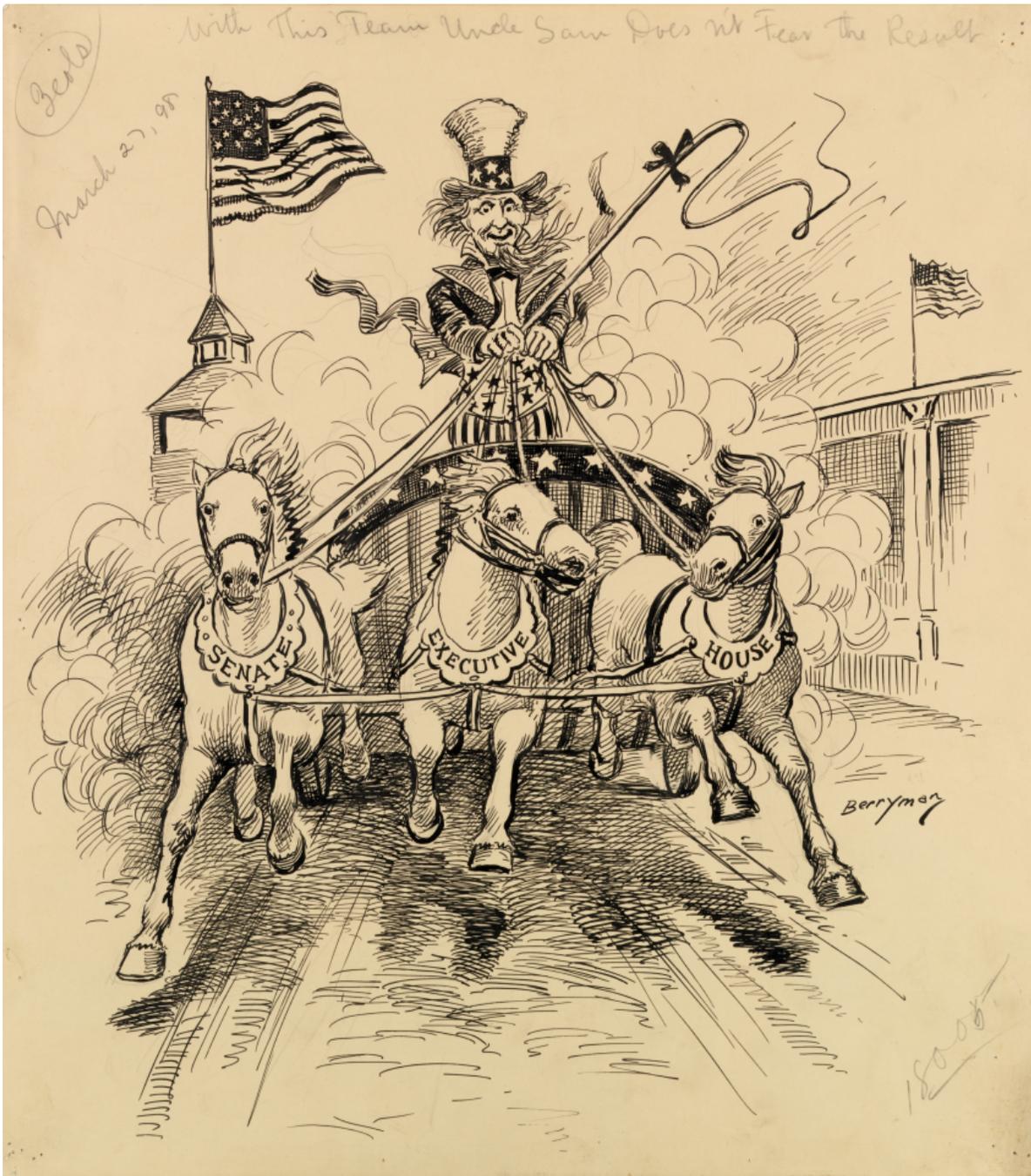


Congress and the Constitution: Articles I and II of the Constitution Illustrated



Responsibilities Are Shared Under the Constitution

The Constitution established branches of government with different powers. Congress makes the laws that the executive branch enforces and the judicial branch interprets. This cartoon depicts the harmony and interdependence of the legislative and executive branches by showing horses pulling together and speeding Uncle Sam around a course.

