



CRS Report for Congress

Membership of the 110th Congress: A Profile

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Summary

This report presents a profile of the membership of the 110th Congress. Statistical information is included on selected characteristics of Members, including data on party affiliation, average age and length of service, occupation, religious affiliation, female and minority Members, foreign-born Members, and military service.

Currently, in the House of Representatives, there are 235 Democrats (including four Delegates), 203 Republicans (including the Resident Commissioner), and two vacant seats. The Senate has 49 Democrats; two Independents, who have aligned themselves with the Democrats; and 49 Republicans.

The average age of Members of both houses, at the convening of the 110th Congress, is 57 years; of Representatives, 55.93 years; and of Senators, 61.73 years. The overwhelming majority of Members have a college education. The dominant professions of Members are public service/politics, business, and law. Protestants collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation of Members. Roman Catholics account for the largest single religious denomination, and numerous other affiliations are represented.

The average length of service in the House, at the beginning of the Congress, is about 10 years (5.07 terms); in the Senate, 12.82 years (slightly over two terms).

A record number of 89 women serve in the 110th Congress: 73 in the House, 16 in the Senate. There are 41 black or African American Members in the House, including two Delegates, and one black Senator. There are 30 Hispanic or Latino Members serving: 26 in the House, including the Resident Commissioner, and three in the Senate. Nine Members (six Representatives, one Delegate, and two Senators) are Asian, Indian American (Asian), or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander. There is one American Indian (Native American), who serves in the House.

This report will be revised at the commencement of the 111th Congress.

The 110th 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.² This count assumes that no seat is temporarily vacant.³ The following is a profile of the 110th Congress.

Party Breakdown

In the 110th Congress, the current party breakdown in the House is 235 Democrats (including four Delegates) and 203 Republicans (including the Resident Commissioner). The Senate has 49 Democrats; two Independents, who have aligned themselves with the Democrats; and 49 Republicans.

Age

The average age of Members of the 110th Congress is possibly the oldest of any Congress in U.S. history.⁴ The average age of Senators in the 110th Congress is 61.73 years, two years older than the average age of Senators in the 109th Congress.⁵ The average age of Representatives is 55.93 years, one year older than for Members of the 109th Congress.⁶ The average age of both houses is 57 years.

The U.S. Constitution requires Representatives to be at least 25 years old when they take office. The youngest Representative, as well as youngest Member of Congress, is Patrick McHenry (R-NC), 31. The oldest Representative is Ralph Hall (R-TX), 84.

Senators must be at least 30 years old when they take office. The youngest Senator is Senator John Sununu (R-NH), who is 42 and a former Member of the House. The

¹ For background information on earlier Congresses, please refer to CRS Report RS22007, *Membership of the 109th Congress: A Profile*, by Mildred Amer; CRS Report RS21379, *Membership of the 108th Congress: A Profile*, by Mildred Amer; CRS Report RS20760, *Membership of the 107th Congress: A Profile*, by Mildred Amer; CRS Report RL30378, *Black Members of the United States Congress: 1789-2005*, by Mildred Amer; CRS Report RL30261, *Women in the United States Congress: 1917-2006*, by Mildred Amer; and CRS Report 97-398, *Asian Pacific Americans in the United States Congress*, by Lorraine Tong.

² This figure includes 100 Senators, 435 Representatives, four delegates (from the District of Columbia, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and one Resident Commissioner (from Puerto Rico). Since 1789, 11,814 individuals (not including Delegates and Resident Commissioners) have served in Congress: 9,919 only in the House, 1,250 only in the Senate, and 645 in both houses.

³ Currently, there are two vacancies in the House.

⁴ The complete CRS records on the ages of Members of the House begin in 1907, the 60th Congress.

⁵ “110th Congress: Statistically Speaking,” *CQ Today*, vol. 42, no. 146, November 9, 2006, p. 76, supplemented by CRS and staff at Congressional Quarterly, Inc.

⁶ Ibid.

oldest Senator, as well as the oldest current Member of Congress, is Robert C. Byrd (D-WV), 89.

