



CRS Report for Congress

Membership of the 110th Congress: A Profile

Mildred Amer
Specialist in American National Government
Government and Finance Division

Summary

This report presents a profile of the membership of the 110th Congress. Statistical information is included on selected characteristics of Members, including data on party affiliation, average age and length of service, occupation, religious affiliation, female and minority Members, foreign-born Members, and military service.

Currently, in the House of Representatives, there are 240 Democrats (including four Delegates) and 200 Republicans (including the Resident Commissioner). The Senate has 49 Democrats; two Independents, who have aligned themselves with the Democrats; and 49 Republicans.

The average age of Members of both houses at the convening of the 110th Congress was 57 years; of Representatives, 55.93 years; and of Senators, 61.73 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 in the House at the beginning of the Congress was about 10 years (5.07 terms); in the Senate, 12.82 years (slightly over two terms).

A record number of 90 women serve in the 110th Congress: 74 in the House, 16 in the Senate. There are 42 black or African American Members in the House, including two Delegates, and one black Senator, the same as the record number in the 109th Congress. There are 30 Hispanic or Latino Members serving: 26 in the House, including the Resident Commissioner, and three in the Senate. Eight Members (five Representatives, one Delegate, and two Senators) are Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander. There is one American Indian (Native American), who serves in the House.

This report will be revised at the commencement of the 111th Congress.

The 110th Congress: A Profile¹

Congress is composed of 540 individuals from the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.² This count assumes that no seat is temporarily vacant.³ The following is a profile of the 110th Congress.

Party Breakdown

In the 110th Congress, the current party breakdown in the House is 240 Democrats (including four Delegates) and 200 Republicans (including the Resident Commissioner). The Senate has 49 Democrats; two Independents, who have aligned themselves with the Democrats; and 49 Republicans.

Age

The average age of Members of the 110th Congress is possibly the oldest of any Congress in U.S. history.⁴ The average age of Senators at the beginning of the 110th Congress was 61.73 years, two years older than the average age of Senators in the 109th Congress.⁵ The average age of Representatives was 55.93 years, one year older than for Members of the 109th Congress.⁶ The average age of both houses was 57 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 Patrick McHenry (R-NC), 32. The oldest Representative is Ralph Hall (R-TX), 84.

¹ For background information on earlier Congresses, please refer to CRS Report RS22007, *Membership of the 109th Congress: A Profile*, by Mildred Amer; CRS Report RS21379, *Membership of the 108th Congress: A Profile*, by Mildred Amer; CRS Report RS20760, *Membership of the 107th Congress: A Profile*, by Mildred Amer; CRS Report RL30378, *Black Members of the United States Congress: 1789-2005*, by Mildred Amer; CRS Report RL30261, *Women in the United States Congress: 1917-2006*, by Mildred Amer; and CRS Report 97-398, *Asian Pacific Americans in the United States Congress*, by Lorraine Tong.

² This figure includes 100 Senators, 435 Representatives, four delegates (from the District of Columbia, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and one Resident Commissioner (from Puerto Rico). Since 1789, 11,827 individuals (not including Delegates and Resident Commissioners) have served in Congress: 9,930 only in the House, 1,251 only in the Senate, and 646 in both houses.

³ Currently, there are no vacancies in the House. For information on the special elections held in the 110th Congress, refer to [<http://www.crs.gov/reference/general/legislative/110change.shtml>]. This site is updated when there is a death or resignation of a Member of Congress.

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

⁵ "110th Congress: Statistically Speaking," *CQ Today*, vol. 42, no. 146, November 9, 2006, p. 76, supplemented by CRS and staff at Congressional Quarterly, Inc.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Senators must be at least 30 years old when they take office. The youngest Senator is Senator John Sununu (R-NH), who is 43 and a former Member of the House. The oldest Senator, as well as the oldest current Member of Congress, is Robert C. Byrd (D-WV), 90.

