Chapter 8

1. Which of the following steps comes first in the lawmaking process?

a. Floor debate

b. Report from committee

\*c. Introduction into the House or Senate

d. Conference committee

2. In the House, bills that raise or spend money are assigned to the

\*a. Union Calendar

b. House Calendar

c. Senate Calendar

d. Private Calendar

3. What does a waiver from the Rules Committee accomplish?

a. Requires an up-or-down vote after three hours of debate on the floor of the House

\*b. Sets aside technical violations of the rules to allow bills to reach the floor

c. Waives the requirement of tax bills originating in the House

d. Forces a committee to report a bill favorably

4. Which of these procedures is the most common way to pass bills in the House?

a. structured rules

\*b. suspension of the rules

c. cloture

d. unanimous consent

5. Which of the following types of bills are considered “privileged” in the House and granted privileged access to the floor?

a. Judicial appointments

b. Labor and workforce

c. Commemorative holidays

\*d. Appropriations

6. Which House committee is considered the “traffic cop” of the House floor?

\*a. Rules

b. Ways and Means

c. Ethics

d. Appropriations

7. Which of the following is true of a structured or restricted rule?

a. No amendments may be considered on the House floor

\*b. Amendments must be approved in advance by the Rules Committee

c. Debate is strictly limited to two hours for each party

d. Only party leadership may offer amendments on the House floor

8. Which of the following is *not* a type of rule granted by the Rules Committee?

a. Open

\*b. Amended

c. Closed

d. Modified

9. During general debate on the House floor, which of the following is true?

a. Members engage in extensive back-and-forth exchanges

b. The majority party receives twice as much time to present its case

\*c. Members largely present preprepared statements

d. Amendments are voted on

10. Which of these is the most common or important way for bills to reach the floor of the Senate?

a. Scheduling by the chair

b. Special rule from the Rules Committee

c. Discharge petition

\*d. Unanimous consent

11. Minority party members are more likely than majority party members to sign a discharge petition.

\*a. True

b. False

12. Most House business is conducted Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday to accommodate members travelling home to their districts.

\*a. True

b. False

13. Only members of Congress can introduce legislation.

\*a. True

b. False

14. The House is required to debate legislation once it is placed on an official calendar.

a. True

\*b. False

15. Only members of Congress can draft legislation.

a. True

\*b. False

16. Members of the minority party typically prefer restrictive rules when bringing legislation to the floor.

a. True

\*b. False

17. It is illegal for lobbying groups to draft legislation and ask members to introduce it into Congress.

a. True

\*b. False

18. Members try to draft bill language so their bills will be referred to a friendly committee.

\*a. True

b. False

19. The number of bills passed by Congress in each session has declined in the modern Congress.

\*a. True

b. False

20. The Rules committee can determine in advance which amendments can be considered on the floor.

\*a. True

b. False

21. Only House members are permitted to offer nongermane amendments on the floor; this practice is prohibited in the Senate.

a. True

\*b. False

22. The Senate’s rules emphasize individual prerogatives and minority rights.

\*a. True

b. False

23. In the modern Senate, even the threat of a filibuster is sufficient to block action on many bills or nominations.

\*a. True

b. False

24. Filibusters are most effective late in the legislative session because there may not be sufficient time to break it.

\*a. True

b. False

25. What is a hold and how does it fit with the norm of individualism in the Senate?

\*a. Answers Vary

@A hold permits one or more senators to block floor action on measures or matters by asking their party leaders not to schedule them. The majority leader will then decide whether (or how long) to honor the hold, but they are often honored because they contain an implicit threat to filibuster. They are part of the norm of individualism because they allow just one senator to delay or even completely block action on a bill.

26. How does the cluster voting rule relate to the idea of the “two Congresses”?

\*a. Answers Vary

@The cluster voting rule accommodates both constituency and legislative activities. By clustering bills debated under the suspension of rules procedure, it accommodates lawmakers returning from weekends in their districts and minimizes disruptions of both committee and constituency work during the workweek. This allows members to focus their efforts on both legislative and constituency duties.

27. How do the House and Senate differ in their protection of minority party rights?

\*a. Answers Vary

@The House has fewer rights for the minority party; although they do have certain prerogatives, such as reserved time during floor debates and the right to bring up a vote to recommit, ultimately the House is a majoritarian institution. In contrast, the Senate has many more rules to protect minority rights. The Senate’s rules, practices, and traditions make it a supermajority rule institution where minorities have significantly more power to delay and block legislation and to demand concessions.

28. Congress has been described as a “procedural obstacle course.” What does this description mean?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Bills must pass through several stages in each house and then be signed by the President (or achieve a two-thirds vote in each house) in order to become law. At any stage, bills could fail to attract a majority (or supermajority). This means a successful bill must pass through many stages before becoming law, meaning the process favors opponents of bills and promotes bargaining and compromise.

