

An hourglass-shaped graphic with a globe inside. The top bulb is dark blue, and the bottom bulb is light blue. The globe is centered in the narrow neck of the hourglass. The text is centered within the hourglass.

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Membership of the 111th Congress: A Profile

Mildred Amer, Specialist on the Congress; Jennifer E. Manning, Information Research Specialist

December 31, 2008

Abstract. This report presents a profile of the membership of the 111th Congress. Statistical information is included on selected characteristics of Members, including data on party affiliation, average age and length of service, occupation, religious affiliation, gender, ethnicity, foreign births, and military service.

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CRS Report for Congress

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Summary

This report presents a profile of the membership of the 111th Congress. Statistical information is included on selected characteristics of Members, including data on party affiliation, average age and length of service, occupation, religious affiliation, gender, ethnicity, foreign births, and military service.

Currently, in the House of Representatives, there are 262 Democrats (including five Delegates and the Resident Commissioner) and 178 Republicans. The Senate has 55 Democrats; two Independents, who caucus with the Democrats; and 41 Republicans. There are two Senate vacancies and one House vacancy.

The average age of Members of both Houses of Congress at the convening of the 111th Congress is 58.2 years; of Members of the House, 57.0 years; and of Senators, 63.1 years. The overwhelming majority of Members have a college education. The dominant professions of Members are public service/politics, business, and law. Protestants collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation of Members. Roman Catholics account for the largest single religious denomination, and numerous other affiliations are represented.

The average length of service for Representatives at the beginning of the 111th Congress is 11.0 years (5.5 terms); for Senators 12.9 years (2.2 terms).

A record number of 95 women serve in the 111th Congress: 78 in the House, 17 in the Senate. There are 41 African American Members of the House and none in the Senate. This number includes two Delegates. There are 31 Hispanic or Latino Members serving: 28 in the House, including the Resident Commissioner, and three in the Senate. Eleven Members (seven Representatives, two Delegates, and two Senators) are Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander. The only American Indian (Native American) serves in the House.

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Congress is composed of 541 individuals from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands.¹ This count assumes that no seat is temporarily vacant.² The following is a profile of the 111th Congress.³

Party Breakdown

In the 111th Congress, the current party alignments are 262 Democrats in the House of Representatives (including five Delegates and the Resident Commissioner) and 178 Republicans. The Senate has 55 Democrats; two Independents, who caucus with the Democrats; and 41 Republicans.

Age

The average age of Members of the 111th Congress is among the highest of any Congress in recent U.S. history.⁴ The average age of Senators at the beginning of the 111th Congress is 63.1 years, approximately 1.5 years greater than that of the 110th Congress (61.7 years) and three years older than that of Senators in the 109th Congress (60.1 years).

The average age of Members of the House, including Delegates and the Resident Commissioner, is 57.0 years, over a year older than that of Representatives in the 110th Congress (55.9 years), and almost two years older than that of Representatives in the 109th Congress (55.1 years). The average age of all Members in both Houses is 58.2 years.

The average age of the new Members of the House, including a Delegate and the Resident Commissioner, is 49.7 years. The average age of new Senators is 57.1 years.

The U.S. Constitution requires Representatives to be at least 25 years old when they take office. The youngest Representative, as well as youngest Member of Congress, is Aaron Schock (R-IL), 27. The oldest Representative is Ralph Hall (R-TX), 85.

¹ This figure includes 100 Senators, 435 Representatives, five delegates (from the District of Columbia, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Marianas Islands), and one Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico. The 111th Congress is the first one in which the Northern Mariana Islands have had a delegate. Note that since 1789, 11,890 individuals (not including Delegates and Resident Commissioners) have served in Congress: 9,984 only in the House, 1,258 only in the Senate, and 648 in both houses.

² Currently, there two Senate vacancies, one from the Illinois seat vacated by President-elect Barack Obama, and one from the undecided Minnesota Senate race. There is one House vacancy for the 5th District of Illinois. For information on any special elections or appointments to fill vacancies in the 111th Congress, refer to <http://www.crs.gov/reference/general/legislative/111change.shtml>. This site is updated when there is a death or resignation of a Member of Congress as well as an appointment or election to fill a vacancy.

