

Congress 101: The Process, Pitfalls, and Protocol



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Federal Relations Director

Congress 101: The Process, Pitfalls, and Protocol

Why does Congress take so long to make decisions?

What's the big deal with cloture?

How does the federal budget process work?

What do Committees do and who serves on them?

How can I track the status of a bill?

Which Committees matter to cities?

How can I influence what happens in Washington?



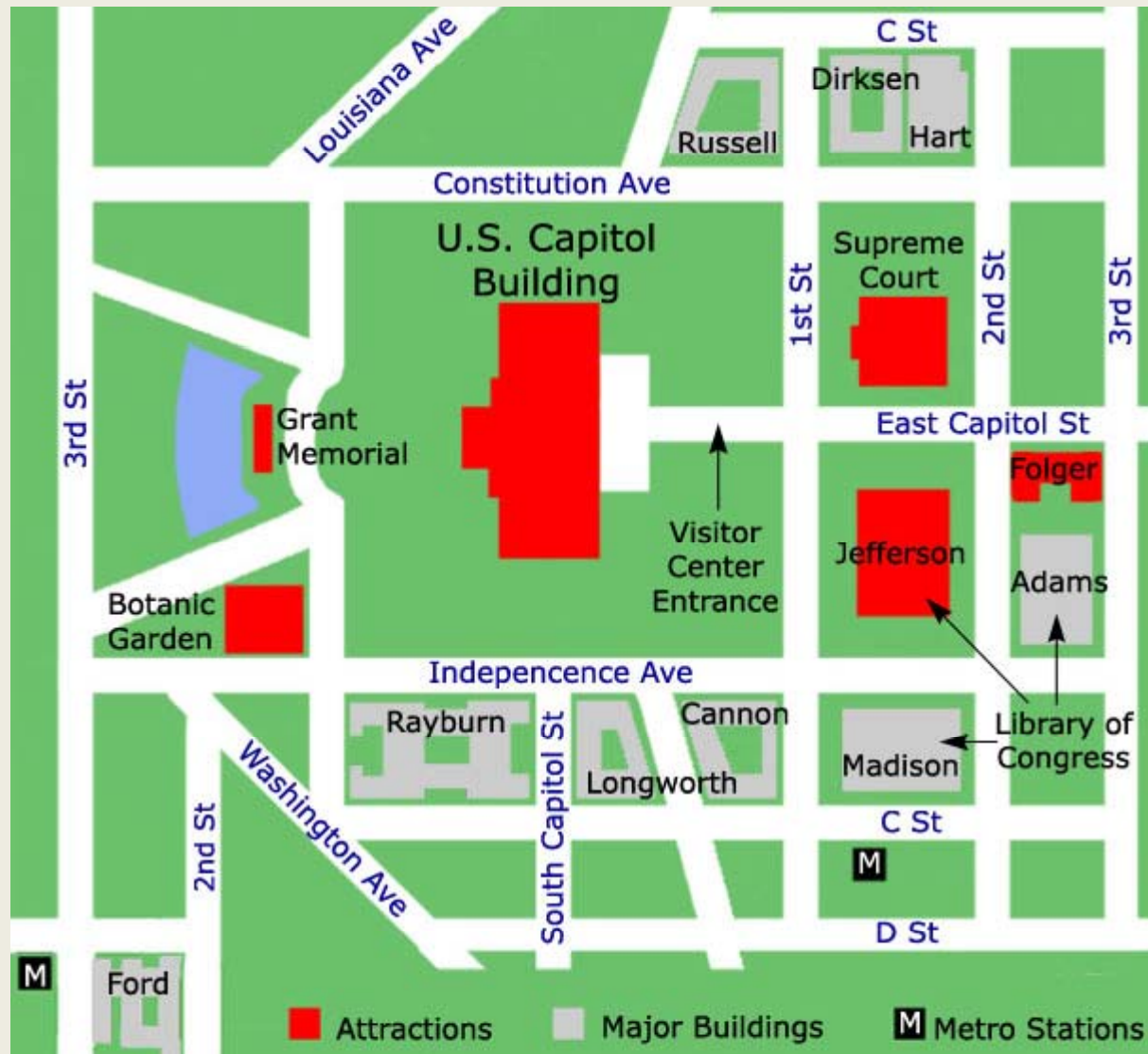
Congress 101: The Process, Pitfalls, and Protocol

Congress \kän-gres\ *n*

1. an assembly esp. of delegates for discussions and usu. *action on some question*
2. the body of senators and representatives constituting a *nation's legislature*
3. a political institution that makes decisions about *who gets what*

Congress 101: Structure and Organization

Congress 101: Capitol Hill



Congress 101: Terms and Sessions of Congress

A **Term** of Congress begins at noon on January 3 of odd-numbered years.

