

CRS Report for Congress

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House Committees: Categories and Rules for Committee Assignments

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Introduction

Both House and party rules detail procedures for committee assignments. House rules address the election and membership of committees, especially limitations on membership. The Democratic Caucus and Republican Conference rules designate categories of committees (shown below) and specify service limitations in addition to those in the House rules.

Organizing the 109th Congress

As of November 30, 2004, the Republican Conference and the Democratic Caucus have not determined committee sizes and ratios for the new Congress. The Republican Steering Committee, the entity responsible for determining most committee chairs and making most committee assignments, has been constituted but has made no assignment decisions. The Democratic Steering Committee has not yet been fully constituted.

On the opening day of a new Congress, the House adopts its rules from the previous Congress, and any changes, some of which often affect committee and subcommittee structure and organization.

This report, therefore, reflects information current as of November 30, 2004, and will be updated as events warrant.

Number of Assignments

- In general, no Member, Delegate or Resident Commissioner can serve on more than two standing committees and four subcommittees of those standing committees (House Rule X, clause 5(b)(2)(A)).
- Democrats and Republicans designate *exclusive* committees and generally limit service to one such panel. Democratic Members of exclusive committees cannot also serve on nonexclusive committees, but they can serve on the Budget or House Administration Committee. Republican Members assigned to the Rules Committee can take “leave with seniority” from one standing committee to serve on Rules.

- Democrats and Republicans designate *nonexclusive* committees and limit Members to service on two such panels, unless the House rules contain other requirements.

Limitations on Assignments

- Service on the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct is exempt from the two-committee limitation. Service is also limited to three Congresses during any five successive Congresses. (House Rule X, clause 5.) Democratic Caucus rules, however, limit service to no more than three Congresses in any five.
- Budget Committee members are limited to no more than four Congresses in any six successive Congresses (House Rule X, clause 5(a)(2)(B)). Democratic Caucus rules limit members to no more than three Congresses in any five. Members may serve for one additional Congress as chair or ranking member if they assumed leadership in their fourth term on the committee.
- Intelligence Committee members are limited to no more than four Congresses in any period of six Congresses (House Rule X, clause 11). In addition, Democratic Caucus rules say Members may not serve on more than one standing committee, although they may take a leave of absence from service on another standing committee to serve on the Intelligence Committee.
- “Any other exception to these limitations must be approved by the House upon the recommendation of the respective party caucus or conference.” (House Rule X, clause 5.)

Categories of Committees

Category	Democrats	Republicans
Exclusive	Appropriations	Appropriations
	Rules	Rules
	Ways and Means	Ways and Means
	Energy and Commerce (for Members first serving on the panel in the 104 th Congress and subsequent Congresses)	Energy and Commerce
Non-Exclusive	Agriculture	Agriculture
	Armed Services	Armed Services
	Budget	Budget
	Education and the Workforce	Education and the Workforce
	Energy and Commerce (for members who served on the panel before the 104 th Congress)	
	Government Reform	Government Reform
	House Administration	House Administration
	International Relations	International Relations
	Judiciary	Judiciary
	Resources	Resources
	Science	Science
	Small Business	Small Business
	Transportation and Infrastructure	Transportation and Infrastructure
Veterans' Affairs	Veterans' Affairs	
Exempt	Standards of Official Conduct; Select Intelligence (not listed as such but treated as exempt)	Select Intelligence; Standards of Official Conduct