

Voting in Congress: More Than "Yea" or "Nay"

Time Needed: One or two class periods

Materials Needed:

Student worksheets; Teacher's Guide
(*only for paper option*)

Copy Instructions:

Student voting guide (*Two pages; double-sided OK; class set*)

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Identify the constitutional powers of Congress.
- Describe the factors members of Congress weigh when voting on bills.
- Demonstrate how members of Congress weigh factors by voting on hypothetical bills.
- Evaluate information in order to apply each factor to real-life issues in the hypothetical bills.
- Weigh the importance of the factors by deciding whether to vote "yea" or "nay" on each bill.

STEP BY STEP

OPTION A: PAPER-ONLY LESSON (one class period)

- ❑ **DISTRIBUTE** one "More than 'Yea' or 'Nay'" notetaking handout to each student.
- ❑ **SHOW** students how to fold the handout in half so it makes a booklet. Factor #1 should be on the front.
- ❑ **USE** the Teacher Key for the handout to guide students through filling out the handout. Discuss concepts with the class as you go along.
- ❑ **PAUSE** during the lesson to quiz the class using the mini quizzes. (see Active Participation Guide)
- ❑ **DISTRIBUTE** one "More Than 'Yea' or 'Nay'" voting handout to each student—***first page only.*** You will only guide the class through voting on Bill A.
- ❑ **GUIDE** students through the voting activity by following the instructions and discussion points on the "Class Activity Guide."

OPTION B: POWER POINT LESSON (one or two class periods)

Day One

- ❑ **DISTRIBUTE** one "More than 'Yea' or 'Nay'" notetaking handout to each student.
- ❑ **SHOW** students how to fold the handout in half so it makes a booklet. Factor #1 should be on the front.
- ❑ **GUIDE** students through the "Voting in Congress: More Than 'Yea' or 'Nay'" Power Point presentation. Pause to allow students to fill in the blanks in their "booklets" as you go along. (Students will use the booklets as a reference for the Day 2 activity.) The lesson includes mini-quizzes throughout, as well as a final mini quiz for closure.

Day Two

- ❑ **DISTRIBUTE** one "More Than 'Yea' or 'Nay'" voting handout to each student.
- ❑ **TELL** students to fill in their identities on the top half of the first page
- ❑ **GUIDE** students through the "Voting in Congress: More Than 'Yea' or 'Nay'" Day 2 Power Point presentation. Pause for discussion of each question and issue. *Students should refer to their "booklets" from Day 1 during the presentation.* The presentation will tell students when it's time to write information on their handouts and when it's time to vote. (If you don't get through all the bills, that's OK.)

Mini Quizzes—Paper Version

DIRECTIONS: Tell the class you will ask a series of questions and that they are to answer as a chorus. Tell them to wait to answer until you ask for the answer. Ask each question twice, give wait time, then ask for the answer. Ask the class to explain why “false” or wrong answer choices are incorrect.

Mini Quiz #1

(Give quiz after you’ve done Factor #1)

1. Congress can pass any law it wants to. (F)
2. Congress has the power to create armies. (T)
3. Congress cannot control business that happens in more than one state. (F)
4. Congress may collect taxes for certain reasons. (T)
5. Congress cannot make any laws about immigration. (F)
6. Congress can make any law as long as it is “necessary and proper.” (F)
7. When can Congress do something that is not listed in the Constitution?
 - A. Always
 - B. Never
 - C. *When it relates to something that is listed.*
 - D. Only on Thursdays

Mini Quiz #2

(Give quiz after you’ve done Factor #4)

1. Members of Congress vote based only on their personal opinions. (F)
2. Members of Congress always agree with their political party about bills. (F)
3. When considering a bill, members of Congress should think about:
 - A. Only themselves
 - B. *Voters back home*
 - C. People on the moon
4. If people in Congress do a bad job, voters back home can kick them out. (T)
5. In Congress, being on a political party is like being on a _____. (team)
6. People in political parties share similar:
 - A. Eye Color
 - B. Opinions about movies
 - C. *Values*
7. When voting on a bill, members of Congress usually think about four things. What are those four things?

