

Student Worksheet

DIRECTIONS

Read the following news story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions. Use additional paper if necessary.

STORY

New Congress Convened Amid Questions Over Senate Seats, 01/06/09

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/jan-june09/congress_01-06.html

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. When did the new Congress open?

2. Which party is in the majority in Congress?

3. Which Senate seats are currently being disputed? Why?

4. What other Senate seats are predicted to be influx? Why?

5. How many members make up the U.S. Congress?

6. How many representatives does each state have?

7. How long is the term of a senator?

8. Name at least three important issues expected to be taken up by the new Congress.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. What do you think of the scandal around the Illinois senate seat? Do you think there is a better way of filling vacant Senate seats?

2. The Minnesota Senate race is incredibly close. Why do you think Senator Norm Coleman is asking the state Supreme Court to look at more of the challenged ballots? Can you think of better ways for us to vote so that no ballots get thrown out?

3. Do you think that the two houses of Congress are a good idea? Does this system seem fair? If not who benefits?

4. Name your senators and representatives.

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.