

Section 3: Influencing Congress

Slide 1:

1. Different factors influence how a lawmaker votes
2. Temperament: Some are willing to take risks other play it safe
3. Controversial issues lawmakers will side with voters back home regardless of how they feel
4. Laws that have little direct effect on their constituents lawmakers rely on their own beliefs or advice of other lawmakers.

Slide 2:

1. Congressional staffers influence decisions because they research information a lawmaker sees on an issue.
2. Also have influence on setting a lawmakers daily calendar
3. Also influence who they meet with and which committee meetings they attend

Slide 3:

Most important influences in order:

1. Concerns of voters
2. Their party's position on issue
3. The President
4. Special interest groups

Slide 4:

1. Voters expect a lawmaker will follow what people in their district want.
2. Voters usually don't take time to find out how members vote
3. On issues where constituents have less information or interest (foreign affairs) lawmakers make up their own minds
4. Voting records are important because in an election campaign candidates will bring up their opponents record

Slide 5:

1. Lawmakers make frequent trips home to learn the local voters' concerns by speaking with them
2. Staff members screen email to learn what issues concerns voters most like the closing of an automotive plant
3. Also send questionnaires to their constituents asking for their opinions on various issues.
4. Pay attention to key supporters who contribute: people who vote rain or shine, work on campaigns and/or contribute money

Slide 6:

1. Democrats and republicans tend to vote with their parties because they share the same political outlook

2. Party voting is much stronger on some issues than others
3. Economic issues: party members tend to vote together
4. Foreign policy: weaker as parties do not have a fixed position

Slide 7:

1. Democrats tend to favor: social welfare programs, job programs, higher taxes, and more government regulation
2. Republicans tend to favor: lower taxes, less social welfare (because its expensive), and less business / economic regulation
3. Another reason for party voting is many lawmakers do not have strong opinions on every issues because there is so many, so they get advice

Slide 8:

1. Some issues party leaders put pressure on members to vote according to the party position (especially if the sitting president is of their party too)
2. Leaders of the opposing party often vote against the president's program and makes it a political issue
3. Gaining party members support is one of the main jobs of a party leader.

Slide 9:

1. President tries to influence Congress to get his legislation passed
2. Can do this by influencing public opinion with speeches or television appearances
3. Since early 1900s, many presidents have tried to increase their influence over Congress

Slide 10:

1. **Lobbyists:** representatives of interest groups
2. Lobbyists try to convince members of Congress to support policies favored by the groups they represent
3. **Lobbying:** efforts to persuade officials to support their point of view
4. Largest and most powerful lobbies have full-time professional staffs in Washington D.C.

Slide 11:

Lobbyists represent business organizations, labor unions, doctors, lawyers, education groups, minority groups and environmental organizations.

Slide 12:

1. Use many methods to influence Congress like offering data and case studies on policies they support or oppose.
2. Visit lawmakers in their office to persuade them to support their position
3. Encourage citizens to write to members of congress
4. Mainly focus their attention on congressional committees

Slide 13:

1. PACs: Political Action Committee
2. Political fundraising organizations established by corporations, labor unions and other special-interest groups
3. PAC funds come from voluntary contributions by employees, stockholders and union members