

CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

Membership of the 108th Congress: A Profile

Mildred L. Amer
Specialist in American National Government
Government and Finance Division

Summary

This report presents a profile of the membership of the 108th Congress. Included is information on numbers of Members, party affiliation, average age and length of service, occupations, religious affiliation, military service, female and minority Members, and foreign-born Members.

Currently, in the House, there are 228 Republicans, 210 Democrats (including five Delegates), one Independent, who is aligned with the Democrats, and one vacancy. The Senate has 51 Republicans, 48 Democrats, and one Independent, who is aligned with the Democrats.

The average age of Representatives at the beginning of the 108th Congress was 53.9 years; of Senators, 59.5 years; and of both houses, 54.9. An overwhelming majority of Members have a college education. The dominant profession of Members continues to be law, followed by business.

Protestants collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation of Members. Roman Catholics account for the largest single religious denomination, and numerous other affiliations are represented.

At the beginning of the 108th Congress, the average length of service in the House was about 9 years (4.6 terms); in the Senate, 11.3 years or almost 2 terms.

A record number of 76 women serve in the 108th Congress: 62 in the House, 14 in the Senate. Also a record 25 Hispanic Members, all in the House, including one Delegate. There are 39 black Members, all in the House, including two Delegates. Seven Members are Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander. There are three American Indians.

This report will be revised at the commencement of the 109th Congress unless significant changes occur in the 108th Congress.

The 108th Congress: A Profile¹

Congress is composed of 540 individuals from the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa. This count assumes that no seat is temporarily vacant.² The following is a profile of the 108th Congress.

Party Breakdown

In the 108th Congress, the current party breakdown in the House is 228 Republicans, 210 Democrats (including five Delegates), and one Independent who is aligned with the Democrats. The Senate has 51 Republicans, 48 Democrats, and one Independent who is aligned with the Democrats.

Age

At the beginning of the 108th Congress, the average age of Senators was 59.5 years, almost the same as in the 107th Congress, which was older than at least the previous 17 Congresses.³ The average age of Representatives was 53.9 years, about the same as in the previous Congress, but also older than the previous 17 congresses.⁴ The average age of both houses was 54.9 years.

Representatives must be at least 25 years old when they take office. The youngest Representative, as well as youngest Member of Congress, is Adam Putnam (R-FL), 29. The oldest Representative is Ralph Hall (R-TX), 80.

Senators must be at least 30 years old when they take office. The youngest Senator is freshman Senator John Sununu (R-NH), who is 39 and a former Member of the House. The oldest Senator, as well as the oldest current Member of Congress, is Robert C. Byrd (D-WV), 86.

¹ For background information on earlier Congresses, please refer to CRS Report RS20013, *Membership of the 106th Congress: A Profile*; CRS Report RS20760, *Membership of the 107th Congress: A Profile*; CRS Report RL30378, *Black Members of the United States Congress: 1789-2001*; CRS Report RL30261, *Women in the United States Congress: 1917-2003*; and CRS Report 97-398, *Asian Pacific Americans in the United States Congress*.

² Note that there is one vacancy in the House. Since 1789, 11,709 individuals (not including Delegates and Resident Commissioners) have served in Congress: 9,834 only in the House, 1,240 only in the Senate, and 635 in both houses.

³ Some of the information here, some of which is no longer available, was obtained from oncongress.cq.com/pubviews/congresswatch108.jsp, the website of Congressional Quarterly, Inc.; and "Congress of Relative Newcomers Poses Challenge to Bush, Leadership," *CQ Weekly Report*, vol. 59, Jan. 20, 2001, "Average Age," *CQ Weekly Report*, vol. 57, Jan. 9, 1999, p. 61.

⁴ Ibid.

Occupations

As has been true in previous Congresses, law and business are the dominant professions in the 108th Congress.⁵ Other professions include public service, education, agriculture, and journalism. A closer look at the prior occupations of Members of the 108th Congress also shows:

- eight medical doctors (including a psychiatrist), three dentists, two veterinarians, an optometrist, three nurses, one pharmacist, and three psychologists;
- three ministers;
- 35 mayors, 13 state Governors, 11 Lieutenant Governors (including two Delegates), two state first ladies (one of whom was also the first lady of the United States) and one territorial first lady, two former cabinet secretaries, two state supreme court justices, and a federal judge;
- a president of the National Conference on State Legislatures and 274 (232 in the House and 42 in the Senate) former state legislators;⁶
- 111 congressional staffers (including 10 congressional pages), 14 White House staffers or fellows, one former aide to the Secretary of Defense, and one former ambassador;
- four police officers (including a Capitol policeman), two state troopers, two sheriffs, two volunteer firemen, two probation officers, and a border patrol chief;
- two CIA agents and two FBI agents;
- two physicists, two chemists, a biomedical researcher, a geologist, and a microbiologist;
- four Peace Corps volunteers;
- an astronaut, a professional magician, a semi-professional musician, two broadcasters, a television sportscaster, a television reporter, a motivational speaker, a commercial airlines pilot, a corporate pilot, a flight school instructor, a major league baseball player, a major league football player (who was also a college football coach), a florist, a librarian, two vintners; and
- two auctioneers, two jewelry makers, a steelworker, a carpenter, an ironworker, a paper mill worker, a meat cutter, a river boat captain, a

⁵ Congressional Quarterly, Inc, “*Congress Watch, A Guide to the 108th Congress.*”

⁶ National Conference of State Legislators, “Former State Legislators in the 108th Congress,” internal report made available to CRS.

hotel bellhop, a taxicab driver, a race track blacksmith, and a “jackeroo” (cowboy) on a sheep-cattle ranch.

