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Length of Congressional Service: First Through 107th

Congresses

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Abstract. This report presents data on the length of service for Representatives and Senators from 1789 to 2002.



## **CRS** Report for Congress

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# **Length of Congressional Service:** First Through 107<sup>th</sup> Congresses

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#### **Summary**

This report presents data on the length of service for Representatives and Senators from 1789 to 2002. The data are from a computer file on the biographical characteristics of Members of Congress maintained at the University of Michigan.

The data are presented in nine tables, one for House and Senate service combined, and eight more, four for each chamber. **Table 1** covers the entire period from 1789 to 2002, showing the total number of terms served summing House and Senate service together. **Table 2** (House) and **Table 6** (Senate) also cover the entire period, but they summarize service in the respective chambers. **Table 3** and **Table 7** include data for the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; **Table 4** and **Table 8** cover the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries; and **Table 5** and **Table 9** cover the period from 1947 to 2002. Each table is a arranged in a similar fashion, showing how many Members served in only one Congress, how many served in two Congresses, etc; the proportion of the total each group represents; a running total (cumulative number of Members) in each category; and a similar cumulative percent.

Efforts to impose limits on the tenure of Members of Congress have not been successful, but many have centered on a 12-year limit. One may contrast the proportion of Members who served more than 12 years for each body for the periods covered. Overall, in the House, 13.9% of the Representatives elected to serve during the period 1789-2002 served more than six Congresses (12 years); the figure was 21.9% in the Senate (see Tables 2 and 6). The comparable figures for the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were 2.8% for the House and 10.9% for the Senate (Tables 3 and 7).

The proportion of Members serving for more than 12 years in the  $20^{th}$  and  $21^{st}$  centuries is 26.9% for the House and 31.7% for the Senate (Tables 4 and 8). The data for the post-WWII period, beginning in 1947, sums to 35.1% for the House and 41.2% for the Senate (Tables 5 and 9).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For a discussion of these efforts, see CRS Report 96-152 GOV, *Term Limits for Members of Congress: State Activity*, by Sula P. Richardson.

Table 1. Congressional Service: 1st-107th Congresses, 1798-2002

| , | ie i. Culi                 | gressional c | bervice. i -     | ior Congress      | <del>es, 1730-</del> 2 |
|---|----------------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
|   | Total no. of Number served |              |                  | Running to        | otals                  |
|   | Congresses                 | Number of    | Percent of total | Cumulative no. of | Cumulative             |
|   | served                     | Members      | Members          | Members           | percent                |
|   | 1                          | 3,547        | 30.4             | 3,547             | 30.4                   |
|   | 2                          | 2,373        | 20.4             | 5,920             | 50.8                   |
|   | 3                          | 1,559        | 13.4             | 7,479             | 64.2                   |
|   | 4                          | 898          | 7.7              | 8,377             | 71.9                   |
|   | 5                          | 689          | 5.9              | 9,066             | 77.8                   |
|   | 6                          | 573          | 4.9              | 9,639             | 82.7                   |
|   | 7                          | 411          | 3.5              | 10,050            | 86.3                   |
|   | 8                          | 318          | 2.7              | 10,368            | 89.0                   |
|   | 9                          | 293          | 2.5              | 10,661            | 91.5                   |
|   | 10                         | 240          | 2.1              | 10,901            | 93.6                   |
|   | 11                         | 163          | 1.4              | 11,064            | 95.0                   |
|   | 12                         | 141          | 1.2              | 11,205            | 96.2                   |
|   | 13                         | 100          | 0.9              | 11,305            | 97.0                   |
|   | 14                         | 82           | 0.7              | 11,387            | 97.7                   |
|   | 15                         | 77           | 0.7              | 11,464            | 98.4                   |
|   | 16                         | 50           | 0.4              | 11,514            | 98.8                   |
|   | 17                         | 36           | 0.3              | 11,550            | 99.1                   |
|   | 18                         | 32           | 0.3              | 11,582            | 99.4                   |
|   | 19                         | 16           | 0.1              | 11,598            | 99.6                   |
|   | 20                         | 11           | 0.1              | 11,609            | 99.6                   |
|   | 21                         | 13           | 0.1              | 11,622            | 99.8                   |
|   | 22                         | 13           | 0.1              | 11,635            | 99.9                   |
|   | 23                         | 4            | 0.0              | 11,639            | 99.9                   |
|   | 24                         | 4            | 0.0              | 11,643            | 99.9                   |
|   | 25                         | 4            | 0.0              | 11,647            | 100.0                  |
|   | 26                         | 1            | 0.0              | 11,648            | 100.0                  |
|   | 27                         | 1            | 0.0              | 11,649            | 100.0                  |
|   | 29                         | 1            | 0.0              | 11,650            | 100.0                  |
|   |                            |              |                  |                   |                        |

