



The Mini Page

Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large



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Our Representatives

Who Leads the Congress?

When we read about arguments or action in the U.S. Congress, we sometimes hear confusing terms: **caucus**, **majority leader**, **president**, **whip**. Have you ever wondered if someone in the Capitol is actually using a whip?!

This week, The Mini Page takes a close look at the leadership and organization of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

The legislative branch

Our Constitution divides government power into three branches:

- **executive** (president, vice president and the Cabinet departments)
- **judicial** (courts)
- **legislative** (Congress).

The legislative branch is where laws are made. American citizens **elect**, or choose, senators and representatives to make decisions about laws that will reflect their wishes.



photo courtesy Architect of the Capitol

The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives meet in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. This photo shows the western front of the building. House members meet in the south wing (at the right in the photo); Senate members meet in the north wing. The large rooms where they meet are called “chambers.”

In session

Meetings of senators and representatives are called **sessions**.

A few times each year, the Senate and the House come together for a **joint session** of Congress.

One of the joint sessions is the State of the Union address in January or February, when the president of the United States speaks about how the country is doing and outlines the government’s goals for the coming year.



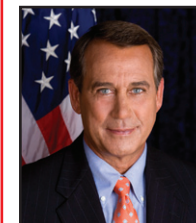
President Obama gives his 2011 State of the Union address.

photo by Chuck Kennedy, courtesy executive office of the president of the United States

Leading the Congress

With 100 senators and 435 representatives trying to work together, someone has to be in charge.

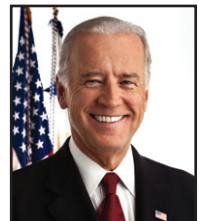
In the Senate, the vice president of the United States also serves as the **president of the Senate**. He or



Speaker of the House John Boehner

she does not vote unless it’s necessary to break a tie.

In the House, the **speaker of the House** leads the representatives.



President of the Senate Joe Biden

Who's Who?

You may have heard people talk about the 113th Congress. This is the current **term** of Congress. Each term lasts two years and is divided into two **sessions**. The 113th Congress will end on Jan. 3, 2015, after new senators and representatives are elected in November 2014.

At the beginning of each term, members must choose leaders for the House and Senate.

Party lines

Congress isn't separated only into the Senate and the House of Representatives. Members of Congress also group together according to the major political parties, the Republicans and the Democrats.

After an election, either the Republicans or the Democrats have more members of Congress than the other party. This is called a **majority**. The party with fewer members is called the **minority**.



House leaders

• Speaker of the House.

This leader controls **debates**, or discussions, between representatives on the House floor. He or she acts as a spokesperson for his or her party in Congress. The person in this position would become president should something happen to the current president and vice president.

• House Majority Leader.

This representative is the second in command after the speaker of the House. He or she manages business on the House floor.

• **House Majority Whip.** The whip is an assistant floor leader. He or she helps to track votes on different issues.

The term "whip" is believed to come from a fox-hunting term for the person who keeps the dogs from straying away from the pack during a hunt.



detail of painting by Richard Barrett Davis, 1836, courtesy Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Senate leaders

• **President of the Senate.** The vice president of the United States usually presides over the Senate only on special occasions or when a tie-breaking vote is needed.

• **Senate Majority Leader.** This senator is really the leader of the Senate. He or she schedules votes and works with committees.

• **Senate Assistant Majority Leader.** This position is similar to the majority whip in the House.

Minority leaders

The House and Senate also have leadership positions for the minority party:

- **House Minority Leader**
- **House Minority Whip**
- **Senate Minority Leader**
- **Senate Minority Whip**

With each new election, the majority and minority, and the leadership, can shift to a different political party.

Ready Resources

The Mini Page provides ideas for websites, books or other resources that will help you learn more about this week's topics.



On the Web:

- congressforkids.net
- 1.usa.gov/1fumOge
- house.gov/content/learn
- senate.gov

At the library:

- "House Mouse, Senate Mouse" by Peter W. Barnes
- "The Congress of the United States" by Christine Taylor-Butler



Congressional Leaders TRY 'N' FIND

Words that remind us of congressional leaders are hidden in the block below. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find: CAPITOL, CAUCUS, COMMITTEE, CONFERENCE, CONGRESS, HOUSE, JOINT, LAWS, LEAD, LEGISLATIVE, MAJORITY, MINORITY, PRESIDENT, RECOMMEND, REPRESENTATIVE, SENATE, SPEAKER, TERM, WHIP.

WHO REPRESENTS YOU?



P	I	H	W	C	O	N	F	E	R	E	N	C	E	T
D	N	E	M	M	O	C	E	R	W	M	X	E	V	N
C	A	U	C	U	S	M	A	J	O	R	I	T	Y	E
Y	T	I	R	O	N	I	M	P	Y	E	K	A	H	D
L	D	J	T	N	I	O	J	I	I	T	B	N	O	I
A	A	R	E	K	A	E	P	S	T	T	N	E	U	S
W	E	S	S	E	R	G	N	O	C	T	O	S	S	E
S	L	E	G	I	S	L	A	T	I	V	E	L	E	R
E	V	I	T	A	T	N	E	S	E	R	P	E	R	P

Mini Spy . . .



