

The Legislative Branch

TOPIC SUMMARY

Congress is a bicameral body made of representatives and senators. In Congress, members of each political party select their own leaders to work in special committees that propose legislation. Congress has the power to pass laws, but it also has nonlegislative powers, such as approving presidential nominees for government offices. Congress also has the duty to conduct investigations and impeach officials charged with misconduct. Members of Congress have staff members and support services that help them do their work. Congress follows strict procedures as it approves bills that may become laws. If committees in the House and Senate approve a bill, that bill goes to the full House or Senate. If the bill passes in both houses, Congress sends it to the president for approval. The president may approve or veto the bill. Congress may choose to override a presidential veto if two-thirds of each house votes to approve it.

FOLDABLES™
Study Organizer

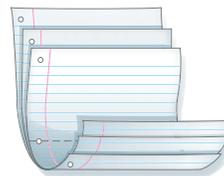
Summarizing Information Study Foldable *This Foldable will help students summarize information about the national government of the United States.*

Step 1 *Collect three sheets of paper and place them on top of each other about an inch apart.*

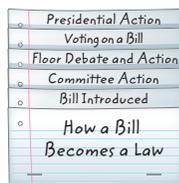


Step 2 *Fold up the bottom edges of the paper to form six tabs.*

This makes all tabs the same size.



Step 3 *When all the tabs are the same size, crease the paper to hold the tabs in place and staple the sheets together. Label each tab as shown.*



Reading and Writing

Write the details of the different stages that a bill goes through to become a law as it passes through Congress.

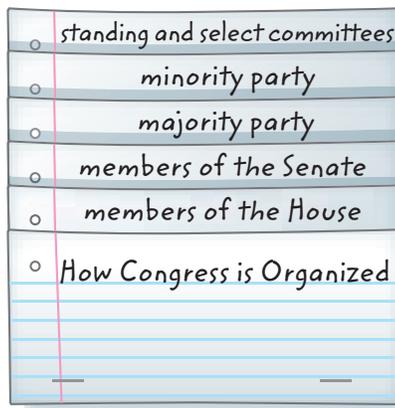
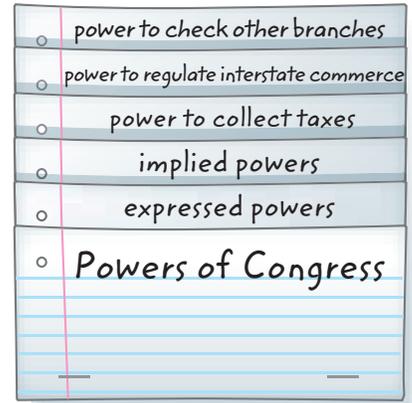
TOPIC ACTIVITY IDEAS

Summarizing

Have students complete the Study Foldable as shown above and discuss the details they included as a class. Then have student groups use the steps described in the Foldable to trace the progress of a bill through one house of Congress. Have one group of students list ideas for a bill that group members would like to see become a law. Then have the group introduce one idea as a bill to a second group of students who will act as a “committee.” The entire class can act as House or Senate members, discussing the merits of the bill and voting on whether to approve it.

COMPARING

Have students use the Foldable to review congressional powers. Students should identify legislative and nonlegislative congressional powers and list these powers on appropriate Foldable tabs. Lead a class discussion about which of the powers were established with the Constitution and which have developed over time.



IDENTIFYING

Have students use the Summarizing Information Study Foldable to identify different groups within Congress. Students should identify five groups within the House and Senate and write the names of these groups on the tabs of the Foldable. Have students summarize beneath each appropriate tab what they have learned about each group, including its duties and responsibilities. Ask students to use the library or Internet resources to find the names of current members of Congress who belong to each of the identified groups.

Student Study Tip

Tell students that the graphic organizers they develop for each section can be used as tools to help them to prepare for tests. Review with students the graphic organizers found in this chapter. Challenge students to organize other areas of their notes with similar charts and visual aids as they prepare for tests.