Congress and the Constitution: Articles I and II of the Constitution Illustrated



Congress Reviews Presidential Appointments

This cartoon refers to the legislative branch review of individuals appointed to the Supreme Court, but it also could apply to any high official whose appointment is subject to Senate confirmation. The Senate has the constitutional responsibility to evaluate the appointments of individuals to high Federal office by Presidents. Although political divisions within the Senate and between it and the White House have sometimes resulted in contentious nomination hearings, the Constitution mandates that the President and Senate must both agree on the appropriateness for office of every major appointee.

Congress and the Constitution: Articles I and II of the Constitution Illustrated



Congress has the Power to Declare War

The Constitution vests in Congress—the representative branch—exclusive power to declare war. Congress’s war power also illustrates the separate powers and responsibilities of Congress and the President. As Commander in Chief of the armed forces, the President implements and is bound by the goals, means, and limitations Congress specifies in the declaration of war. In this cartoon, the House and Senate report to Uncle Sam, a symbol of the nation, not the President.

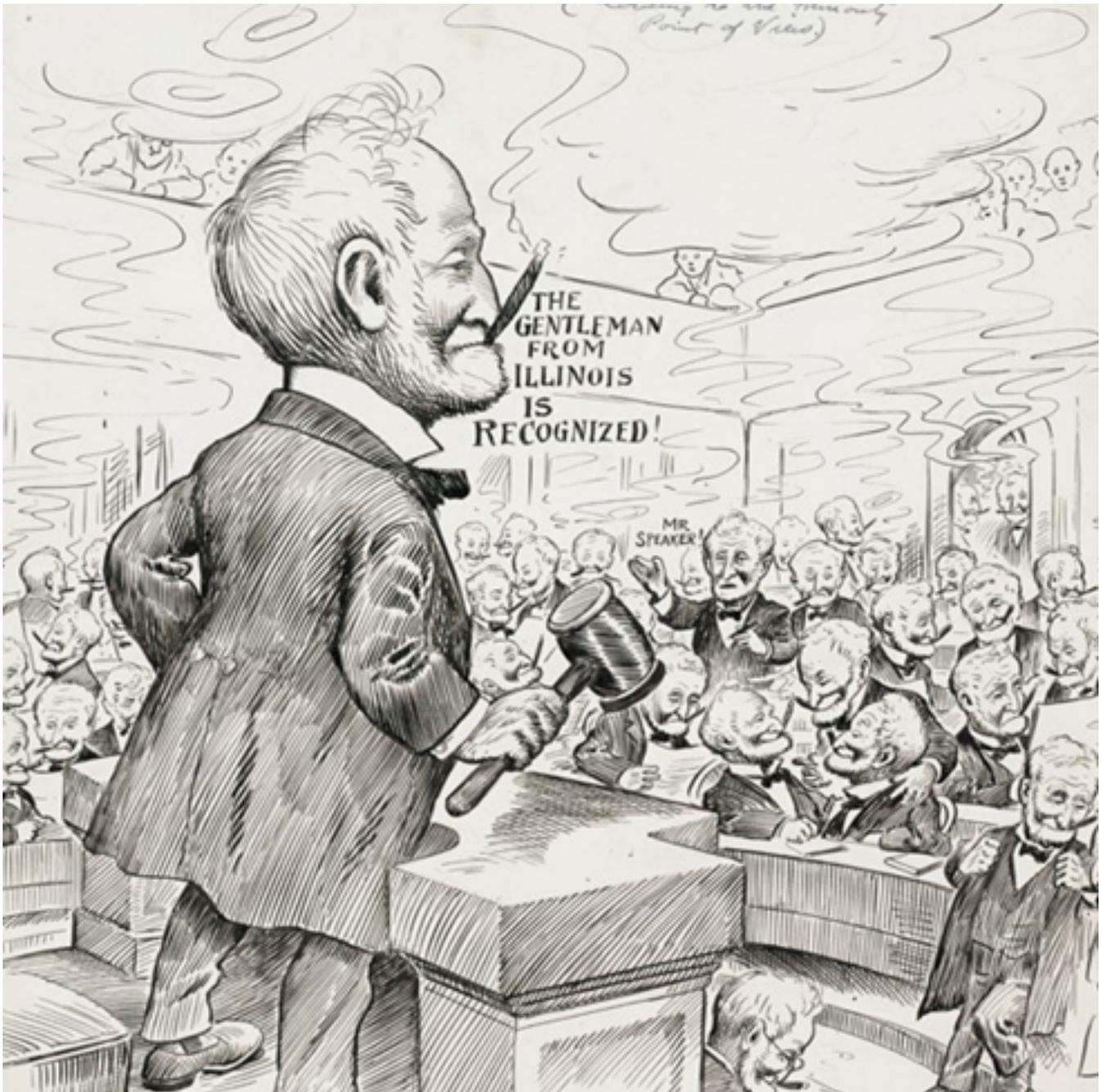
Congress: The Elected, Representative Branch of Government



Congress is the People's Representative Assembly

A new Congress convenes every two years when voters elect the entire House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate. The House and the Senate share legislative powers but have different rules and procedures. The House represents the people in their congressional districts, and the Senate represents them as residents of their states. As the representative branch of government, Congress taxes, decides how the government should spend public monies, keeps track of past spending, and serves as a public forum wherein all the great issues facing the nation are debated.