Occupations⁷

In the 110th Congress, law is the dominant declared profession of Senators, followed by public service/politics; for Representatives, public service/politics is first, followed by business and law.⁸ A closer look at the prior occupations of Members of the 110th Congress also shows:

- 13 medical doctors (including a psychiatrist), two dentists, three nurses, two veterinarians, one psychologist, an optometrist, and one pharmacist;
- six ministers;
- 36 mayors, nine state governors, nine 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;
- three former Cabinet secretaries, two former Secretaries of the Navy, a vice admiral in the navy, a former Deputy Administrator in the Department of Veterans' Affairs, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, a former Defense Department counter terrorism consultant, a former ambassador, three state supreme court justices, and a federal judge;
- 271 (232 in the House and 39 in the Senate) former state legislators;⁹
- 100 congressional staffers (including 10 congressional pages), 16 White House staffers or fellows, several former executive branch employees, and a former parliamentary aide in the British House of Commons;
- four sheriffs, a deputy sheriff, four police officers (including a Capitol policeman), two state troopers, two probation officers, a volunteer fireman, an FBI agent, and a former border patrol chief;
- three chemists, two physicists, a biomedical engineer, and a microbiologist;
- six Peace Corps volunteers;
- two radio talk show hosts, a radio broadcaster, a radio newscaster, a television talk show host, and a television commentator;
- five accountants;
- a corporate pilot, and an astronaut;

⁷ The professions described here are not necessarily the ones practiced by Members immediately prior to entering Congress.

⁸ "110th Congress: Statistically Speaking," p. 76. In the overwhelming majority of previous Congresses, business has followed law as the dominant occupation of Members. In the 110th Congress, 215 Members (158 Representatives, 58 Senators) list their occupation as law, 202 Members (171 Representatives, 31 Senators) list public service/politics, and 189 Members (162 Representatives, 26 Senators) list business. Eighty-four Representatives and 14 Senators list education as a profession. Members often list more than one profession when surveyed by Congressional Quarterly, Inc.

⁹ National Conference of State Legislators, "Former State Legislators in the 110th Congress," internal report made available to CRS.

- three professional musicians, a semi-professional musician, a screenwriter, a major league baseball player, a major league football player; and
- three carpenters, two vintners, two bank tellers, a furniture salesman, an organic farmer, a ski instructor, an ironworker, an auto worker, a clothing factory worker, a mortician, a waitress, a teamster member/dairy worker, a paper mill worker, a cement plant worker, a meat cutter, a river boat captain, a taxicab driver, a toll booth collector, a hotel clerk, a hotel bellhop, a fruit orchard worker.

Education

As has been true in previous Congresses, most Members of the 110th Congress hold university degrees.¹⁰ CRS research indicates some 397 Members of the House and 98 Senators hold bachelor's degrees; 123 Members of the House and 19 Senators have master's degrees; 177 Members of the House and 58 Senators hold law degrees; 22 Members of the House have doctoral degrees; and 13 Members of the House and four Senators hold medical degrees.¹¹

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

Congressional Service

The average length of service of Members of the House is about 10 years (5.07 terms). Representatives are elected for two-year terms. Representative John Dingell (D-MI), the dean of the House, has the longest consecutive service of any Member of the 110th Congress (51 years). He began serving on December 13, 1955.

The average length of service of Members of the Senate is 12.82 years (about two terms). Senators are elected for six-year terms. Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV), the President Pro Tem of the Senate, has served longer (48 years) than any other Senator in history.¹² His service began on January 3, 1959. Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) is the current Republican Senator with the longest Senate service (38 years). He has been a Member of the Senate since December 24, 1968.¹³

¹⁰ "110th Congress: Statistically Speaking," p. 76., supplemented by CRS.

¹¹ Ten Representatives, two Senators, and one Delegate have an M.D. degree; two Representatives have a D.D.S. (doctor of dental surgery) degree; and two Senators have a D.V.M. (doctor of veterinary medicine) degree. One Representative has an O.D. (doctor of optometry) degree, but is not included in the count of those with medical degrees..

¹² Note that 49 Sens. in the 110th Congress have previously served in the House.

¹³ For additional information, see CRS Report RL32648, *Average Years of Service for Members of the Senate and House of Representatives, First - 109th Congress*, by Mildred Amer.

