

# CRS Report for Congress

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## Membership of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress: A Profile

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### Summary

Currently, there are 228 Republicans, 206 Democrats, and one Independent in the House of Representatives. In the Senate there are 55 Republicans and 45 Democrats.

The average age in the House is 52; in the Senate, 58. An overwhelming majority of Members have a college education. The dominant profession of Members continues to be law. However, Members frequently list more than one occupation.

Protestants collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation of Members, but Roman Catholics account for the largest single religious denomination. Other affiliations (Greek Orthodox, Jewish, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints [Mormon], and Christian Scientist, etc.) make up the balance.

The average length of service in the House is eight years; in the Senate, 10 years.

Record numbers of women and Hispanics are serving in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress. There are 65 female Members: 56 in the House, nine in the Senate. There are 20 Hispanic Members, all in the House, including two Delegates—one from Guam and the other from Puerto Rico. There are 40 Black Members: 39 in the House and one, a woman, in the Senate. Two of the Black Members are Delegates, one from the District of Columbia, the other from the Virgin Islands. Seven Members are of Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander ancestry, including the Delegate from Guam, who is also Hispanic. One Senator is a Native American.

Of Members with some form of military service, 135 are Representatives, and 48 are Senators.

This report will be revised at the commencement of the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress.

## The 105<sup>th</sup> Congress: A Profile

Congress is composed of 540 individuals from the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa. This count assumes that no seat is temporarily vacant.<sup>1</sup> The following is a profile of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, which commenced on January 3, 1997.<sup>2</sup> Except where indicated, this profile highlights the makeup of Congress as of July 17, 1998.

### Party Breakdown

The current party breakdown in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress is 228 Republicans, 206 Democrats, and one Independent in the House; and 55 Republicans and 45 Democrats in the Senate.

### Age<sup>3</sup>

The average age of Senators at the beginning of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress was 58, the same as in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. The average age of Representatives was 52, up one year from the previous Congress.

Representatives must be at least 25 when they take office. The youngest Representative and Member of Congress is Harold Ford (D-TN), who is 27. The oldest Representative is Sidney Yates (D-IL), who is 88.

Senators must be at least 30 when they take office. The youngest Senator is Rick Santorum (R-PA), who is 40. The oldest Senator and Member of Congress is Strom Thurmond (R-SC), who is 95.

### Occupations

As has been true in previous Congresses, law is the dominant profession in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress. Other professions include business, journalism, education, agriculture, law enforcement, and public service. A closer look at the prior occupations of Members of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress also shows:

- nine medical doctors (including an ophthalmologist and a psychiatrist), three dentists, two veterinarians, three nurses, and two pharmacists;
- three ministers;
- 14 governors, a federal judge, a state supreme court justice, and an ambassador;

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<sup>1</sup> Note that since 1789, 11,544 individuals have served in Congress, not including Delegates: 9,703 only in the House, 1,221 only in the Senate, and 620 in both houses.

<sup>2</sup> Information on the five Delegates is included only where indicated.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Overberg and Shana Gruskin, "105<sup>th</sup> Congress: A Closer Look," *USA Today*, Nov. 7, 1996, p. 6A.

- a president of the National Conference on State Legislatures and 253 former state legislators;
- 76 congressional staffers (including six congressional pages and two Senate Watergate Committee staffers), and 12 White House staffers;
- a CIA agent, a CIA analyst, an FBI agent, a police chief, three sheriffs, two police officers, two probation officers, and a border patrol chief;
- six Peace Corps volunteers and a director of the Peace Corps;
- two funeral directors, an actor, a florist, a librarian, and a wine maker; and
- two auctioneers, a volunteer fireman, an automobile assembly line worker, a river boat captain, a hotel bellhop, a jewelry maker, and a taxicab driver.

**Table 2. Members' Occupations**

Occupation	House			Senate			Congress
	D	R	Total	D	R	Total	Total
Acting/Entertainment	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Aeronautics	0	1	1	1	0	1	2
Agriculture	8	14	22	2	6	8	30
Business or Banking	55	129	184	8	25	33	217
Clergy	1	1	2	0	1	1	3
Education	42	34	77*	5	8	13	91*
Engineering	1	7	8	0	0	0	8
Health Administration	2	2	4	0	0	0	4
Journalism	4	7	12*	2	7	9	21*
Labor Officials	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Law	87	84	171	26	27	53	224
Law Enforcement	8	2	10	0	0	0	10
Medicine/Allied Fields	7	9	16	1	2	3	19
Military	0	1	1	0	1	1	2
Professional Sports	0	3	3	0	0	0	3
Public Service	55	47	102	9	17	26	128
Real Estate	3	20	23	2	3	5	28

**Note:** Because some Members list more than one occupation, totals are higher than total membership.  
**Source:** "Members' Occupations," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, vol. 55, Jan. 4, 1997, p. 29, supplemented by CRS.