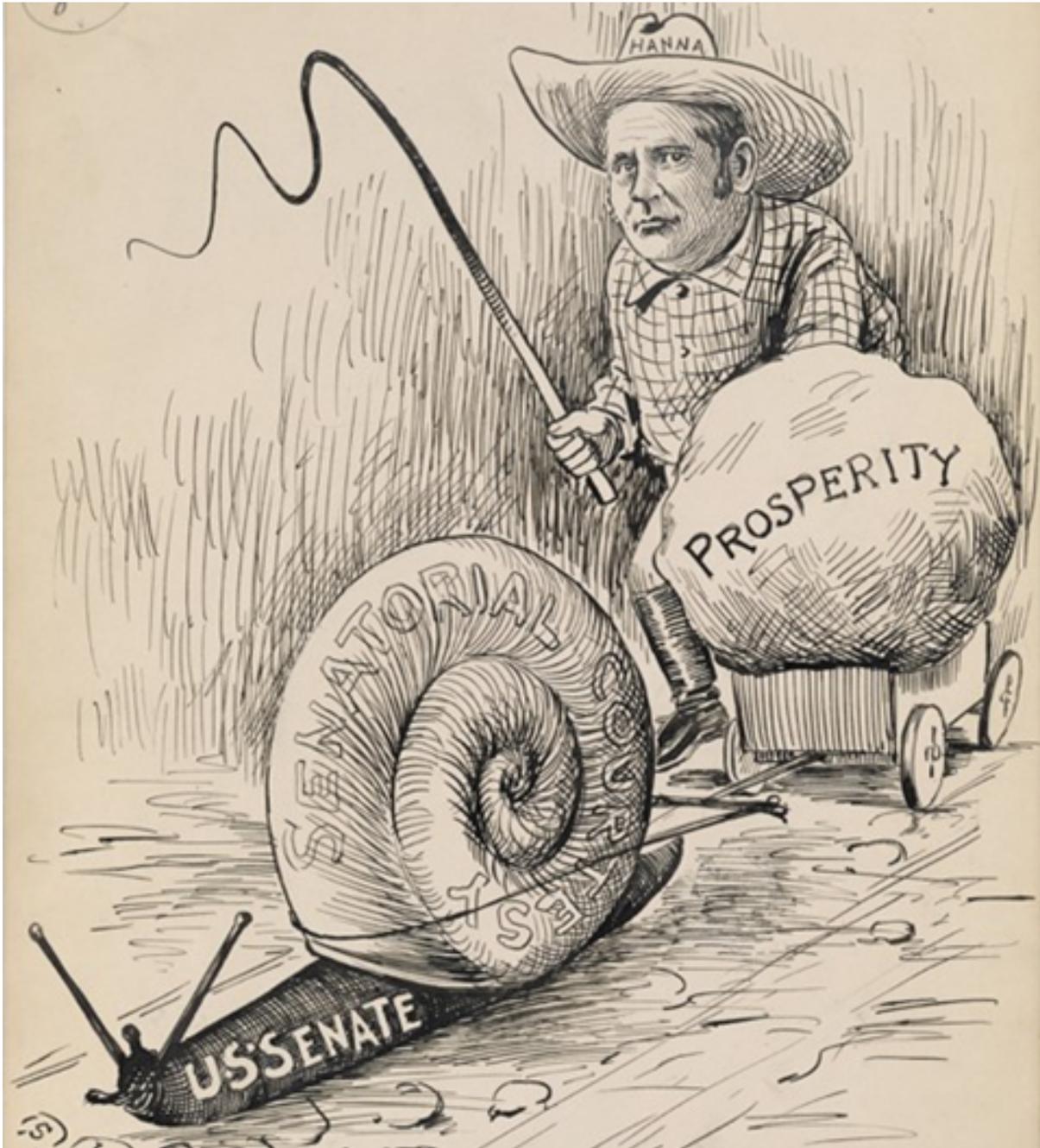
Congress: The Elected, Representative Branch of Government



The Speaker Leads the House by Majority Rule

Led by a powerful Speaker of the House whose party holds the majority of seats, the House of Representatives often works at a faster pace than the Senate and frequently leaves the minority party limited influence. This cartoon depicts the House under its most powerful Speaker to that point, Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois, who led the Republican majority in the House from 1903 to 1911.

