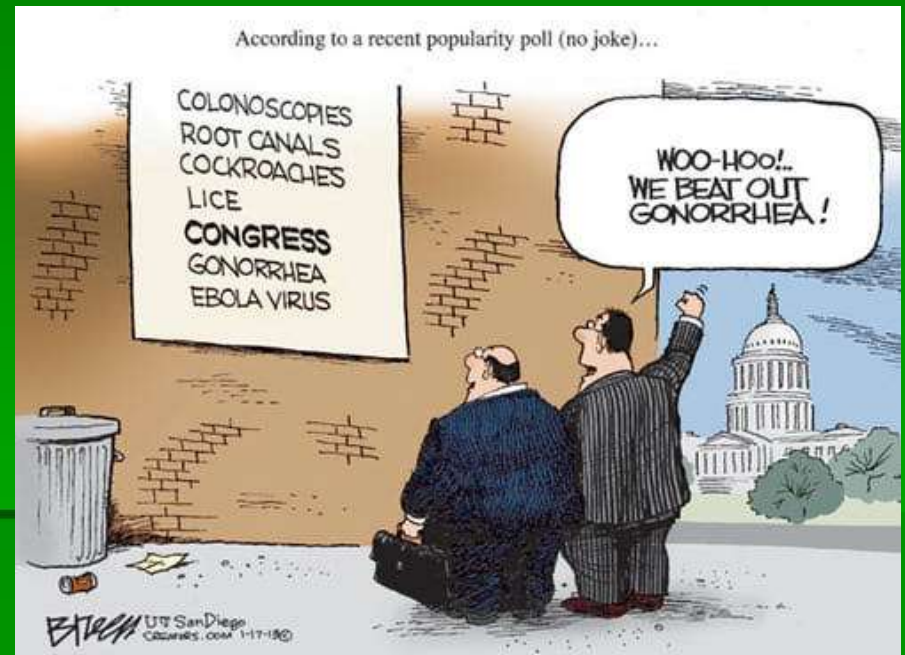
---

**Is Congress  
Representative  
of the People?**

# Is Congress Representative?

“Although members of Congress pride themselves on being close to the people, Congress as a whole does not closely reflect the population characteristics of the nation.”

- Robert Heineman



# Representative?

Gerrymandering

Manipulating  
congressional  
district  
boundaries



# Representative?

Nonpartisan  
biases?



# **Representative?**

---

## **1. Member Attitudes**

**a. House or Senate?**

**b. Delegate or leader?**

# **The Legislative Branch**

---

## **Organization**

---

# Organization

## Leadership

House – “Speaker of the House” has control over floor debate, bills to committees, committee assignments



# Organization

## Leadership

Senate – smaller  
in size and  
more flexible in  
terms of rules,  
procedures.



# Organization

## Committees

---

1. Division of labor in Congress
2. Experience in committee member areas
3. “Cozy” or “iron” triangles
4. Most powerful? – Rules, Budget, Appropriations, Ways and Means (economic committees)

# **The Legislative Branch**

---

# **The Legislative Process**

---

# The Legislative Process

## Origins of Legislation

Mostly executive branch....but,

"That makes me smart."

-Donald Trump in response to Hillary Clinton saying that Trump "paid nothing in federal taxes"



# The Legislative Process

...also members of  
Congress,  
committees,  
interest groups,  
and ordinary  
citizens



# The Legislative Process

## Legislative “path”

---

1. Writing the bill – agency or committee
2. Introduction of a bill – 97% killed here
3. Referred to committee
  - a. Subcommittee hearings – public testimony
  - b. Markup session – kill, amend, or report out unchanged
  - c. Full committee action – up for vote

# The Legislative Process

---

## Voting Procedures

1. Voice vote – yea or nea
2. Standing vote
3. Teller vote – for a bill, first in line;  
oppose follow
4. Roll-Call vote – each member's vote  
recorded

# **The Legislative Branch**

---

# **Legislative Oversight**

---

# Legislative Oversight

---

1. The legislative veto – (ruled unconstitutional by Supreme Court in 1983)
2. Use of special prosecutors – “independent” counsels for investigations
3. Impeachment – judges, president, vice-president

# **The Legislative Branch**

# **Congressional Reform**

# Congressional Reform

---

## Budget Process

1. Budget Impoundment and Control Act (1974) gave Congress more control over budgetary process
2. Balanced Budget and Emergency Control Act (1985) passed to help Congress control spending and reduce deficit and debt

# Congressional Reform

Congressional  
ethics?

