

Congress Vocabulary

Session *The sitting of a court, legislature, council, or commission for the transaction of its proper business.*



- Congress adjourns, or suspends until the next session, each regular session as it sees fit
- If necessary, the President has the power to prorogue, or adjourn a session, but only when the two houses cannot agree on a date for adjournment
- Only the President may call Congress into a special session - a meeting to deal with some emergency situation.



Single-member district

Single-Member District

Single-member district- An electoral district that returns one office holder to a body with multiple members such as a legislature.

- A number of voting systems use single-member districts like CA

- Members of parliament can be elected from both single-member districts as well as multi-member districts that are headed by members of the Cabinet.



Gerrymandering

manipulate the boundaries of (an electoral constituency) so as to favor one party or class

- In 1986, the [Supreme Court ruled](#) that the act of manipulating district borders for political gain (gerrymandering) is unconstitutional.
- In 1842, Congress passed an [Apportionment Act](#), which required that congressional districts be both connected and tightly packed.

Filibuster: act in an obstructive manner in a legislature, especially by speaking at inordinate length

Relevant Fact: Senate adopted a “cloture” rule to limit filibustering in 1917.

Relevant Fact: Filibustering is not limited to long speeches, however, nor does it occur only in the U.S. Senate.



Trustees

1 of 4 voting options



Trustees believe that each question they face must be dived on its merits.

A congressman is or acts as a trustee

There is at least one trustee in each state.

Delegates: 1 of 4 voting options

Delegate - a person sent or authorized to represent others, in particular an elected representative sent to a conference

- Ami Bera is a California representative
- At the caucus, delegates are chosen to represent the State's interests

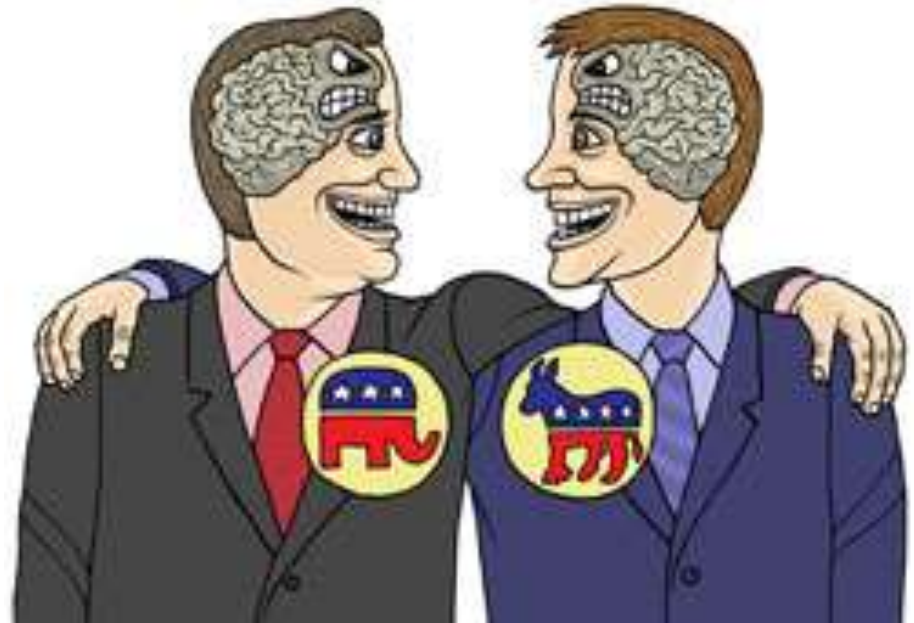


Partisans: 1 of 4 voting options

a committed member of a political party, used for politicians who strongly support their party's policies and are reluctant to compromise with their political opponents

Relevant Facts:

- Partisans on both sides give “cold” ratings for members of the opposing party.
- Having cross-party friendships is associated with how coldly partisans see the other party.



Politicos: 1 of 4 voting options

An informal term for politician. Attempts to combine the basic elements of the trustee, delegate, and partisan roles.

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Franking Privilege

Definition: allows Members of Congress to transmit mail matter under their signature without postage

Fact #1: Cannot be used to solicit votes or contributions, to send mail regarding political campaigns or political parties, or to mail autobiographical or holiday greeting materials

Fact #2: Each mass mailing sent by a Member of Congress must bear the following notice: “Prepared, Published, and Mailed at Taxpayer Expense.”



Oversight Function

Definition: A supervisory activity of Congress that centers on its constitutional responsibility to see that the executive branch carries out the laws faithfully and spends appropriations properly

Fact: Many forms of oversight function for Congress exist, such as impeachment hearings.

Fact: Oversight function was used during the Watergate Scandal as well.



Income tax: Individual and Corporation

Definition: tax levied by a government directly on income. The largest source of federal revenue today. It is a progressive tax - the higher the income and the ability to pay, the higher the tax rate.

- All citizens are required to pay an annual tax on their personal income
- Individual income taxes regularly provide the largest source of federal revenue
- The tax is levied on each person's taxable income.



