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House Committees: Categories and Rules for Committee Assignments

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Summary

Both House and party rules detail procedures for committee assignments. House rules address the election and membership of committees, especially limitations on membership. The Democratic Caucus and Republican Conference rules designate categories of committees (shown in **Table 1**) and specify service limitations in addition to those in the House rules.

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Introduction

Both House and party rules detail procedures for committee assignments. House rules address the election and membership of committees, especially limitations on membership. The Democratic Caucus and Republican Conference rules designate categories of committees and specify service limitations in addition to those in the House rules.

Number of Assignments

- In general, no Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner can serve on more than two standing committees and four subcommittees of those standing committees (House Rule X, clause 5(b)(2)(A)).
- Democrats and Republicans designate *exclusive* committees and generally limit service to one such panel. Democratic Members of exclusive committees cannot also serve on nonexclusive committees, but they can serve on the Budget or House Administration Committee. Republican Members assigned to the Rules Committee can take “leave with seniority” from one standing committee to serve on Rules.
- Democrats and Republicans designate *nonexclusive* committees and limit Members to service on two such panels, unless the House rules contain other requirements.

Limitations on Assignments

- Service on the Ethics Committee is exempt from the two-committee limitation. Service is also limited to three Congresses during any five successive Congresses. (House Rule X, clause 5(a)(3)(B)). Democratic Caucus rules limit service to no more than three Congresses in any five.
- Budget Committee members are limited to no more than four Congresses in any six successive Congresses (House Rule X, clause 5(a)(2)(B)). Democratic Caucus rules limit Members to no more than three Congresses in any five. Members may serve for one additional Congress as chair or ranking Member if they assumed leadership in their fourth term on the committee.
- Intelligence Committee members are limited to no more than four Congresses in any period of six successive Congresses. There is no term limit for Members selected to serve as chair and ranking Member. (House Rule X, clause 11). In addition, Democratic Caucus rules say Members may not serve on more than one standing committee, although they may take a leave of absence from service on another standing committee to serve on the Intelligence Committee.
- Committee and subcommittee chairs are limited to service of six years on the same committee or subcommittee.
- “Any other exception to these limitations must be approved by the House upon the recommendation of the respective party caucus or conference.” (House Rule X, clause 5.)

Table I. Categories of Committees

Category	Democrats	Republicans
Exclusive	Appropriations	Appropriations
	Rules	Rules
	Ways and Means	Ways and Means
	Energy and Commerce (for Members first serving on the panel in the 104 th Congress and subsequent Congresses)	Energy and Commerce
	Financial Services (for Members first serving on the panel in the 109 th and subsequent Congresses)	Financial Services
Non-Exclusive	Agriculture	Agriculture
	Armed Services	Armed Services
	Budget	Budget
	Education and The Workforce	Education and The Workforce
	Energy and Commerce (for Members who served on the panel before the 104 th Congress)	
	Financial Services (for Members who served on the panel before the 109 th Congress)	
	Foreign Affairs	Foreign Affairs
	Homeland Security	Homeland Security
	House Administration	House Administration
	Judiciary	Judiciary
	Natural Resources	Natural Resources
	Oversight and Government Reform	Oversight and Government Reform
	Science, Space and Technology	Science, Space and Technology
	Small Business	Small Business
	Transportation and Infrastructure	Transportation and Infrastructure
	Veterans' Affairs	Veterans' Affairs
Exempt	Ethics; Select Intelligence (not listed as such but treated as exempt)	Select Intelligence; Ethics
	Select Committee on Benghazi (not listed as such but treated as exempt)	Select Committee on Benghazi (not listed as such but treated as exempt)

Source: Compiled by the author from her analysis of Democratic Caucus and Republican Conference rules.

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