Occupations⁷

In the 110th 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.⁸ A closer look at the prior occupations of Members of the 110th Congress also shows:

- 13 medical doctors (including a psychiatrist), two dentists, three nurses, two veterinarians, one psychologist, an optometrist, and one pharmacist;
- six ministers;
- 37 mayors, nine state governors, nine 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 former Cabinet secretaries, two former Secretaries of the Navy, a vice admiral in the navy, a former Deputy Administrator in the Department of Veterans' Affairs, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, a former Defense Department counter terrorism consultant, a former ambassador, three state supreme court justices, and a federal judge;
- 272 (233 in the House and 39 in the Senate) former state legislators;⁹
- at least 109 congressional staffers (including 10 congressional pages),¹⁰ 16 White House staffers or fellows, several former executive branch employees, and a former parliamentary aide in the British House of Commons;
- 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;
- three chemists, three physicists, a biomedical engineer, and a microbiologist;

⁷ The professions described here are not necessarily the ones practiced by Members immediately prior to entering Congress.

⁸ "110th Congress: Statistically Speaking," p. 76. In the overwhelming majority of previous Congresses, business has followed law as the dominant occupation of Members. In the 110th Congress, 215 Members (159 Representatives, 58 Senators) list their occupation as law, 202 Members (172 Representatives, 31 Senators) list public service/politics, and 189 Members (162 Representatives, 26 Senators) list business. Eighty-two Representatives and 14 Senators list education as a profession. Members often list more than one profession when surveyed by Congressional Quarterly, Inc.

⁹ National Conference of State Legislators, "Former State Legislators in the 110th Congress," internal report made available to CRS.

¹⁰ Michael L. Koempel and Judy Schneider, *Congressional Deskbook*, 5th ed. (Washington: TheCapital.Net, 2007), pp. 206-209.

- six Peace Corps volunteers;
- two radio talk show hosts, a radio broadcaster, a radio newscaster, a television talk show host, and a television commentator;
- five accountants;
- a corporate pilot, and an astronaut;
- three professional musicians, a semi-professional musician, a screenwriter, a documentary film maker, a major league baseball player, a major league football player; and
- three carpenters, two vintners, two bank tellers, a furniture salesman, an organic farmer, a ski instructor, an ironworker, an auto worker, a clothing factory worker, a mortician, a waitress, a teamster member/dairy worker, a paper mill worker, a cement plant worker, a meat cutter, a cannery worker, a shellfish specialist, a river boat captain, a taxicab driver, an auctioneer, a toll booth collector, a hotel clerk, a hotel bellhop, a fruit orchard worker.

Education

As has been true in previous Congresses, most Members of the 110th Congress hold university degrees.¹¹ CRS research indicates some 402 Members of the House and 97 Senators hold bachelor's degrees; 123 Members of the House and 19 Senators have master's degrees; 180 Members of the House and 57 Senators hold law degrees; 22 Members of the House have doctoral (Ph.D) degrees; and 13 Members of the House and four Senators hold medical degrees.¹²

In addition, there are four graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, three in the House and one in the Senate; two Senators are graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy; one Representative (a woman) is a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy; three Representatives and three Senators were Rhodes Scholars; two Representatives were Fulbright Scholars, and one was a Marshall Scholar.

Congressional Service

The average length of service of Members of the House was about 10 years (5.07 terms) at the beginning of the present Congress.. 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 110th Congress (52 years). He began serving on December 13, 1955.

The average length of service of Members of the Senate at the beginning of the present Congress was 12.82 years (about two terms). Senators are elected for six-year terms. Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV), the President Pro Tem of the Senate, has served

¹¹ "110th Congress: Statistically Speaking," p. 76, supplemented by CRS.

¹² Ten Representatives, two Senators, and one Delegate have an M.D. degree; two Representatives have a D.D.S. (doctor of dental surgery) degree; and two Senators 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.

longer (48 years) than any other Senator in history.¹³ His service began on January 3, 1959. Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) is the current Republican Senator with the longest Senate service (39 years). He has been a Member of the Senate since December 24, 1968.¹⁴

Religion¹⁵

Most Members of the 110th Congress cite a specific religious affiliation. 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. This is the first time that members of these faiths have served in Congress.