(The Powers of Congress, Personal Opinion, Political Party Views, and What the Voters Think)

Voting Activity—Paper Version (A Bill to Stop Mail on Saturdays)

DIRECTIONS: Make sure each student has a copy of the voting handout. First, let students choose their identities by filling out the top half of the handout. Then help the class put the “four factors” they just learned about into practice by guiding them through a vote to decide whether Saturday mail delivery should stop. Use the guide below to help students consider each factor properly.

Factor #1: Does Congress have the power to stop Saturday mail delivery?

- Does Congress have power over post offices (therefore the postal service)?
- Have students check the list in their booklets under Factor #1
- Have students fill in the information for Factor #1 on the voting handout.

Factor #2: In your opinion, should Saturday mail delivery end?

- WAIT! Some things to consider (discuss each one with the class):
 - The Postal Service pays for itself with the money it brings in from its services.
 - The Postal Service has been losing a LOT of money because people are sending fewer letters
 - Why might people be sending fewer letters (email; paying bills online)
 - In 2009, the Postal Service lost \$3.8 billion. Stopping Saturday mail would save \$3 billion.
 - However, a lot of people want to get mail 6 days per week!
- Have students fill in the information for Factor #2 on the voting handout

Factor #3: Would your political party support stopping mail delivery on Saturdays?

- Tell students to look at the checklist of values on the front of their voting handout. Which value most matches the purpose of this bill? Which political party most likely supports that value? (cost saving—Republican)
- Have students fill in the information for Factor #3 on the voting handout

Factor #4: Would your voters support stopping Saturday mail delivery?

- WAIT! More things to consider (discuss each with the class):
- In 1957, Congress passed a bill to end Saturday mail delivery. It lasted one Saturday. Voters were so angry that Congress passed another bill to bring Saturday mail delivery back!
 - Did they have email and online bill pay in 1957? Might that make a difference?
- For this activity, have students pretend the majority of voters they represent are older voters. Older voters are more likely to use the Postal Service, while younger voters are more likely to do business online. If the majority of their voters are older, will the voters likely support this bill?
- Have students fill in the information for Factor #3 on the voting handout.

Time to Vote!

- Tell students to weight the four factors and mark their vote for or against the bill on their voting handout
- Tally the votes
- Discuss results with the class

What the

Think

There would be too many people in Congress if

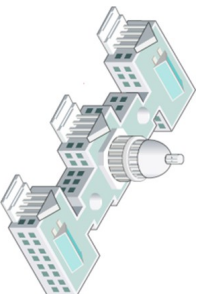
_____ went . . .



So voters choose a _____ people to represent them.

Members of Congress are responsible for _____ the voters back _____.

So they'd better think about those voters, because voters _____ people to Congress . . .



. . . and voters can _____ people _____!



FACTOR

#4

The

of

Congress is _____ by what the

_____ says.

Here is what Congress can do:



•Collect _____ to raise money to pay _____, to

_____ the country, and to provide for the _____ of the U.S.

•Pass laws about _____ that happens in more than one _____, with _____ countries, and with Indian _____.

•Make laws about _____.

•Make laws about _____.

•Establish _____.

•Declare _____.

•Raise and support _____.



Congress can also make all _____ laws _____ that are _____ and _____ for executing the powers on the list above.

That means Congress can sometimes can do things that are

_____ on the list if it is related to something that _____ on the list.

FACTOR

#1

Personal _____

Members of Congress are _____, just like you!

Sometimes members of Congress _____ with a bill . . .



. . . and sometimes they are totally _____ a bill.



FACTOR

#2

_____ Views

People in a political party share similar _____.

They work for _____ that _____ those values.



For a member of Congress, being on a political party is like being on a _____.

Members of the team _____ each other and try to create _____ that reflect their values.

Usually members of Congress _____ with their political party about bills . . .



. . . but sometimes they _____!

