

## **Committee Research Assignment**

Congratulations on your new committee appointment! It may not have been your first choice, but that is often (usually) the case in Congress.

Committees are important sources of policy and political expertise in Congress. With expertise comes influence. You cannot expect others to automatically respect your views. Your influence depends in part on whether you are able to persuade others that what you want is what they want, or that doing what you want will get them what they want!

The issues before Congress are typically more complex and multidimensional than they seem on the surface, so shedding new light on a topic can be very persuasive. For this to happen though, you need to know your issues. This assignment asks you and your colleagues to research your committee's primary issue responsibilities.

### **Each committee submits a single essay assignment that is due**

. The assignments differ slightly depending on the type of committee (see below).

The length of this assignment will vary depending on the size of the committee. Part I should require about 1 single-spaced page of text (total). Part II should also require about 1 single-spaced page of text. As always, content rather than length is what the instructors will be focusing on. Once again, consult the rubric on the grading page.

Each student will subsequently be asked to evaluate the contributions of other committee members to the project.

Note: A good place to begin your research is the website of the actual congressional committee. The [CQ Researcher](#) (you need to login to the UW library) provides historical summaries of issues via the searchable *CQ Almanac*. The *Almanac* is an annual publication that covers what Congress did that year. Congress does not take up legislation on every issue every year, and committees need to be prepared to take up issues that may currently be dormant (e.g. health care reform). For this reason, you should not limit your attention to only the most recent years.

## **Policy Committees**

Part I

1. Name the committee and describe the scope of its responsibilities (it's jurisdiction).
2. Describe where/how these responsibilities overlap with those of other committees. For example, what other committees might assert the right to review legislation that would also be referred to your committee?
3. Identify the major/hot issues that have come before the committee in recent years.

## Part II

4. Assign one major/hot issue to each committee member.
  - Introduce the issue and why the committee has deemed it to be a major/hot issue
  - Describe its origins as an issue and important political developments of recent history
  - Provide information about programmatic spending or estimated costs, where appropriate
  - Identify the most controversial provisions or proposals, and explains why they are controversial
  - Identify the key interests that have or are supporting the issue and why
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  - Indicate which student prepared the issue brief.

## **Rules and Appropriations Committees**

Your committees do not have issue jurisdictions but they do have important responsibilities that other students need to appreciate.

### Part I.

Explain the role that your committees play in the lawmaking process, how what you do affects the success of other committees, and how those other committees can enable you to fulfill your responsibilities more efficiently and effectively.

### Part II.

## **Appropriations**

Each member of the committee is responsible for summarizing one department's budget, including how much of the overall federal budget is devoted to that department, and how spending breaks down across the department's top programs.

## **Rules**

The committee is collectively responsible for describing the congressional budget process in general terms, and for identifying House procedures relating to taxing and spending proposals that lawmakers need to be aware of.