

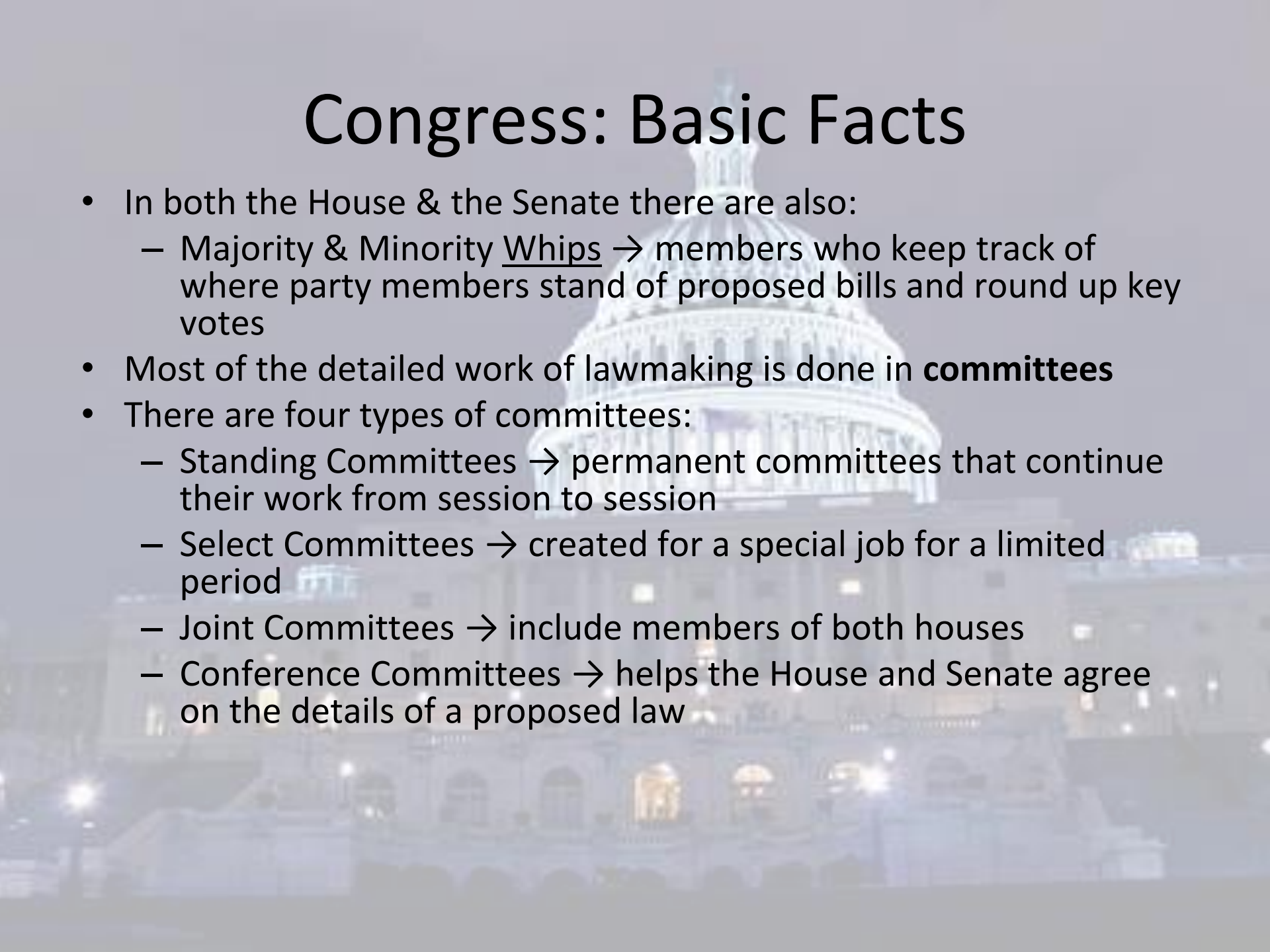
The image shows the United States Capitol building at night. The central dome is brightly lit, and the building's facade is also illuminated, with many windows glowing from within. The sky is dark, and the overall scene is a classic night view of the Capitol.

Congress: The Basics

Congress: Basic Facts

- The legislative branch is created in Article One of the Constitution
- The Congress is bicameral (two houses) → the House of Representatives & the Senate
- There are 535 total members of Congress
- In both the House & the Senate there are:
 - Majority Leaders → the leader of the political party with more than half the members **NAMES?**
 - Minority Leaders → the leader of the political party with fewer than half the members **NAMES?**

Congress: Basic Facts



- In both the House & the Senate there are also:
 - Majority & Minority Whips → members who keep track of where party members stand on proposed bills and round up key votes
- Most of the detailed work of lawmaking is done in **committees**
- There are four types of committees:
 - Standing Committees → permanent committees that continue their work from session to session
 - Select Committees → created for a special job for a limited period
 - Joint Committees → include members of both houses
 - Conference Committees → helps the House and Senate agree on the details of a proposed law

Committee Assignments



Based on resources and makeup of populations in a district.