**Note:** In this table House and Senate service are summed together (denoted as "congressional service"). The source for all the tables in this report is: McKibbin, Carroll, and the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), *Roster of United States Congressional Officeholders and Biographical Characteristics of Members of the United States Congress, 1789-1996: Merged Data, ICPSR study no. 7803 (Ann Arbor, MI). Frequencies, percentages, and 1997-2002 data updates are by CRS. These data are for the total number of Congresses served. They make no distinctions for breaks in service, and Members who only served part of a term are counted as having served a complete term.* 

Table 2. House Service: 1st-107th Congresses, 1798-2002

| Total no. of | Number served   |                  | Running totals    |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Congresses   | Number of       | Percent of total | Cumulative no. of | Cumulative |
| served       | Representatives | Representatives  | Representatives   | percent    |
| 1            | 3,409           | 32.8             | 3,409             | 32.8       |
| 2            | 2,354           | 22.7             | 5,763             | 55.5       |
| 3            | 1,294           | 12.5             | 7,057             | 67.9       |
| 4            | 854             | 8.2              | 7,911             | 76.1       |
| 5            | 619             | 6.0              | 8,530             | 82.1       |
| 6            | 412             | 4.0              | 8,942             | 86.1       |
| 7            | 326             | 3.1              | 9,268             | 89.2       |
| 8            | 260             | 2.5              | 9,528             | 91.7       |
| 9            | 197             | 1.9              | 9,725             | 93.6       |
| 10           | 190             | 1.8              | 9,915             | 95.4       |
| 11           | 116             | 1.1              | 10,031            | 96.6       |
| 12           | 85              | 0.8              | 10,116            | 97.4       |

| 13 | 70 | 0.7 | 10,186 | 98.0  |
|----|----|-----|--------|-------|
| 14 | 54 | 0.5 | 10,240 | 98.6  |
| 15 | 49 | 0.5 | 10,289 | 99.0  |
| 16 | 32 | 0.3 | 10,321 | 99.3  |
| 17 | 23 | 0.2 | 10,344 | 99.6  |
| 18 | 13 | 0.1 | 10,357 | 99.7  |
| 19 | 8  | 0.1 | 10,365 | 99.8  |
| 20 | 4  | 0.0 | 10,369 | 99.8  |
| 21 | 7  | 0.1 | 10,376 | 99.9  |
| 22 | 4  | 0.0 | 10,380 | 99.9  |
| 23 | 2  | 0.0 | 10,382 | 99.9  |
| 24 | 3  | 0.0 | 10,385 | 100.0 |
| 25 | 2  | 0.0 | 10,387 | 100.0 |
| 26 | 1  | 0.0 | 10,388 | 100.0 |
| 27 | 1  | 0.0 | 10,389 | 100.0 |

Table 3. House Service: 1<sup>st</sup>-56<sup>th</sup> Congresses, 1798-1901 (18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries)

| (10 and 13 defitalies) |                 |                  |                   |            |
|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Total no. of           | Number          | r served         | Running to        | otals      |
| Congresses             | Number of       | Percent of total | Cumulative no. of | Cumulative |
| served                 | Representatives | Representatives  | Representatives   | percent    |
| 1                      | 2,398           | 42.9             | 2,398             | 42.9       |
| 2                      | 1,685           | 30.1             | 4,083             | 73.0       |
| 3                      | 718             | 12.8             | 4,801             | 85.9       |
| 4                      | 354             | 6.3              | 5,155             | 92.2       |
| 5                      | 181             | 3.2              | 5,336             | 95.5       |
| 6                      | 100             | 1.8              | 5,436             | 97.2       |
| 7                      | 55              | 1.0              | 5,491             | 98.2       |
| 8                      | 35              | 0.6              | 5,526             | 98.9       |
| 9                      | 30              | 0.5              | 5,556             | 99.4       |
| 10                     | 13              | 0.2              | 5,569             | 99.6       |
| 11                     | 6               | 0.1              | 5,575             | 99.7       |
| 12                     | 3               | 0.1              | 5,578             | 99.8       |
| 13                     | 3               | 0.1              | 5,581             | 99.8       |
| 14                     | 4               | 0.1              | 5,585             | 99.9       |
| 15                     | 3               | 0.1              | 5,588             | 100.0      |
| 16                     | 2               | 0.0              | 5,590             | 100.0      |