Religion¹⁴

Most Members of the 110th Congress cite a specific religious affiliation. Protestants (Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and others) collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation of Members. Roman Catholics, however, account for the largest single religious denomination. Other affiliations include Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Christian Scientist, Quaker, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon). There are also two Buddhists and one Muslim in the House. This is the first time that members of these faiths have served in Congress.

Female and Minority Members

Female Members. More women, 89, serve in the 110th Congress than have in any prior Congress.¹⁵ Seventy-three serve in the House and 16 in the Senate. Of the 73 women in the House, 52 are Democrats, including three Delegates, and 21 are Republicans. Of women serving in the Senate, 11 are Democrats and five are Republicans.

Black Members. There are 42 black or African American Members in the 110th Congress, 41 in the House, one in the Senate.¹⁶ All are Democrats, including two Delegates. Thirteen black or African American women, including two Delegates, serve in the House. Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) is the first black male Democrat to serve in the Senate.

Hispanic Members. There are 30 Hispanic or Latino Members of the 110th Congress, the same number as in the 109th Congress, which had the largest number of Hispanic Members in a single Congress.¹⁷ Twenty-seven serve in the House and three in the Senate. Of the Members of the House, 22 are Democrats, five are Republicans (including the Resident Commissioner), and seven are women. The Hispanic Senators include two Democrats and one Republican. All are male.

Two sets of Hispanic Members are brothers, and one set are sisters. Mario and Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Republicans from Florida, serve in the House. Ken Salazar (D-CO)

¹⁴ Congressional Quarterly, Inc., "Religions in the 110th," *CQ Today*, vol. 42, no. 146, November 9, 2006, p. 77.

¹⁵ Ninety women were elected to the 110th Congress; 74 to the House, 16 to the Senate. However, Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-CA) died on April 22, 2007.

¹⁶ Forty three black or African American Members were elected to the 110th. However, Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-CA) died on April 22, 2007.

¹⁷ This number includes three Members of the House who are of Portuguese decent and belong to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. Note, that until November 2006, a record number of 29 Hispanic Members (26 in the House; three in the Senate) served in the 109th Congress. On November 13, 2006, Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ) was sworn in to fill the vacancy caused when Rep. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) resigned from the House in January 2006 after he was appointed to the Senate. Rep. Sires was also elected to the 110th Congress.

serves in the Senate, and his brother, John Salazar (D-CO), serves in the House. Linda and Loretta Sanchez, Democrats from California, serve in the House.¹⁸

Asian Pacific Americans. Nine Members are of Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander heritage. Seven serve in the House, six Democrats (including a Delegate) and one Republican. Two, both Democrats, serve in the Senate. Of those serving in the House, one is a Delegate, one is a black Member with Filipino heritage, and one is Indian American (Asian).

American Indians. There is one American Indian (Native American) Member of the 110th Congress, who is a Republican Member of the House.

Foreign Born¹⁹

Eleven Representatives and one Senator were born outside the United States. Their places of birth include Cuba, Hungary, Mexico, Taiwan, Japan, Pakistan, Canada, and the Netherlands.

Military Service

According to the Military Officers Association of America, 129 Members of the 110th Congress have had some form of military service.²⁰ The House has 101; the Senate 28. They have served in World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf (1990-1991), Iraq (2003-present), and Kosovo, as well as during times of peace. Some have served in the Reserves and the National Guard. Several Members are still serving as Reservists. As noted above, two Senators are former Secretaries of the Navy.

The number of veterans in the 110th Congress reflects part of the trend of a steady decline in the number of Members who have served in the military. For example, 390 veterans served in the 93rd Congress (1973-1975); and 236 served in the 103rd (1993-1995). This may be attributed in part to the end of the Selective Service System draft in 1973.

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¹⁸ Note that brothers Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) and Rep. Sander Levin (D-MI) also serve in the 110th Congress as well as Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and his son Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI).

¹⁹ “Born Abroad,” *CQ Today*, July 1, 2005, p.10, supplemented by CRS.

²⁰ Military Officers Association of America, unpublished data supplemented by CRS.