Education⁷

As has been true in previous Congresses, the Members of the 108th Congress are well educated. At least 400 Members of the House and 97 Senators hold bachelor’s degrees; 123 Members of the House and 19 Senators have master’s degrees; 176 Members of the House and 59 Senators hold law degrees; 18 Members of the House have doctoral degrees; and 11 Members of the House and three Senators hold medical degrees.⁸

In addition, there are two graduates of the U. S. Military Academy, one in the House and one in the Senate; one Senator is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy; one Representative (a woman) is a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy; five Representatives and three Senators were Rhodes Scholars; one Representative was a Fulbright Scholar, and one was a Marshall Scholar.

Congressional Service⁹

At the beginning of the 108th Congress, the average length of service of Members of the House was about 9 years or 4.6 terms, the highest it has been since the 102nd Congress (1992-1993). Representatives are elected for 2-year terms. Representative John Dingell (D-MI) has the longest consecutive service of any Member of the 108th Congress (48 years). Currently the dean of the House, he began serving on December 13, 1955.¹⁰

At the beginning of the 108th Congress, the average length of service of Senators was nearly 11.3 years, the highest since the 103rd Congress (1993-1995). Senators are elected for 6-year terms. Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) has served longer (45 years) than any other incumbent Member of the Senate. His service began on January 3, 1959. Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK), the Senate President pro tempore, is the current Republican Senator with the longest Senate service (35 years). He has served since December 24, 1968.

Religion¹¹

Most Members of the 108th Congress cite a specific religious affiliation. Protestants (Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and others) collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation of Members. However, Roman Catholics account for the

⁷ “Guide to the New Congress,” *CQ Daily Monitor*, vol. 38, no. 161, Nov. 7, 2002, pp. 21-45.

⁸ Six Reps., one Sen., and one Del. have an M.D. degree; three Reps. have a D.D.S. (doctor of dental surgery) degree; two Sens. have a D.V.M. (doctor of veterinary medicine) degree; and one Rep. has an O.D. (doctor of optometry) degree.

⁹ Note that 49 Sens. in the 108th Congress have previously served in the House of Representatives.

¹⁰ Rep. Philip M. Crane (R-IL), who has served in the House for 34 years, is the Republican in the 108th Congress with the longest continuous House service.

¹¹ Congressional Quarterly, Inc., “Members’ Religious Affiliation,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, , vol. 61, no. 4, Jan. 25, 2003, p. 193.

largest single religious denomination. Other affiliations, such as Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Christian Scientist, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon), make up the balance.

Female and Minority Members

A record number of 76 women serve in the 108th Congress: 62 in the House (the same as the record number in the 107th Congress), and 14 in the Senate. The 14 female Senators are a new record. Of the 62 women in the House, 41 are Democrats, including three Delegates, and 21 are Republicans. In the Senate, nine women are Democrats; five are Republicans.

A record 25 Hispanic Members are in the 108th Congress. All serve in the House, and one is a Delegate. Twenty are Democrats, seven are women. Two Hispanic Members are brothers, and two are sisters. Mario and Lincoln Diaz-Balart are Republicans from Florida. Linda and Loretta Sanchez are Democrats from California.¹²

There are 39 black Members of the 108th Congress, two fewer than the record number of 41 in the 104th Congress. All 39, including two Delegates, serve in the House and are Democrats. Thirteen black women serve in the House, including two Delegates.

Seven Members are of Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander heritage. Five serve in the House and two in the Senate. One is a Delegate, and one is an African American with Filipino heritage. All are Democrats.

There are three American Indian Members of the 108th Congress. Two, one from each party, serve in the House. The third is a Republican Member of the Senate.

Foreign Born¹³

Eight Members of the House were born outside the United States. Their places of birth include Cuba, Hungary, Taiwan, Japan, Mexico, Pakistan, and the Netherlands. No current Senators were born outside the United States, although a number of previous Senators were foreign born.

Military Service¹⁴

There are 154 Members of the 108th Congress who have had some form of military service, some 14 fewer than in the 107th Congress. The House has 119 veterans: 71 Republicans and 48 Democrats, including one woman, who is a Republican. In the

¹² Note that brothers Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI), and Rep. Sander Levin (D-MI) also serve in the 108th Congress as well as Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and his son Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI).

¹³ "Born Abroad," *CQ Daily Monitor*, vol. 36, no. 135, Sept. 12, 2000, p.7, supplemented by CRS.

¹⁴ Some information here is from the Military Officers Association of Americans Office [http://www.moaa.org/Legislative/Handbook/FactSheets/LegisTips/legislative_tips_5.asp], visited Jan. 21, 2004.

Senate, 35 Members are veterans: 19 Republicans and 16 Democrats. They have served in World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and Kosovo, and during times of peace, as well as in the Reserves and the National Guard. One Senator is a former Secretary of the Navy. There has been a steady decline in the number of Members who have served in the military, which may be attributed in part to the end of the Selective Service System draft in 1973.