Table 4. House Service: 57<sup>th</sup>-107<sup>th</sup> Congresses, 1901-2002 (20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries)

| Total no. of | Number served   |                  | Running to        | otals      |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Congresses   | Number of       | Percent of total | Cumulative no. of | Cumulative |
| served       | Representatives | Representatives  | Representatives   | percent    |
| 1            | 1,016           | 21.1             | 1,016             | 21.1       |
| 2            | 671             | 14.0             | 1,687             | 35.1       |
| 3            | 576             | 12.0             | 2,263             | 47.1       |
| 4            | 500             | 10.4             | 2,763             | 57.5       |
| 5            | 439             | 9.1              | 3,202             | 66.6       |
| 6            | 312             | 6.5              | 3,514             | 73.1       |
| 7            | 271             | 5.6              | 3,785             | 78.7       |
| 8            | 225             | 4.7              | 4,010             | 83.4       |
| 9            | 167             | 3.5              | 4,177             | 86.9       |
| 10           | 177             | 3.7              | 4,354             | 90.6       |
| 11           | 110             | 2.3              | 4,464             | 92.9       |
| 12           | 82              | 1.7              | 4,546             | 94.6       |

| 13 | 67 | 1.4 | 4,613 | 96.0  |
|----|----|-----|-------|-------|
| 14 | 50 | 1.0 | 4,663 | 97.0  |
| 15 | 46 | 1.0 | 4,709 | 98.0  |
| 16 | 30 | 0.6 | 4,739 | 98.6  |
| 17 | 23 | 0.5 | 4,762 | 99.1  |
| 18 | 13 | 0.3 | 4,775 | 99.3  |
| 19 | 8  | 0.2 | 4,783 | 99.5  |
| 20 | 4  | 0.1 | 4,787 | 99.6  |
| 21 | 7  | 0.1 | 4,794 | 99.7  |
| 22 | 4  | 0.1 | 4,798 | 99.8  |
| 23 | 2  | 0.0 | 4,800 | 99.9  |
| 24 | 3  | 0.1 | 4,803 | 99.9  |
| 25 | 2  | 0.0 | 4,805 | 100.0 |
| 26 | 1  | 0.0 | 4,806 | 100.0 |
| 27 | 1  | 0.0 | 4,807 | 100.0 |

Table 5. House Service: 80<sup>th</sup>-107<sup>th</sup> Congresses, 1947-2002

| i abic c. i  | IOUSE SELVI     |                  | Culigicaaca,      | 1371-2002  |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Total no. of | Number          | r served         | Running to        | otals      |
| Congresses   | Number of       | Percent of total | Cumulative no. of | Cumulative |
| served       | Representatives | Representatives  | Representatives   | percent    |
| 1            | 367             | 15.2             | 367               | 15.2       |
| 2            | 258             | 10.7             | 625               | 25.9       |
| 3            | 265             | 11.0             | 890               | 36.8       |
| 4            | 257             | 10.6             | 1,147             | 47.5       |
| 5            | 252             | 10.4             | 1,399             | 57.9       |
| 6            | 170             | 7.0              | 1,569             | 64.9       |
| 7            | 142             | 5.9              | 1,711             | 70.8       |
| 8            | 137             | 5.7              | 1,848             | 76.5       |
| 9            | 103             | 4.3              | 1,951             | 80.8       |
| 10           | 112             | 4.6              | 2,063             | 85.4       |
| 11           | 72              | 3.0              | 2,135             | 88.4       |
| 12           | 57              | 2.4              | 2,192             | 90.7       |
| 13           | 53              | 2.2              | 2,245             | 92.9       |
| 14           | 42              | 1.7              | 2,287             | 94.7       |
| 15           | 42              | 1.7              | 2,329             | 96.4       |
| 16           | 27              | 1.1              | 2,356             | 97.5       |
| 17           | 17              | 0.7              | 2,373             | 98.2       |
| 18           | 12              | 0.5              | 2,385             | 98.7       |
| 19           | 8               | 0.3              | 2,393             | 99.0       |
| 20           | 4               | 0.2              | 2,397             | 99.2       |
| 21           | 7               | 0.3              | 2,404             | 99.5       |
| 22           | 4               | 0.2              | 2,408             | 99.7       |
| 23           | 1               | 0.0              | 2,409             | 99.7       |
| 24           | 3               | 0.1              | 2,412             | 99.8       |
| 25           | 2               | 0.1              | 2,414             | 99.9       |
| 26           | 1               | 0.0              | 2,415             | 100.0      |
| 27           | 1               | 0.0              | 2,416             | 100.0      |

