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American-Government

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Question: 1

Congress possesses all of the following enumerated powers EXCEPT the power to

- A. regulate commerce.
- B. appoint federal judges.
- C. establish post offices.
- D. declare war.

Answer: A

Explanation:

Enumerated powers are powers specifically given to the government by the Constitution. Enumerated powers of Congress include the right to regulate commerce, establish posts offices, establish an army and a navy, collect taxes, and declare war, in addition to other powers. Congress also has implied powers, powers not expressly given to it by the Constitution. However, Congress does not have the power to appoint judges. The president has the authority to appoint federal judges, although the Senate has the power to confirm - or not to confirm - those appointments, itself a significant power.

Question: 2

Why can the House of Representatives often agree on new legislation faster than the Senate?

- A. The Senate is more partisan than the House of Representatives.
- B. The Senate's Debate Committee often makes agreement difficult.
- C. The House has stricter limits than the Senate for debate time.
- D. The House does not require proposed bills to go to committee first.

Answer: C

Explanation:

Time allowed for debate is set by the Rules Committee in the House of Representatives. These time limits are then accepted by the majority of the entire House. The Senate allows more time to debate legislation; the House of Representatives is stricter in the sense that it typically has more rules than the Senate. Both the House and the Senate require bills to be reviewed by the relevant congressional committee first, before going (if at all) to the rest of Congress. This eliminates option D. The House is often more partisan than the Senate; this eliminates option A. The Senate does not have a Debate Committee; this eliminates option B.

Question: 3

A filibuster can be used to

- A. kill proposed legislation in the Senate by extending debate indefinitely.
- B. kill proposed legislation in the House by extending debate indefinitely.
- C. prevent a bill from leaving a committee by extending debate indefinitely.
- D. override a veto on a new bill by extending debate indefinitely.

Answer: A

Explanation:

Filibusters apply only in the Senate (this eliminates option B). Senators can extend debate indefinitely, until the bill's sponsors give up and withdraw the bill; this ensures that the legislation is never voted on and therefore does not become law. Filibusters are not used in committees. Instead, filibusters are used only after bills have left a relevant Senate committee and have come before the full Senate; this eliminates option C. Filibusters are not used to override vetoes; they are internal to the Senate rather than a check on the power of the president.

Question: 4

Which of the following is the BEST description of the trustee view of representation?

- A. Representatives are entrusted to vote in accordance with the views of their constituents and therefore should do so.
- B. Representatives should vote their consciences and in order to serve the nation as a whole.
- C. Representatives are entrusted to bring tangible benefits to their constituents and should work to do so.
- D. Representatives should vote in accordance with the principles of the political party to which they belong.

Answer: B

Explanation:

According to the trustee view of representation, representatives should look beyond the views of their constituents; they should also consider their own views and vote according to what they personally believe is right. In addition, according to this view, representatives should also consider what is best not only for their constituents, but what is best for the nation as a whole. This view is contrasted with a view of representation that regards representatives as instructed delegates, who are bound to vote as their constituents wish them to vote, regardless of the views representatives themselves hold. Only option B correctly describes the trustee view; the other options can be eliminated.

Question: 5

The majority party in Congress has the authority to do all of the following EXCEPT

- A. choose the Speaker of the House and the Senate majority leader.
- B. hold the majority of congressional committee seats.

- C. require congresspersons to vote with the party line.
- D. choose the chairpersons of all congressional committees.

Answer: C

Explanation:

The majority party in Congress chooses the Speaker of the House and the Senate majority leader. Members of the majority party also serve as chairs of congressional committees, thereby leading and holding the majority of seats on those committees. Therefore, the majority party wields considerable power in Congress. However, the majority party cannot actually require party members to vote in certain ways (the majority power certainly wields influence on party members and exerts pressure, but it does not have the authority to actually require them to vote in certain ways).

Question: 6

Which of the following is a way in which Congress does NOT exercise its oversight function?

- A. Holding hearings
- B. Conducting investigations
- C. Changing an executive agency's budget
- D. Firing executive branch officials

Answer: D

Explanation:

Congress's oversight function is its function to monitor the executive branch in order to ensure that the executive branch is carrying out laws as Congress intends, as well as spending money in acceptable ways. The standing committees of Congress are important in carrying out the oversight function (for example, a standing committee on the judiciary, in both the Senate and the House, monitors the Department of Justice). Options A, B, and C each describe a way in which Congress carries out its oversight function. Congress does not fire officials in the executive branch, so option D is the correct answer.

Question: 7

The purpose of a conference committee is to reach an agreement

- A. between the House and the Senate.
- B. between the executive branch and Congress.
- C. between the entire Senate and a committee.
- D. between standing committees and party leadership.

Answer: A

Explanation:

A conference committee, composed of members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, meets in order to agree on a compromise on new legislation, after the Senate and the House have passed different versions of the same legislation. Members of a conference committee are appointed by leaders of both political parties. Once the conference committee has agreed on a compromise, the new bill must be passed both by the full Senate and the full House of Representatives before it can become law. Only option A correctly describes the purpose of a conference committee.

Question: 8

Logrolling is the practice of

- A. attaching riders to a new bill.
- B. trading votes between legislators.
- C. strategically scheduling votes.
- D. benefiting wealthy interest groups.

Answer: B

Explanation:

Logrolling occurs when a legislator agrees to vote in a certain way in exchange for another legislator agreeing to vote in a certain way on a different matter. Logrolling is a way for two legislators both to get what they want. Legislators in the Senate do sometimes attach riders to bills, support bills that are favorable to wealthy interest groups, and (in the House especially) schedule voting on bills in a way that is most favorable to the majority party. However, none of these practices is the practice of logrolling.

Question: 9

What is the purpose of proposing a new bill under a closed rule?

- A. To limit the number of speakers on the floor during debate
- B. To prevent amendments from being added to new legislation
- C. To impose strict time limits on debate on the floor
- D. To overrule a committee's recommendation about new legislation

Answer: B

Explanation:

In the House of Representatives, the Rules Committee can decide whether a bill - once it has gone to the full House for consideration - can be amended by the full House or not. If it can be amended, there is said to be an "open rule" regarding the bill; if it cannot be amended, there is said to be a "closed rule" regarding the debate. Imposing a closed rule is a way in which a majority party can limit the power of the minority party (because the minority party cannot change a bill it has doubts about; it can only debate and vote yea or nay). Option B is the only answer that correctly describes the purpose of introducing a bill under a closed rule.

Question: 10

Why is it easier to add amendments to bills in the Senate than in the House of Representatives?

- A. Party leadership in the Senate has more formal power than party leadership in the House of Representatives.
- B. Because Representatives often represent more local interests than Senators, the House of Representatives is typically less partisan than the Senate.
- C. The Speaker of the House, unlike the Senate majority leader, is free to add amendments to a bill.
- D. Riders can be added to bills in the Senate, but not to bills in the House of Representatives.

Answer: D

Explanation:

Riders are amendments to a bill that are not related to the content of the bill. Such amendments can be added to a bill in the Senate, but not to bills in the House of Representatives. Regarding option A, the Speaker of the House has more formal power than the Senate majority leader (so option A is false). The House is also typically more partisan, not less partisan, than the Senate (so option B is false). Regarding option C, the Senate majority leader can add amendments to a bill (whether the Speaker of the House can depends on whether legislation was introduced under open or closed rules).

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