Scandals!

Term limits – a  
good idea?

Would You Work For This Company?

Do you fancy working for a company that has a little more than 500 employees and has the following statistics?:

- \* 29 have been accused of spousal abuse
- \* 7 have been arrested for fraud
- \* 19 have been accused of writing bad checks
- \* 117 have directly or indirectly bankrupted at least 2 businesses
- \* 3 have done time for assault
- \* 71 cannot get a credit card due to bad credit
- \* 14 have been arrested on drug-related charges
- \* 8 have been arrested for shoplifting
- \* 21 are currently defendants in lawsuits
- \* 84 have been arrested for drunk driving in the last year ...

Can you guess which organization this is?  
Given up yet?

# **The Legislative Branch**

---

## **An Elite Perspective on Congress**

# Elite Perspective

Charles Lewis's,

*The Buying of Congress* (1996).

## THE BUYING OF THE CONGRESS



HOW SPECIAL INTERESTS HAVE STOLEN  
YOUR RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY,  
AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

CHARLES LEWIS  
AND THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY

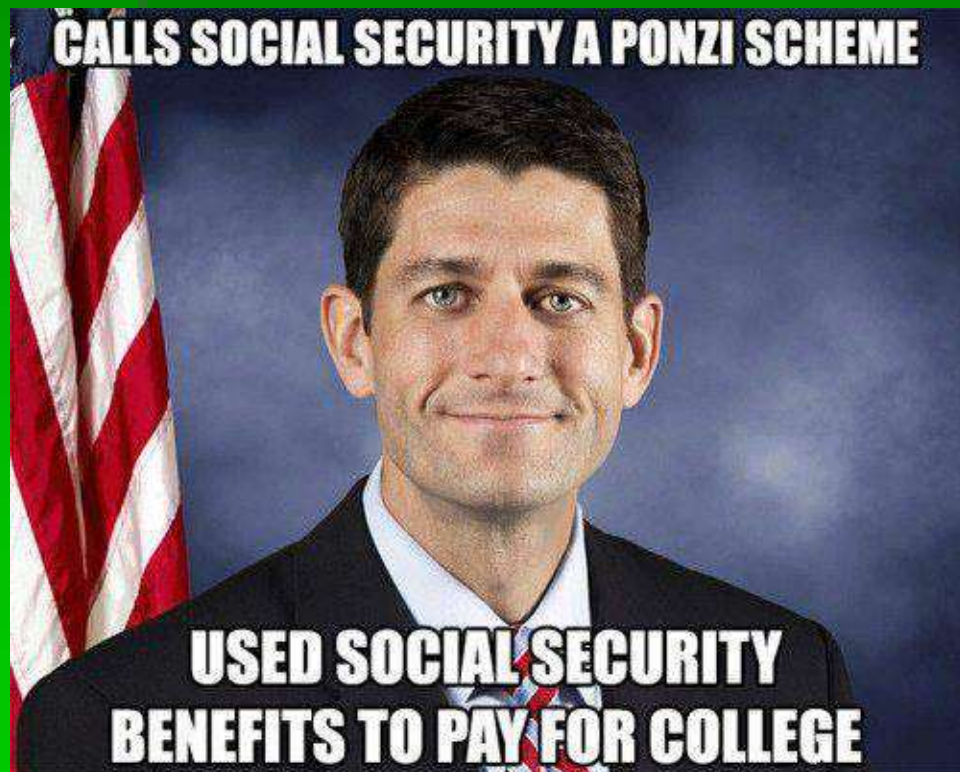
# Elite Perspective

## Thesis:

1. In general, “members of Congress moonlight for themselves and their wealthy patrons more than they work for us.”



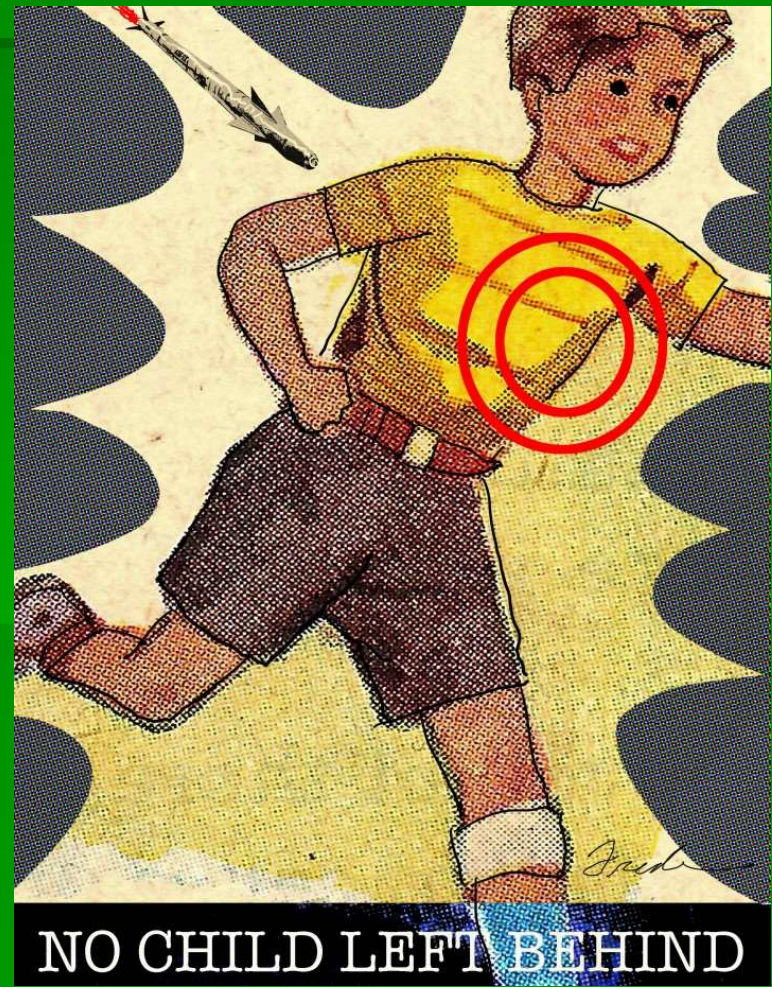
# Elite Perspective



2. On issues of public interest of the American people, Congress generally follow the economic agenda of a few “vested” interests.

# Elite Perspective

**3. While most Americans do not understand Congress, the reality is that Congress is directly involved in our lives every single day. You cannot tune out or escape the fact that Congress is a significant, relevant force in your life.**



# **Elite Perspective**

---

**Data / Proof /  
Evidence**