Table 6. Senate Service: 1st-107th Congresses, 1798-2002

| I GOIO OI    | Senate Serv   | 100. i 10 <i>1</i> | Congresses,       | 1730-2002  |
|--------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Total no. of | Number served |                    | Running to        | otals      |
| Congresses   | Number of     | Percent of total   | Cumulative no. of | Cumulative |
| served       | Senators      | Senators           | Senators          | percent    |
| 1            | 332           | 17.6               | 332               | 17.6       |
| 2            | 202           | 10.7               | 534               | 28.4       |
| 3            | 500           | 26.6               | 1,034             | 54.9       |
| 4            | 127           | 6.7                | 1,161             | 61.7       |
| 5            | 108           | 5.7                | 1,269             | 67.4       |
| 6            | 201           | 10.7               | 1,470             | 78.1       |
| 7            | 72            | 3.8                | 1,542             | 81.9       |
| 8            | 54            | 2.9                | 1,596             | 84.8       |
| 9            | 94            | 5.0                | 1,690             | 89.8       |
| 10           | 21            | 1.1                | 1,711             | 90.9       |
| 11           | 23            | 1.2                | 1,734             | 92.1       |
| 12           | 56            | 3.0                | 1,790             | 95.1       |
| 13           | 16            | 0.8                | 1,806             | 95.9       |
| 14           | 18            | 1.0                | 1,824             | 96.9       |
| 15           | 21            | 1.1                | 1,845             | 98.0       |
| 16           | 11            | 0.6                | 1,856             | 98.6       |
| 17           | 5             | 0.3                | 1,861             | 98.8       |
| 18           | 10            | 0.5                | 1,871             | 99.4       |
| 19           | 4             | 0.2                | 1,875             | 99.6       |
| 20           | 2             | 0.1                | 1,877             | 99.7       |
| 21           | 4             | 0.2                | 1,881             | 99.9       |
| 22           | 1             | 0.1                | 1,882             | 99.9       |
| 25           | 1             | 0.1                | 1,883             | 100.0      |

Table 7. Senate Service: 1<sup>st</sup>-56<sup>th</sup> Congresses, 1798-1901 (18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries)

| Total no. of | Number served |                  | Running to        | otals      |
|--------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Congresses   | Number of     | Percent of total | Cumulative no. of | Cumulative |
| served       | Senators      | Senators         | Senators          | percent    |
| 1            | 158           | 17.9             | 158               | 17.9       |
| 2            | 144           | 16.3             | 302               | 34.2       |
| 3            | 282           | 31.9             | 584               | 66.1       |
| 4            | 67            | 7.6              | 651               | 73.6       |
| 5            | 62            | 7.0              | 713               | 80.7       |
| 6            | 75            | 8.5              | 788               | 89.1       |
| 7            | 33            | 3.7              | 821               | 92.9       |
| 8            | 17            | 1.9              | 838               | 94.8       |
| 9            | 22            | 2.5              | 860               | 97.3       |
| 10           | 8             | 0.9              | 868               | 98.2       |
| 11           | 5             | 0.6              | 873               | 98.8       |
| 12           | 4             | 0.5              | 877               | 99.2       |
| 13           | 2             | 0.2              | 879               | 99.4       |
| 14           | 1             | 0.1              | 880               | 99.5       |
| 15           | 1             | 0.1              | 881               | 99.7       |
| 16           | 2             | 0.2              | 883               | 99.9       |
| 18           | 1             | 0.1              | 884               | 100.0      |

Table 8. Senate Service: 57<sup>th</sup>-107<sup>th</sup> Congresses, 1901-2002 (20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries)