³ Information on the five Delegates and the Resident Commissioner is included where relevant. References to Representatives include information for the 435 Members of the House, but not Delegates or the Resident Commissioner. For background information on earlier Congresses, refer to CRS Report RS22555, *Membership of the 110th Congress: A Profile*, by Mildred Amer, and CRS Report RS22007, *Membership of the 109th Congress: A Profile*, by Mildred Amer. See also CRS Report RL30378, *African American Members of the United States Congress: 1870-2008*, by Mildred Amer; CRS Report RL30261, *Women in the United States Congress: 1917-2008*, by Mildred Amer; and CRS Report 97-398, *Asian Pacific Americans in the United States Congress*, by Lorraine H. Tong.

⁴ Complete CRS records on the ages of Members of the House begin in 1907, the 60th Congress.

Senators must be at least 30 years old when they take office. The youngest Senator is Senator Mark Pryor (D-AR), who is 45. The oldest Senator, as well as the oldest current Member of Congress, is Robert C. Byrd (D-WV), 91.

Occupations

According to *CQ Today*, in the 111th Congress, law is the dominant declared profession of Senators, followed by public service/politics; for Representatives, public service/politics is first, followed by business and law.⁵ A closer look at the prior occupations of Members of the 111th Congress also shows⁶

- 16 medical doctors (including a psychiatrist), two dentists, three nurses, two veterinarians, a psychologist, an optometrist, a clinical dietician, and a pharmacist;
- four ministers;
- 38 mayors, 13 state governors, ten lieutenant governors (including two Delegates), two state first ladies (one of whom was also the first lady of the United States), and one territorial first lady;
- three Cabinet secretaries, one Secretary of the Navy, a vice admiral in the Navy, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, a Defense Department counter terrorism consultant, an ambassador, three state supreme court justices, and a federal judge;
- 269 (229 in the House, including two Delegates, and 40 in the Senate) state or territorial legislators;⁷
- at least 112 congressional staffers (including 9 congressional pages),⁸ 13 White House staffers or fellows, and several executive branch employees;
- a parliamentary aide in the British House of Commons and a foreign service officer;
- five Peace Corps volunteers;
- four sheriffs, a deputy sheriff, four police officers (including a Capitol policeman), two state troopers, two probation officers, a volunteer fireman, an FBI agent, and a former border patrol chief;

⁵ “111th Congress: Statistically Speaking,” *CQ Today*, vol. 44, no. 138 (November 6, 2008), p. 72. In the overwhelming majority of previous Congresses, business has followed law as the dominant occupation of Members. However, in the 111th Congress, 214 Members (182 Representatives, 33 Senators) list their occupation as public service/politics, 204 Members (152 Representatives, 51 Senators) list law, and 201 Members (175 Representatives, 27 Senators) list business. Ninety-four (78 Representatives and 16 Senators) list education as a profession. Members often list more than one profession when surveyed by Congressional Quarterly, Inc.

⁶ “The New Senators and The New Representatives,” *CQ Today*, vol. 44, no. 13 (November 6, 2008), pp. 23-25, 27-37, 50-57, supplemented by CRS. The professions listed here are not necessarily the ones practiced by Members immediately prior to entering Congress.

⁷ National Conference of State Legislators, “Former State Legislators in the 111th Congress,” (as of December 8, 2008), <http://www.ncsl.org/print/statefed/fs111.pdf>.

⁸ Michael L. Koempel and Judy Schneider, *Congressional Deskbook*, 5th ed. (Washington: TheCapital.Net, 2007), pp. 206-209, supplemented by CRS.

