



## What is the U.S. Senate?

The U.S. Senate is one of two chambers (the other being the House of Representatives), that make up the United States Congress, which is the legislative branch in the federal government. Congress holds several responsibilities — the main one being drafting and passing laws for the United States. There are one-hundred Senators total — two elected in each state — regardless of state size or state population. <https://www.senate.gov/>

## How long is a U.S. Senator's term? Are there term limits?

In every state, voters elect two U.S. Senators to serve six-year terms. One-third of U.S. Senators are up for reelection every two years. There are no term limits for members of the U.S. Senate. <https://www.senate.gov/>

## Are U.S. Senators political actors?

Yes, U.S. Senators are politicians and are affiliated with a political party. Typically, candidates must first win a state primary in order to win a political party's nomination. From there, candidates advance to the general election, where they campaign against the candidate from the opposing political party.

## What are the responsibilities of U.S. Senators?

- **Legislation:** Senators are responsible for drafting and enacting the laws of the United States of America. Legislation that begins in the Senate must first go through committee. The majority of bills die in committee. If a bill is voted out of committee, it goes before the full Senate for debate and a vote. Budget reconciliation bills only require a simple majority to pass. All other bills require 3/5 majority, or 60 votes.  
If passed in the Senate, the piece of legislation is sent to the House of Representatives. In order for the bill to become law, both chambers of Congress must vote in favor of it and the President must sign off. <https://www.senate.gov/reference/Index/Legislation.htm>
- **Nominations:** The Constitution asserts that U.S. Presidents have the power to nominate some federal officials to high-ranking positions. For example, presidents nominate federal judges - including U.S. Supreme Court Justices, ambassadors, and executive cabinet officials. Once nominated, the U.S. Senate must vote to approve or reject the nomination. A simple majority is needed in order for a presidential nominee to be confirmed. <https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures.htm>
- **Treaties:** By a two-thirds vote, U.S. Senators have the power to approve treaties negotiated by the executive branch. Senators do not aid in negotiating treaties, but work with the House of Representatives to provide checks and balances on the executive branch. <https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures.htm>
- **Impeachments:** After the House of Representatives, by a simple majority, vote to impeach a federal government official, the case is sent over the Senate. Senators hold power to acquit or convict an impeached official. A 2/3 vote is required to convict. If convicted, the official would be removed from office and in some cases, disqualified from seeking public office again. <https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures.htm>

## What is Senate leadership?

Within the Senate, there are several leadership roles taken by elected members. Leadership is chosen for two-year terms at the beginning of each Congress. Three of the main roles are:

- **Senate Majority Leader:** Since the United States is a two-party political system, the Senators of the party in power have the ability to elect a Senate Majority Leader. The Senate Majority Leader holds tremendous power over Congress. The Leader has the power to set the legislative agenda and organize committees. This means, in part, that by setting the agenda and schedule of the Senate, the Senate Majority Leader can refuse to hold votes on pieces of legislation. <https://www.senate.gov/about/origins-foundations/parties-leadership.htm>
- **Senate Minority Leader:** The Senate Minority Leader is the leader of the political party that is not currently in power. Similar to the Senate Majority Leader, Minority Leaders serve primarily as the party's spokesperson on issues and legislative strategy. <https://www.senate.gov/about/origins-foundations/parties-leadership/majority-minority-leaders.htm>
- **Vice President of the United States:** According to the U.S. Constitution, the Vice President is responsible for presiding over the Senate. Vice Presidents can only cast a vote in the Senate in order to break a tie. <https://www.senate.gov/about/officers-staff/vice-president.htm>

## What are Senate committees?

Within the U.S. Senate, there are currently 24 committees. Committees consist of groups of Senators who focus on specific issues and are responsible for gathering information that will aid in drafting legislation. Typically, U.S. Senators serve on 2-3 committees. Some examples of the committees are: Judiciary, Finance, and Foreign Relations.

<https://www.senate.gov/committees/history.htm>

## What are the requirements of running for US Senator?

Senators must be at least 30 years old, have been a U.S. citizen for at least 9 years, and be a resident of the state they are representing at the time of the election. [https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/Constitutional\\_Qualifications\\_Senators.htm](https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/Constitutional_Qualifications_Senators.htm)

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## Questions for U.S. Senate candidates:

- Do you support a person's right to bodily autonomy, including the right to abortion? Will you support the Women's Health Protection Act?
- Do you support expanding the Voting Rights Act, protecting the right to vote, and ending partisan gerrymandering in both state and federal elections?
- Are you committed to protecting American's digital privacy? Do you support the Fourth Amendment is Not for Sale Act?
- Will you support legislation that ends the failed War on Drugs?

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## How do I find my U.S. Senator?

Visit [senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov) and use the "Find Your Senators" drop-down bar at the top of the page.