FACTOR

#3

What the Voters Think

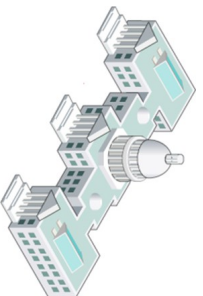
There would be too many people in Congress if *everyone* went



So voters choose a *few* people to represent them.

Members of Congress are responsible for *representing* the voters back *home* .

So they'd better think about those voters, because voters *send* people to Congress



can



. . . and voters *kick* people *out* !



FACTOR

#4

The Powers of Congress

Congress is *limited* by what the *Constitution* says.

Here is what Congress can do:



- Collect *taxes* to raise money to pay *debts* , to defend the country, and to provide for the *general welfare* of the U.S.
- Pass laws about *business* that happens in more than one *state* , with *foreign* countries, and with Indian *tribes* .
- Make laws about *immigration* .
- Make laws about *bankruptcy* .
- Establish *post offices* .
- Declare *war* .
- Raise and support *armies* .



Congress can also make all *laws* that are *necessary* and *proper* for executing the powers on the list above.

That means Congress can sometimes can do things that are *not* on the list if it is related to something that *is* on the list.

FACTOR

#1

Personal Opinion

Members of Congress are human beings, just like you!

Sometimes members of Congress agree with a bill . . .



. . . and sometimes they are totally against a bill.



FACTOR

#2

Political Party Views

People in a political party share similar values.

They work for laws that reflect those values.



For a member of Congress, being on a political party is like being on a team.

Members of the team support each other and try to create bills that reflect their values.

Usually members of Congress agree with their political party about bills . . .



. . . but sometimes they don't!



FACTOR

#3



More Than "Yea" or "Nay"

Name: _____

Choose Your Role!

I am a member of:
(Check one)

the House of Representatives

the Senate

Representing:

Representing:

_____ (City & State)

_____ (State)

My new title is:

Representative _____
(Your last name)

Senator _____
(Your last name)

The one value I care about most is:

Liberty: means that people have the freedom to do things that they want to do

Competition: means that people are encouraged to compete to succeed

Cost Saving: means that the government is not spending a lot of money

Equality: means that everyone is treated fairly and has an equal

Cooperation: means that people are encouraged to work together to get things

Generosity: means the government provides large benefits or services to citizens

These tend to be **Republican Party** values.

These tend to be **Democratic Party** values.

Bill "A": No Mail on Saturdays

Factor #1

Does Congress have the power to do this?

Yes No

Because _____

Factor #2

In your opinion, should this bill pass?

Yes No

Because _____

Factor #3

Which political party would likely support this bill?

1) Check the one value this bill stands for the most:

- Liberty Equality
- Competition Cooperation
- Cost Saving Generosity

2) This bill would most likely be supported by the:

- Republican Party Democratic party

Factor #4

Would your voters support this bill?

Yes No

Because _____

Based on all four factors, how will you vote?

Yea Nay



More Than "Yea" or "Nay"

Name: _____

Bill "B": Raise the Minimum Wage

Factor #1

Does Congress have the power to do this?

- Yes No

Because _____

Factor #2

In your opinion, should this bill pass?

- Yes No

Because _____

Factor #3

Which political party would likely support this bill?

1) Check the one value this bill stands for the most:

- Liberty Equality
 Competition Cooperation
 Cost Saving Generosity

2) This bill would most likely be supported by the:

- Republican Party Democratic party

Factor #4

Would your voters support this bill?

- Yes No

Because _____

Based on *all four factors*, how will you vote?

- Yea Nay

Bill "C": Grant Titles of Nobility

Factor #1

Does Congress have the power to do this?

- Yes No

Because _____

Factor #2

In your opinion, should this bill pass?

- Yes No

Because _____

Factor #3

Which political party would likely support this bill?

1) Check the one value this bill stands for the most:

- Liberty Equality
 Competition Cooperation
 Cost Saving Generosity

2) This bill would most likely be supported by the:

- Republican Party Democratic party

Factor #4

Would your voters support this bill?

- Yes No

Because _____

Based on *all four factors*, how will you vote?

- Yea Nay