- three physicists, one chemist, six engineers including a biomedical engineer, and one microbiologist;
- a radio talk show host, a radio/television broadcaster, a radio broadcaster, a radio newscaster, a television reporter, and a television commentator;
- five accountants;
- an astronaut, a naval aviator, the commander of an aircraft carrier battle group, an instructor at West Point, and a pilot of Marine One (the President's helicopter);
- two professional musicians, a semi-professional musician, a screenwriter, a documentary film maker, a major league baseball player, and an NFL football player;
- three organic farmers, three ranchers, two vintners, and a fruit orchard worker;
- a driving instructor, a cosmetic sales woman, a mountain guide, and a ski instructor;
- a casino dealer, a night watchman, and a prison guard; and
- three carpenters, two bank tellers, a furniture salesman, an ironworker, an auto worker, a clothing factory worker, a textile worker, an oil field worker, a mortician, a coroner, a waitress, a teamster member/dairy worker, a paper mill worker, a cement plant worker, a meat cutter, a shellfish specialist, a river boat captain, a taxicab driver, an auctioneer, a toll booth collector, and a hotel clerk.

Education

As has been true in recent Congresses, the vast majority of Members (95%) of the 111th Congress hold university degrees.⁹ CRS research indicates that 27 Members of the House and one Senator have no educational degree beyond a high school diploma. Five Members of the House, but no Senators, have Associates' degrees as their highest degree, and one House Member has an L.P.N. (nursing) degree. Eighty-three Members of the House and 16 Senators earned a Masters degree as their highest educational degree, and 168 Members of the House and 57 Senators have a law degree. Of the Members holding a law degree, five (three House Members and two Senators) also hold an LLM (Master of Laws) degree. Twenty-three Representatives (but no Senators) have doctoral (Ph.D.) degrees, and 17 Members of the House and three Senators have a medical degree.¹⁰

By comparison, 30 years ago in the 96th Congress (1979-1981), at least 48 Members of the House and 7 Senators had no degree beyond a high school diploma. Sixty-seven Representatives and 15 Senators had a masters degree, 17 Representatives and 4 Senators had a doctoral (Ph. D) degree,

⁹ The information in this section of the report includes the Delegates and the Resident Commissioner.

¹⁰ Thirteen Representatives, one Senator, and one Delegate have an M.D. degree; two Representatives have a D.D.S. (doctor of dental surgery) degree; and one Senator and one Representative have a D.V.M. (doctor of veterinary medicine) degree. One Representative has an O.D. (doctor of optometry) degree, but is not included in the count of those with medical degrees.

and 197 Members of the House and 60 Senators had a law degree.¹¹ Five Members of the House and one Senator had a medical degree.¹²

Forty years ago in the 91st Congress (1969-1971), at least 45 Representatives and 9 Senators had no degree beyond a high school diploma. Thirty-seven Representatives and 14 Senators had a masters degree, 7 Representatives and 2 Senators had a doctoral (Ph. D) degree, 219 Members of the House and 58 Senators had a law degree, and four Representatives had a medical degree.¹³

In addition, three Representatives and one Senator in the 111th Congress are graduates of the U.S. Military Academy and two Senators and two Representatives are graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy. Three Senators and two Representatives were Rhodes Scholars, three Representatives were Fulbright Scholars, and one Representative was a Marshall Scholar.

Congressional Service

The average length of service of Members of the House at the beginning of the 111th Congress is 11.0 years (5.5 terms), a year longer than that of the 110th Congress (10.0 years), and a year and half longer than the average service (9.3 years) in the 109th Congress.¹⁴ Representatives are elected for two-year terms. Representative John Dingell (D-MI), the dean of the House, has the longest consecutive service of any Member of the 111th Congress (53.0 years).¹⁵ He began serving on December 13, 1955.

The average length of service of Members of the Senate at the beginning of the 111th Congress is 12.9 years (2.2 terms), six months longer than that of the 110th Congress (12.3 years), and slightly more than a year longer than the average service (11.8 years) in the 109th Congress.¹⁶ Senators are elected for six-year terms.¹⁷ Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV), the President pro tempore of the Senate, has served longer (50.0 years) than any other Senator in history. His service began on January 3, 1959.

¹¹ CRS Report 89-92, *Educational Degrees Attained By Members of Congress, 94th through 101st Congresses*, by Mildred Amer. This report is available only from the author.

¹² This number includes one Senator with a veterinary medicine degree and one Representative with a dental degree.

¹³ Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton, "Educational Background of Members of Congress," remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, vol. 117, part 36 (December 17, 1971), pp. 47696-47697. Senator Eagleton released a study done by educators George S. Reuter Jr. and Helen S. Reuter.

