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## Congressional Research Service

 Report RS21285Length of Congressional Service: First Through 107th Congresses

David C. Huckabee, Government and Finance Division
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# CRS Report for Congress Received through the CRS Web 

# Length of Congressional Service: First Through $107^{\text {th }}$ Congresses 

David C. Huckabee<br>Specialist in American National Government<br>Government and Finance Division

## 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 $18^{\text {th }}$ and $19^{\text {th }}$ centuries; Table 4 and Table 8 cover the $20^{\text {th }}$ and $21^{\text {st }}$ 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. ${ }^{1}$ 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 $18^{\text {th }}$ and $19^{\text {th }}$ 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 $20^{\text {th }}$ and $21^{\text {st }}$ 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).

[^0]Table 1. Congressional Service: $1^{\text {st }}-107^{\text {th }}$ Congresses, 1798 -2002

| Total no. of <br> Congresses <br> served | Number served |  | Running totals |  |
| ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
|  | Number of <br> Members | Percent of total <br> Members | Cumulative no. of <br> Members | Cumulative <br> 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: $1^{\text {st }}-107^{\text {th }}$ Congresses, $\mathbf{1 7 9 8 - 2 0 0 2}$

| Total no. of <br> Congresses <br> served | Number served |  | Running totals |  |
| ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
|  | Number of <br> Representatives | Percent of total <br> Representatives | Cumulative no. of <br> Representatives | Cumulative <br> 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 |

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| 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: $1^{\text {st }}-56^{\text {th }}$ Congresses, 1798-1901 ( $18^{\text {th }}$ and $19^{\text {th }}$ Centuries)

| Total no. of <br> Congresses <br> served | Number served |  | Running totals |  |
| ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
|  | Number of <br> Representatives | Percent of total <br> Representatives | Cumulative no. of <br> Representatives | Cumulative <br> 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: $57^{\text {th }}-107^{\text {th }}$ Congresses, 1901-2002 (20 ${ }^{\text {th }}$ and $21^{\text {st }}$ Centuries)

| Total no. of <br> Congresses <br> served | Number served |  | Running totals |  |
| ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
|  | Number of <br> Representatives | Percent of total <br> Representatives | Cumulative no. of <br> Representatives | Cumulative <br> 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 |

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| 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: $80^{\text {th }}-107^{\text {th }}$ Congresses, 1947-2002

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

Table 6. Senate Service: $\mathbf{1}^{\text {stt }}-107^{\text {th }}$ Congresses, $\mathbf{1 7 9 8 - 2 0 0 2}$

| Total no. of | Number served |  | Running totals |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Congresses | Number of | Percent of total | Cumulative no. of | Cumulative | Conges


| 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: $1^{\text {st }}-56^{\text {th }}$ Congresses, $1798-1901$ ( $18^{\text {th }}$ and $19^{\text {th }}$ Centuries)

| Total no. of <br> Congresses <br> served | Number served |  | Running totals |  |
| ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
|  | Percent of total <br> Senators | Cumulative no. of <br> Senators | Cumulative <br> 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: $57^{\text {th }}-107^{\text {th }}$ Congresses, 1901-2002 (20 ${ }^{\text {th }}$ and $21^{\text {st }}$ Centuries)

| Total no. of <br> Congresses <br> served | Number served |  | Running totals |  |
| ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
|  | Percent of total <br> Senators | Cumulative no. of <br> Senators | Cumulative <br> percent |  |
| 1 | 174 | 17.4 | 174 | 17.4 |
| 2 | 58 | 5.8 | 232 | 23.2 |
| 3 | 218 | 21.8 | 450 | 45.0 |
| 4 | 60 | 6.0 | 510 | 51.1 |
| 5 | 46 | 4.6 | 556 | 55.7 |
| 6 | 126 | 12.6 | 682 | 68.3 |
| 7 | 39 | 3.9 | 721 | 72.2 |
| 8 | 37 | 3.7 | 758 | 75.9 |
| 9 | 72 | 7.2 | 830 | 83.1 |
| 10 | 13 | 1.3 | 843 | 84.4 |
| 11 | 18 | 1.8 | 861 | 86.2 |
| 12 | 52 | 5.2 | 913 | 91.4 |
| 13 | 14 | 1.4 | 927 | 92.8 |
| 14 | 17 | 1.7 | 944 | 94.5 |
| 15 | 20 | 2.0 | 964 | 96.5 |
| 16 | 9 | 0.9 | 973 | 97.4 |
| 17 | 5 | 0.5 | 978 | 97.9 |
| 18 | 9 | 0.9 | 987 | 98.8 |
| 19 | 4 | 0.4 | 991 | 99.2 |
| 20 | 2 | 0.2 | 993 | 99.4 |
| 21 | 4 | 0.4 | 997 | 99.8 |
| 22 | 1 | 0.1 | 998 | 99.9 |
| 25 | 1 | 0.1 | 999 | 100.0 |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Table 9. Senate Service: $80^{\text {th }}-107^{\text {th }}$ Congresses, 1947-2002

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


[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ For a discussion of these efforts, see CRS Report 96-152 GOV, Term Limits for Members of Congress: State Activity, by Sula P. Richardson.