\* Includes one Independent Member.

## Education<sup>4</sup>

As has been true in previous Congresses, the Members of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress are well educated. There are at least 394 Representatives and 93 Senators with bachelor's degrees, 112 Representatives and 17 Senators with master's degrees, 177 Representatives and 53 Senators with law degrees, 19 Representatives and three Senators with doctoral degrees, and 12 Representatives and two Senators with medical degrees.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, there are three Rhodes Scholars in the Senate and two in the House, and one Marshall Scholar in the House.

## Congressional Service<sup>6</sup>

At the beginning of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, the average length of service of Representatives was eight years, or four terms. Representatives are elected for two-year terms. Representative John Dingell (D-MI) has the longest consecutive service of any Member of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress (42 years). He is currently the Dean of the House. His service began on December 13, 1955.<sup>7</sup>

At the beginning of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, the average length of service of Senators was 10 years, slightly less than two terms. Senators are elected for six-year terms. Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC) has served longer (42 years in the Senate) than any other Member of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, and he is the Senate President *Pro Tempore*. His current service began on November 7, 1956. Previously he served in the Senate from December 24, 1954, to April 4, 1956.<sup>8</sup>

## Religion<sup>9</sup>

Most Members of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress cite a specific religious affiliation. Protestants such as Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc., collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation of Members. However, Roman Catholics account for the largest single religious denomination. Other affiliations, such as Greek Orthodox, Jewish,

<sup>4</sup> Information on the education of the freshmen Members of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress is drawn from the web site of Issue Dynamics Inc. and Capitol Advantage, "Congress at Your Fingertips on Line," <http://Congress.org/>, visited July 6, 1998. Information on the other Members is from CRS files.

<sup>5</sup> Eight Representatives and one Senator have an M.D. degree; three Representatives have a D.D.S. (dental) degree; and one Representative and one Senator have a D.V.M. (doctor of veterinary medicine) degree.

<sup>6</sup> Overberg and Gruskin, "105<sup>th</sup> Congress: A Closer Look," p. 6A.

<sup>7</sup> Representative Sidney Yates (D-IL) has served 47 years in the House, but his service is non-consecutive. Representative Joseph McDade (R-PA), with 36 years in the House, is the Republican in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress with the longest continuous House service.

<sup>8</sup> Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) is the Democrat with the longest Senate service. His service began on Jan. 3, 1959.

<sup>9</sup> Overberg and Gruskin, "105<sup>th</sup> Congress: A Closer Look," p. 6A.

Christian Scientist, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon), make up the balance.

## **Female and Minority Members**

There is a record number (65) of female Members in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress: 56 in the House and nine in the Senate. Of the 56 women in the House, 39 are Democrats and 17 are Republicans. In the Senate, six women are Democrats and three are Republicans.

The 20 Hispanic Members of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress are a record number. All are Members of the House. Eighteen are Democrats, and four are women.

There are 40 Black Members in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, one less than the record number of 41 in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. Thirty-nine Black Members, including two Delegates, serve in the House and one Black woman serves in the Senate. A record number of 11 Black women serve in the House, including two Delegates. With the exception of one Member of the House, all of the Black Members of Congress are Democrats.

Seven Members are of Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander heritage. Five serve in the House and two in the Senate. Of these Members of the House, one is a woman, and two are Delegates, one of whom (from Guam) is also Hispanic. All but one of the seven are Democrats.

One Senator, a Republican, is a Native American.

## **Foreign Born**

Currently, eight Members of the House were born outside the United States. The places of birth include Cuba, Germany, Hungary, South Korea, Kenya, Japan, and the Netherlands. No current Senators were born outside the United States, although a number of previous ones were.

## **Military Service**

The number of Members with some form of military service is 135 in the House (including one woman) and 48 in the Senate. This includes service in World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf and during times of peace, as well as membership in the Reserves and the National Guard.<sup>10</sup> There has been a steady decline in recent years of the number of veterans serving in Congress.

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<sup>10</sup> The information on veterans in Congress was provided by the staff of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and supplemented by CRS.

## **Marital and Family Status**

According to *USA Today*, 84% (366) of the Members of the House are married, and 86% (377) have children; 88% (88) of Senators are married and 95% (95) have children.<sup>11</sup> Several Members of Congress are divorced or widowed.

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<sup>11</sup> Overberg and Gruskin, "105<sup>th</sup> Congress: A Closer Look," p. 6A.