

## **Chapter 7 Notes: Congress (Our Legislative Branch)**

### **Chapter 7, Lesson 1- The Structure of Congress:**

- 1. The Two Houses of Congress:**
  - a. Congress is bicameral (Two Houses)**
  - b. House of Representatives**
    - i. 435 total members**
      - 1. Representation based on state population**
      - 2. House is reapportioned/ fixed every 10 years**
    - ii. Serve two year terms**
    - iii. Closer to the people**
    - iv. Considered the lower house**
    - v. Qualifications:**
      - 1. 25 years or older**
      - 2. Citizen for at least 7 years**
      - 3. Live in the state you are going to represent**
  - c. Senate**
    - i. 100 total members**
    - ii. Serve six year terms**
    - iii. Considered the upper house**
    - iv. Qualifications:**
      - 1. 30 years or older**
      - 2. Citizen for at least 9 years**
      - 3. Live in the state you are going to represent**
  - d. Leadership:**
    - i. House of Representative- Speaker of the House**
    - ii. Senate- Vice President and president pro tempore**
- 2. Congress at Work:**
  - a. Congress is organized into committees for more efficiency**
  - b. Three types of committees**
    - i. Standing Committee- permanent**
    - ii. Special/ Select Committee- temporary only created for specific purpose**
    - iii. Joint Committee- members from both houses**

## **Chapter 7, Lesson 2- The Powers of Congress:**

### **1. Expressed or Enumerated Powers:**

#### **a. Specific powers listed to Congress under Article I, section 8**

- i. The power to tax**
- ii. Borrow Money**
- iii. Regulate Trade/Commerce**
- iv. Declare War**
- v. Power to raise and maintain armed services**
- vi. Naturalization**
- vii. Establish post offices and lower courts**
- viii. Establish patents and copyrights**

### **2. Implied Powers:**

#### **a. Powers not directly stated in the Constitution**

- i. Article I, section 8, Clause 18- the "Elastic Clause"**
  - 1. (Necessary and Proper Clause)**
- ii. Allows Congress to stretch powers to meet new needs**
  - 1. Example: Not expressed to hire people for the Defense Department, but in order to support armed forces (expressed power) it needs to do so**

### **3. Law- Making Powers:**

- a. Congress is the law making branch of the government**
- b. 3 main categories: money, commerce, and military/ foreign policy**

### **4. Non-Legislative Powers:**

- a. Checking the powers of the other branches is the most important non-legislative duty of Congress**
  - i. Senate approves or rejects presidential nominees**
  - ii. Impeachment**
    - 1. 2 step process**
    - 2. Formally accusing a government official**
      - a. Starts in the House of Representatives**
      - b. The Senate holds the trial to see if the official is guilty and removed from office with 2/3 vote**
    - 3. Propose Constitutional Amendments**

### **5. Limits on Congressional Powers:**

- a. The Constitution specifically states what Congress MAY or MAY NOT do.**

- i. Framers wanted to prevent Congress from violating rights
- b. Reserved powers are for the States, Not Congress
- c. The Supreme Court can determine a law to be unconstitutional
- d. President can veto laws

## Chapter 7, Lesson 3- How Congress Works:

### 1. Qualifications and Staffing:

- a. Former Career Occupations
  - i. Lawyers, Doctors, Armed Service Members, and etc.
- b. "Joiners"- tend to be more active in in community organizations
- c. Benefits: \$174,000/year, free office space, free parking, free trips home
- d. Members hire staff of clerks, secretaries, and special assistants
  - i. Run offices
  - ii. Gather information on new bills and issues
  - iii. Handle requests for help from constituents
  - iv. Deal with the media and lobbyists
  - v. Help win reelection the member
- e. Agencies of Congress:
  - i. Library of Congress
  - ii. Government Accountability Office (GAO)- financial matters
  - iii. Congressional Budget Office (GBO) - develops gov't. budget

### 2. Congress at Work:

- a. Roles of Lawmakers:
  - i. Investigators- research the issue
  - ii. Writer- propose a bill
  - iii. Promoters- gain support
  - iv. Evaluators- examine bill for effect on people and the nation
- b. Doing Casework- Members help their constituents deal with the federal government
  - i. Helps Congress see how the Executive Branch is handling programs (i.e. social security, veteran's benefits)
- c. Helping the District or State- by bringing gov't. funded projects
  - i. (Pork-barrel projects): dams, military bases, highways, etc.
  - ii. Use different methods to win projects:
    - 1. Constituents contact agencies/ Congressional influence
    - 2. Add wording to a bill (earmarks)