**(DPE)**

# Elite Perspective

## 1. Food Industry

While thousands die each year and millions become ill from lax safety standards, from 1987 to 1996, Congress accepted more than \$41 million in campaign contributions.



Deesillustration.com

# Elite Perspective

## 2. Tobacco Industry



**450,000 Americans die each year from tobacco related illness. Congress continues to protect and operate programs to help grow, insure, export, and protect against foreign imports, due to the over \$30 million a year in contributions.**

# Elite Perspective

## 3. Big PHARMA

10 to 20% of all drug treatments cause adverse reactions, which kill as many as 160,000 Americans a year. Since pharmaceuticals and medical device companies inject 28\$ million into re-election coffers of legislators (1987-96), Congress has repeatedly proposed *weakening* regulations.



# Elite Perspective

## 4. Health Care

In 1980, 54% of workers at large / medium sized firms had paid health insurance. By 1993, that number had fallen to 20%. The health care industry has prevented Congress from making reforms by giving more than \$72 million (1987-96).



# Elite Perspective

The historic Telecommunications Act of 1996 (put in place by Congress and the cable industry) suggested that with “market competition” and the new law, rates would fall. In fact, they’ve risen 10%. Political contributions: \$15.9 million (1987-96).

## 5. Telecom Industry



# Elite Perspective

## 6. Corporate Welfare



GM Corp. donated \$182 million to Congress members (87-96) through PACs and “soft money” contributions of up to \$72 million. It should not be surprising that over the years Congress has repeatedly cut taxes for corporations and wealthy individuals. In 1956, corporate income tax accounted for 28% of all tax revenue. Today, that number is below 10%.