¶ 2.1

POLS 120 B — Lecture 2

Congress



Gemini Notebook

¶ 2.2



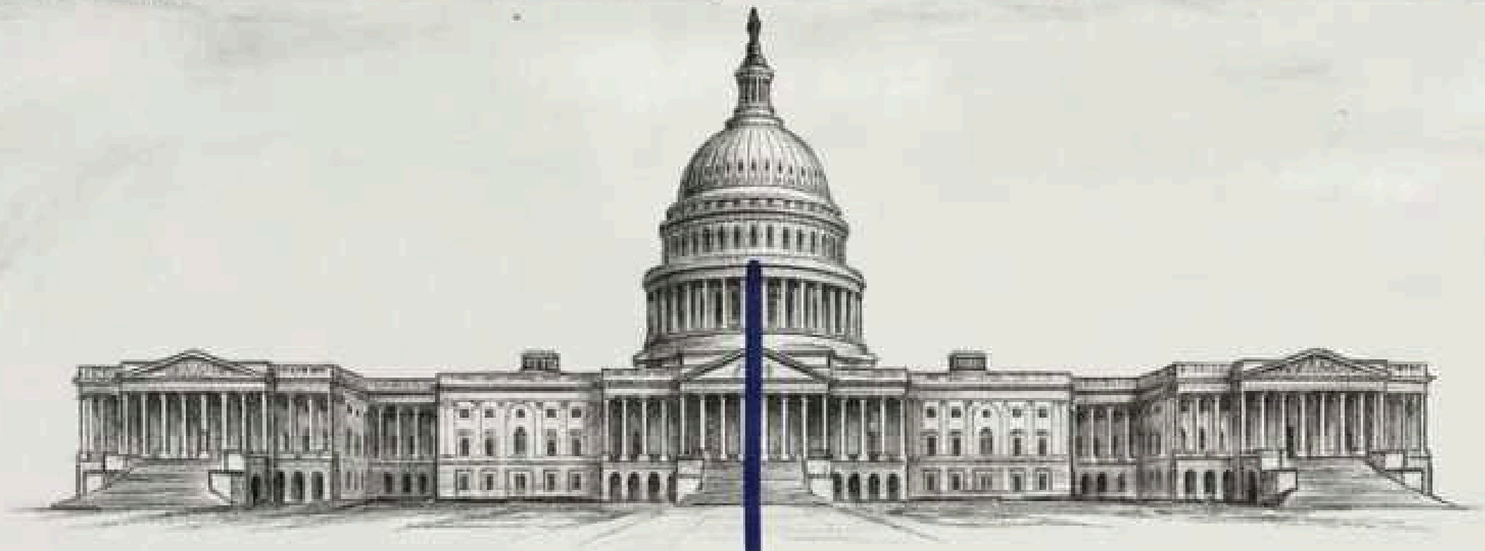
Article I → Legislative Branch →

- **Form** (Chambers & Elections)
- **Function** (Operations)
- **Force** (Powers over Taxes, War, Branches)

✳ Framers put Congress first: The heart of self-government.

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¶ 2.3



House + Senate = Bicameral Legislature

House

n = 435 (Voting Members)

t = 2 yrs

Age ≥ 25

Senate

n = 100 (2 x 50 states)

t = 6 yrs

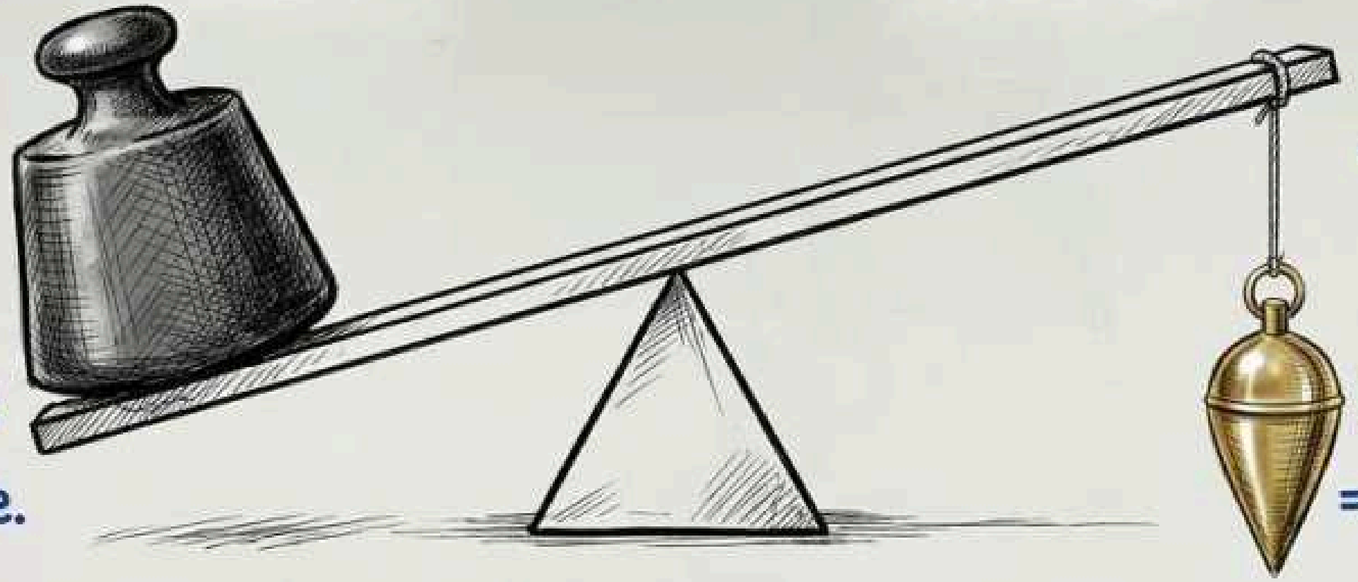
Age ≥ 30

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¶ 2.4

The House

Frequent elections
= Close to the people.