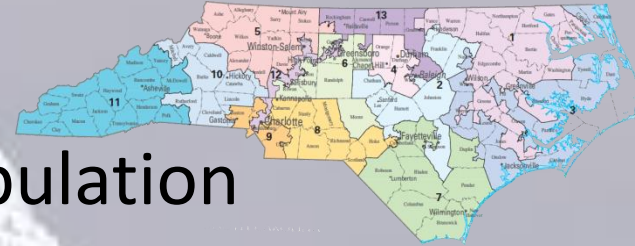
A Senator from Iowa (Chuck Grassley) or North Carolina (Thom Tillis) might be assigned to the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee.

Seniority also plays a factor and can determine committee chairperson role.

- Drifting away from this

The House of Representatives

- 435 Members → determined by population
- Serve 2 year terms; represent a district in their state
- Led by the Speaker of the House
- Qualifications:
 - Must be at least 25 years old
 - Live in the state you represent
 - Be a U.S. citizen for 7 years
- Seats are reapportioned (reassigned) to the states every 10 years based on the census → states then redraw district lines (redistricting)



The Senate



- 100 Members → 2 from each state
- Serve 6 year terms; represent their entire state
- Officially led by the Vice President; day-to-day leader is the President Pro Tempore
- Qualifications:
 - Must be at least 30 years old
 - Live in the state you represent
 - Be a U.S. citizen for 9 years
- Only one-third of the Senate is up for reelection every 2 years
- Because the members are older and serve longer terms, the Senate is the more prestigious body

Special Powers of the House



- Only the House can propose tax bills → Framers believed that the members of the HR were closer to the people
- The House Rules Committee is the most important committee → it sets the calendar for bills to be debated and the rules for debate
- The House begins the impeachment process → formally accusing a president of wrongdoing
- If there is a tie vote for president in the Electoral College, the HR breaks the tie

Special Powers of the Senate

- Only the Senate can add completely unrelated amendments to bills called riders
- The Senate must confirm all presidential appointments
- The Senate must ratify (approve) all treaties
- The Senate formally votes to remove an impeached president (2 presidents impeached; the Senate removed neither)
- If there is a tie for V.P. in the Electoral College, the Senate breaks the tie

Non-legislative Powers

Approval - Presidential nominees (cabinet members, ambassadors, federal judges, Supreme Court justices)

Removal - federal official who committed any serious wrongdoing

House - Impeaches by majority vote (accuse)

Senate - Removes official by 2/3s vote (try)

Oversight - cmte monitors effectiveness

Investigation - Watergate, Iran-Contra, Trump-Russia

Impeachment note!

Please note I spend waaaaay more time teaching this in greater depth than you are held accountable for. This info as a result of repeated student questions going back to 2015.

Impeachment & Removal Info

Impeachment definition

- A. Being formally accused of unlawful activity, committing a crime**
- B. Not necessarily being kicked out of office**

Who can be Impeached?

Article II, Section 4 of the Constitution

- A. “President, Vice-President, and all civil officers of the United States”**
- B. Civil Officers include people appointed by the President (cabinet members and judges)**
- C. Members of Congress are NOT civil officers**

Impeachment & Removal Steps



- 1. Justice Department or an independent council investigates charges & presents them to the House Judiciary Committee**
- 2. House Judiciary Committee (HJC) reviews evidence**
- 3. HJC drafts Articles of Impeachment**

Impeachment & Removal Steps



4. HJC debates Articles of Impeachment (Nixon)

5. Entire House of Representatives debates Articles of Impeachment & votes on them

a. Requirement: Simple Majority

b. If this happens, President is considered Impeached

Impeachment & Removal Steps

6. Senate holds the Trial -

"Will the official be kicked out of office?"

- a. House Judiciary Committee acts as the prosecution-- presents evidence against the accused**
- b. Accused chooses own lawyers to present defense**
- c. Chief Justice of Supreme Court acts as Judge and rules on admissibility of evidence**
- d. Senate acts as the Jury**
- e. Requirement: A 2/3 majority of the Senate must vote against accused to remove the person from office (Andrew Johnson, Bill Clinton)**

1998 Impeachment proceedings against President Bill Clinton

Charge	House vote	Passed?	Senate vote	Passed?
1) Perjury to a grand jury	228–206	Yes	45-55	No
2) Obstruction of justice	221–212	Yes	50-50	No
3) Perjury (second count)	205–229	No	N/A	N/A
4) Abuse of power	148–285	No	N/A	N/A

Limits on Power



cannot

- suspend writ of habeas corpus
- pass bills of attainder
- pass ex post facto laws
- grant titles of nobility