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Congress in flash answers

Main article: United States Congress
George W. Bush delivered his annual State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress on January 28, 2003, in the House chamber. The history of the United States Congress refers to the chronological record of the United States Congress including legislative sessions from 1789 to the present day. It also includes a brief history of the Continental Congress from 1774 through 1781 and the Congress of the Confederation from 1781 to 1789. The United States Congress first organized in 1789, is an elected bicameral democratic legislative body established by Article I of the United States Constitution, ratified in 1788. It consists of an upper chamber, the senate with 2 members per state, and a lower chamber, the House of Representatives, with a variable number of members per state based on population. The bicameral structure of the Congress was modeled on the bicameral legislatures of the Thirteen Colonies, which in turn were modeled on the bicameral structure of the English Parliament. The politics of Congress have been defined by members' affiliation with political parties. From the earliest days, politicians and the public have adopted a de facto 2-party political system. Membership in parties has at different times been defined by ideology, economics, rural/urban and geographic divides, religion, and populism. In different periods of American history, the role of Congress shifted along with changing relations with the other branches of government and was sometimes marked by intense partisanship and other times by cooperation across the aisle. Generally, Congress was more powerful in the 19th century than in the 20th century, when the presidency (particularly during the 1920s) became a more dominant branch. One analyst examining congressional history suggested there were four main eras, with considerable overlap, and these included the formative period (1789–1829), the partisan era (1830s–20th century), the committee era (1910s–1960s), and the contemporary era (1970s–today). The Congress Voting Independence, by Robert Edgar. Fine, pitched the Second Continental Congress voting in 1776. Although one can trace the history of the Congress of the United States to the First Continental Congress, which met in the autumn of 1774,[2] the true antecedent of the United States Congress was convened on May 10, 1775, with twelve colonies in attendance. A year later, on July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress declared the thirteen colonies free and independent states, referring to them as the "United States of America". The Second Continental Congress was the national government until March 1, 1781, supervised the war and diplomacy, and adopted the Articles of Confederation before the States ratified it in 1781. One common term for patriot was "Congress Man"—a supporter of Congress against the King.[citation needed] The Congress of the Confederation governed the United States for eight years (March 1, 1781, to March 4, 1789). There was no chief executive or president before 1789, so Congress governed the United States. The Articles of Confederation was written in 1776 and came into effect in 1781. This established a weak central government, with only a unicameral body, in which each state was equally represented and each had a veto over most actions. There was no executive or judicial branch. This congress was given limited authority over foreign affairs and military matters, but not to collect taxes, regulate interstate commerce, or enforce laws.[3] This system of government did not work well, with economic fights among the states, and an inability to suppress rebellion or guarantee the national defense.[3] John Shaw Flag (red first variation) John Shaw Flag (white first variation)
Annapolis became the temporary capital of the United States after the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Congress was in session in the state house from November 26, 1783, to June 3, 1784, and it was in Annapolis on December 23, 1783, that General Washington resigned his commission as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. For the 1783 Congress, the governor of Maryland commissioned John Shaw, a local cabinet maker, to create an American flag.[4] The flag is slightly different from other designs of the time. The blue field extends over the entire height of the hoist. Shaw created two versions of the flag: one that started with a red and white canton and another that started with a white canton. In 1787, a convention, to which delegates from all the states of the Union were invited, was called to meet in Annapolis to consider measures for the better regulation of commerce, but delegates came from only five states (New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, and Delaware), and the convention, known afterward as the "Annapolis Convention", without proceeding to the business for which it had met, passed a resolution calling for another convention to meet at Philadelphia in the following year to amend the Articles of Confederation. The Philadelphia convention drafted and approved the Constitution of the United States, which is still in force. In May 1787, a Convention met in the Philadelphia State House for the purpose of resolving problems with the Articles of Confederation. Instead, the Articles were scrapped entirely, and a new Constitution was drafted.[3] All states agreed to send delegates, except Rhode Island. One of the most divisive issues facing the convention was the way which structure of Congress would be defined. The practice of having "two-house" bicameral legislatures (bicameral from the Latin camera meaning chamber) was well established in state governments by 1787.[5] Edmund Randolph's Virginia Plan argued for a bicameral Congress; the lower house would be elected directly by the people whereas the upper house would be elected by the lower house.[6][7] The plan attracted support of delegates from large states as it called for representation based on population. The smaller states, however, favored the New Jersey Plan, which had a unicameral Congress with equal representation for the states.