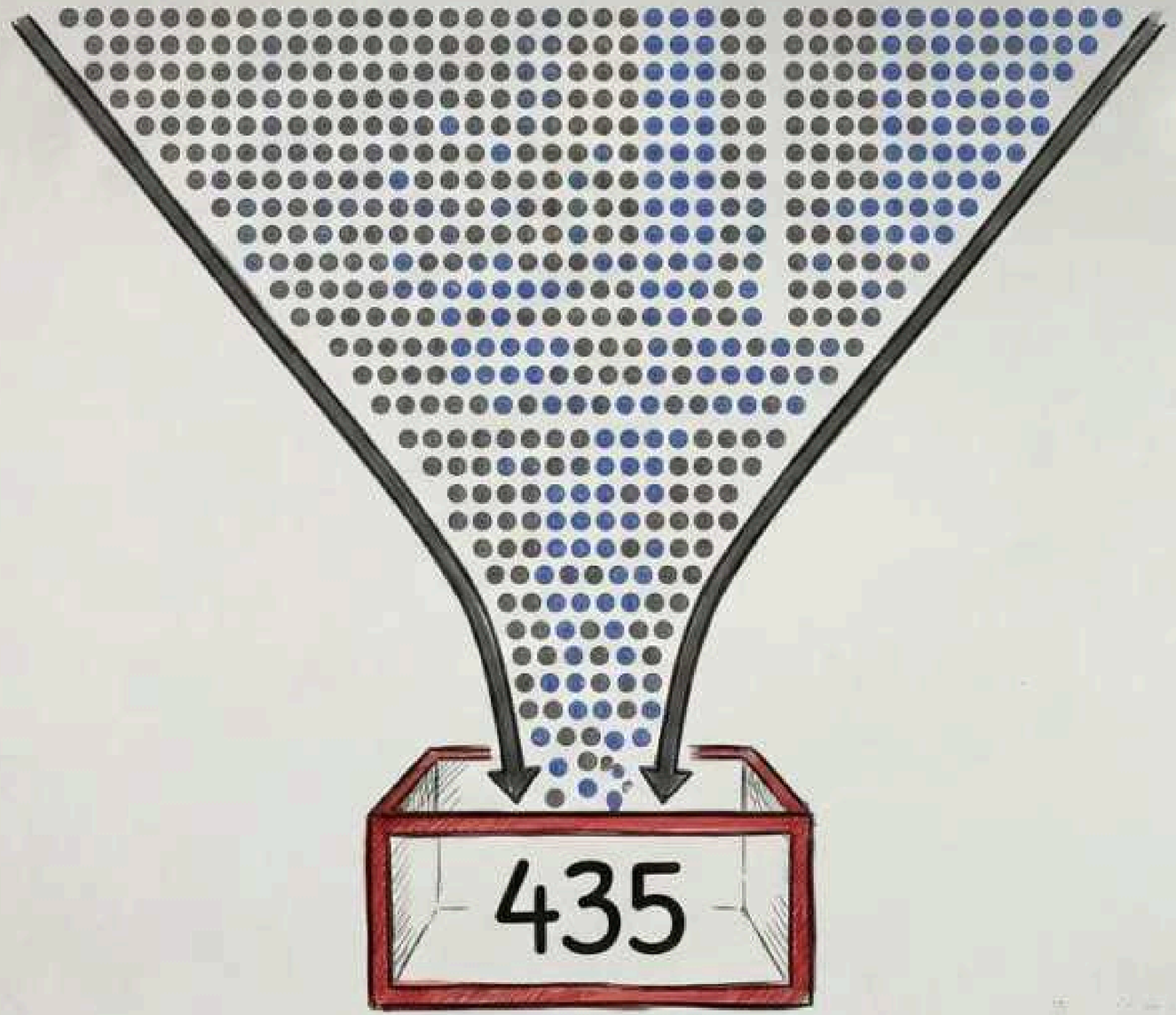


The Senate

Staggered terms
(1/3 face voters per cycle)
= Steadier, deliberate.

Pre-1913 (State Legislatures Choose) → [17th Amendment] → Post-1913 (Direct Voter Election)

¶ 2.5



Total Seats <= 435

(Capped since 1929)

