

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Date of Elections: November 7, 1972

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held to renew all the members of the House of Representatives and one-third of the members of the Senate (33 Senators), on the normal expiry of their terms of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The United States Congress comprises 2 Houses:

- The Senate, consisting of 100 members elected for 6 years on the basis of 2 for each of the 50 States, a third of whom are chosen every 2 years in such manner that, in each State, both Senators are not normally standing for election at the same time.
- The House of Representatives, consisting of members elected every 2 years in such manner that each member represents roughly the same number of citizens, provided that each State has at least 1 Representative.

Within the constitutional limitation that " the number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty thousand ", the Congress itself has the power to determine the size of the House of Representatives. Under the law presently in force, the membership is fixed at 435. In addition to the Representatives from the 50 States, there is a Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico, elected for 4 years, and Delegates from the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands and Guam, elected for 2 years; these have the right to take part in debate, but not to vote except in committees.

Electoral System

The Constitution of the United States lays down that all citizens who, " in each State, shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State legislature " are entitled to vote in elections for Congress; it prescribes, furthermore, that the right of citizens to vote shall not be denied or abridged on account of race, colour or sex, or by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.

Under these terms, determination of the right to vote falls under the authority of each State, with the proviso that no violation be made of the factors of

discrimination proscribed by the Constitution. To be allowed to vote, electors are required to be United States citizens and no less than 18 years of age.

With the passage of the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1970, the States ceased to have the right to impose literacy tests or similar devices as a condition to vote prior to August 6, 1975.

In elections other than presidential, durational residence requirements for voting vary among States, ranging from 3 to 12 months. But a 1972 Supreme Court ruling strongly indicates that a maximum period of 30 days residence in the State will be constitutionally required in the future.

In every State, an individual must take the initiative in order to become registered to vote. Once on the register, except in 2 States, a voter need take no other initiative other than to continue to vote regularly, providing that he or she does not change his or her name or address. The registers — which are mostly drawn up at the county level, and occasionally at the city level — are revised almost continuously, and particularly before state-wide elections.

Although voting is not compulsory, employers in 31 States are statutorily required to permit their employees to take time off to vote without loss of pay.

The insane and those persons convicted of a crime which carries the penalty of disenfranchisement are disqualified from voting in virtually all States. Further grounds for disqualification scattered among States include pauperism, conviction for an election-connected offense, bad moral character, dueling and imprisonment. Tests of moral character, however, fall under the prohibitions of the Voting Rights Amendments of 1970, and therefore are suspended until August 6, 1975.

No person may be a Representative who has not attained the age of 25 years and been for 7 years a citizen of the United States, For the Senate, the requirement is 30 years of age and 9 years' citizenship. When elected, a member of Congress must be an inhabitant of the State for which chosen. According to the Constitution, no Senator or Representative may hold any office under the United States during his term in Congress. Furthermore, no person may be a member of Congress who, having previously taken an oath to support the Constitution, takes part in an insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or gives aid to its enemies. But Congress may, by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

A person may be a candidate to Congress as an independent or as a member of a political party; most candidates are, in practice, presented on the ballot paper under a party designation. Voters may, furthermore, " write in " the name of a candidate who does not appear on the printed ballot.

Nomination as a result of nominating, or primary, elections of parties is the practice in most States. It is regulated by State law. Usually, a person may become a candidate in the primary election by obtaining a petition subscribed

by a designated number of voters enrolled in his political party. The enrolled voters then choose their party's candidate at the primary election.

The number of voters whose support is necessary to present a candidature, and the necessity or amount of an accompanying monetary deposit, varies according to State law.

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 placed certain well-defined limits on the amount which may be spent for communications media use in nomination or election campaigns by any candidate to Congress. No candidate for the Senate may, furthermore, spend more than \$35,000 of his own or his immediate family's funds in connection with his campaign; the limit is \$25,000 for candidates to the House.

Each State is entitled to at least 1 Representative and all beyond this minimum number are apportioned among the States according to population, so that no congressional district is exactly the same size. After the 1970 census there were 6 States with only 1 Representative, while the State of California had 43. A 1964 Supreme Court decision has said, however, that districts must be substantially the same size in terms of population and that, as to redistricting, a good faith effort should be made by a State to attain, as nearly as practicable, equality of population among the districts. Thus each district — whether it be geographically small or large, a whole State, or merely a few blocks within a large city — elects 1 Representative. Every State entitled to more than 1 Representative must elect from single-member districts.

Each of the 50 States is entitled to 2 Senators, each of whom represents the entire State in the Senate, regardless of population.

Members of Congress are all elected popularly, generally on the basis of simple plurality of vote. The 2 exceptions are the State of Georgia and the District of Columbia, both of which provide for a run-off election in the event that no candidate obtains a majority of the votes cast in the general election.

In all of the States the laws provide that names of candidates in general partisan elections be printed in one of 2 formats: "party column", on which all candidates of a particular party are printed under the name and symbol of a party, or "office-block", on which candidates for each office are listed below the office designation.

