

## Why Committees?

Goal: Get students thinking *for themselves* about the roles of committees in Congress.

Be sure to debrief either through a random call or a mini-lecture.

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-In Congress, introduced bills are initially referred to smaller groups of legislators in “committees” (there are about 20 committees in each chamber).

-Different committees have primary responsibility for different issues. For example the House Armed Services committee has jurisdiction over military matters.

-Committees can choose to ignore referred bills, or recommend them to the chamber with or without modifications. About 85% of all introduced bills die in committee.

-Each party appoints about the same proportion of committee seats as it holds in the chamber. Members can ask to serve on particular committees, but seats are generally allocated according to seniority (a member who served on the committee before has priority).

1. Working individually, write down at least two different reasons why Congress might give a small number of members so much influence over bills in specific policy areas.

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2. When you have finished this individual assignment, share your answers with your group.