

Inside Congress

Read how Congress is built, makes laws, and checks power.

SS.7.CG.3.7 "Explain the structure, functions, and processes of the legislative branch of government."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB In paragraph 2 only, write the numbers 1 through 6 beside its six sentences to show the order of the bill's route in the example.

Congress at Work

- ① Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government. It has two chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House has 435 voting members, with each state's number based on population. Every state has two senators, so the Senate has 100 members. Representatives serve two-year terms, and senators serve six-year terms. Both chambers write and debate bills, which are proposed laws. Congress also controls federal spending, collects taxes, declares war, and checks other branches through oversight.
- ② Suppose a representative introduces a bill in the House. A House committee studies it, may change it, and sends it to the full House for debate and a vote. If a majority of the House approves, the bill goes to the Senate. A Senate committee studies the bill, and the full Senate debates, revises, and votes on it. If the Senate passes a revised version, the House must vote again and approve that exact Senate-revised version. The president then signs the identical bill, making it a law.
- ③ Congress can also respond when a president vetoes a bill. To override a veto, a two-thirds vote in each chamber must approve the bill. This high requirement makes an override difficult. Committees perform another important function: oversight. They hold hearings, question officials, and investigate how executive agencies use laws and public money. They may request documents and call witnesses to gather evidence about agency actions. Through laws, budgets, hearings, and investigations, Congress represents people and checks executive power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How is representation in the House different from representation in the Senate?

2 According to the example, what happens after the House approves a bill, and what must the House do if the Senate revises it?

3 How do congressional committees carry out oversight, and which branch do they check?

4 What must happen for Congress to override a presidential veto?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a five-sentence bill journey about an idea you choose. Include House introduction, committee action and a House vote, a Senate revision, the House approving the exact Senate-revised version, presidential action, and one oversight action Congress could take later.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

In paragraph 2 only, write the numbers 1 through 6 beside its six sentences to show the order of the bill's route in the example. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How is representation in the House different from representation in the Senate?	The House has 435 voting members, and each state's number of representatives is based on population. The Senate has 100 members because every state has two senators.
2	According to the example, what happens after the House approves a bill, and what must the House do if the Senate revises it?	The bill goes to the Senate, where a committee and the full Senate study, debate, revise, and vote on it. If the Senate passes a revised version, the House must vote again and approve that exact Senate-revised version.
3	How do congressional committees carry out oversight, and which branch do they check?	Committees hold hearings, question officials, investigate agency actions, request documents, and call witnesses. These actions check the executive branch.
4	What must happen for Congress to override a presidential veto?	A two-thirds vote in both the House and the Senate must approve the bill.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Representative Lee introduces a bill to fund safer crosswalks in the House. A House committee studies the bill, and the full House approves it by a majority vote. The Senate revises the funding amount and passes its revised version. The House then approves the exact Senate-revised version, and the president signs it into law. Later, a congressional committee holds a hearing to ask transportation officials how the money is being used.

Accept equivalent descriptions of House representation by population and equal state representation in the Senate. For the bill-process response and the open task, require that the House explicitly approves the Senate-revised version before presidential action.