If a seat becomes vacant in the House of Representatives between general elections, a by-election is held. If a seat becomes vacant in the Senate, the Governor of the State concerned may, through a temporary appointment, fill the same until a by-election is organized in conformity with the laws of that State.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

While President Richard Nixon was overwhelmingly re-elected for a second term on November 7, his Republican Party remained in the minority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The election campaign in fact failed to develop a discussion on substantive issues between the President and his Democratic opponent George McGovern. While the former did a minimum of personal campaigning, the Democrats criticized the Administration for not effecting more equitable tax and welfare reforms, and underlined the threat to civil liberties and the Bill of Rights posed by the continuing and widespread racial and class divisions, the concentration of executive power at the expense of Congress and the people, and the extensive power of the military-industrial complex. McGovern's chief issue, however — the Administration's conduct of the war in Viet-Nam — lost much of its impact when a negotiated peace appeared to be in sight during the last days of the campaign. This factor, together with the President's trips to Peking and Moscow — which pointed to further detente with those regimes — ensured the Republicans of sufficient electoral support to overcome such disadvantages as the break-in and attempted bugging of the Democratic headquarters in the Watergate building.

In addition to the Republican Party and Democratic Party, 15 minor parties fielded a total of 37 candidates for Senate seats. Minor candidates for Representatives numbered 224, from 26 different parties.

Largely because for the first time Americans 18 to 21 years old were allowed to vote, the total number of voters was a record. Nevertheless, the turnout in percentage terms was the lowest since 1948.

Although the election marked the first time in the history of the United States that a party carried 60% or more of the presidential vote but failed to add seats in both the House and the Senate, the make-up of the House, at least, has somewhat altered. With 65 new Representatives — including 5 more women, 3 more Negroes — the average age of that body is considerably younger.

Statistics

1. *Distribution of Seats in the House of Representatives*

Valid votes.	71,188,405
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Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	Number of Seats in the House of Representatives
Democratic Party.	423	38,063,331	244* (-12)
Republican Party.	400	32,706,418	191 (+12)
Conservative Party.	42	376,863	—
Liberal Party.	34	251,807	—
American Independent Party.	30	233,967	—
Independent Party.	32	137,664	—
Peace and Freedom Party	11	63,894	—
Socialist Workers Party	20	51,815	—
Prohibition Party.	4	10,902	—
Socialist Labor Party.	5	10,835	—
Others.	46	206,386	—
			435

Including one Independent.

2. Distribution of Seats in the Senate

Valid votes. 37,809,098

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	Number of Seats obtained on November 7	Number of Seats in the Senate
Republican Party.	33	19,821,203	17	43 (-2)
Democratic Party.	33	17,199,567	m	57* (+2)
Independent Party.	9	318,238	—	—
American Independent Party	2	131,482	—	—
Socialist Workers Party	4	58,680	—	—
Conservative Party.	1	42,348	—	—
Socialist Labor Party	3	33,761	—	—
Prohibition Party.	2	23,858	—	—
Others.	16	179,961	—	—
			33	100

* Including one Independent.

3. *Distribution of Members of Congress according to Sex*

	" .	House of Representatives
Men	100	421
Women	—	14
	100	435

4. *Average Age of Members of Congress*

Senate	55.3 years old
House of Representatives	51.1 years old

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PUBLICATIONS OF THE CIDP

Unless otherwise indicated, the publications mentioned below are obtainable from the Inter-Parliamentary Bureau, Place du Petit-Saconnex, 1211 Geneva 28 (Switzerland)

PARLIAMENTS. — A Comparative Study on the Structure and Functioning of Representative Institutions in Fifty-Five Countries (New revised edition). Preface by Mr. G. Codacci-Pisanelli and Mr. A. de Blonay. Pp. 346 (1966). French edition also available. On sale in bookshops and, for members of the Union, at the Inter-Parliamentary Bureau. Sw. Fr. 25.—

SERIES " REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS "

1. Present-Day Problems of Parliament. International Symposium held in Geneva from November 4 to 6, 1965, by the CIDP, under the auspices of the Union.
Verbatim Report. Introductory reports and debates *in extenso*, in the original language (French or English). Pp. 250 (out of print).
2. The Role of Parliament in the Elaboration and Control of Economic Development Plans (English and French). Mimeographed brochure. Pp. 50. (out of print)
3. Parliament and its Means of Contact with Public Opinion through the Press, Radio and Television.
Reports and Debates. Introductory reports and verbatim record of the debates of the 2nd International Symposium, organized in Geneva from December 5 to 7, 1968, by the CIDP, under the auspices of the Union. In the original language, English or French. Mimeographed volume. Pp. 316. » 15.—
4. The Member of Parliament: his Requirements for Information in the Modern World.
Proceedings of an International Symposium, held in Geneva from January 18 to 20, 1973, by the Inter-Parliamentary Union
Two mimeographed volumes which contain:
 1. Verbatim record of reports and debates, in the original language (English or French), each statement followed by a brief summary in the other language; list of participants; index of speakers.
 2. *Synthesis of Results of the International Inquiry on the MP's Means of Information* — a revised version of the analysis prepared by the International Centre for Parliamentary Documentation, containing detailed comparative data in textual form with 13 tables, based on replies received from 39 countries. Sections on Parliamentary Libraries; Documentation, Study and Research Services; Experts; Procedures which contribute to informing MPs; Inspecting and Supervisory Bodies; Selective Bibliography (by country).
Both volumes. » 25.—

CHRONICLE OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

- I. July 1, 1966 — June 30, 1967.
Bilingual edition (English-French). » 7.—
- II. July 1, 1967 — June 30, 1968 * » 10.—
- III. July 1, 1968 — June 30, 1969 * » 15.—
- IV. July 1, 1969 — June 30, 1970* » 30.—
- V. July 1, 1970 — June 30, 1971 * » 30.—
- VI. July 1, 1971 — June 30, 1972* » 30.—
- VII. July 1, 1972 — June 30, 1973 * » 30.—

(Starting with Volume II, the elections are printed on detachable index-cards.)

* French edition also available.