The Legislative Branch

What is the basic structure of the House / Senate?

What benefits do you get if you are a member of Congress?

What are the requirements / leadership roles in the Congress?
What is the US Congress?

- The US Congress is the main, law-making body of the US government
  - House of Representatives
  - Senate

- Specifics:
  - Leadership
  - Powers
  - Responsibilities
Why did the Founding Fathers want a “Legislative” Branch?

- Prior to the Revolution, all the colonies had legislative government
  - Legislatures
  - Assemblies

- The Founding Fathers believed that this was the best method of government
  - No king or dictator
What is the House of Representatives?

- The House is the **lower** house of our bicameral legislature.

- Remember the Connecticut Compromise?
  - One House based on population (House)
  - One House based on a single vote (Senate)
What are the qualifications to be in the House of Representatives?

- Term: 2 years

- Qualifications
  - 25 years old
  - 7 years as a U.S. citizen
  - Resident of the represented district
How many delegates are in the House of Representatives?

- Number of representatives: 435

- **Leadership:**
  - Speaker of the House

- **Power**
  - Decides the committees each member will serve on
  - Decides the order in which bills will be heard
The Current Speaker of the House is Congressmen John Boehner (R - Ohio)
Get the Joke?
What is the US Senate?

- The US Senate is the **upper** house of the bicameral legislature.
- “the older / wiser” group
  - All states have one vote / are equal
What are the qualifications of being in the Senate?

- Term of office: 6 years

- Qualifications:
  - 30 years old
  - 9 years a citizen of the U.S.
  - Resident of the represented state
How many delegates are in the US Senate?

☐ Number of Senators: 100

☐ Leadership:
  - Head of the Senate: President of the Senate (U.S. Vice President)
  - Day to day head of Senate: President Pro Tempore

☐ Power:
  - Decides committee members
  - Order bill are debated.
President of the Senate

The Current President of the Senate is Vice-President Joe Biden (D - Delaware)
President of the Senate

The Current President Pro-Tempore of the Senate is Senator Patrick Leahy (D - Vermont)
What are the major requirements for both houses of Congress?

- Both houses must:
  - Must keep a Journal (The Congressional Record)
  - Must hold sessions at the same time (begin January 3rd each year)
  - Must have a quorum to do business (51% of members present on the floor)
What privileges and compensations does a member of Congress get?

- Members of Congress get the following “perks:
  - Salary ($147,000 per year)
  - Medical and dental benefits
  - Free office, parking, and trips to home state
  - Staff budget
  - Tax breaks
  - Privilege- free postage
What other Privileges or Compensations do members of Congress get?

- Members of Congress also get the following legal "perks":
  - Immunity or legal protection (while in office)
  - Cannot be sued (say or write while carrying out their duties)
  - Cannot be arrested for minor offenses (while Congress is in session)
  - May not hold any other political office at the same time