State Seats ~ Population

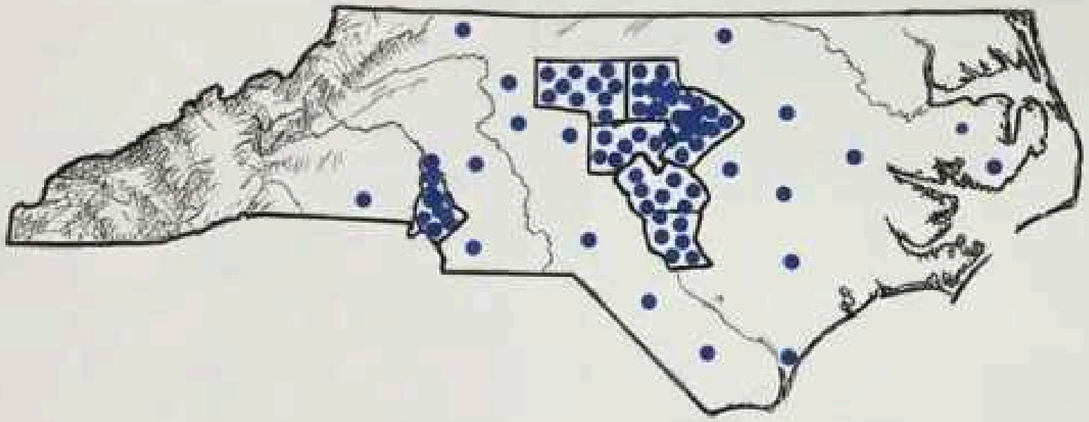
(Reassessed every 10 years via Census)

Min(Seats_State) = 1

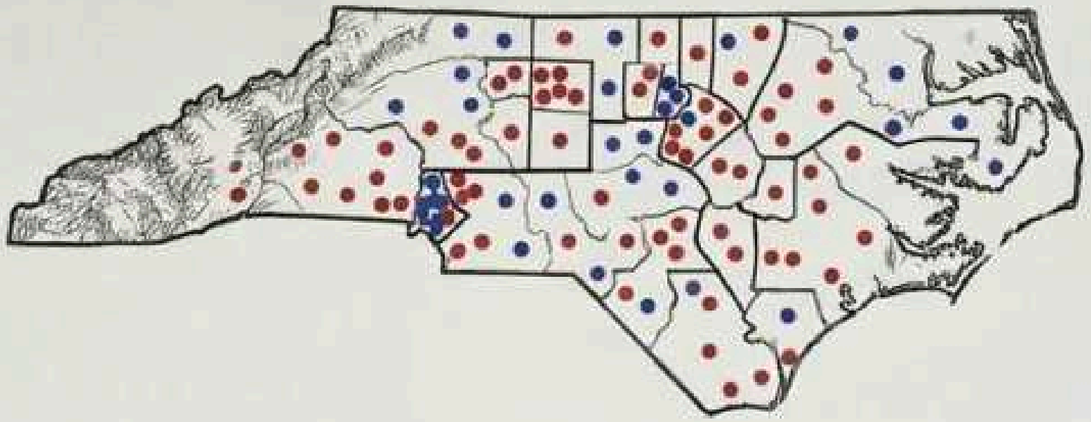
* D.C. & Territories:
  Delegates = Debate (True),
  Final Vote (False)

Gerrymandering: Party in power draws lines for partisan advantage.

¶ 2.6



Packing



Splitting / Cracking

Mechanisms: Packing U Splitting

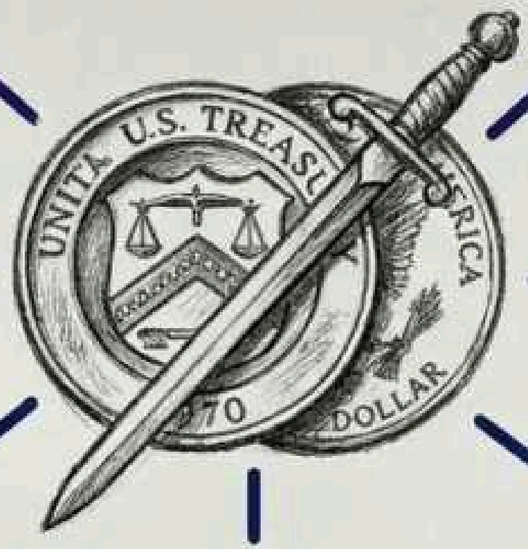
- Legal Status (2019 SCOTUS): Federal courts != Arbiters of partisan gerrymandering.
- Alternative: Independent commissions.

¶ 2.7

Levy Taxes

Borrow Money

Coin Money



Regulate Commerce

Raise Armies

Power of the Purse
(No money leaves Treasury without approval)

Declare War

Enumerated Powers x "Necessary & Proper" Clause = Expanded Authority

¶2.8

House Leadership

Speaker (2nd in line to POTUS)

↓

Majority & Minority Leaders

↓

Whips

Senate Leadership

Vice President (Tie-breaker only)

