Two Paths to Congress

Compare who serves, who elects them, and what they do

9-12.GOV.30 "Analyze Article I and the 17th Amendment of the Constitution as they relate to the legislative branch, including eligibility for office, roles, duties, casework, length of terms, and election to office for representatives and senators."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each rule about eligibility, elections, or term length, and circle each example of a legislative duty or casework. Use your marks to compare representatives and senators.

After the Bridge Closes

1. After a flood closes a bridge, residents ask Congress for help. Their district's representative speaks for a smaller geographic area, while both of their state's senators represent the whole state. Article I sets different entry rules: a representative must be at least 25, have been a U.S. citizen for seven years, and live in the state when elected. A senator must be at least 30, have been a U.S. citizen for nine years, and live in the state when elected. Neither office requires a person to be born in the United States.

2. Voters in each district elect a representative for a two-year term; voters across an entire state elect its two senators, each for a six-year term. Article I originally gave the choice of senators to state legislatures, not voters. Ratified in 1913, the 17th Amendment changed that choice to a direct vote by the people of each state. When a Senate seat becomes vacant, the amendment calls for an election; a state legislature may also authorize its governor to make a temporary appointment until voters elect someone. These rules affect whose votes candidates must win and how often they face voters.

3. Suppose the bridge needs federal funding. A representative could introduce a bill to address the problem; senators could debate and vote on it. Both chambers must pass a bill in the same form before it goes to the president. Article I also gives the House the sole power to impeach federal civil officers and the Senate the sole power to try impeachments. Separately, congressional offices might help a resident contact a federal disaster agency about a delayed application. That help is called casework. It serves constituents, but the Constitution does not require members to perform it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. A 28-year-old state resident has been a U.S. citizen for eight years. Which office's eligibility rules does this person meet, and which rules prevent the person from holding the other office?

2. How did the 17th Amendment change the selection of senators? Compare today's Senate elections with House elections.

3. A representative and a senator are both elected in 2026. If both seek another term, which one must face voters sooner? Use their term lengths to explain.

4. In the bridge situation, identify one legislative responsibility and one example of casework. Which is not required by the Constitution?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A resident wants a federal law requiring clearer wildfire warnings and also needs help with a delayed federal aid claim. Write a five-sentence plan explaining how a representative and a senator could respond, how each gets elected and for how long, and why help with the claim is not a constitutional duty.

ANSWER KEY

Two Paths to Congress

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.30

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each rule about eligibility, elections, or term length, and circle each example of a legislative duty or casework. Use your marks to compare representatives and senators. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	A 28-year-old state resident has been a U.S. citizen for eight years. Which office's eligibility rules does this person meet, and which rules prevent the person from holding the other office?	**The person meets the rules for representative but is too young and has been a citizen for too few years to be a senator.**
2	How did the 17th Amendment change the selection of senators? Compare today's Senate elections with House elections.	**State legislatures originally chose senators; the amendment established direct election by state voters. Representatives are also elected by voters, but by voters in their districts.**
3	A representative and a senator are both elected in 2026. If both seek another term, which one must face voters sooner? Use their term lengths to explain.	**The representative must face voters sooner, in 2028 after a two-year term. The senator's six-year term ends in 2032.**
4	In the bridge situation, identify one legislative responsibility and one example of casework. Which is not required by the Constitution?	**Introducing, debating, or voting on a bill is legislative work. Helping a resident contact a federal disaster agency is casework, which the Constitution does not require.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The resident could ask the district's representative to propose a federal wildfire warning bill. The state's senators could debate and vote on that bill, while the representative could also vote on it in the House. District voters elect representatives for two-year terms, while voters across the state directly elect senators for six-year terms under the 17th Amendment. Either office could contact a federal agency about the delayed aid claim as casework. Unlike the work of passing legislation under Article I, casework helps an individual constituent and is not required by the Constitution.

Accept other accurate ways either office could help with legislation or contact a federal agency. The plan should distinguish lawmaking from casework and correctly compare the two elections and term lengths.