Government Bridge

Week Three

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: What took the legislative branch so long to pass bills regarding COVID relief?

PROCEDURES: Read the background information and then for each news article, write a paragraph answering the question. In your responses, include information from the article, what you've learned in class, information from the news, websites, etc.

WORK TO BE RETURNED: One paragraph response per Question

RESOURCES: Background Information, Article I, Article 2, Article 3

Background Info:

Legislative Branch - Established by Article I of the Constitution, the Legislative Branch consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate, which together form the United States Congress. The Constitution grants Congress the sole authority to pass laws and declare war, the right to confirm or reject many Presidential appointments, and substantial investigative powers.

Differences between the House of Representatives and the Senate:

- The House of Representatives is made up of 435 members from congressional districts all over the country. The Senate consists of 100 members, two from each state.
- Members of the House serve two year terms and must be at least 25 years old to take office. Members of the Senate serve six year terms and must be at least 30 years old to take office.
- The House is currently controlled by the Democratic Party, and led by Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). The Senate is controlled by the Republican Party, and currently led by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)

The Lawmaking Process:

Step 1: A Bill Is Born

Anyone may draft a bill; however, only members of Congress can introduce legislation, and, by doing so, become the sponsor(s). The president, a member of the cabinet or the head of a federal agency can also propose legislation, although a member of Congress must introduce it.

Step 2: Committee Action
As soon as a bill is introduced, it is referred to a committee. At this point the bill is examined carefully and its chances for passage are first determined. If the committee does not act on a bill, the bill is effectively "dead."

**Step 3: Subcommittee Review**

Often, bills are referred to a subcommittee for study and hearings. Hearings provide the opportunity to put on the record the views of the executive branch, experts, other public officials and supporters, and opponents of the legislation.

**Step 4: Mark up**

When the hearings are completed, the subcommittee may meet to "mark up" the bill; that is, make changes and amendments prior to recommending the bill to the full committee. If a subcommittee votes not to report legislation to the full committee, the bill dies. If the committee votes for the bill, it is sent to the floor.

**Step 5: Committee Action to Report a Bill**

After receiving a subcommittee’s report on a bill the full committee votes on its recommendation to the House or Senate. This procedure is called "ordering a bill reported."

**Step 6: Voting**

After the debate and the approval of any amendments, the bill is passed or defeated by the members voting.

**Step 7: Referral to Other Chamber**

When the House or Senate passes a bill, it is referred to the other chamber, where it usually follows the same route through committee and floor action. This chamber may approve the bill as received, reject it, ignore it, or change it.

**Step 8: Conference Committee Action**

When the actions of the other chamber significantly alter the bill, a conference committee is formed to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions.
Step 9: Final Action

After both the House and Senate have approved a bill in identical form, it is sent to the president. If the president approves of the legislation, he signs it and it becomes law. Or, if the president opposes the bill he can veto it.

Step 10: Overriding a Veto

If the president vetoes a bill, Congress may attempt to "override the veto." If both the Senate and the House pass the bill by a two-thirds majority, the president's veto is overruled and the bill becomes a law.

Article One

“Pelosi Vows to Bring Coronavirus to House Floor as Republicans Push for Changes”

*Published March 12, 2020*


Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., was unable to reach a deal late Thursday on a package of measures to address the coronavirus pandemic amid pushback from the top House Republican that the bill "comes up short."

Negotiations were set to resume on Friday on the legislation, which does not include an emergency payroll tax cut — something that President Trump has been pressing for Congress to pass but that Democrats and some Republicans have rejected.

However, the deal taking shape would include free coverage for coronavirus testing, extended unemployment insurance, paid sick leave and expanded food assistance as the pandemic takes a larger toll on the U.S. and global economies.

"We have — are near — to an agreement," Pelosi said at the Capitol late Thursday.

"We've resolved most of our differences and those we haven't, we'll continue the conversation because there will be other bills," she said.

Her remarks came as Republicans on Capitol Hill and in the Trump administration pushed for changes to the measure. Pelosi said House Democrats had been negotiating with the White House throughout the morning.
For the second time in two days, Democrats voted against advancing the huge bill to help with the global health and economic crises caused by the coronavirus pandemic, claiming that Congress needed to avoid the errors made during the Great Recession of 2008.

Republicans blasted Democrats for expanding the negotiations, growing angry and frustrated with them as the stock market continued its plunge and the projections of this week’s initial jobless claims soared to the largest on record. But Democrats feared the bill was too friendly to businesses and not friendly enough for workers.

Democrats are pressing for the package to give less discretion to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and more oversight on how the loans are disbursed and used. There are also objections to a six-month waiting period before public reporting of companies that tap into the program — something defenders say is intentional in order to prevent negative market reaction for firms that go for assistance. Yet it significantly limits the transparency attached to the program.

The Senate bill is expected to cost roughly $2 trillion dollars. The majority of that, Republicans pointed out, would not bail out corporations.

Sen. John Thune, the Republican whip, preempted Brown’s critiques on Monday, saying that about $1.2 trillion of the bill is targeted for individuals and families, health care workers and hospitals, health care providers and unemployed people.

Thune said it would give $1,200 to individuals making up to $75,000 a year. He said it would give $250 billion dollars for unemployment insurance. And he said it would give $350 billion dollar for small businesses to keep their employees.

Thune said that the Democrats’ complaints about a $500 billion loan program for distressed companies like major airlines are unfounded because the industries are cratering through "no fault of their own."

President Donald Trump signed into law Friday afternoon a historic $2 trillion stimulus package as the American public and the US economy fight the devastating spread of Covid-19.
The far-reaching legislation stands as the largest emergency aid package in US history. It represents a massive financial injection into a struggling economy with provisions aimed at helping American workers, small businesses and industries grappling with the economic disruption.

The House of Representatives earlier in the day approved the bill that passed the Senate earlier this week. Key elements of the package include sending checks directly to individuals and families, a major expansion of unemployment benefits, money for hard-hit hospitals and health care providers, financial assistance for small businesses and $500 billion in loans for distressed companies.

**Assignment 1**

**Directions:**

Read Articles One and Two. Answer the Questions Below in Complete Sentences.

1. List three specific items Speaker Pelosi says are in the House bill that would help people during the coronavirus crisis.

2. Senate Democrats initially blocked a vote on the coronavirus stimulus package. Name two specific objections they had to the bill.

3. There were important differences between the House bill described in Article One and the Senate bill in Article Two. List three of those differences.

**Assignment 2**

**Directions:** Answer the Questions Below:

1. Which powers are specifically granted to the Legislative Branch by the US Constitution?

2. Identify the leaders of both the House and the Senate and identify which political parties they are members of.
3. List two differences between the House of Representatives and the US Senate

Assignment 3

Directions: Write a paragraph response for the questions below. In your response, include information from the articles, background information, what you’ve learned in class, information from the news, websites, etc.

We can see from the dates of the three articles that it took nearly 20 days for the Legislative Branch to pass the coronavirus stimulus bill. Why does legislation often take so long to work its way through Congress? Why do you think our Constitution created a system that can cause such a delay in passing important legislation? How can our legislative process cause problems during an emergency such as the one we are facing now?