↓

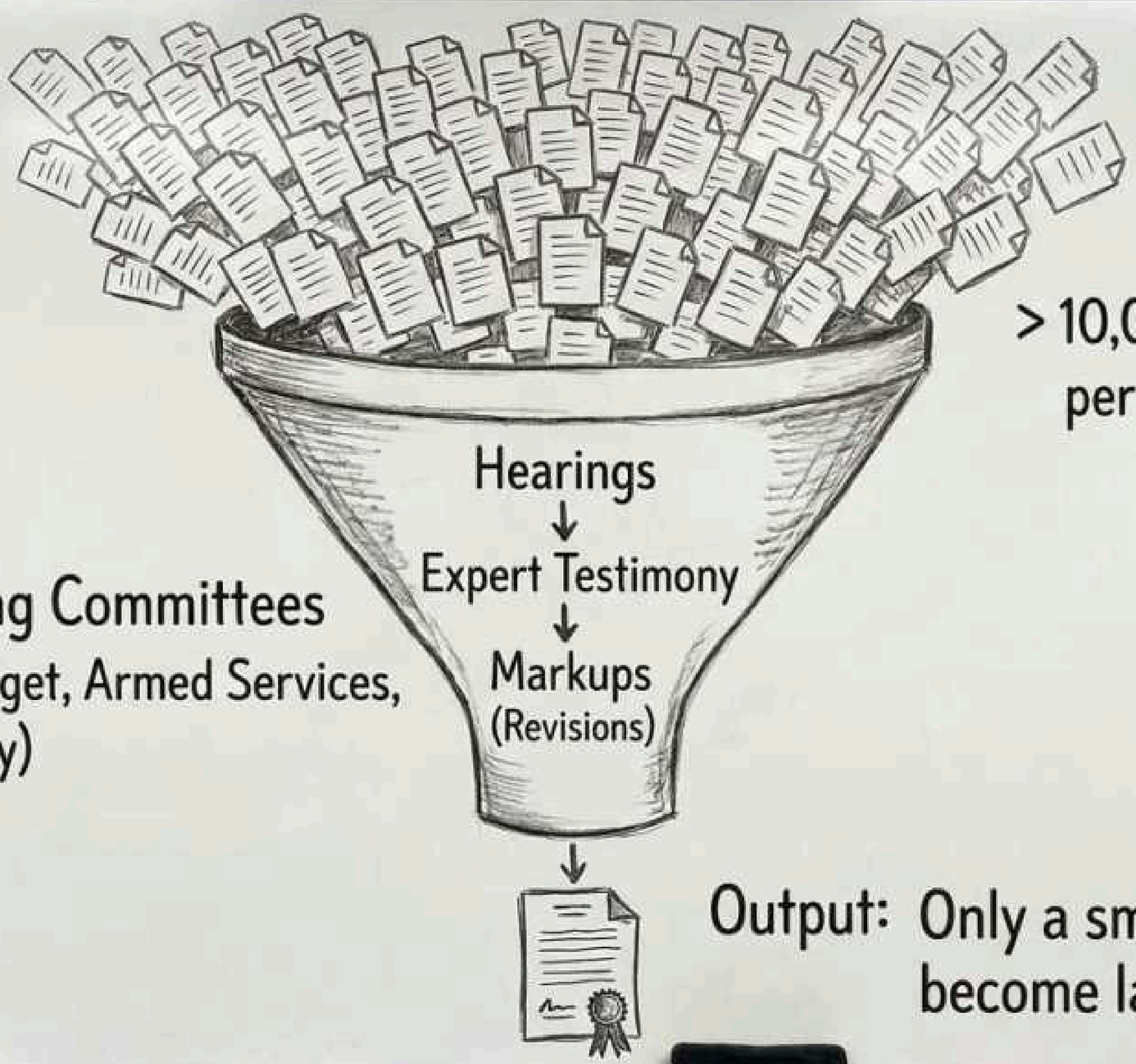
Majority & Minority Leaders

↓

Whips

$$\text{Whips} = \sum(\text{Vote Counting}) + \text{Party Cohesion}$$

¶2.9

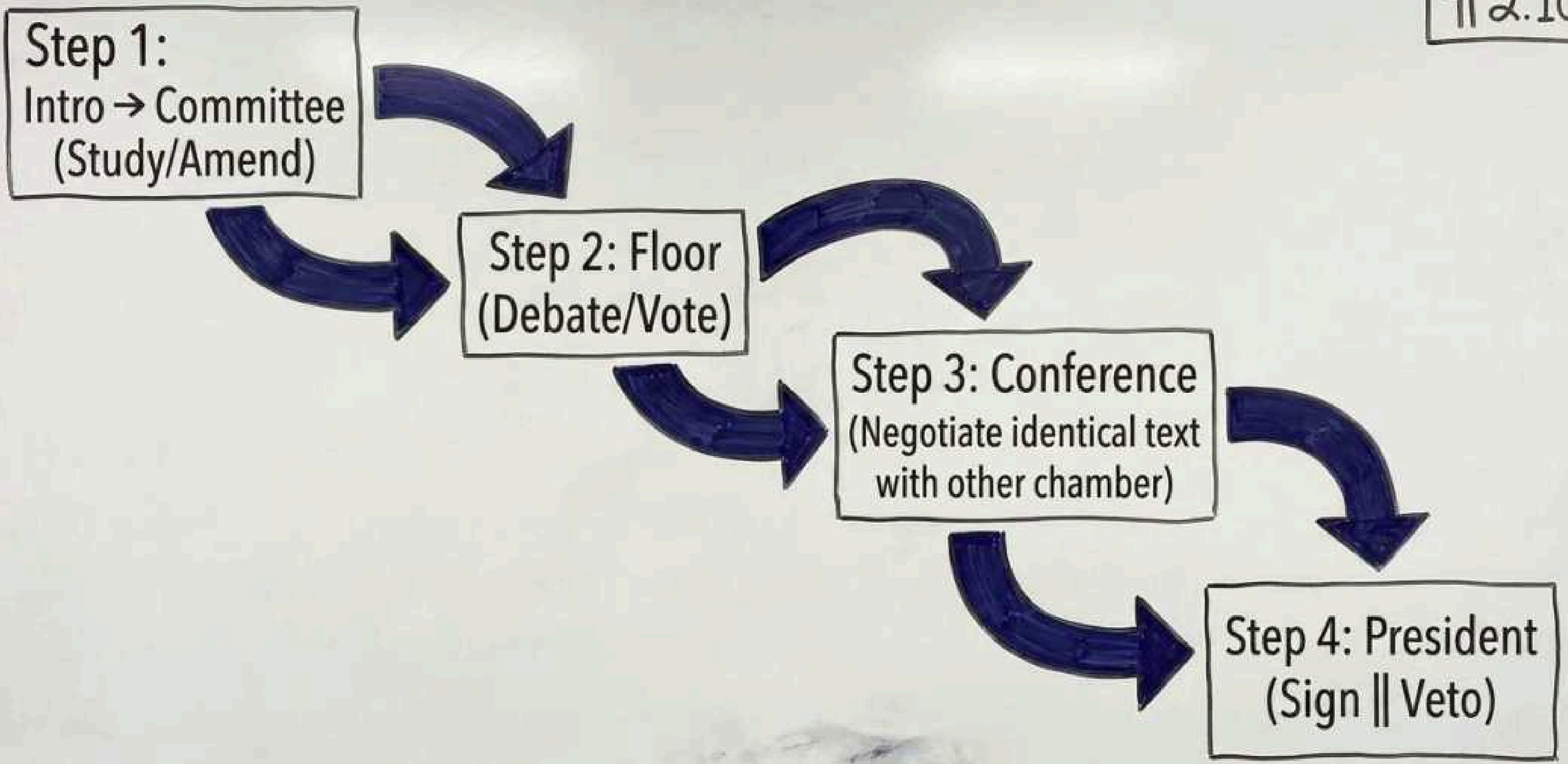


> 10,000 Bills introduced per 2-year Congress

Filter: Standing Committees
(e.g., Budget, Armed Services, Judiciary)

Output: Only a small share become law.

¶2.10


Step 1:
Intro → Committee
(Study/Amend)
Step 2: Floor
(Debate/Vote)
Step 3: Conference
(Negotiate identical text
with other chamber)
Step 4: President
(Sign || Veto)

Time Limit: $t \leq 10$ days (excluding Sundays)

