

Key Differences: House and Senate



Constitutional Powers and Structure

- Gives “advice and consent” to treaties and presidential appointments
- 435 members with 2 year terms
- Members are generalists
- More committees and subcommittees
- Initiates articles of impeachment (brings the charges)
- 100 members with 6 year terms
- Initiates revenue bills
- Members are highly specialized
- Power distributed more evenly
- More centralized and formal
- Has more foreign policy responsibilities
- Conducts impeachment trials
- Emphasizes tax and revenue policy
- Less centralized, less formal
- Numbers determined by decennial census
- Two legislators per state (no matter state size)

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House of Representatives

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Senate

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- **Always two legislators per state (no matter state size)**

Legislative & Committee Procedures

- bills referred to a committee by the Speaker
- scheduling generally agreed to by the majority and minority leader
- bills introduced and referred to a committee by the majority leader
- rigid floor debate rules favor majority— limits set by Rules committee
- Speaker may create an “ad hoc” (temporary) committee
- Floor action on a bill important as work in the committee
- scheduling controlled by majority party and Rules committee
- Committee action on a bill more influential than action on the floor
- uses a filibuster to extend debate on a bill to prevent a vote

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Institutional Changes (1990s-2000s)

- threat of filibusters more frequent than in the past
- **work load increasing**
- procedures are becoming more efficient
- **those seeking re-election *almost always* win**
- turnover is moderate
- **increasingly partisan- difficult to pass legislation**
- power centralized around the speaker's "inner circle"
- power of leadership and key committees increasing
- **more organizing and bill writing outside committees**

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