

United States Congress:

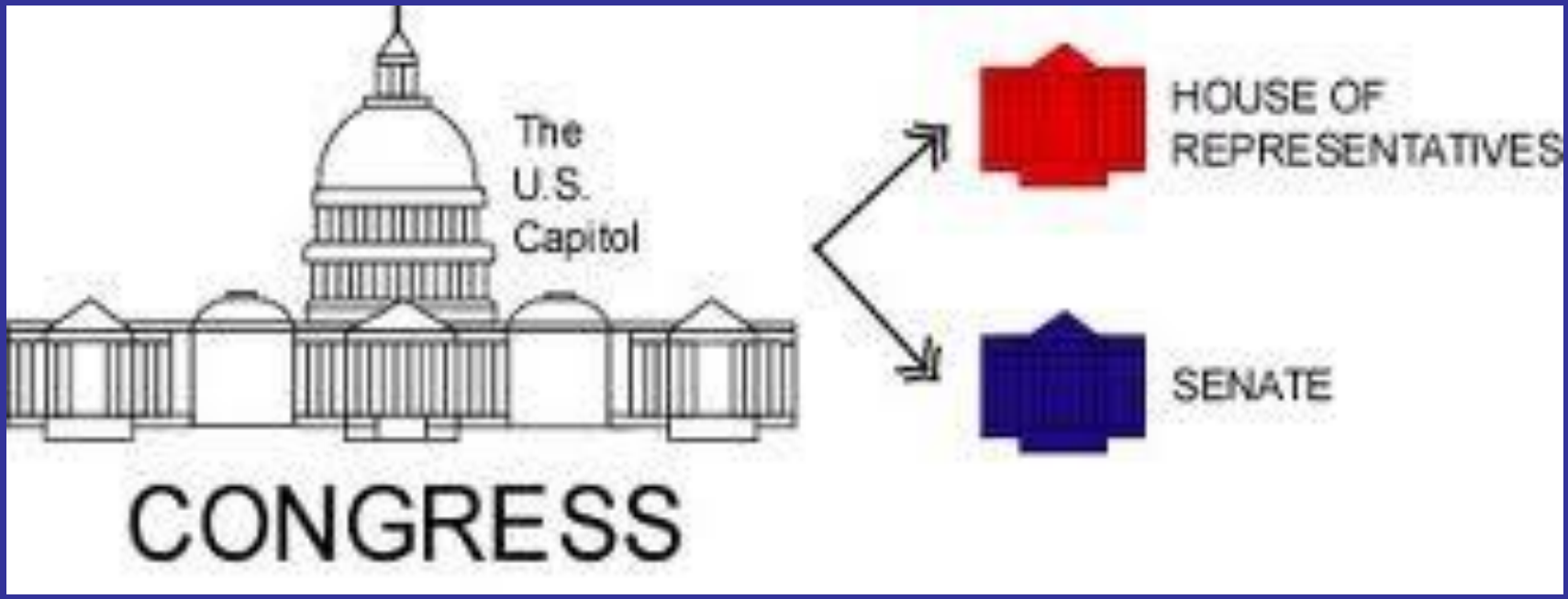
The Basics

Article I ~ Legislative Branch

The US Constitution states the following:

- “All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.”
- House of Rep’s = population (435 members)
- Senate = 2 per state (100 members)
- The Great Compromise creates a bicameral system

Bicameral Legislature



House of Representatives

Qualifications:

- Minimum 25 years old
- Citizen for 7 years
- Resident of the district

How is the number of rep's determined?

- Originally, 1 per 30,000 (smallest ratio)
- 1911 = the number was fixed by Congress at 435

Length of Term = 2 years; can serve as long as the voters will keep re-elect them

*Supposed to be more in-tune with ordinary people

WA – 10th Congressional District





Reapportionment

- *Census* = official population count; takes place every 10 years
- *Reapportionment* = following each census, representatives are re-allocated based upon population growth, stagnation, or loss
- Some states will gain seats, others will lose seats

Politics of Redistricting

- *Redistricting* = the lines of each district get redrawn to make each congressional district roughly equal in population
- Each state has laws governing this process
- Can become highly political = each side tries to gain an advantage
- *Gerrymandering* = drawing the lines to favor one party over another
- Instead of following natural geographic features, lines are drawn to include or exclude certain neighborhoods
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_QNH7EYvcQ&t=7s&ab_channel=CBSSundayMorning