¶ 2.11



IF Signed → Law

IF Vetoed → Congress can override [(House_Votes ≥ 2/3) AND (Senate_Votes ≥ 2/3)] [Rare]

IF Inaction AND Congress Adjourned → Pocket Veto (Bill Dies)

¶2.12

The House

Limited debate
(Rules Committee sets strict parameters).

The Senate

Unlimited debate
(Right to talk at length to block a vote = The Filibuster).

Ending Debate $= \frac{3}{5} \times 100$ Senators
$= 60$ Votes

Takeaway: This supermajority requirement is why many bills need more than a simple majority.

¶ 2.13

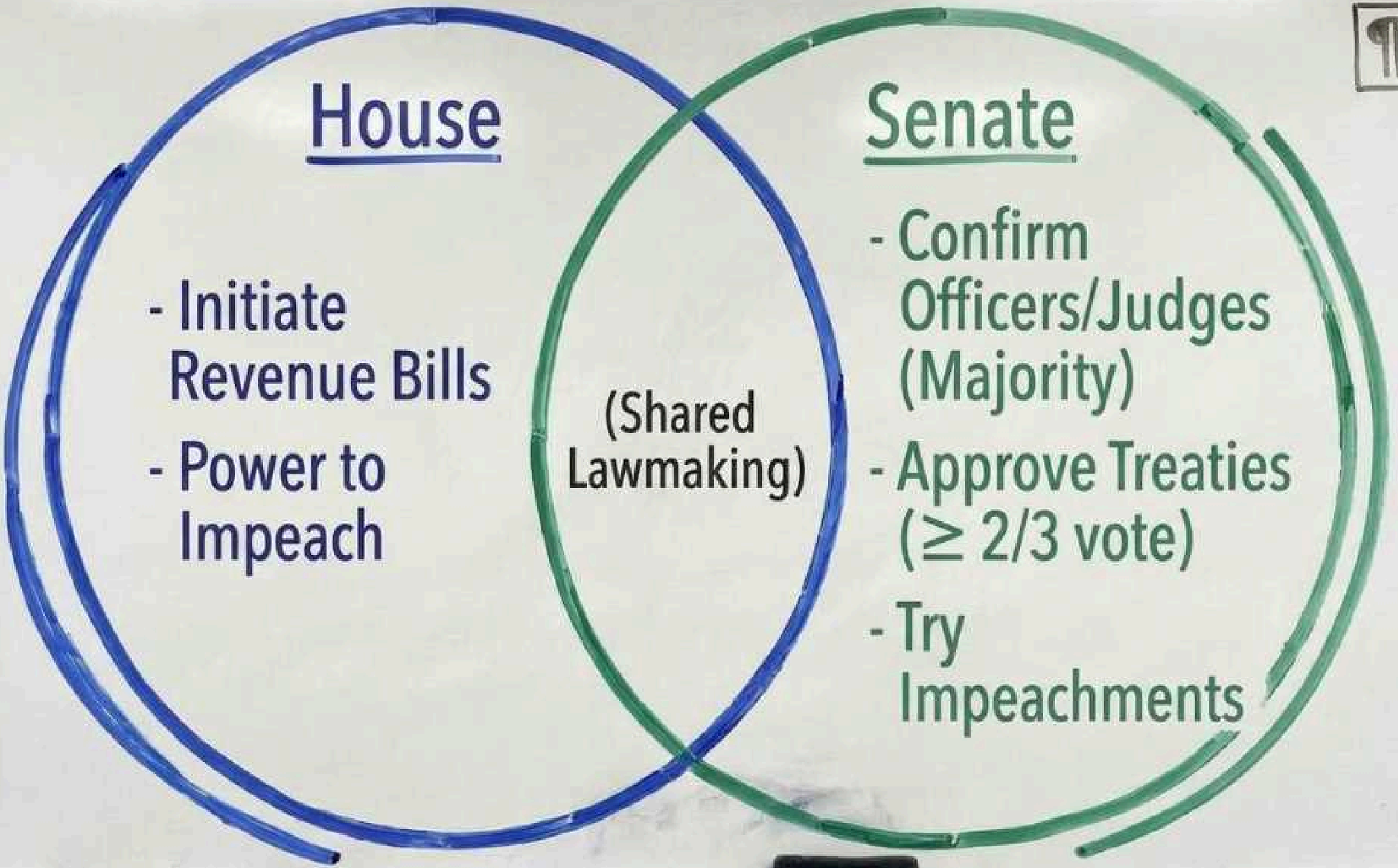
t_0 = October 1
(Fiscal Year Begins)



