



Assignments to Senate Subcommittees

Judy Schneider
Specialist on the Congress

November 15, 2005

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

www.crs.gov

98-635

Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Sizes and Ratios | 1 |
| Process for Selecting Subcommittee Leaders and Members..... | 1 |
| Limits on Subcommittee Assignments..... | 1 |
| Limits on Service as Subcommittee Chair | 2 |

Contacts

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Author Contact Information | 2 |
|----------------------------------|---|

One of the first orders of business for Senate committees is deciding whether to establish subcommittees, and if so, determining their number, sizes, party ratios, chairs, ranking minority members, and other members. There are no direct limits on the number of subcommittees that may be created.

Sizes and Ratios

Senate and party rules are silent on subcommittee size. A committee often determines its subcommittee sizes through interparty negotiations, especially between the committee's chair and ranking minority member.

Process for Selecting Subcommittee Leaders and Members

Neither Senate nor party rules discuss how subcommittee chairs, ranking members, and other members are selected. However, there are two prevalent approaches. Under one approach, the full committee chair exercises discretion to choose subcommittee leaders and members. Consultation with the ranking minority member and other committee members is common; some committees' rules explicitly require prior consultation, particularly with the ranking minority member or majority-party members of the full committee.

Under the other common practice, Senators choose subcommittee leadership slots and other assignments in order of seniority on the full committee. Typically, there are separate, parallel processes for Republicans and Democrats, allowing each Senator to choose one subcommittee assignment before anyone in the same party chooses a second assignment. Each Senator then selects a second assignment before anyone in the same party selects a third assignment.

Although they do not address the *assignment process*, both Senate and Republican Conference rules limit the number of subcommittee assignments or chairs per Senator. Senate rules do not limit subcommittee ranking memberships, and Democrats do not have written Conference Rules addressing subcommittee assignment and leadership issues.

Limits on Subcommittee Assignments

Senate Rule XXV establishes three categories of committees, popularly called the "A" "B" and "C" committees. Senators generally are limited to two "A" and one "B" committee assignments, although waivers can be granted. In addition, Senators are restricted from serving on more than three subcommittees of each "A" committee (except Appropriations) and two subcommittees of a "B" committee (Senate Rule XXV, paragraph 4(b)(1) and (2)). The full committee limitations sometimes are waived, and assignment to an additional committee usually also allows service on additional subcommittees. No service restrictions exist on subcommittees of "C" committees, although "C" subcommittees have been rare in recent years.

Special provision is made for the chair and ranking member of each full committee to serve *ex officio*, without vote, as a member of any of a committee's subcommittees (Senate Rule XXV, paragraph 4(b)(3)). Some committees also allow their members to sit with any subcommittee during its sessions, although their role may be restricted. For instance, some committees prohibit Senators from participating in subcommittee votes if they are not regular members of a subcommittee.

Limits on Service as Subcommittee Chair

Senate rules essentially prohibit each Senator from chairing more than one subcommittee per committee, and limit each Senator to three chairs of “A” and “B” committees and subcommittees (Rule XXV, paragraph 4(e)(2) and (3)). A Senator who does not chair a full committee may chair a subcommittee of each of the Senator’s two “A” committees and a subcommittee of the Senator’s “B” committee. However, a Senator who chairs a full “A” or “B” committee may chair only two subcommittees: the chair of a full “A” committee may chair one “A” and one “B” subcommittee, while the chair of a full “B” committee may chair two “A” subcommittees.

Republican Conference rules further restrict the chairs held by Republican Senators (Conference Rule V(C)). The chair of a full “A” committee may not chair any subcommittees, except of Appropriations. The chair of a full “non-A” committee, except Ethics, may chair one subcommittee. The chair of the Rules and Administration Committee may chair the Joint Committee on the Library or the Joint Committee on Printing. Other Senators who are not full-committee chairs may chair two subcommittees, although waivers can be granted. These conference rules also apply to ranking memberships, should the Republicans be the minority party.

(For additional information, see CRS Report 98-183, *Senate Committees: Categories and Rules for Committee Assignments* and CRS Report RL30743, *Committee Assignment Process in the U.S. Senate: Democratic and Republican Party Procedures*, both by (name redacted).)

Author Contact Information

(name redacted)
Specialist on the Congress
-redacted-@crs.loc.gov, 7-....

EveryCRSReport.com

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is a federal legislative branch agency, housed inside the Library of Congress, charged with providing the United States Congress non-partisan advice on issues that may come before Congress.

EveryCRSReport.com republishes CRS reports that are available to all Congressional staff. The reports are not classified, and Members of Congress routinely make individual reports available to the public.

Prior to our republication, we redacted names, phone numbers and email addresses of analysts who produced the reports. We also added this page to the report. We have not intentionally made any other changes to any report published on EveryCRSReport.com.

CRS reports, as a work of the United States government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

Information in a CRS report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to members of Congress in connection with CRS' institutional role.

EveryCRSReport.com is not a government website and is not affiliated with CRS. We do not claim copyright on any CRS report we have republished.