Each **Term** has two **Sessions**: the 1st session is the 1st calendar year of the term and the 2nd session is the 2nd calendar year.

Congress 101: The Membership

House: 435 Representatives, 4 Delegates,
and 1 Commissioner

Senate: 100 Senators

Congress 101: Leadership

House: Speaker, Majority Leader,
Minority Leader, Majority Whip,
Minority Whip

Senate: President of the Senate (VP)
Majority Leader, Majority Whip,
Minority Leader, and Minority Whip

Congress 101: Standing Committees of Jurisdiction

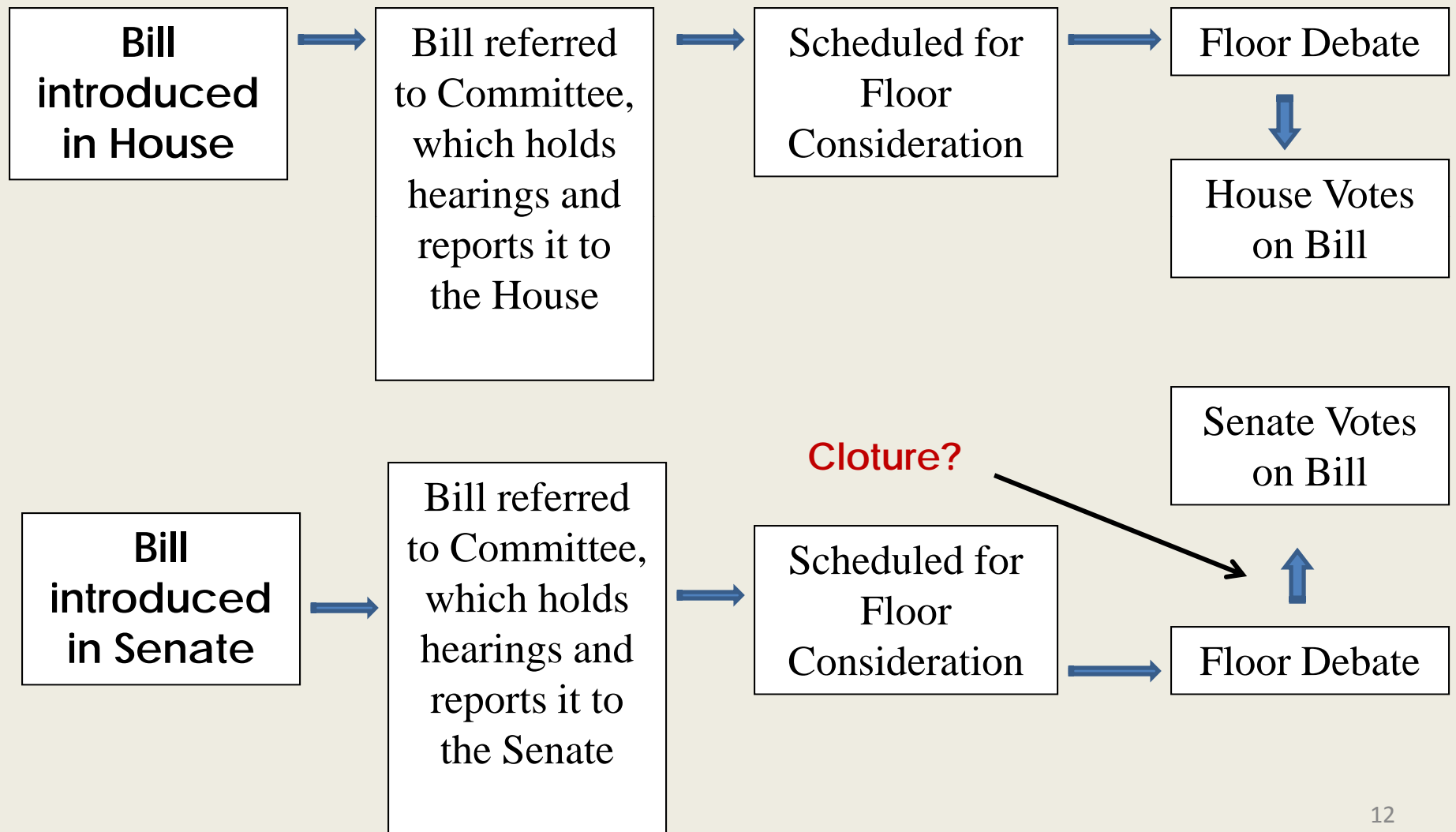
HOUSE COMMITTEES	
Agriculture	Judiciary
Appropriations	Natural Resources
Armed Services	Oversight and Government Reform
Budget	Rules
Education and Labor	Science and Technology
Energy and Commerce	Small Business
Financial Services	Standards of Official Conduct
Foreign Affairs	Transportation and Infrastructure
Homeland Security	Veterans Affairs
House Administration	Ways and Means