Revenue

Definition: income, especially in terms of an organization

Fact 1: Congress passed Revenue Act of 1862 to fund Civil which raised taxes

Fact 2: Marijuana Tax Revenue Act of 2015 put a tax on Marijuana



A faint, stylized illustration of Uncle Sam, the personification of the United States government, is visible in the background. He is wearing his characteristic top hat and a striped suit, and is depicted from the waist up, looking forward.

Public Debt

Definition: Government debt (also known as public interest, national debt and sovereign debt) is the debt owed by a central government. (In federal states, "government debt" may also refer to the debt of a state or provincial, municipal or local government.)

It includes all of the money borrowed and not yet repaid, plus the accrued, or accumulated interest.

Facts:

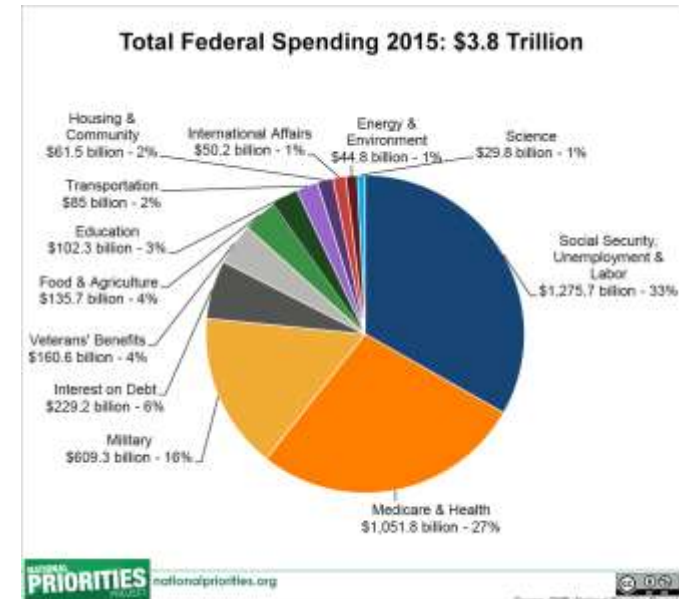
1. California is projected to be about 450 billion dollars in debt in 2018.
2. National debts may, and local debts must, be defined in units of external currency.

Federal spending

Definition: President and Congress select among competing demands for federal funds

Fact: Mandatory and discretionary spending account for more than ninety percent of all federal spending, and pay for all of the government services and programs on which we rely

- Entitlements are benefits that federal law says must be paid to all those who meet the eligibility requirements. Forty-nine percent, or almost half of all spending, paid for Social Security and health care entitlements (primarily Medicare and Medicaid).
- Interest on the public debt has grown to be the 2nd largest category of federal spending.
- Outlays for defense spending account for another large section of federal spending.



State Constitution

Definition:The basic, fundamental law of a **state** which sets out how that **state** will be organized and the powers and authorities of government

1. Alabama has the longest constitution and Vermont has the shortest

2. Both the federal and state constitutions are organic text.

- Protections of Civil Rights
- Governmental structure
- Governmental powers and processes
- Constitutional change
- Miscellaneous provisions.



Initiative

Definition: a means by which a minimum number of registered voters can sign a petition which can force a public vote.

2 Facts:

President Obama launched a global food security initiative called [Feed the Future](#) as one of the first foreign policy acts of his presidency.

Of the 24 states, 18 allow initiatives to propose constitutional amendment
propose statutes.



Referendum: a general vote by the electorate on a single political question or legislative measure that has been referred to them for a direct decision

Relevant Fact: May result in the adoption of a new law.

Relevant Fact: At least 107,923 votes to be passed.



Governor's Role

A ruler or chief magistrate appointed to govern, and possess a number of powers and rights under the United States Constitution. Basic legal responsibility is “to take care that the laws be faithfully executed.”

Tasks

- Appointment and removal of assistants
- Supervising the staff of the State's executive branch
- Preparing the annual or biennial budget to go to the legislature
- Commanding the State militia, or National Guard



Criminal law

A system of law concerned with the punishment of those who commit crimes, laws that congress themselves make

The california state legislature creates laws in relation to california,while the federal legislature creates laws in relation to the entire United States.

Two levels: felonies and misdemeanors



Civil Law



The system of law concerned with private relations between members of a community or private parties and the government that are not covered by criminal law.

- Congress created civil laws that fit with the needs of the people of the United States.
- California follows a civil law, like the rest of the United States.
- Cases are referred to as “law suits”
- The suits usually lead to an award of money or a fine

Grand Jury

Grand jury :a jury, normally of twenty-three jurors, selected to examine the validity of an accusation before trial. Consists of 6 to 23 persons, depending on the State. A majority is needed to indict. They meet in secret.

- The grand jury ruled that the death of Michael Brown was justified.
- Branzburg v. Hayes, 408 U.S. 665, was a landmark United States Supreme Court decision invalidating the use of the First Amendment as a defense for reporters summoned to testify before a grand jury.



Petit Jury

Petit jury - an old-fashioned name for the jury that hears a lawsuit or criminal prosecution and decides the disputed facts.

- Made up of 12 members (jurors)
- Verdict must either unanimous or by a large majority depending on the state.
- Criminal juries decide the outcome for the defendant