Female and Minority Members

Female Members. 90 women serve in the 110th Congress, more than have in any prior Congress.¹⁶ Seventy-four serve in the House and 16 in the Senate. Of the 74 women in the House, 54 are Democrats, including three Delegates, and 20 are Republicans. Of women serving in the Senate, 11 are Democrats and five are Republicans.

Black Members. There are 43 black or African American Members in the 110th Congress, the same as the record number elected to the 109th Congress. Forty-two serve in the House, one in the Senate.¹⁷ All are Democrats, including two Delegates. Thirteen black or African American women, including two Delegates, serve in the House. Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) is the first black male Democrat to serve in the Senate.

Hispanic Members. There are 30 Hispanic or Latino Members of the 110th Congress, the same number as in the 109th Congress, which had the largest number of

¹³ Note that 49 Sens. in the 110th Congress have previously served in the House.

¹⁴ For additional information, see CRS Report RL32648, *Average Years of Service for Members of the Senate and House of Representatives, First - 109th Congress*, by Mildred Amer.

¹⁵ Congressional Quarterly, Inc., “Religions in the 110th,” *CQ Today*, vol. 42, no. 146, November 9, 2006, p. 77.

¹⁶ Ninety-three women have thus far been elected to the 110th Congress; 77 to the House, 16 to the Senate. Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-CA), who died on April 22, 2007, was replaced by Rep. Laura Richardson (D-CA) on September 4, 2007; Rep. Jo Ann Davis (R-VA), who died on October 6, 2007, was replaced by Rep. Rob Wittman (D-VA) on December 13, 2007; Rep. Rep. Martin Meehan (D-MA), who resigned on July 1, 2007, was replaced by Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-MA) on October 18, 2007; Rep. Julia Carson (D-IN) died on December 15, 2007, and was replaced by her grandson Andre Carson, on March 13, 2008; and Rep. Tom Lantos (D-CA) died on February 11, 2008, and was replaced by Jackie Speier on April 10, 2008.

¹⁷ Forty four black or African American Members were elected to the 110th. However, Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-CA) died on April 22, 2007, and was replaced by Rep. Laura Richardson (D-CA); and Rep. Julia Carson (D-IN) died on December 15, 2007, and was replaced by her grandson, Andre Carson, on March 13, 2008.

Hispanic Members in a single Congress.¹⁸ Twenty-seven serve in the House and three in the Senate. Of the Members of the House, 22 are Democrats, five are Republicans (including the Resident Commissioner), 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 and Loretta Sanchez, Democrats from California, serve in the House.¹⁹

Asian Pacific Americans. Eight Members are of Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander heritage. All are Democrats. Five serve in the House; two in the Senate. Of those serving in the House, one is a Delegate, and one is a black Member with Filipino heritage.

American Indians. There is one American Indian (Native American) Member of the 110th Congress, who is a Republican Member of the House.

Foreign Born²⁰

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

Military Service

According to the Military Officers Association of America, 127 Members of the 110th Congress have had some form of military service.²¹ The House has 99; the Senate 28. They have served in World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf (1990-1991), Iraq (2003-present), 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, two Senators are former Secretaries of the Navy.

The number of veterans in the 110th Congress reflects part of the trend of a steady decline in the number of Members who have served in the military. For example, 390 veterans served in the 93rd Congress (1973-1975); and 236 served in the 103rd (1993-1995). This may be attributed in part to the end of the Selective Service System draft in 1973.

¹⁸ This number includes three Members of the House who are of Portuguese decent and belong to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus..

¹⁹ Note that brothers Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) and Rep. Sander Levin (D-MI) also serve in the 110th Congress as well as Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and his son Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI).

²⁰ “Born Abroad,” *CQ Today*, July 1, 2005, p.10, supplemented by CRS.

²¹ Military Officers Association of America, unpublished data supplemented by CRS.