| Total no. of Number served Running totals |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Number                                    | r served  | Running to  | otals   |  |
| Number of                                 | Percent of total  | Cumulative no. of   | Cumulative  |  |
| Senators                                  | Senators  | Senators  | percent   |  |
| 174                                       | 17.4  | 174   | 17.4  |  |
| 58  | 5.8   | 232   | 23.2  |  |
| 218                                       | 21.8  | 450   | 45.0  |  |
| 60  | 6.0   | 510   | 51.1  |  |
| 46  | 4.6   | 556   | 55.7  |  |
| 126                                       | 12.6  | 682   | 68.3  |  |
| 39  | 3.9   | 721   | 72.2  |  |
| 37  | 3.7   | 758   | 75.9  |  |
| 72  | 7.2   | 830   | 83.1  |  |
| 13  | 1.3   | 843   | 84.4  |  |
| 18  | 1.8   | 861   | 86.2  |  |
| 52  | 5.2   | 913   | 91.4  |  |
| 14  | 1.4   | 927   | 92.8  |  |
| 17  | 1.7   | 944   | 94.5  |  |
| 20  | 2.0   | 964   | 96.5  |  |
| 9   | 0.9   | 973   | 97.4  |  |
| 5   | 0.5   | 978   | 97.9  |  |
| 9   | 0.9   | 987   | 98.8  |  |
| 4   | 0.4   | 991   | 99.2  |  |
| 2   | 0.2   | 993   | 99.4  |  |
| 4   | 0.4   | 997   | 99.8  |  |
| 1   | 0.1   | 998   | 99.9  |  |
| 1   | 0.1   | 999   | 100.0   |  |
|   | Number Number of Senators  174  58  218  60  46  126  39  37  72  13  18  52  14  17  20  9  5  9  4  2  4  1 | Number of Senators         Percent of total Senators           174         17.4           58         5.8           218         21.8           60         6.0           46         4.6           126         12.6           39         3.9           37         3.7           72         7.2           13         1.3           18         1.8           52         5.2           14         1.4           17         1.7           20         2.0           9         0.9           5         0.5           9         0.9           4         0.4           2         0.2           4         0.4           1         0.1 | Number of Senators         Percent of total Senators         Cumulative no. of Senators           174         17.4         17.4           58         5.8         232           218         21.8         450           60         6.0         510           46         4.6         556           126         12.6         682           39         3.9         721           37         3.7         758           72         7.2         830           13         1.3         843           18         1.8         861           52         5.2         913           14         1.4         927           17         1.7         944           20         2.0         964           9         0.9         973           5         0.5         978           9         0.9         987           4         0.4         991           2         0.2         993           4         0.4         997           1         0.1         998 |  |

Table 9. Senate Service: 80<sup>th</sup>-107<sup>th</sup> Congresses, 1947-2002

| Total no. of Congresses served         Number of Senators         Percent of total Senators         Cumulative no. of Senators         Cumulative no. of Senators           1         74         14.8         74           2         24         4.8         98           3         74         14.8         172           4         37         7.4         209           5         24         4.8         233           6         61         12.2         294           7         21         4.2         315 | ent<br>14.8<br>19.6<br>34.4<br>41.8 |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| served         Senators         Senators         perc           1         74         14.8         74           2         24         4.8         98           3         74         14.8         172           4         37         7.4         209           5         24         4.8         233           6         61         12.2         294           7         21         4.2         315   | ent<br>14.8<br>19.6<br>34.4<br>41.8 |
| 1     74     14.8     74       2     24     4.8     98       3     74     14.8     172       4     37     7.4     209       5     24     4.8     233       6     61     12.2     294       7     21     4.2     315   | 14.8<br>19.6<br>34.4<br>41.8        |
| 2     24     4.8     98       3     74     14.8     172       4     37     7.4     209       5     24     4.8     233       6     61     12.2     294       7     21     4.2     315  | 19.6<br>34.4<br>41.8                |
| 3     74     14.8     172       4     37     7.4     209       5     24     4.8     233       6     61     12.2     294       7     21     4.2     315  | 34.4<br>41.8                        |
| 4     37     7.4     209       5     24     4.8     233       6     61     12.2     294       7     21     4.2     315  | 41.8                                |
| 5     24     4.8     233       6     61     12.2     294       7     21     4.2     315   |                                     |
| 6 61 12.2 294<br>7 21 4.2 315   |                                     |
| 7 21 4.2 315  | 46.6                                |
|   | 58.8                                |
|   | 63.0                                |
| 8 24 4.8 339  | 67.8                                |
| 9 55 11.0 394   | 78.8                                |
| 10 5 1.0 399  | 79.8                                |
| 11 13 2.6 412   | 82.4                                |
| 12 36 7.2 448   | 89.6                                |
| 13 10 2.0 458   | 91.6                                |
| 14 9 1.8 467  | 93.4                                |
| 15 7 1.4 474  | 94.8                                |
| 16 4 0.8 478  | 95.6                                |
| 17 4 0.8 482  | 96.4                                |
| 18 7 1.4 489  | 97.8                                |
| 19 4 0.8 493  | 98.6                                |
| 20 1 0.2 494  | 98.8                                |
| 21 4 0.8 498  | 99.6                                |
| 22 1 0.2 499  | 99.8                                |
| 25 1 0.2 500  | 100.0                               |