

LESSON PLAN

Legislative Branch

Level: Literacy, Low Beginning

Suggested Length: 1 or 2 class periods, depending on class time and level

Civics Test Questions

- #13—Name one branch or part of the government.
 - #16—Who makes federal laws?
 - #17—What are the two parts of the U.S. Congress?
 - #18—How many U.S. Senators are there?
 - #19—We elect a U.S. Senator for how many years?
 - #20—Who is one of your state’s U.S. Senators now?
 - #21—The House of Representatives has how many voting members?
 - #22—We elect a U.S. Representative for how many years?
 - #23—Name your U.S. Representative.
 - #24—Who does a U.S. Senator represent?
 - #25—Why do some states have more Representatives than other states?
 - #31—If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?
 - #47—What is the name of the Speaker of the House of Representatives now?
- Related Test Item:
- #55—What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?

Reading Test Vocabulary

Congress, government, President, right, Senators
U.S.
How, What, Who, Why
elects, has, is/are, name, vote
for, in, of, the, to, we
many, one, people

Writing Test Vocabulary

Congress, President, right, Senators, state/states
elect, has, is, vote
and, for, in, of, the, to, we
one hundred, people

Objectives:

Students will:

- identify the legislative branch as one branch of the government
- learn about Congress’ role in the government
- identify the two parts of Congress, the different terms, and the number of members in each chamber
- name one of their Senators and their Representative, or be able to state that there are none
- understand how states and districts are represented in Congress
- explain the role of the Speaker of the House in the presidential succession

Materials:

Wall map of the United States

USCIS Civics Flash Cards or prepared sets of Civics Test items on the legislative branch

Handouts: **The Legislative Branch**, **The U.S. Senate**, **The U.S. House of Representatives**, **More About the U.S. Congress**, and **Word Puzzle—U.S. Congress**

Optional handout (Literacy Level Writing Practice): **Congress**

Legislative Branch Lesson Answer Key



Lesson Overview and Notes to Teacher:

There are three separate lessons on the three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. We recommend teaching the government lessons in that order, as some content builds on a previous lesson.

In planning this lesson, decide if you want to cover the material in one or two class sessions. The handouts focus on Civics Test items from two sections: System of Government and Rights and Responsibilities. They also promote discussion on voting and ways to participate in democracy. On the Civics Test, the applicant may

be asked the name of their current U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, or Speaker of the House. Since this information can change frequently, remind the students that they should check this information immediately prior to their naturalization interview. You can find the names of the current members of Congress at www.senate.gov and at www.house.gov. Lastly, the Literacy Level Writing Practice handout **Congress** highlights vocabulary from the Reading and Writing Test and an item from the Civics Test.

Introduction: Tell the class you will talk about the U.S. government. Write **U.S. Government** on the board. Ask **How many parts are in the U.S. government? (Three).** Write **branch** on the board and explain that **branch means part**. Ask the class to name the branches while

you label a diagram on the board. Point out that **Name one branch or part of the government** is an item on the Civics Test. Note that any of these words (**executive, President, legislative, Congress, judicial, or courts**) are all acceptable answers for this test item.

Guided Practice: Tell the students that you are going to study the legislative branch today. Distribute the handout **The Legislative Branch**. Review the names of the three buildings (**White House, Capitol Building, and Supreme Court**). Note that the Capitol Building is highlighted to focus the students' attention on the legislative branch. Ask **Who works here? (Congress), What's the name**

of the building? (Capitol Building), and Where is it? (Washington, DC), while you write the answers on the board. Then read each sentence 2-3 times out loud for students to hear. Have the students repeat each line after you. Have the students examine the pictures and point out that **Who makes federal laws?** and **What are the two parts of the U.S. Congress?** are items on the Civics Test.

Practice: Use the same method to review the handouts **The U.S. Senate** and **The U.S. House of Representatives**. A critical point for students to understand is that, while every state has two U.S. Senators, the number of U.S. Representatives for each state depends on that state's population. Use a map of the United States to help the students comprehend that it is population (not the size of the state) that determines the number of representatives in Congress. At the bottom of each handout, have the students fill in the name of their district/state's current congressional member (for the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories, refer to the note at the end of this section). Point out that **How many U.S. Senators are there?, We elect a U.S. Senator for how many years?, Who does a U.S. Senator represent?, and Who is one of your state's U.S. Senators now?** are Civics Test items related to the Senate. The Civics Test items **The House of Representatives has how many voting members?, We**

elect a U.S. Representative for how many years?, Name your U.S. Representative, and Why do some states have more Representatives than other states? are test items related to the House of Representatives. After each handout, go around the room and practice the relevant items with the entire class. Then have the students practice them in pairs.

Important Note: With regard to Civics Test item 20 on the U.S. Senate, District of Columbia residents and residents of U.S. territories should answer that D.C. (or the territory where the applicant lives) has no U.S. Senators. Regarding Civics Test item 23 on the U.S. House of Representatives, residents of territories with nonvoting Delegates or Resident Commissioners may provide the name of that Delegate or Commissioner. Also acceptable is any statement that the territory has no (voting) Representatives in Congress.

Evaluation: Distribute the handout **More About the U.S. Congress**. This handout begins with the order of presidential succession, highlighting the role of the Speaker of the House. Ask the students **Who becomes president if the president can no longer serve? (the vice president).** Then explain that the Speaker of the House

is the leader of the House of Representatives and that the Speaker becomes president if neither the president nor the vice president can serve. Have the students look at the photo of the current Speaker and help the students with the pronunciation of the Speaker's name. Point out that **What is the name of the Speaker of the House of**

Representatives now? and **If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?** are items on the Civics Test. In the middle of the handout, there is a brief review about Congress where students fill in the correct number to complete each sentence. At the bottom of the handout, brainstorm with the students the ways Americans participate in their democracy. There are two ways that relate specifically to Congress: voting and contacting a member of Congress. Say **The United States is a democracy. That means that our government is by the people. Americans can**

participate in their government in different ways. What are some ways that Americans participate in their democracy? The students should be able to suggest some of the following: vote in an election, join a political party, help with a campaign, join a civic or community group, contact a senator or representative, and write to a newspaper. Write their answers on the board in simple phrases for the students to copy. Point out that **What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?** is a question on the Civics Test.

Extension: The handout **Word Puzzle—U.S. Congress** is a word game highlighting specific language from the Civics Test. Have the students read the sentences at the top of the page and fill in the words from the information in the reading paragraphs. The letters in the vertical word **CONGRESS** provide a one-letter clue in the word puzzle. Model the first sentence for them. Say **Congress meets in the (What) building? (Capitol)**. Write **CAPITOL** in the sentence blank and then direct the students' attention to number 1 in the puzzle. Have them fill in the rest of the letters to spell out the word **CAPITOL**.

There are many Civics Test items to practice in this lesson. It would be beneficial to give the students time to practice

the questions and answers in pairs or small groups. You could either use several sets of the Civics Flash Cards or download the Civics Flash Cards from the Citizenship Resource Center (visit www.uscis.gov/citizenship and search for "cutout reversed Civics Flash Cards" for a printer-friendly version). For this activity, separate out the specific questions on the legislative branch listed at the beginning of the lesson plan. Give a set of those questions to each pair or small group of students. Have the students take turns, choosing a random card and reading the item aloud for the others to answer. As the students quiz each other, circulate and offer assistance as necessary.

Additional Writing Practice for Literacy/Low

Beginning Students: The handout **Congress** is included for optional copy work. Students can practice writing

vocabulary from the Reading and Writing Vocabulary lists as well as a Civics Test item.