Who Moves Congress?

Trace leadership and committee roles through a proposed bill.

USG.C.4.1.D "Describe the leadership roles of the Speaker of the House, the Senate President Pro Tempore, and majority and minority leaders, including the responsibilities of major congressional committees."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one responsibility for each of the Speaker, the Senate president pro tempore, and the four party leaders. Circle each committee named, then box an action it could take.

A Bridge Bill in Congress

1. After a severe storm damages bridges, members of Congress propose a federal bridge safety bill. The House Speaker, elected by the entire House and usually from its majority party, presides over House sessions and has major influence over which bills reach the floor. The House majority leader helps plan the party's floor agenda and gathers support for bills. The House minority leader organizes the opposing party's strategy, offers alternatives, and works to keep its members informed. These leaders cannot pass a bill alone. Representatives must debate and vote, and a bill needs both chambers' approval before it can become law.

2. Across the Capitol, the vice president is the Senate's president but rarely presides over its daily sessions. The Senate elects a president pro tempore, traditionally a senior member of the majority party, to preside when the vice president is absent. In practice, the president pro tempore often assigns other senators to preside. The Senate majority leader is the chamber's chief agenda setter, bringing measures toward floor debate and coordinating votes. The Senate minority leader organizes the minority's response and negotiates with the majority leader over debate and scheduling. Neither leader can simply order senators to vote a certain way.

3. Committees give members time to examine details before the whole chamber votes. For the bridge proposal, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee could hold hearings and recommend changes to federal bridge policy. In the Senate, the Environment and Public Works Committee could examine similar highway issues. The House Rules Committee often proposes the terms for debating a bill on the House floor; the House then votes on those terms. Separately, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees draft spending bills that could provide money for bridge programs. Their drafts do not release funds by themselves: both chambers must pass a spending bill, and it must become law.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. A House member wants the bridge bill debated soon. What could the Speaker and the House majority leader each do to help?

2. When the vice president is absent, what is the Senate president pro tempore's formal duty, and what often happens in practice?

3. How could the House and Senate minority leaders each respond as the majority moves the bridge bill forward?

4. Which committees could examine bridge policy, and what must happen before an Appropriations Committee's spending proposal provides funding?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence briefing about a proposed federal wildfire smoke alert bill. Describe distinct roles for the Speaker, the Senate president pro tempore, the House majority and minority leaders, the House Rules Committee, and the Appropriations Committees, including what must happen before funding is enacted.

ANSWER KEY

Who Moves Congress?

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.4.1.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one responsibility for each of the Speaker, the Senate president pro tempore, and the four party leaders. Circle each committee named, then box an action it could take. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	A House member wants the bridge bill debated soon. What could the Speaker and the House majority leader each do to help?	**The Speaker could use their influence over which bills reach the House floor. The majority leader could plan the floor agenda and gather support.**
2	When the vice president is absent, what is the Senate president pro tempore's formal duty, and what often happens in practice?	**The president pro tempore presides over the Senate when the vice president is absent but often assigns another senator to preside.**
3	How could the House and Senate minority leaders each respond as the majority moves the bridge bill forward?	**The House minority leader could organize an alternative and coordinate party strategy. The Senate minority leader could organize a response and negotiate over debate and scheduling.**
4	Which committees could examine bridge policy, and what must happen before an Appropriations Committee's spending proposal provides funding?	**The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee could examine bridge policy. Both chambers must pass a spending bill, and it must become law.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The House Speaker could help bring a wildfire smoke alert bill to the House floor, while the House majority leader could plan the agenda and gather support. The House minority leader could organize an alternative proposal and explain her party's concerns. The Senate president pro tempore could preside when the vice president is absent, though another senator might preside instead. The House Rules Committee could propose terms for House floor debate, which the House would then vote on. The Appropriations Committees could draft spending bills for the alerts, but funding would require passage by both chambers and enactment into law.

Accept other accurate ways the named leaders could carry out their roles. Responses must distinguish committee drafts from enacted funding: both chambers must pass a spending bill, and it must become law.