



PRINCIPLE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Vocabulary Set 6

Name:

Congress and the Presidency

Section:

Congress

Attentive public – Those citizens who follow public affairs closely.

Bicameralism – The principle of a two-house legislature.

Closed rule – A procedural rule in the House of Representatives that prohibits any amendments to bills or provides that only members of the committee reporting the bill may offer amendments.

Cloture – A procedure for terminating debate, especially filibusters, in the Senate.

Conference committee – Committee appointed by the presiding officers of each chamber to adjust differences on a particular bill passed by each in different form.

Constituents – The residents of a congressional district or state.

Delegate – An official who is expected to represent the views of his or her constituents even when personally holding different views; one interpretation of the role of legislator.

Discharge petition – Petition that, if signed by majority of the House of Representatives' members, will pry a bill from committee and bring it to the floor for consideration.

Earmarks – Special spending projects that are set aside on behalf of individual members of Congress for their constituents.

Enumerated powers – The powers expressly given to Congress in the Constitution.

Filibuster – A procedural practice in the Senate whereby a senator refuses to relinquish the floor and thereby delays proceedings and prevents a vote on a controversial issue.

Gerrymandering – The drawing of legislative district boundaries to benefit a party, group, or incumbent.

Hold – A procedural practice in the Senate whereby a senator temporarily blocks the consideration of the bill or nomination.

Incumbent – The current holder of the elected office.

Joint committee – A committee composed of members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate; such committees oversee the Library of Congress and conduct investigations.

Logrolling – Mutual aid and vote trading among legislators.

Majority leader – The legislative leader selected by the majority party who helps plan party strategy, confers with other party leaders, and tries to keep members of the party in line.

Minority leader – the legislative leader selected by the minority party as spokesperson for the opposition.

Open rule – A procedural rule in the House of Representatives that permits floor amendments within the overall time allocated to the bill.

Override – An action taken by Congress to reverse the presidential veto, requiring a two-thirds majority in each chamber.

Party caucus – A meeting of the members of a party in a legislative chamber to select party leaders and to develop party policy. Called a *conference* by the Republicans.

Pocket veto – A veto exercised by the president after Congress has adjourned; if the president takes no action for 10 days, the bill does not become law and does not return to Congress for possible override.

President pro tempore – Officer of the Senate selected by the majority party to act as chair in the absence of the vice president.

Reapportionment – The assigning by Congress of congressional seats after each census. State legislatures reapportion state legislative districts.

Redistricting – The redrawing of congressional and other legislative district lines following the census, to accommodate population shifts and keep districts as equal as possible in population.

Rider – A provision attached to a bill – to which it may or may not be related – in order to secure its passage or defeat.

Safe seat – An elected office that is predictably won by one party or the other, so the success of that party's candidate is almost taken for granted.

Senatorial courtesy – Presidential custom of submitting the names of prospective appointees for approval to senators from the states in which the appointees are to work.

Seniority rule – A legislative practice that assigns the chair of the committee or subcommittee to the member of the majority party with the longest continuous service on the committee.

Speaker – The presiding officer in the House of Representatives, formally elected by the House but actually selected by the majority party.

Special or select committee – A congressional committee created for a specific purpose, sometimes to conduct an investigation.

Standing committee – A permanent committee established in a legislature, usually focusing on a policy area.

Trustee – An official who is expected to vote independently based on his or her judgment of the circumstances; one interpretation of the role of the legislator.

Whip – Party leader who is the liaison between the leadership and the rank-and-file in the legislature.

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The Presidency

Cabinet – Advisory council for the president consisting of the heads of the executive departments, the vice president, and a few other officials selected by the president.

Chief of staff – The head of the White House staff.

Congressional-executive agreement – A formal agreement between a U.S. president and the leaders of other nations that acquires approval by both houses of Congress.

Cycle of decreasing influence – The tendency of presidents to lose support over time.

Cycle of increasing effectiveness – The tendency of presidents to learn more about doing their jobs over time.

Executive agreement – A formal agreement between the U.S. president and the leaders of other nations that does not require Senate approval.

Executive Office of the President – The cluster of presidential staff agencies that help the president carry out his responsibilities. Currently the office includes the Office of Management and Budget, the Council of Economic Advisers, and several other units.

Executive orders – Formal orders issued by the president to direct action by the Federal bureaucracy.

Executive privilege – The right to keep executive communications confidential, especially if they relate to National Security.

Impeachment – Formal accusation against a president or other public official, the first step in removal from office.

Impoundment - A decision by the president not to spend money appropriated by Congress, now prohibited under Federal law.

Inherent powers – Powers that grow out of the very existence of government.

Line item veto – Presidential power to strike, or remove, specific items from a spending bill without vetoing the entire package; declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

Mandate – A president’s claim of broad public support.

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) – Presidential staff the agency that serves as a clearinghouse for budgetary requests and management improvements for government agencies.

Parliamentary system – A system of government in which the legislature selects the prime minister or president.

Pocket veto – A formal decision to reject a bill passed by Congress after it adjourns – if Congress adjourns during the ten days that the president is allowed in order to sign or veto law, the president can reject the law by taking no action at all.

Presidential ticket – The joint listing of the presidential and vice presidential candidates on the same ballot as required by the Twelfth Amendment.

Rally point – A rising public approval of the president that follows a crisis as Americans “rally ’round the flag” and the chief executive.

State of the Union Address – The president’s annual statement to Congress and the nation.

Take care clause – The constitutional requirement (in Article II, Section 3) that presidents take care that the laws are faithfully executed, even if they disagree with the purpose of those laws.

Treaty – A formal, public agreement between the United States and one or more nations that must be approved by two thirds of the Senate.

Veto – A formal decision to reject the bill passed by Congress.

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