[8] Arguments between federalists and anti-federalists about congressional scope, power, role, and authority happened before ratification of the Constitution and continue, to varying extents, to the present day. Generally, the Constitution gave more powers to the federal government, such as regulating interstate commerce[9][10] [citation needed], managing foreign affairs and the military, and establishing a national currency. These were seen as essential for the success of the new nation, but the states retained sovereignty over the internal affairs.[11] Especially, as the Commercial Compromise of the Great Compromise was settled, one house of Congress would provide proportional representation, and whereas the other would provide equal representation to preserve further the authority of the states, the compromise proposed that state legislatures, rather than the people, would elect senators.[12] To protect against abuse of power at the federal level, the Constitution mandated separation of powers, with responsibilities divided among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The Constitution was ratified by the end of 1788, and its full implementation was set for March 4, 1789.[13][14][15] The Constitution defines the Senate as having two senators for each state in the Union. The size of the House of Representatives is based on the number of states and their populations. The numerical size of the House is set by law, not by the Constitution. The House grew in size as states were admitted throughout the 19th century, and as the nation grew in population. Since the Constitution allows for one representative for as few as 30,000 citizens, Congress passed new, higher limits for the House, which grew in size until a law passed in 1911, based on the 1910 United States census, established the present upper limit of 435 members of the House.[16] Since the House's size was fixed but the population kept growing, instead of a congressperson representing only 30,000 citizens (as the Constitution had previously established), a congressperson represents 600,000 and more persons.[17] There have also been and continue to be a small number of non-voting members who represent U.S. territories. The Second Bank of the United States was the source of considerable controversy from the 1820s through 1840s. The Constitution remained the main issue for Americans until the 1792 elections, consisting of a battle between the U.S. Federalist Party (Pro-Administration Party), which supported the Constitution and the Anti-Federalist Party (Anti-Administration Party), which opposed the Constitution. After the first Congressional and Presidential elections took place in 1789, the Federalists had control over US Congress. Between 1792 and 1800 the struggle over Congress was between the Federalist Party and the Republican Party, which was the main party that opposed Andrew Jackson until 1824. Jefferson, who was elected President in 1800, gained Senate seats in parts of the Senate, but he maintained control over Congress until 1835, when Jackson's James Madison, uniting with moderate Jefferson and prominent Anti-Federalists to form the Democratic Republican Party, as Madison became an opposer to Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton's First Bank of the United States. In 1794, however, the Democratic Republican Party lost control of the United States Senate, thanks in part to the party's opposition to Jay's Treaty. In 1796, the Democratic Republican Party would also lose control of the United States House of Representatives, due to the party's support of the unpopular French Revolution.[18] though the Democratic Republican Party still could obtain second place victories in these elections— which made Jefferson the US Vice President— as well; Washington, however, was supported by almost every American, and even though he ran under the Federalist ticket, he still was not an official Federalist and was easily re-elected U.S. president unanimously in 1792 as well, and John Adams— an actual Federalist who was also elected United States President in 1796— was elected vice president (president of the Senate) on the Federalist ticket with Washington as well. Henry Clay wielded great influence in the early Congress. The early 19th century was marked by frequent clashes between the House of Representatives and the Senate. After victory in the 1800 US elections, Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party dominated both the US Senate and US House of Representatives, as well as the presidential elections; this was because states' rights became a popular issue after the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions protested against the Federalists Alien and Sedition Acts.[19] Federalists, after having lost the presidency and Congress, had a stronghold in the Supreme Court, presided over by chief justice John Marshall. One highly partisan justice, Samuel Chase, had irked president Jefferson by highly charged partisan attacks on his character, calling him a "Jacobin". Jefferson, after becoming president, urged Congress to impeach Chase. The House initiated impeachment in 1804, and the Senate tried but acquitted Chase. In 1832, the House impeached Chief Justice Roger Taney, but the Senate acquitted him. The House impeached and limited their criticisms to the judicial aspects of congressional and presidential decisions. Chase was the only Supreme Court justice impeached by Congress.[20] Henry Clay of Kentucky was the speaker of the US House of Representatives, and dominant leader over Congress, during the 1810s. A careful numerical balance between the free North and the slave holding South existed in the Senate, as the numbers of free and slave states was kept equal by a series of compromises, such as the Missouri Compromise of 1820. That broke down in 1850 when California was admitted as a free state, but the Compromise of 1850 postponed a showdown. Meanwhile, the North was growing faster and dominated the House of Representatives, despite the rule that counted 3/5 of non-voting slaves in the population base of the South. This section needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources in this section. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. (March 2017) (Learn how and when to remove this message) The decisive defeat of the British by forces led by General Jackson made the warrior an American hero. The victory of John Quincy Adams in 1824 was challenged by Andrew Jackson, who argued a corrupt bargain between Clay and Adams had cheated Jackson; Jackson led both electoral votes and popular votes, but had no majority in the electoral college. Clay strongly opposed Jackson's "total war" policy (Jackson's unauthorized invasion of the Spanish colony of Florida was criticized in Congress—Jackson was the victorious general of the Battle of New Orleans). Clay gave his votes in the House of Representatives to the candidate who was closest to Jackson in terms of both electoral votes and popular votes, namely, John Quincy Adams. Jackson and his (as yet unnamed) followers easily dominated the 1826 Congressional Election and took complete control of the 20th United States Congress. As the Second Party System emerged, the Whigs and Jacksonians (called "Democrats" by 1834) battled for control of Congress.[24] In 1832, the divide between the pro-slavery southern Democratic candidate Franklin Pierce and broke with Henry Clay over the Compromise of 1850) and the anti-slavery Northern (who stood behind Clay's compromise and supported the party's nominee Winfield Scott) would also help give the
Democrats not only control both houses of Congress, but also the US presidency as well.[25] In the 1854 elections, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, sponsored by Senator Stephen Douglas, was put against vehement opposition. The opposition to this act led to the formation of the new Republican party. In early 1856, the Know Nothing Party assembled nativists and former Whigs but the Democrats regained control over Congress. During this time the Know Nothing Party and Republican Party united and together, elected Know Nothing Congressman Nathaniel Prentice Banks, as to serve as the speaker of the House of Representatives for the remaining years of the 34th United States Congress. Through the 35th United States Congress, the Democrats regained control of both houses in Congress; this thanks in part to the division of the Know-Nothing Party and the Republican Party during the 1856 US presidential election.[26] The Know Nothings soon collapsed, and in the North were absorbed by the Republicans, who dominated most of the House and took control of the U.S. House of Representatives in the 1858 elections, as abolitionist Know Nothings joined the Republican Party after the controversial Dred Scott ruling occurred in 1857. In 1860, Abraham Lincoln led the Republicans to a victory based entirely in the anti-slavery North, and the Republican Party now took full control of Congress. Investors in 1873 clamber up the Fourth National Bank No. 20 Nassau Street hoping to get their money back. Congress played a major role in the American Civil War, as the Republicans were in control of both chambers; after the war ended in 1865, Reconstruction was controlled by President Andrew Johnson, who broke with the Radical Republicans (led by Congressman Thaddeus Stevens and Senator Charles Sumner.) After the Radical Party came to power, impeached (but not convicted) President Johnson, and rolled Reconstruction policy. The Radical hope was broken by the Democratic landslide victories in the election of 1874, and Democrats regained control of the US House of Representatives, and even gained control of the US Senate in the 1878 US Senate election as the depression worsened. The Gilded Age (1877–1901) was marked by Republican dominance of Congress—and the Presidency— except in the early years, and some of the mid-years of the Gilded Age, despite the Democratic lock on the Solid South. 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and little action. The last time that anyone did anything about it was in 1945, when the last Senator Robert M. La Follette Jr., Progressive from Wisconsin, and Representative Mike Monroney, Oklahoma Democrat, headed a committee that investigated congressional procedures. Out of that investigation came a legislative reorganization act that, among other things, cut the number of standing congressional committees from 81 to 34, and required Capitol Hill lobbyists to register. ^ "Bitsnews.com". Bitsnews.com. Retrieved January 21, 2012. ^ "Independence Day". Time. November 8, 1948. Archived from the original on July 3, 2009. Retrieved January 21, 2012. ^ "New Jobs, Old Faces". Time. November 15, 1948. Archived from the original on July 3, 2009. Retrieved January 21, 2012. ^ "RT66.com". RT66.com. Archived from the original on February 4, 2012. Retrieved January 21, 2012. ^ "Ashbrook.org". Ashbrook.org. Retrieved January 21, 2012. ^ "Volokh.com". Volokh.com. 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Whereas the Chairman of the Committee, and two of his Republican colleagues, were dismissed from the Committee; Whereas, in a statement to the press, the departing Chairman of the Committee stated '[t]here is a bad perception out there that there was a purge in the Committee and that people were put in that would protect our side of the aisle better than I did,' and a replaced Republican Member, also in a statement to the press, referring to his dismissal from the Committee, noted his belief that 'the decision was a direct result of our work in the last session'; Whereas the newly appointed Chairman of the Committee improperly and unilaterally fired nonpartisan Committee staff who assisted in the ethics work in the last session; and ... ^ a b Emi Kolawole (August 20, 2010). "Tom DeLay: Don't think I'm stupid". The Washington Post. Archived from the original on January 12, 2012. Retrieved September 11, 2010. But DeLay did have one regret, 'The only regret that I have is this criminalization of politics - it's not bad enough now to just beat 'em in policy or let them ruin your reputation. They've got to bankrupt you, ruin your family, put you in jail, put you in the grave and then dance on your grave.' ... DeLay denied that he crossed the line in his dealings with former lobbyist Jack Abramoff. 'It's bad enough for people to call me corrupt, but it really makes me angry when people think I'm stupid,' said DeLay who insisted he was surrounded by lawyers and frequently sought their opinion before doing anything. 'I couldn't go to the restroom without a legal opinion.' ^ The New York Times, January 11, 2011: Article David M. Herszenhorn; Robert Pear (March 25, 2010). "Final Votes in Congress Cap Battle on Health Bill". The New York Times. Retrieved September 11, 2010. 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