NOTE TAKING: Process

• In Binder or Notebook (for my CLASS only!)
• In the TOP RIGHT corner write the following:
  – 1/26/09 (DATE)
  – Influences on Members of Congress (TITLE)
  – (OBJECTIVE)

TLW explain the influences on members of Congress.

QUESTION

What is Congress' job?

How do they get it done?
Influences on Congress

• Constituent Convictions
  – If a member votes according to these, he is said to act in the delegate role and engage in representational voting.
  – Difficult to gauge constituent opinion on a given issue.
  – Most constituents are not even aware of the issues faced by Congress.
  – Diversity of interests makes this difficult.

Influences on Congress

• Members’ Own Convictions
  – trustee role and engage in attitudinal voting

• Other Members of Congress
  – E.g., party leaders, committee leaders, state delegations, other members with similar ideology
  – Organizational voting
  – Reciprocity (exchange of favors) and logrolling (exchange of votes)

Influences on Congress

• Congressional Staff Members
  – Society larger and more complex → Congress takes on more responsibilities → need for larger staffs
    • Control information that members receive
    • Control access to members
    • Help set committee agenda
    • Make recommendations on legislation
    • Help write legislation
    • Analyze info from presidential staff
How might staffers be seen as an undemocratic aspect to Congress?

**Influences on Congress**

- **Interest groups/lobbies/PACs**
  - Campaign contributions
  - "report cards"
  - Targeting
  - Providing information
  - Testifying before committee
  - Paying for "junkets"
- **Congressional caucuses**
  - Black caucus, Hispanic caucus, blue collar caucus, women's caucus

**Influences on Congress**

- **President**
  - Can punish or reward members—especially those of his own party
  - Campaign for or against member
  - Attend/not attend member fundraisers
  - Speak out/for members
  - Use his "electronic throne" to gain leverage
- **Campaign contributors**
  - Evidence mixed
  - Other influences much stronger
  - Most effect on narrower issues
Influences on Congress

• Media
  – As a “watchdog” they hold members accountable to constituents

• Iron Triangles (subgovernments, issue networks, policy networks)
  – Congressional committee → related federal agency → impacted interest group(s)

• Party membership of members
  – Best predictor of congressional voting
  – Party unity scores strong
  – Especially on economic and social welfare issues
  – Not so much on foreign policy/civil liberties issues

SUMMARIZE NOTES

• The most important step of note taking is to take what you have written down and write a summary.

• At the end of your notes—

• WRITE a 50 word summary describing the influences on Congress & how they work.