

WHAT MEMBERS OF CONGRESS DO

Class Notes

I. Members of Congress as Representatives and Lawmakers

The beliefs and interest of members of Congress can affect policy:

1. *Delegates* - duty to represent “the folks back home” and do what they want v.
2. *Trustees* - vote according to their own view of what is best for the district, state or nation

II. Forces of Influence on Congress

A. Internal Influences

1. Other members >>> logrolling, pork barreling, earmarks
 - *Logrolling* – mutual aid between members of congress; “i’ll support your bill or program if you vote for mine”
 - *Pork barrel legislation* - spending for programs/projects, paid for by taxpayers, that is intended to benefit constituents of a politician in return for their political support
 - *Earmarks* - congressional provision that directs approved funds to be spent on specific projects; usually added to an appropriations bill; typically, a legislator seeks to insert earmarks that direct a specified amount of money to a particular organization or project in his/her home state or district.
2. Party
3. Caucus
4. Staffs and Specialized Offices
 - a. Tasks of staff members
 - Constituency service (a.k.a. *casework*) - major task of staff
 - Legislative function - monitoring hearings, devising proposals, drafting reports, meeting with lobbyists
 - Staff members consider themselves advocates of their employers
 - b. Growth and impact of staff
 - Rapid growth: a large staff itself requires a large staff
 - Larger staff generates more legislative work
 - Members of Congress can no longer keep up with increased legislative work and so must rely on staff.
 - Results in a more individualistic Congress.

B. External Influences

1. White House
2. Interest groups/lobbyist
3. Constituents
4. Federal agencies
5. Governors
6. Mayors
7. Media

III. CBS News Clip: *Lobbying Congress*

- *Think-Pair-Share*: work with a partner and brainstorm 3 ways lobbying can be positive and 3 ways lobbying is negative or bad.

IV. Earmarks and Pork Barrel Legislation

Class Debate: Pork Barrel Legislation and Earmarks – the Pro’s and Con’s

- A. 5-6 Minutes: read the two articles on earmarks, highlighting important statements/facts, and write a + in the margin if it supports earmarks and a – if it’s negative towards earmarks.
- B. 5 Minutes: work in small groups (2 pro and 2 con) – choose captains and feed them info for the debate.
- C. Debate: 1) each side has 2 minutes to make their arguments; 2) then open it up to others in the class
- D. Assessment: 1 point for reading/research; 2 points for group participation; Captains receive 2 point for debate; others can get an additional 1 point for participation after debate.