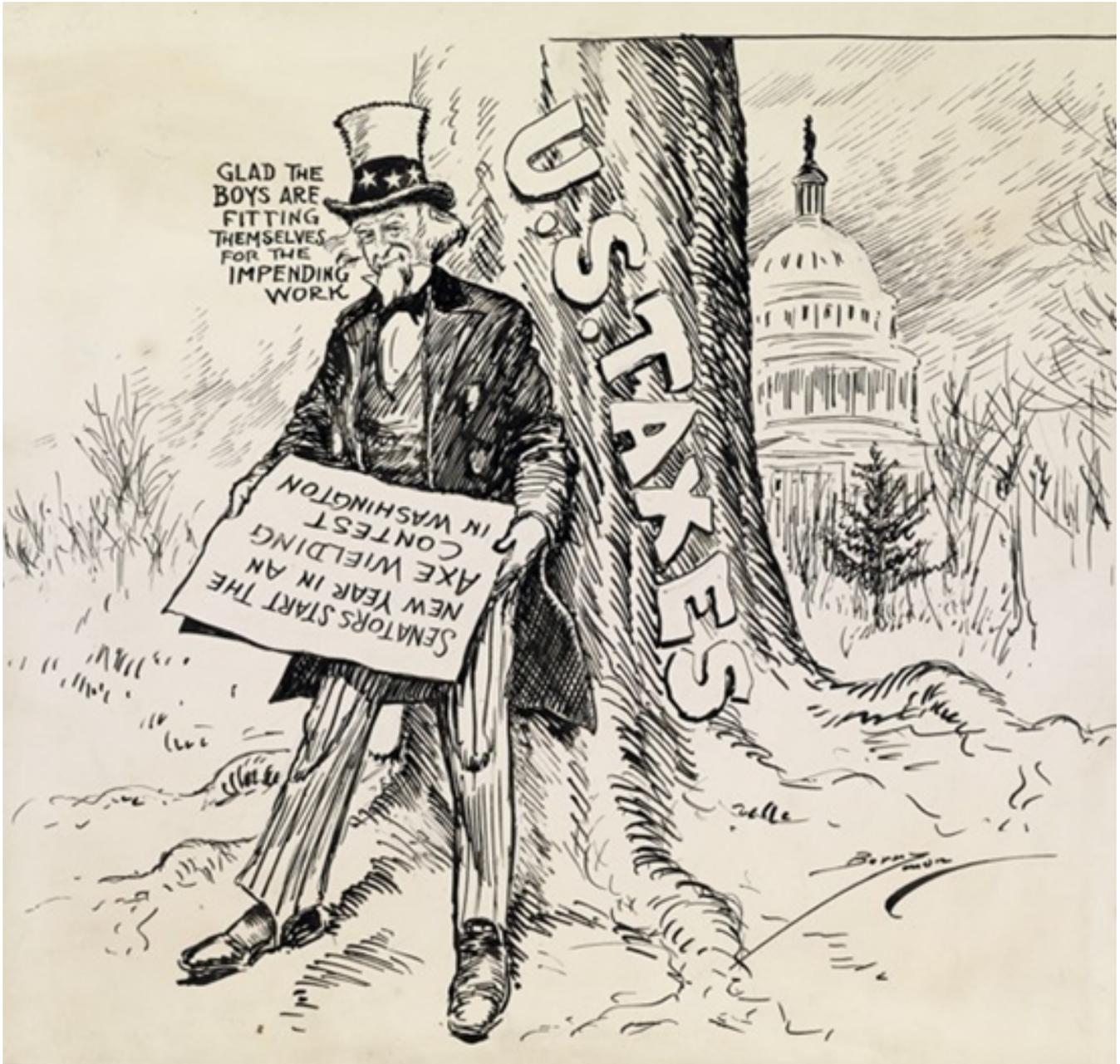
Congress: The Elected, Representative Branch of Government



All Senators are Equal, and Senate Minorities are Protected

The Senate operates in a manner and at a pace far different from the House. Senators represent states and serve staggered six-year terms, which means that only one-third of the Senators face reelection every two years and that the Senate is a continuously operating body. The Senate Majority Leader typically has less power than the Speaker of the House, Senate rules recognize the equality of all Senators, and Senate procedures protect the power of the minority. This 1897 caricature shows the slow deliberative pace of the Senate.

