Who Leads Congress?

Track leadership roles as a bill moves through Congress

9-12.GOV.32 "Identify leadership positions of the legislative branch, including majority and minority leaders, the president pro tempore, the role of the Vice president, and the Speaker of the House."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each leadership title, circle an action linked to it, and write H or S beside the title to show whether it belongs to the House or Senate.

A Bill Moves Through Congress

1. After a storm damages several public libraries, a repair bill moves through Congress. In the House of Representatives, the Speaker of the House presides over the chamber and is chosen by its members. The Speaker also has major influence over the House agenda. The House majority leader helps the majority party advance its plans, while the House minority leader organizes the party with fewer seats. Those two leaders represent different parties' priorities, but neither holds the Speaker's position. Knowing whether a leader works in the House or the Senate helps you follow what happens to the bill next.

2. The bill then arrives in the Senate, where both parties have floor leaders. The Senate majority leader leads the majority party and has a central role in scheduling Senate business and guiding that party's work. The Senate minority leader leads the minority party and coordinates its response to proposals. Each can speak for a group of senators, but neither is the Senate's constitutional presiding officer. If the repair bill faces a close vote, these leaders may work to gather support. Their titles describe their parties' standing in the chamber, not whether they personally support repairing libraries.

3. The Constitution names the Vice President of the United States as president of the Senate. The Vice President can preside over a Senate session and may cast a vote there only to break a tie. Senators also elect a president pro tempore, who presides when the Vice President is absent. In practice, other senators often take turns presiding, so the president pro tempore does not lead every meeting. On a day when senators debate the library bill, the person at the front of the chamber might guide the proceedings without directing either party's strategy. Presiding and leading a party are different jobs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which House leader presides over the chamber and has major influence over its agenda?

2. The Senate is deciding when to consider the repair bill, while one party plans its response. Which Senate leader has a central scheduling role, and which coordinates the minority party's response?

3. Who is named president of the Senate, and when may that person cast a Senate vote?

4. If the Vice President is absent, which elected Senate officer can preside? How is that job different from leading a party's strategy?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A bill to repair storm-damaged clinics passes the House and reaches the Senate. Write five sentences explaining one possible action each for the Speaker of the House, the Senate majority leader, the Senate minority leader, the president pro tempore, and the Vice President as the bill moves forward.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.32

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each leadership title, circle an action linked to it, and write H or S beside the title to show whether it belongs to the House or Senate. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which House leader presides over the chamber and has major influence over its agenda?	**The Speaker of the House.**
2	The Senate is deciding when to consider the repair bill, while one party plans its response. Which Senate leader has a central scheduling role, and which coordinates the minority party's response?	**The Senate majority leader has a central scheduling role. The Senate minority leader coordinates the minority party's response.**
3	Who is named president of the Senate, and when may that person cast a Senate vote?	**The Vice President is president of the Senate and may vote to break a tie.**
4	If the Vice President is absent, which elected Senate officer can preside? How is that job different from leading a party's strategy?	**The president pro tempore can preside. Presiding guides the Senate's proceedings rather than directing a party's strategy.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before the clinic bill left the House, the Speaker of the House presided over its debate. The Senate majority leader could schedule Senate business to bring the bill up for consideration. The Senate minority leader could coordinate the minority party's response to the bill. The president pro tempore could preside over a Senate session while the Vice President is absent. If senators split evenly on a vote, the Vice President could cast the tie-breaking vote.

Accept accurate actions tied to the correct chamber and position. The Vice President votes in the Senate only to break a tie; the president pro tempore presides when the Vice President is absent.