29. How can the Senate obtain floor action when a bill is blocked in committee?

\*a. Answers Vary

@There are two effective means of obtaining floor action in this situation. First, a senator with the Senate’s approval can add the bill as a nonrelevant/nongermane amendment to another bill. Second, the Senate can bypass the committee entirely by placing the bill directly on the calendar. (Two other methods, suspending the rule or discharging the bill, are very rare and not effective; students need not mention these for full credit.)

30. How does an open rule differ from a closed rule?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Closed rules prohibit rank-and-file members from offering amendments on the House floor. In contrast, open rules allow any lawmaker to propose germane (relevant) amendments, as long as they are in accordance with general House rules for amendments.

31. Why do members of Congress introduce legislation? Outline the three broad categories and give an example of each.

\*a. Answers Vary

@The categories are personal, political, and policy. Personal means the member has a personal experience or reason for wanting the bill passed—such as having a mentally ill daughter and introducing a bill to fund mental illness programs. Political means introducing a bill for reelection or partisan reasons, such as sponsoring a labor bill to win the support of union workers in one’s district. Finally, policy means sponsoring a bill because it furthers policy ends the member cares about or that responds to a real-world problem, such as introducing an energy bill during a time when gasoline prices are on the rise.

32. How do elections influence the timing of legislation?

\*a. Answers Vary

@After a big win, parties might capitalize off their recent success/momentum to pass legislation. In contrast, policy issues might be kept off the agenda because of an upcoming election in which members feel vulnerable and do not wish to support (or oppose) controversial bills.

33. How might the amendment process in the House have electoral consequences?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Floor amendments can be a form of position taking for members, allowing them to take positions that are popular with voters even if the amendment has no chance of being enacted. In contrast, a member could propose a “put them on the spot” amendment that forces members of the opposite party to go on the record with an unpopular position that could damage their reputation with constituents.

34. Why has the creative use of complex rules expanded in recent years?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Multiple factors here, most important is the increasing use of multiple referrals, because these require the Rules committee to play more of a role in coordinating floor action among multiple committees. Other factors include the rise of omnibus bills, desire of majority leaders to exert greater control, impatience with obstructive/delay tactics, demands from members for greater predictability, and efforts by committee leaders to limit amendments.

35. How can rules aid in members’ reelection efforts?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Restrictive rules of various flavors can help protect vulnerable members’ reelection efforts. They can protect members from casting votes that could be electorally dangerous—for example, by preventing an amendment from coming to the floor that is popular among voters but that the majority party leadership does not want to succeed.

36. Why has the number of bills passed by Congress declined in recent years?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Part of this decline is explained by the use of omnibus legislation. In previous years, these provisions might have been split up over multiple bills, while now they are combined into just one bill. The decline also stems from widespread congressional sentiment that more laws may not be the answer to the nation’s problems. Finally, political stalemates caused by a variety of reasons, especially polarization and interbranch conflicts, have led to less bills becoming law.

37. How has the role of the Rules Committee changed over Congress’s history?

\*a. Answers Vary

@The original Rules Committee prepared rules each new Congress and then dissolved. Over time, House procedures became more complex and the Rules Committee became a standing committee. Over time, the Speaker’s control over the Rules Committee has fluctuated along with majority party power, with the Speaker having significant control in the modern era.

38. What recourse do House members have if a committee refuses to report a bill? Are these methods effective?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Three tactics can allow House members to get a bill to the floor even if a committee will not report it: the discharge petition, Calendar Wednesday rule, and ability of the Rules Committee to extract a bill from committee. While these methods can be successful, they are rarely used and rarely successful.

39. What are the six steps observed for passing a major bill in the House?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Adopting the rule, convening in the Committee of the Whole, allotting time for general debate, amending, voting, and moving the bill to final passage.

40. Why are rules from the Rules Committee rarely defeated on the House floor?

\*a. Answers Vary

@There are two main reasons here. First, members of the majority party typically vote with their leaders on procedural votes, to a greater extent than on policy issues. This is at least in part because voters are less likely to care about procedural votes. Second, the House Rules Committee is sensitive to the wishes of the floor and unlikely to attempt a highly unpopular rule.

41. Identify a recent bill passed by Congress. Use Thomas.gov to track how the bill progressed through both chambers. Which committees was it referred to? What rules was it considered under? How did procedural concerns shape the progress of the bill through the chambers?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Students will present careful and detailed information on the passage of a bill of their choosing. They will consider and describe specific procedural elements from the text in analyzing the passage of the bill.