¹⁴ This service does not include Delegates or the Resident Commissioner. For additional information, refer to CRS Report RL32648, *Average Years of Service for Members of the Senate and House of Representatives, First - 110th Congresses*, by Mildred Amer.

¹⁵ For additional information on longevity in Congress, refer to CRS Report RL34581, *Members Who Have Served in the U.S. Congress for 30 Years or More*, by Mildred Amer and Clay H. Wellborn.

¹⁶ CRS Report RL32648, *Average Years of Service for Members of the Senate and House of Representatives, First - 110th Congresses*, by Mildred Amer.

¹⁷ Note that 48 Senators in the 111th Congress have previously served in the House.

Religion

Most Members of the 111th Congress cite a specific religious affiliation.¹⁸ Protestants (Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and others) collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation of Members. Roman Catholics, however, account for the largest single religious denomination. Other affiliations include Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Christian Scientist, Quaker, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon). There are also two Buddhists and two Muslims in the House.

Gender and Ethnicity

Female Members

A record number of 95 women serve in the 111th Congress; 78 serve in the House and 17 in the Senate. Of the 78 women in the House, 61 are Democrats, including 3 Delegates, and 17 are Republicans. Of the 17 women serving in the Senate, 13 are Democrats and 4 are Republicans.

African American Members

There are 41 African American Members in the 111th Congress, all serving in the House. All are Democrats, including two Delegates. Fourteen African American women, including two Delegates, serve in the House.

Hispanic Members

There are a record number of 31 Hispanic or Latino Members of the 111th Congress, one more than the record number who served in the 109th and 110th Congresses.¹⁹ Twenty-eight serve in the House and three in the Senate. Of the Members of the House, 22 are Democrats (including one Delegate), three are Republicans, and seven are women. The Hispanic Senators include two Democrats and one Republican. All are male.

Two sets of Hispanic Members are brothers, and one set are sisters. Mario and Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Republicans from Florida, serve in the House. Ken Salazar (D-CO) serves in the Senate, and his brother, John Salazar (D-CO), serves in the House. Linda Sánchez and Loretta Sanchez, Democrats from California, serve in the House.²⁰

¹⁸ “Religions in the 111th,” *CQ Today*, vol. 44, no. 38 (November 6, 2008), p. 73.

¹⁹ This number includes three Members of the House who are of Portuguese descent and belong to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

²⁰ Note that brothers Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) and Rep. Sander Levin (D-MI) also serve in the 111th Congress as well as Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and his son Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI).

Asian Pacific Americans

A record eleven Members of the 111th Congress are of Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander heritage. Nine (seven Democrats, two Republicans) serve in the House; two (both Democrats) serve in the Senate. Of those serving in the House, two are Delegates and one is an African American Member with Filipino heritage. Included in this count is the first Vietnamese American to serve in Congress.

American Indians

There is one American Indian (Native American) Member of the 111th Congress, who is a Republican Member of the House.

Foreign Birth

Twelve Representatives and one Senator were born outside the United States. Their places of birth include Cuba, Mexico, Taiwan, Japan, Pakistan, Peru, Canada, Vietnam, and the Netherlands.²¹

Military Service

In the 111th Congress there are 121 Members who have served in the military, five less than in the 110th Congress.²² The House has 96 veterans (including two Delegates); the Senate 25. These Members served in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo, as well as during times of peace. Some have served in the Reserves and the National Guard. Several Members are still serving as Reservists. As noted above, one Senator is a former Secretary of the Navy.

The number of veterans in the 111th Congress reflects the trend of a steady decline in the number of Members who have served in the military. For example, there were 298 veterans (240 Representatives, 58 Senators) in the 96th Congress (1979-1981); and 398 veterans (329 Representatives, 69 Senators) in the 91st Congress (1969-1971).

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²¹ "Born Abroad," *CQ Today*, vol. 43, no. 175 (October 30, 2007), p. 9, supplemented by CRS.

²² Congressional Quarterly Inc., http://www.cq.com/flatfiles/editorialFiles/memberFactFiles/demographics_111.html, and the Military Officers Association of America, unpublished data supplied to CRS.

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