Congress: Making Laws for the Nation



Congress Makes the Nation's Spending and Taxing Bills

The power to tax balances Congress's power to appropriate money for spending. Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution grants Congress power to "lay and collect taxes." Article I, Section 7 specifies that tax legislation must originate in the House of Representatives. Since the beginning of the Republic, Congress has grappled with what taxes should be levied, how much revenue should be raised, and who should bear the greatest tax burden. This cartoon shows Uncle Sam hoping that Congress is prepared to take an ax to taxes.

Congress: Making Laws for the Nation



Amended Bills Reflect Compromises when Passed

The legislative process established in the Constitution requires that each bill pass through rigorous procedures in both houses of Congress, including opportunities to add amendments. A bill's journey through Congress is not complete until it has been passed in identical form by both houses. This cartoon depicts a bill that has been amended so much in the Senate that it is practically unrecognizable to its original House author.

Congress and the President: Balancing Articles I and II of the Constitution



Successful Bills Become Laws with the President's Signature

Even when a bill has cleared all the hurdles in the legislative process through both houses of Congress, it still requires the signature of the President to become law. Only a small percentage of bills introduced in any Congress make it this far in the legislative process. This cartoon conveys a railroad bill's anxiety about how it will be received by the President.

Congress and the President: Balancing Articles I and II of the Constitution



A President's Objection (Veto) Return a Bill to Congress

Veto power—derived from the Latin phrase “I forbid”—gives the President the authority to veto legislation. This executive power over a legislative action is an example of a constitutional check by one branch upon the authority of another. The Founders designed the Constitution with multiple checks and balances to ensure that no one branch can independently exert control of the government.

Congress and the President: Balancing Articles I and II of the Constitution



Congress Can Reconsider a Returned Bill and Override a Veto

When a President vetoes a piece of legislation—provided that the action takes place within 10 days (Sundays excepted)—it is returned to the chamber of Congress where it originated along with a statement of why the President objects. That chamber then has an opportunity to re-vote on it. If the bill receives a two-thirds majority, it is sent to the other chamber where it is again voted upon. With a two-thirds majority in that chamber as well, the bill becomes law without the President's signature, a congressional action referred to as a veto override.

Political Parties: Play a Leading Role in Congress



Each Party Seeks Issues that Will Lure Voters

Political parties try to win elections by choosing and angling for issues that will appeal to voters. This cartoon shows the two parties on the lookout for issues that will lure undecided voters to their side and away from the other party.

Political Parties: Play a Leading Role in Congress



Party Rivalry Reflects the Range of Opinions on Issues

The rivalry between the two parties is a regular feature of congressional politics, and Democrats and Republicans often view congressional action and legislation from opposite perspectives. Going home at the end of the session, the two characters depicted in this cartoon have starkly different opinions of how the session went. Despite their differences, both parties contribute to the work of Congress, with the minority party often suggesting policy alternatives and obstructing bills that lack sufficient support to pass.

Political Parties: Play a Leading Role in Congress



The People Show Their Support for Each Party When They Vote

Having the voters choose their representatives is an important way that the ideal of popular sovereignty is translated into political reality. Each election allows the voters to take stock of the work of their representatives, and every two years each voter has a chance to appraise the work of their representatives in Congress.

A Member's Job: Representing the People and the States



Each Member Juggles a Wide Range of Responsibilities

Whether in the majority or minority party, each Representative or Senator must juggle a wide range of demanding daily tasks related to the needs of constituents, their district or state, and the nation. Each member must keep informed about bills on many topics, participate in the work of committees, and fulfill numerous other responsibilities, including raising money for the next election campaign.

A Member's Job: Representing the People and the States



Casting Votes is the Defining Duty of a Member

Voting is the engine of democracy. Decisions at all levels of government are based on this expression of popular will. The House and Senate take many votes on each measure they debate. Votes in committee lead to votes in the full House and additional votes in the Senate. Typically, by the time a law is passed, Members of Congress have had many opportunities to demonstrate their support or opposition.

A Member's Job: Representing the People and the States



Communicating with Voters is the Key to Reelection

Communicating with constituents is a critical element of representation. Members of the House and Senate are busy addressing many complex issues on behalf of voters. When they return home from Washington, they must explain the actions they took, decisions they made, and their thoughts and plans for the future. This cartoon shows that the Members' work does not end when Congress is recessed.