

Preface

The United States Congress is one of the world's most powerful legislatures. It is a complex, but often fascinating, institution. It is a place of contrasts, where most of the day-to-day work is mundane and unremarkable but can occasionally provide moments of great drama. To read the history of Congress is to learn about both the great and infamous names and moments of American politics.

The aim of this book is to provide an introduction to the US Congress. It makes no claims to formulate any new theories or models of Congressional action. What it attempts to do is explain the role of Congress and its internal procedures. Particular issues and examples are highlighted to try and give the reader an understanding of some of the complexities and nuances of the legislative process in the United States.

One of the difficulties in writing a text such as this is that politics does not ever stand still. Events constantly threaten to usurp the information written here. Indeed, this fact was behind the inception of this book. The 1994 election gave the Republican Party control of Congress for the first time in forty years and ushered in a period of rapid change. Textbooks written before 1994, through no fault of their own, were in

danger of becoming outdated. Consequently, much of the material in this text focuses on events since that time.

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