

Congress and bicameral legislation overview



AP Essay- Congress The framers of the Constitution created a bicameral legislation where there were two chambers of congress made. There was the Senate and the House of Representatives and these two chambers split the necessary duties that congress needed to fulfill. The framers of the Constitution chose a bicameral legislature because they did not want all powers of the government concentrated in a single government institution as they would have been if a unicameral legislature was used. They feared it would lead to rule by oppressive or impassioned majority.

They believed that a bicameral legislature would balance powers in congress so that neither chamber would ever gain tyrannical power. When making congress, the framers also knew that the states were jealous of their independence and would not consent to a national constitution if it did not protect their interests and strike a reasonable balance between large and small states. There were many disputes between small and large states on how representation in congress should be gained by delegates at the Constitutional Convention.

This was the reason a bicameral legislature was created, and this was known as " The Great Compromise". This gave small states equal representation in the Senate and large states their proportional representation in the House. The House of Representatives is the lower house and it contains 435 members. Members are chosen by districts based on population. Some of the House of Representative's powers are to impeach the president and initiate taxing and spending bills. One unique power the House of Representatives holds is that it gets to select the president for the country if no candidate wins the electoral vote.

This was almost the case during the 2000 election between Bush and Gore, the winner was in question after the votes in Florida went uncouned. The framers of the Constitution gave the House of Representatives this power because this chamber is closer to the people than the Senate and is more informed on what the people want. The Senate is the upper house and it contains 100 members. Election time is on a rotating basis and 1/3 of the senate runs every 2 years. Some of the Senate's powers are to accept or reject treaties and tries the president after the House of Representatives impeaches them (HIST).

One unique power the Senate holds is that it can approve presidential appointments such as cabinet positions, Supreme Court judges, federal judges, and heads of agencies. The Senate approved Clarence Thomas as a Supreme Court judge. The framers gave the Senate this power because in order to carry out checks and balances, they wanted the congress to make sure that the President was not holding too much power. By approving or disapproving presidential appointments, the president's power is weakened and the executive branch does not contain more power than the legislative branch.