Risk: Failure → Government Shutdown.

Shortcut Mechanism: Reconciliation = Senate passage at 51 votes
(Bypasses the 60-vote filibuster for certain budget measures).

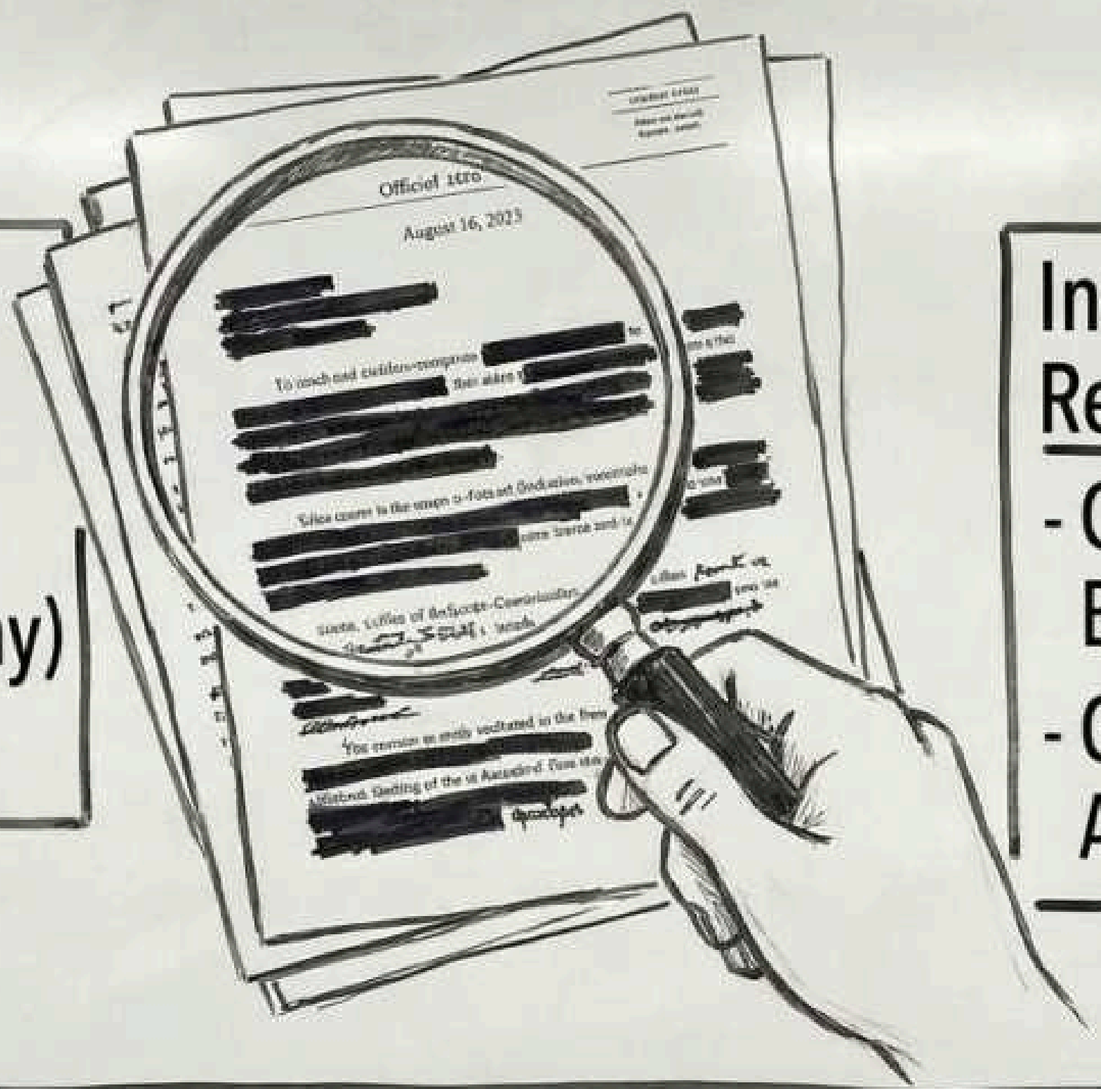
¶ 2.14


House
- Initiate Revenue Bills
- Power to Impeach
(Shared Lawmaking)
Senate
- Confirm Officers/Judges (Majority)
- Approve Treaties (≥ 2/3 vote)
- Try Impeachments

¶ 2.15

Tools of Oversight:

- Hearings
- Subpoenas (compel documents/testimony)
- Calling Officials



Independent Research Arms:

- CBO (Congressional Budget Office)
- GAO (Government Accountability Office)

Goal: Information independent of the White House.

