



## AP<sup>®</sup> United States Government & Politics 2003 Sample Student Responses

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Congressional Committees exemplify the economic concept of specialization of labor. Not only are committees divided by subject area, which allows individual Congress members to specialize and become experts in areas of policy, but they also contain subcommittees, specializing Congressional expertise even more. This specialization allows at least some measure of efficiency in the cumbersome legislative process by allowing members to develop a base of knowledge on a subject area and then limit the number of bills from that area that are debated on the House floor. Theoretically, this ensures that only the best bills and resolutions make it out of committee because they would have to pass the scrutiny of those Congress members best versed in the bill's subject area.

Party representation on committees is designed to give both an edge in representation and the committee's chair to the majority party in Congress. This makes committees relatively representative of the House or Senate as a whole as well as increasing the majority party's ability to control (to a large extent) the legislative and policy agenda. Since the committee chair (of the majority party) schedules hearings on bills and only by a majority vote can a bill be recommended to the full House or Senate floor, only with the consent of the majority party can bills or resolutions come up for a vote and garner mass media attention, setting them on the legislative and policy agenda.

The Senate Majority Leader has great power in scheduling when items come up for debate and setting the legislative calendar. This can effectively prevent many bills from being considered on the full Senate floor.

if the Majority Leader opposes them, solidifying the majority party's control over the legislative agenda. For example, Bob Dole chose never to schedule debate or votes on many of President Clinton's Court nominees, an action which outraged Democrats and caused retaliation from Majority Leader Tom Daschle on President George W. Bush's judicial nominees.

Whips on both sides of the aisle are responsible for party discipline. By cajoling, persuading, bargaining, arm-twisting, or threatening Congress members, whips attempt to line up the entire party behind its stated principles. This increase in party discipline makes the legislative process more streamlined because votes become more predictable when they fall on party lines. Additionally, it makes the entire legislative process more conducive to the majority party in the House, where a one-vote majority can push through bills if party discipline is high. In the ~~Senate~~ Senate, high party discipline could help a minority party with at least 40 seats hold off cloture votes perpetually and sustain a filibuster until the majority party agrees to concessions.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the examination.

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a.) Specialization is the result of membership on a standing committee, wherein a Congressman gains expertise in the field his committee deals with. This has the effect that the people dealing with a bill know the most about it. It also justifies long-term membership on the same committee.

Party representation ~~is proportional~~ on a committee is proportional to party representation in that branch of Congress. For example, if the House is 60% Republican, each committee will be 60% Republican as well. This reinforces the strength of the majority party, by giving it more influence over which bills even make it to the floor.

b) The membership of a committee is the determining factor of how that committee behaves. Since the party leadership determines who will sit on which committee, this gives them great influence over what the general behavior of the specific committees will be.

Often, parties like to have all their members vote the same way, to present a united front and show strength within the party. In these cases it is the party leadership which determines the direction in which the party as a whole is to vote. Thus, in some circumstances, the party leadership essentially decides the outcome of the vote.

In order to adopt effective legislation, several elements of the congressional committee system are applied such as specialization and party representation on committees. Specialization is used in both the Senate and House of Representatives to save time and allow a better informed and familiarized group of legislators to evaluate and look over bills. With Congress there are specialized committees for certain areas such as agriculture or national defense. Once a bill is proposed, it is sent to the specialized committee to be reviewed. This next element of the congressional committee system is very beneficial because of the large number of congressmen. It would take a longer time to review all bills at once with all congressmen. There are both Republicans and Democrats on committees which provides for equality. Democrats and Republicans usually have ~~contrasting~~ different or contrasting views on subjects thus making the legislation diverse. Party leadership in Congress can influence the legislative process by having the majority. If the majority leader in the House is the Democrat, then they will have more weight and influence in what bills are passed.