Origins of Gerrymandering

- Term first used in 1812
- Mass. Gov. Elbridge Gerry signed a bill redistricting his state to give a huge advantage to the Democratic-Republicans
- To accomplish this, district lines were drawn in unusual shapes and cut through & around some neighborhoods
- Criticized by the Federalists

Political Cartoon ~ 1812

- The following cartoon was published
- Federalists claimed that one of the districts looked like a “salamander” created by Gerry
- thus it became known as a “gerrymander”
- Gerrymandering in the news:

https://www.politico.com/news/2022/01/14/ohio-congressional-map-struck-down-527116

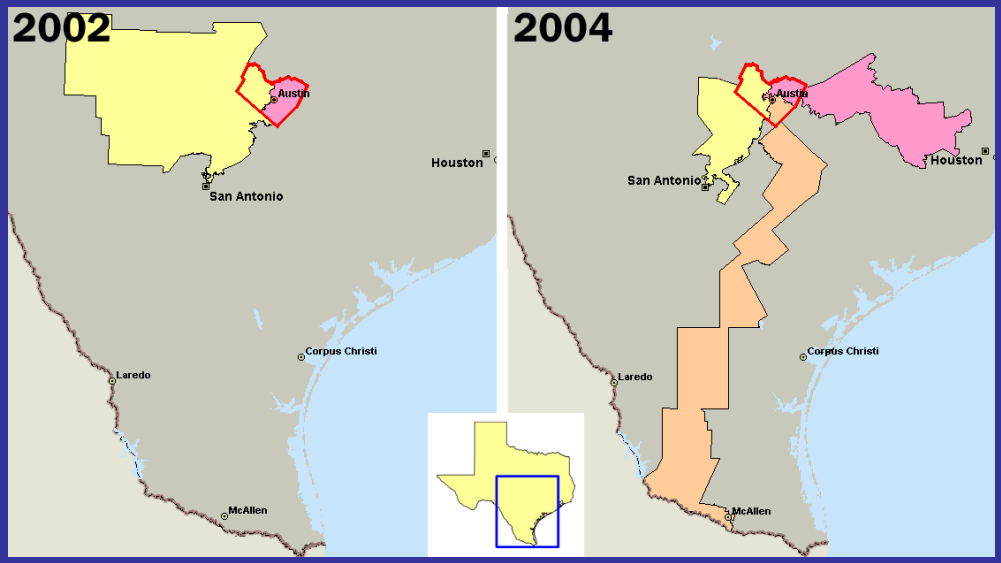


Gerrymandering Examples

California



Texas



[Redistricting Game]

https://www.redistricting.wa.gov/final-maps

Senate

Qualifications ~ “The Upper House”

- 30 years old
- Citizen for 9 years
- Resident of the state

Term ~ 6 years, no term limits

- Staggered terms
- 1/3 of the senate is up every 2 years

2 per state = 100 senators

WA's Senators





XVII Amendment

Adopted in 1913 ~ changed the way each state chooses its senators

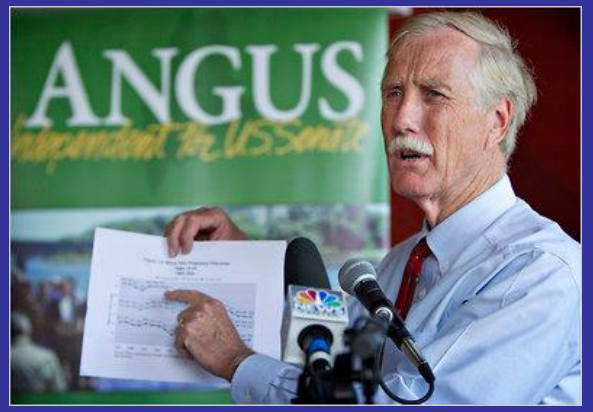
- Prior to the 17th Amendment ~ senators were chosen by the State Legislatures
- After the 17th Amendment ~ chosen directly by the people

*Senate tends to work at a slower pace; it's supposed to be a very deliberative body

2023-2024 Congress

Senate:

- 48 Democrats
- 3 Independents (caucus with Dem's)
- 49 Republicans



House of Rep's:

- 219 Republicans
- 213 Democrats



