Inside Congress

How Article I divides power between two chambers

USG.C.4.1 "Describe the scope and powers of the legislative branch of the federal government as delineated in Article 1 of the Constitution of the United States of America..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two powers Congress has, circle facts that distinguish the House from the Senate, and write 1 beside the Seventeenth Amendment and 2 beside the Twenty-Seventh Amendment. Use your marks to track how Congress is organized and what it can do.

Why Congress Has Two Chambers

1. Congress is the federal lawmaking branch, but Article I gives it defined powers rather than unlimited authority. Congress can levy taxes, borrow money, regulate interstate and foreign commerce, declare war, and make laws necessary and proper to carry out its listed powers. Both chambers must approve a bill before it goes to the president. The Framers created two chambers partly to settle a dispute between large and small states and partly to slow hasty lawmaking. House seats are divided among states by population, while every state has two senators. That balance gives people and states different forms of representation.

2. The House has 435 voting members under current law; each represents a district and serves a two-year term. A representative must be at least 25 years old, have been a U.S. citizen for seven years, and live in the state represented. Senators serve six-year terms; a senator must be at least 30, have been a citizen for nine years, and live in the state represented. Originally, state legislatures chose senators. The Seventeenth Amendment established their direct election by voters. Congress sets members' pay by law, but the Twenty-Seventh Amendment delays any change until after an election for the House.

3. The House starts revenue bills and votes on whether to impeach federal officers; the Senate tries impeachments and considers treaties and presidential appointments. The Speaker presides over the House and helps shape its agenda. The Senate's president pro tempore presides when the vice president is absent, though the Senate majority leader usually drives its daily agenda. In each chamber, majority leaders coordinate their party's work; minority leaders organize their party's response. Committees examine proposed laws, hold hearings, and oversee executive agencies. For example, a transportation committee might question officials about railroad safety before deciding whether to advance a bill.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Identify two powers of Congress. Then explain one job assigned specifically to the House and one assigned specifically to the Senate.

2. Compare how seats are distributed, term lengths, and age and citizenship qualifications in the House and Senate. Why did the Framers choose two chambers?

3. How did the Seventeenth Amendment change the selection of senators? How does the Twenty-Seventh Amendment affect changes to members' pay?

4. Compare the Speaker's role with the president pro tempore's role. How do party leaders and committees affect congressional work?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a federal bill that is not about railroad safety. In five sentences, name its purpose and a congressional power behind it, describe a committee's action, explain what the House and Senate must do, and show how review by both chambers could affect the bill.

ANSWER KEY

Inside Congress

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two powers Congress has, circle facts that distinguish the House from the Senate, and write 1 beside the Seventeenth Amendment and 2 beside the Twenty-Seventh Amendment. Use your marks to track how Congress is organized and what it can do. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Identify two powers of Congress. Then explain one job assigned specifically to the House and one assigned specifically to the Senate.	**Congress can levy taxes and declare war. The House starts revenue bills, while the Senate considers treaties.**
2	Compare how seats are distributed, term lengths, and age and citizenship qualifications in the House and Senate. Why did the Framers choose two chambers?	**House seats are based on state population; representatives serve two years and must be at least 25 and citizens for seven years. Each state has two senators, who serve six years and must be at least 30 and citizens for nine years. The design addressed disagreements between large and small states and helped slow hasty lawmaking.**
3	How did the Seventeenth Amendment change the selection of senators? How does the Twenty-Seventh Amendment affect changes to members' pay?	**The Seventeenth Amendment replaced selection by state legislatures with direct election by voters. Under the Twenty-Seventh Amendment, a change to members' pay cannot take effect until after an election for the House.**
4	Compare the Speaker's role with the president pro tempore's role. How do party leaders and committees affect congressional work?	**The Speaker presides over the House and helps shape its agenda; the president pro tempore presides over the Senate when the vice president is absent. Majority leaders coordinate their party's work, minority leaders organize responses, and committees examine bills, hold hearings, and oversee agencies.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I propose a federal bill that taxes imported plastic packaging to fund waterway cleanup. Congress could use its power to levy taxes to consider this bill. A committee could hold hearings about the tax and its effects. Because it raises revenue, the bill would begin in the House, and both chambers would need to approve it. Review by both chambers could bring out different concerns from states with different industries.

Accept other accurate Article I powers and chamber-specific duties in question 1. For the open task, accept a plausible bill supported by a congressional power and a clear explanation of how a committee and both chambers would handle it.