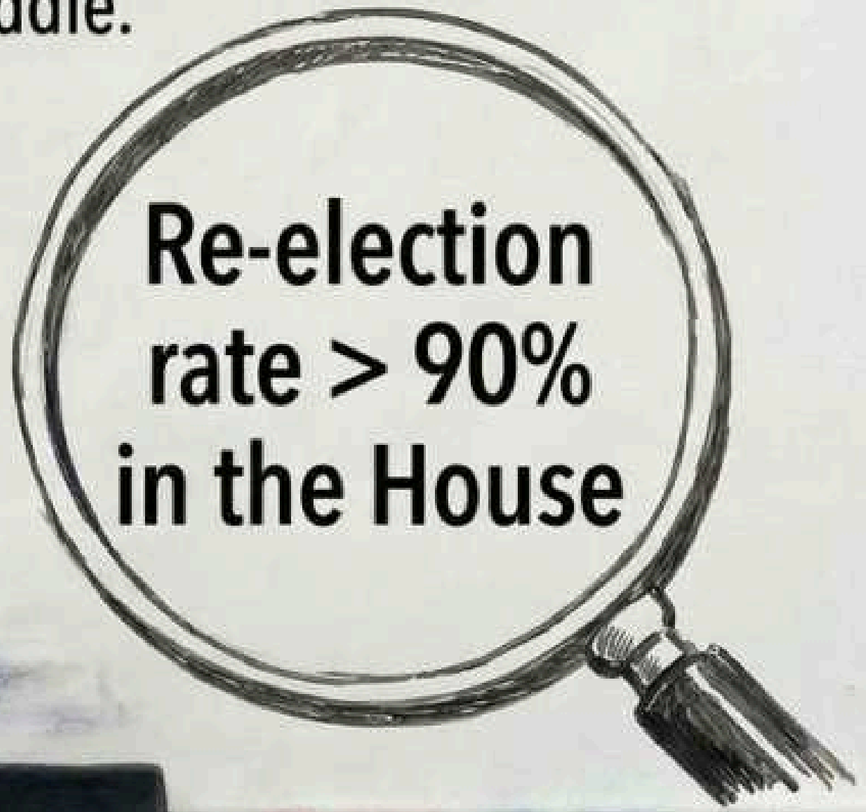
¶ 2.16

Delegate
(Follows constituents' wishes)

Reality: Most members operate in the middle.

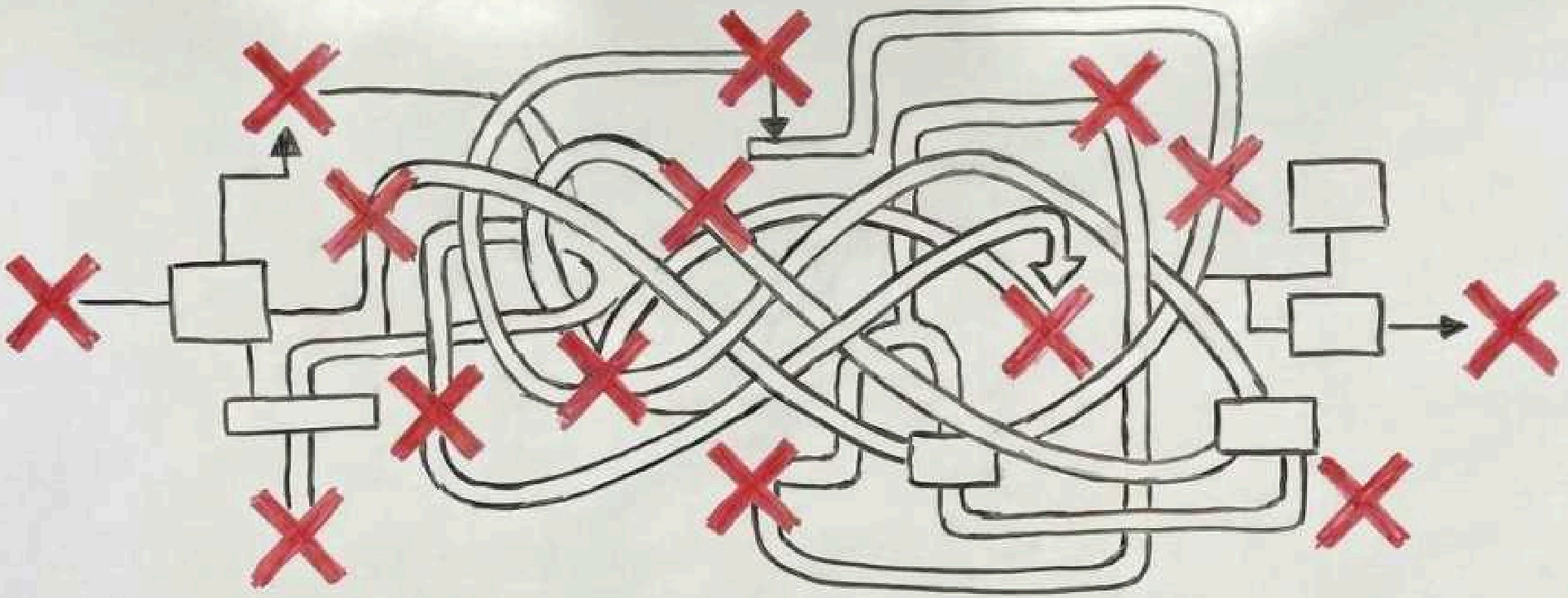
Trustee
(Uses own judgment)

Debate: Critics argue this means decreased accountability; supporters argue it reflects high voter approval.



