

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF THE PRESIDENTS™

Women in Congress

Introduction:

Congress is the branch of the government that makes laws. Members of Congress work in the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. The Senate meets in one side of the building and the House of Representatives meets in the other. The Senate has 100 members, two from each state. The House has 435 voting members, assigned to states based on population.

The sessions of Congress are numbered. The First Congress served from 1789 to 1791. More recently, the 115th Congress served from 2017 to 2019. For over one hundred years, all members of Congress were men. This changed with the 65th Congress. In 1917, Jeannette Rankin became the first woman to serve in Congress as a representative from Montana. As of 2019, women make up almost one-quarter of Congress.

Questions:

1. What is the main job of Congress?
2. What two houses make up Congress?
3. What 1848 event began the women's suffrage movement?
4. How many women served in the 62nd Congress?
5. Who was the first woman elected to Congress?
6. In 1968, who became the first African American woman elected to Congress?
7. Who was the first female Speaker of the House?
8. Why do you think the percentage of women in Congress has increased over time?
9. What is the percentage of women in the 116th Congress?
10. Do you expect the percentage of women serving in Congress to increase, decrease, or stay the same? Explain your answer.