Congress 101: Standing Committees of Jurisdiction

SENATE COMMITTEES	
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry	Finance
Appropriations	Foreign Relations
Armed Services	Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs	Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Budget	Judiciary
Commerce, Science, and Transportation	Rules and Administration
Energy and Natural Resources	Small Business and Entrepreneurship
Environment and Public Works	Veterans' Affairs

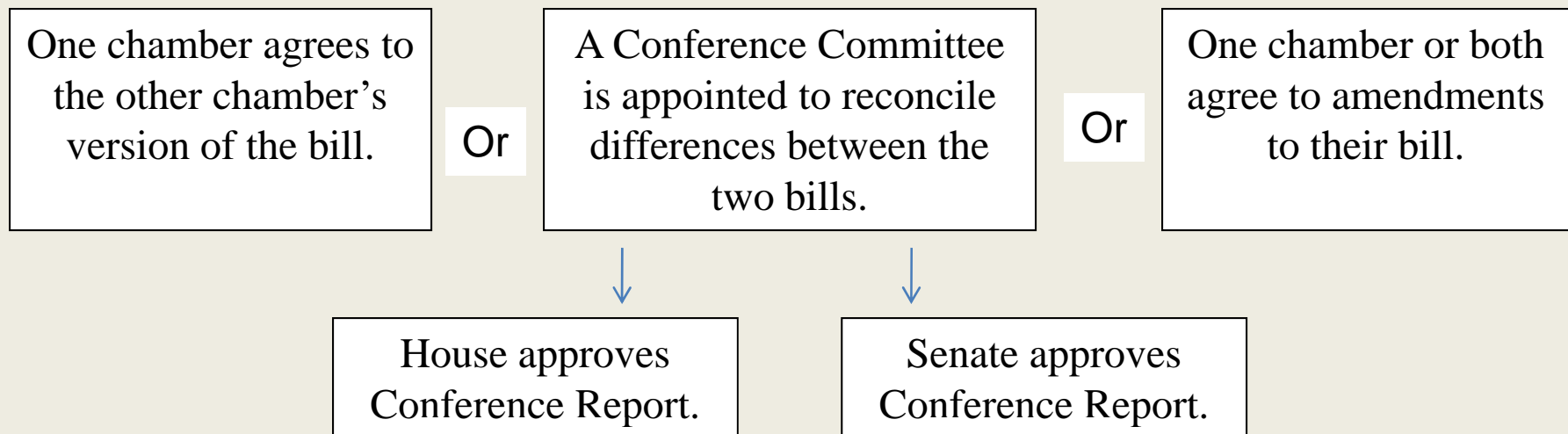
Congress 101: The Legislative Process

Congress 101: The Legislative Process

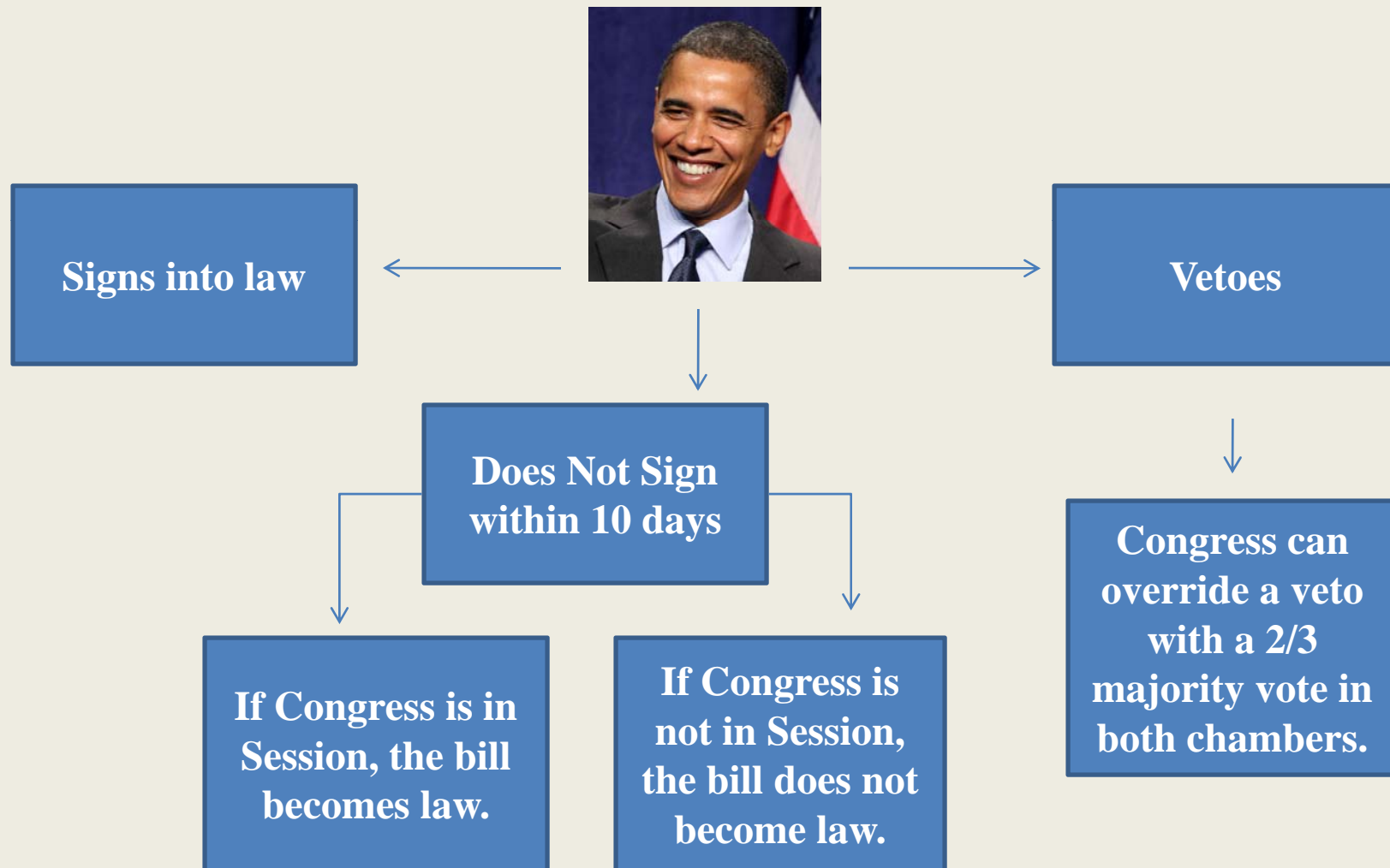


Congress 101: The Legislative Process, cont'd.

The same version of a bill must pass the House and Senate before being presented to the President. Three ways this can happen:



Congress 101: The Legislative Process, Cont'd.



