

Handout A: Background Essay—Congress in the Modern Era Answer Key

Critical Thinking Questions

1. The candidate for office differs from the person in office because of the structure of the legislative process and Congress itself, the dominating role of political parties, and desire for campaign contributions from special interest groups and supporters.
2. Special interest groups, or SIGs, hire lobbyists who work to convince members to pass legislation that is beneficial to the industry or group the lobbyists represent. The lobbyists try to persuade the members and their staffs to add language to bills that will help the SIG or may add funding. The SIG may give financial support to a member who was helpful or if the member has the power to potentially help them.
3. They help the congressperson wield influence to benefit the favored groups and help the member keep their assignments on committees or subcommittees. They also assist the member with constituents since the congressperson is usually in committee hearings or voting. The assistants read the proposed legislation carefully and make recommendations for action.
4. Interns are unpaid so the member can have several who will perform all kinds of valuable jobs, such as interacting with the constituents who call the office, clerical work the office needs, attending committee briefings, and escorting constituents and VIPs.
5. The pay is low, the hours are long, and the turn-over high because as soon as the staffer gets significant experience, they may be hired by the private sector or other congressional offices which may offer more lucrative salaries or better working conditions.

Handout B: Congressional Member's Staff Chart Answer Key

Washington, D.C. Office	Position	Task
	Chief of Staff	Supervises all staff, manages hiring, acts as primary policy advisor; manages relationships with other members, party leadership, and constituent community
	Legislative Director	Helps write bills; compiles vote recommendations
	Legislative Assistants	Policy experts who have portfolios they manage on specific issues; help director draft and analyze bills
	Press Communications Staffer	Media's contact point; Internet and social media; can be headquartered at the district office
	Legislative Correspondent	Manages daily written communications & social media contacts with constituents
	Interns	Non-paid staffers who help answer phones, give tours of the Capitol, perform whatever task needs to be completed

District/Home Office		
	Director	Keeps Capitol Hill staff aware of home issues; Answers constituent issues in; constituent services; Keeps Capitol Hill staff aware of home issues; Answers constituent issues in; constituent services
	Scheduler	Schedules all meeting requests with the member, organizes events, and transportation; can be located on Capitol Hill
	Staff Assistant	Word processing, filing, responding to constituent requests, reception, can be located on Capitol Hill
	Field Representatives	Community liaisons; hosts meetings throughout the district, attends events and meetings on behalf of the member

1. The Capitol Hill office focuses on committee work, policy issues, and understanding, writing, and revising proposed legislation. The District Office's focus is the constituents' needs and keeping local stakeholders informed and engaged with the Congress members' activities.
2. Both Capitol Hill and District offices work to keep the congressperson organized, informed and in office.

Handout C: Political Cartoons Answer Key

Cartoon 1

1. Donkey-Democratic Party, Uncle Sam-U.S.A., Elephant-Republican Party
2. (Donkey) Can't do anything; (Elephant) Won't do anything
3. The United States cannot function because neither party cooperating. The animals are not facing the same direction and are attached at both ends of the cart.
4. Answers may vary but should demonstrate an understanding that little gets accomplished without the parties cooperating.
5. Answers may vary but should demonstrate an understanding that in a slow and deliberative legislative body, members will disagree about policy and legislation, and that disagreement is a normal part of a deliberative legislative body.

Cartoon 2

1. The Elephant-Both chambers of Congress; Uncle Sam- USA; President Obama with a large veto pen-President Obama plans to veto bill
2. "House", Senate, "What do you mean it's pointless?" "Compromise in 2015" "Veto pen"
3. Since the House and Senate are Republican majority and the President is planning to veto bills that body sends, there is no reason to work out a compromise.
4. Rather than working toward finding some common ground on which the Congress and the President can agree, the Congress will not try to compromise
5. Answers may vary but should indicate an understanding that both show the government not functioning to get legislation written. The first cartoon is showing in Congress the two parties are not working together while the second shows the divided government is not functioning in 2015.