

CRS Report for Congress

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Congressional Statistics: Bills Introduced and Laws Enacted, 1947-2004

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Summary

The Congressional Research Service receives many requests for statistics on the numbers of bills introduced and the numbers of laws enacted in each Congress. Although this information is available in several sources, it is nowhere set out in a simple table. It is generally included in tables with many other indicators of congressional activity. This report is designed to fill the need for a simple tabulation of legislative workload. It provides the numbers of bills and joint resolutions introduced, and the numbers of public and private laws enacted, from the 80th Congress through the 108th Congress (1947-2004). This report contains historical data and will not be updated. For more recent statistics on bills and joint resolutions and laws enacted, consult the “Bill Lists” tables in the Legislative Information System (LIS) Bill Summary and Status Files at [<http://www.congress.gov/billsumm/lists.html>].

The Statistics

These numbers on bills introduced and laws enacted should not be interpreted as the only, or the most important, measures of congressional workload and activity. Other indicators are data on investigations, confirmations, days in session, hearings, casework, omnibus legislation, etc. For statistics on record floor votes, see CRS Report RL30562, *Congressional Roll Call and Other Record Votes: First Congress through 108th Congress, 1789 Through 2004*. For statistics on the whole range of quantitative indicators, see *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2001-2002*, by Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 2002). Other indicators for the 80th Congress (1947-1948) to the present are available on the Internet in the *Résumés of Congressional Activity* section on the Senate’s public website at [http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/reference/two_column_table/Resumes.htm].

Comparable compilations of statistics for the first through the 79th Congresses, before legislative activity began to be quantified in the “Daily Digest” section of the *Congressional Record*, are extremely difficult to come by. Some researchers have pulled

together figures on measures introduced for a few scattered, selected years, but they do not all use the same definition of “measures.” So, the resulting figures cannot be compared accurately.

Compilations exist of earlier statistics on the numbers of laws enacted, covering both the pre- and post-80th Congresses. However, the same problems of differing inclusions and exclusions in the figures used apply to these, as well. Consequently, there will be some differences between figures in those compilations and in the table given here.

In the following table, two things stand out: a steady decline since the mid-1970s in the number of bills and joint resolutions introduced and a drastic decline in recent years in the number of private laws enacted. An important reason for the former is changes in the rules of the House of Representatives on bill sponsorship. The number of cosponsors allowed on an individual bill was once severely restricted, often causing many different Members to introduce identical versions of popular proposals. Beginning in 1967, up to 25 cosponsors were allowed on a bill, and in 1979, the House rules were amended to permit unlimited numbers of cosponsors.

The decline in the number of private bills and laws cannot be traced to a specific rule change. Private bills deal with one or more named individuals or entities. In the 20th century, most private bills concerned immigration cases or private claims. Over the years, Congress has delegated more of its authority on individual immigration matters and private claims to the executive branch, so the number of private bills and laws has declined dramatically.

Table 1. Selected Legislative Statistics

Congress	Bills & Joint Resolutions Introduced ^a			Laws Enacted	
	Total	House	Senate	Public	Private
80 th (1947-1948)	10,797	7,611	3,186	906	458
81 st (1949-1950)	14,988	10,502	4,486	921	1,103
82 nd (1951-1952)	12,730	9,065	3,665	594	1,023
83 rd (1953-1954)	14,952	10,875	4,077	781	1,002
84 th (1955-1956)	17,687	13,169	4,518	1,028	893
85 th (1957-1958)	19,112	14,580	4,532	936	784
86 th (1959-1960)	18,261	14,112	4,149	800	492
87 th (1961-1962)	18,376	14,328	4,048	885	684
88 th (1963-1964)	17,479	14,022	3,457	666	360
89 th (1965-1966)	24,003	19,874	4,129	810	473
90 th (1967-1968)	26,460	22,060	4,400	640	362
91 st (1969-1970)	26,303	21,436	4,867	695	246
92 nd (1971-1972)	22,969	18,561	4,408	607	161
93 rd (1973-1974)	23,396	18,872	4,524	649	123

Congress	Bills & Joint Resolutions Introduced ^a			Laws Enacted	
	Total	House	Senate	Public	Private
94 th (1975-1976)	21,096	16,982	4,114	588	141
95 th (1977-1978)	19,387	15,587	3,800	634	170
96 th (1979-1980)	12,583	9,103	3,480	613	123
97 th (1981-1982)	11,490	8,094	3,396	473	56
98 th (1983-1984)	10,559	7,105	3,454	623	52
99 th (1985-1986)	9,885	6,499	3,386	664	24
100 th (1987-1988)	9,588	6,263	3,325	713	48
101 st (1989-1990)	10,352	6,683	3,669	650	16
102 nd (1991-1992)	10,513	6,775	3,738	590	20
103 rd (1993-1994)	8,544	5,739	2,805	465	8
104 th (1995-1996)	6,808	4,542	2,266	333	4
105 th (1997-1998)	7,730	5,012	2,718	394	10
1 st session	4,801	3,194	1,607	153	4
2 nd session	2,929	1,818	1,111	241	6
106 th (1999-2000)	9,158	5,815	3,343	580	24
1 st session	5,636	3,602	2,034	170	3
2 nd session	3,522	2,213	1,309	410	21
107 th (2001-2002)	9,130	5,892	3,238	377	6
1 st session	5,603	3,691	1,912	136	1
2 nd session	3,527	2,201	1,326	241	5
108 th (2003-2004) ^b	8,621	5,544	3,077	498	6
1 st session	5,812	3,783	2,029	198	0
2 nd session	2,809	1,761	1,048	300	6

Source: House bills and resolutions from archived CRS Report 93-707, *Indicators of House of Representatives Workload and Activity*, p. 15 (no longer available), the Legislative Information System website, and the final “Daily Digests” for the 103rd through 108th Congresses. Senate bills and resolutions from archived CRS Report 93-789, *Workload and Activity Report: United States Senate, 1946-1992*, p. 12 (no longer available), the Legislative Information System website, and the final “Daily Digests” for the 103rd through 108th Congresses. Public laws from archived CRS Report 93-789, p. 15 (no longer available), the Legislative Information System website, and the final “Daily Digests” for the 103rd through 108th Congresses.

- a. Includes only bills and joint resolutions. Simple and concurrent resolutions, which do not have the force of law when enacted, are not included in these figures.
- b. 108th Congress bill statistics do not include H.R. 3 and H.R. 9 — these bill numbers were reserved by the House leadership but never actually introduced.