Mini Spy is talking to her classmates about Congress. See if you can find:

- exclamation mark
- paint roller
- cat
- frog
- pencil
- chicken
- butterfly
- carrot
- bear
- bell
- banana
- word MINI
- letter B
- snake
- poodle
- pumpkin
- comb
- kite
- letter Z
- needle
- canoe
- toothbrush
- ruler
- number 2
- basket



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Rookie Cookie's Recipe Broccoli Side Dish

You'll need:

- 4 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- dash cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon water
- 2 cups fresh broccoli florets
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/3 cup chopped red or orange bell pepper
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt

What to do:

1. Combine olive oil, water, lemon juice, vinegar, honey and seasonings in a jar with a tight lid; shake well.
2. In a separate bowl, mix vegetables and cranberries.
3. Add dressing and toss to coat evenly.
4. Cover and chill for 1 hour.

You will need an adult's help with this recipe.



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Meet Barry Gellert



photo by Ben Murphy

Barry Gellert, also called Barry G, is best known for his music with The Dream Jam Band, which he helped found. His first solo CD is "Huh-Uh!" He plays the guitar, sings and composes music.

Barry has performed in elementary schools in New York as part of "Dream Jam All Access." This program teaches kindergartners a variety of musical types. Some of the students now sing with Dream Jam Kids.

He first began playing the guitar when he was 5 years old. As an adult, he played guitar with several rock bands and began composing music. He now writes and composes musical theater shows for kids.

Barry performs music to help raise money for many charities, including food banks and other community programs. He also performs music for kids in hospitals.

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Goldie Goodsport's Report

Supersport: Crystal Dunn



Height: 5-2 **Birthdate:** 7-2-92
Hometown: Rockville Centre, N.Y.

Crystal Dunn has reached the top of women's college soccer. She wants to stay there.

After winning National Player of the Year honors and leading the University of North Carolina to the 2012 NCAA championship, the Tar Heels senior came out this season with her usual competitive fire and desire. She contributed six goals to help the No. 1-ranked Heels start 6-0. Listed as a midfielder, the three-time All-American can sparkle at any position.

Already her name is etched among the most elite players to compete for the nation's premier college program (21 national titles). She's also plays for the U.S. national team and has found time to lead a soccer camp for inner-city youth in New York.

And Dunn isn't done. She wants to finish her UNC career with another title!

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MIGHTY FUNNY'S

Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

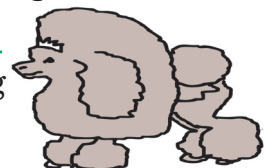
Charles: Why was George Washington always standing in official White House portraits?
Carrie: Because he could never lie!



Cory: If Thomas Jefferson were alive today, what would be the most amazing fact about him?
Cindy: His age!

Caesar: What was a patriot's favorite dog back in Colonial times?

Craig: A Yankee poodle!



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The Three C's

Caucus ...

Within Congress, the Democrats call their party members a **caucus** (KAW-kus). The caucus is the party's organization that helps senators and representatives understand the party's goals as they think about **legislation**, or laws being considered.

For example, the caucus might take a position about the importance of supporting small businesses. If a resolution comes before the House that concerns small business, the caucus will share that position with its members.

We must support small businesses!



Conference ...

The Republican group in Congress is called a **conference**. Similar to the Democrats' caucus, the Republican conference shares the goals of the party with members of Congress.

If the conference believes that taxes are too high, Republican members will receive information about upcoming bills that have to do with changing our tax system.

Let's make taxes lower!



Look in your newspaper for articles about Congress and the leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives.

... and Committees

Can you imagine all the subjects that members of Congress must think about as they make laws? For almost any topic that's important to our nation, there is a **committee** of members of Congress. These members concentrate on a particular

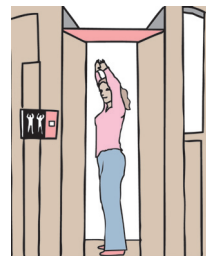
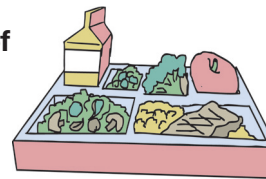
subject and study the details about it, then recommend how the Senate and the House should vote.

Each committee may also have many subcommittees. With your class, research congressional committees. Which ones make decisions that affect you?

Congressional Committees Quiz-a-Roonie

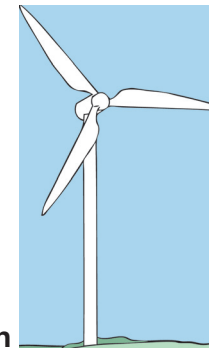
Below are some issues that might affect kids. Match the issue with the Senate or House committee that you think would be best at studying the issue and making good recommendations for a vote on the Senate or House floor.

1. Improving the quality of school lunches.



2. Making security screenings at airports quicker and more thorough.

3. Finding new and renewable sources of energy for our future needs.



4. Setting high standards for education so that kids can succeed in college and as adults.



5. Assuring that military workers returning home from war have the services they need to return to civilian life.



A. House Education and the Workforce Committee

B. House Homeland Security Committee

C. Senate or House Veterans' Affairs Committee

D. Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee

E. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Answers: 1-D; 2-B; 3-E; 4-A; 5-C.

Next week, The Mini Page celebrates Halloween with ideas for a terrific holiday party.

The Mini Page Staff

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