Veto Points: System inherently allows many members/committees to say "no".

¶ 2.17



Divided Government + Unified Parties = Max Gridlock

⇩

Result: Compromise becomes exceedingly difficult -> Resulting in low public approval.

¶ 2.18

I. Structure: Pop-based House + Equal Senate (Different Rules).

II. Process: Committees → Floors → POTUS (Checks: Veto & Filibuster).

III. Power: Taxes, Spending, Executive Oversight.

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¶ 2.19

Takeaway Assignment

1. Identify: Who is your House Rep & who are your 2 Senators?

2. Search: Find one recent bill they voted on.

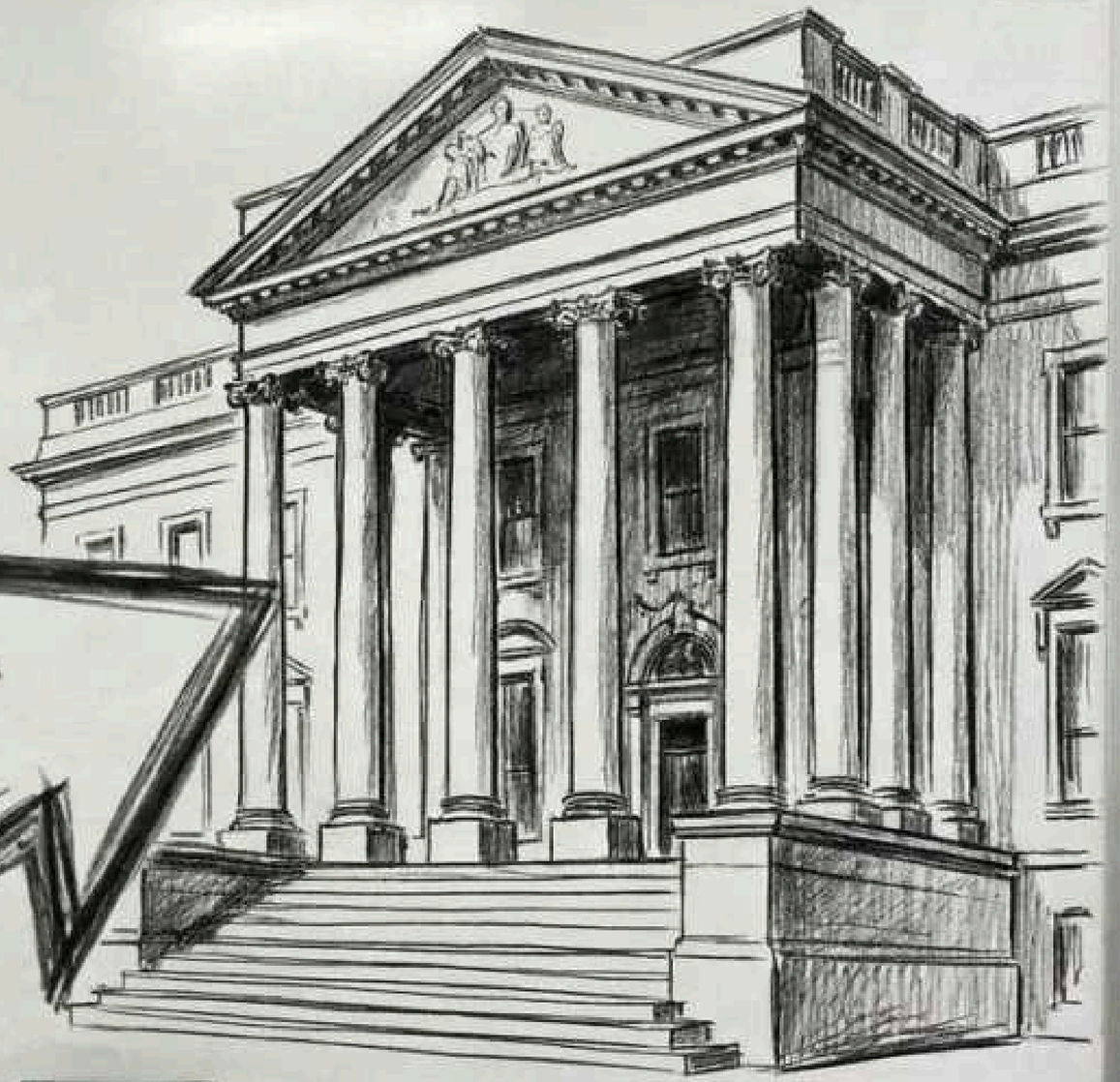
3. Evaluate: Does Their Vote = Your Preference? Why or why not?

¶2.20

Next Up: Article Two

Topics:

- The President
- The Electoral College (Math of the Presidency)
- The Executive Branch (carrying out the law)



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