Congress 101: How to Track a Bill

The screenshot shows a browser window with the address bar containing <http://www.thomas.gov/>. The browser interface includes a menu bar (File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, Help), a search bar, and various toolbars. The website content is titled "The LIBRARY of CONGRESS THOMAS" and includes a navigation menu on the left with links such as "THOMAS Home", "About THOMAS", "Bills, Resolutions", "Congressional Record", "Presidential Nominations", "Treaties", "Committee Reports", "Government Resources", "For Teachers", and "Help". Below the navigation menu are links for "House of Representatives", "Senate", and "U.S. Code". The main content area features a "THOMAS" header, a search box for "Search Bill Summary & Status", and sections for "Legislation in Current Congress", "Current Activity", "Learn", and "Find More Legislation". A specific bill, "HR3200: America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009", is highlighted. A "FEEDBACK" button is visible in the bottom right corner.

www.thomas.gov

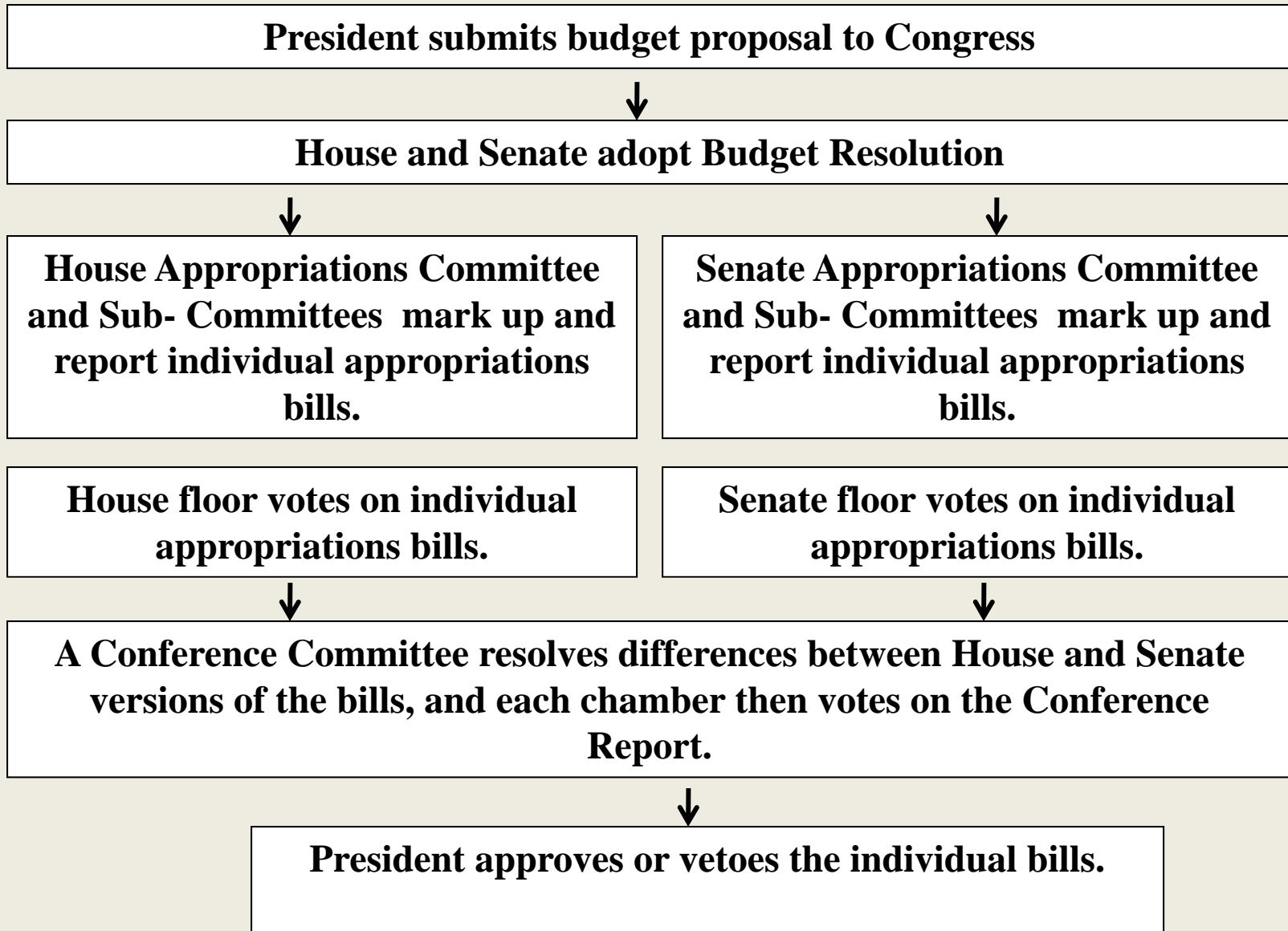
Congress 101: The Budget Process

Congress 101:

The Appropriations Sub - Committees

House	Senate
Agriculture	Agriculture, Rural Development
Commerce, Justice, Science	Commerce, Justice, Science
Defense	Defense
Energy and Water	Energy and Water Development
Financial Services	Financial Services and General Government
Homeland Security	Homeland Security
Interior and Environment	Interior, Environment
Labor, HHS, and Education	Labor, HHS, Education
Legislative Branch	Legislative Branch
Military Construction, VA	Military Construction, VA
State, Foreign Operations	State, Foreign Operations
Transportation, HUD	Transportation, HUD

Congress 101: The Budget Process



Congress 101: Influencing Congress

Congress 101: Influencing Congress

The Basics:

- ✓ Be Prepared
- ✓ Build Relationships
- ✓ Communicate, Communicate, Communicate
- ✓ Use the Media
- ✓ Use the District Office

Congress 101: Influencing Congress

Tips to Remember:

- ✓ Members of Congress are your colleagues.
- ✓ Educating your Member is your obligation.
- ✓ Congressional staffers can seem uninformed, but so can a very large Mouse.
- ✓ Today's opponent may be tomorrow's ally: know both.
- ✓ Honesty is the only policy.
- ✓ Don't forget to ask for what you want!

Congress 101: Influencing Congress

The screenshot shows the National League of Cities website. The browser address bar displays <http://capwiz.com/nlc/keyvotes.xc/?vl=C>. The website header includes the NLC logo and the tagline "Strengthening & promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance". A navigation menu lists: About Cities | Advocating For Cities | Resources For Cities | Inside NLC | Conferences & Events | Newsroom. The main content area is titled "Home: Advocating for Cities: Legislative Action Center".

In this Section

- ▶ Federal Lobbying Priorities
- ▶ Federal Relations Updates
- ▶ Legal Advocacy Activities
- ▶ Legislative Action Center
- ▶ National Municipal Policy

Nation's Cities Weekly
Official Publication of NLC

Legislative Alerts and Updates • **Current Legislation** • **Key Votes** • **Capitol Hill Basics**

Key Votes: Congress

Enter ZIP Code to see how your reps voted

Other

House Votes

Passed	FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007 09/20/2007	✓
Passed	New Direction for Energy Independence, National Security, and Consumer Protection Act 08/04/2007	--
Passed	Water Resources Development Act of 2007 08/02/2007	✓
Passed	Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act 07/17/2007	✗
Passed	Water Quality Financing Act of 2007 03/09/2007	✓

✓=We Supported ✗=We did not Support --=No Position

Senate Votes

Congress 101: Congress by the Numbers

Congress by the Numbers

		2008	2007	1996	1995
Days in Session	Senate	184	190	132	211
	House	118	164	122	168
Average Length Daily Session	Senate	5.4	7.2	7.9	8.7
	House	7.5	9.0	7.5	9.0
Bill/Resolutions Introduced	Senate	1590	3033	860	1801
	House	3225	6194	1899	3430
	Total	4815	9227	2759	5231
Public Laws Enacted	Number	278	138	245	88
	% of Total Introduced	5.8	1.5	8.88	1.7
Recorded Votes	Senate	215	442	306	613
	House	690	1186	455	965
	Total	905	1628	761	1578

Congress 101: Helpful Websites

- www.nlc.org and www.floridaleagueofcities.com
- www.thomas.gov
- www.house.gov
- www.senate.gov
- www.whitehouse.gov
- www.recovery.gov
- www.washingtonpost.com
- www.cspan.org

Congress 101: The Process, Pitfalls, and Protocol

Remember: When it comes to
Congress, you can make a
difference!