

***Vital Statistics on Congress***  
**Major Changes and Minor Errata**  
**Last Updated November 2020**

Notes on the November 2020 Update

The November 2020 updates to *Vital Statistics on Congress* were overseen by Molly Reynolds and build on several decades of previous work by Thomas Mann, Norman Ornstein, Michael Malbin, and generations of research assistants and interns at the Brookings Institution, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Campaign Finance Institute. The changes and corrections listed below represent updates to those outstanding previous efforts and are presented here to help researchers who may have used previous versions of the data. Unless listed otherwise, all changes and corrections were made for the November 2020 data release. Where possible, the reason for the change is described.

If you notice additional errors or discrepancies in the published data, please contact us at [vitalstatistics@brookings.edu](mailto:vitalstatistics@brookings.edu).

Minor Changes:

- **Table 4-3 and 4-5:** For the 107<sup>th</sup>, 111<sup>th</sup>, 112<sup>th</sup>, and 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses the Senate Indian Affairs Committee had been treated as a Select/Special Committee as opposed to a Standing Committee like in other Congresses. Data in Table 4-3 was revised to reflect this change and subsequent calculations in Table 4-5 were revised.

For the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Senate Special Committee to Investigate Whitewater Development Corporation and Related Matters was not previously included in the count of special/select committees. It has been added to that total and subsequent figures have been revised to reflect the change.

For the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Senate Special Committee on the Y2K Technology Problem, was not previously included in the count of Special/Select committees though it has been included in the tally of 106<sup>th</sup> Congress Special/Select committees. This number has been updated and subsequent figures have been revised to reflect the change.

- **Table 4-2, 4-3, and 4-5:** For the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Joint Select Committee on Multiemployer Pension Plans and the Joint Select Committee on the Budget and Appropriations process were not included in the House or Senate counts of Joint Committees. These counts have been updated and data in subsequent tables has been updated. The underlying data in Table 4-4 was updated however no changes were needed in the published tables due to rounding.

Previous Updates

The *Vital Statistics on Congress* project receives periodic updates when new information becomes available and minor errors are discovered in the data. The following errata were corrected prior to the most recent major update in November 2020.

Updates for March 2019 Publication

*Major Changes*

- **Table 2-7:** For 2008-2014, members running for other office were not counted consistently as retiring from Congress. For years prior to 2008 and since 2014, members running for other office

have been counted as retiring. Updated data for 2008-2014 reflects this. Errors in the number of members running for re-election and losing re-election were also corrected.

- **Table 7-3:** For FY1999-FY2010, budget resolution numbers were updated to reflect total (not just on-budget) amounts in congressional budget resolutions.

#### *Minor Changes*

- **Table 1-6:** Minor seniority calculation adjustments were made for representatives in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress to match the House clerk records.
- **Table 1-7:** Minor seniority calculation adjustments were made for senators in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress
- **Table 1-8, 1-9, 1-10, 1-11, 1-12, and 1-13:** Occupations data were updated for minor tabulations errors in the 114<sup>th</sup> and 115<sup>th</sup>.
- **Table 1-14:** Religion numbers for representatives were updated for the 114<sup>th</sup> and 115<sup>th</sup> Congress.
- **Table 1-15:** Religion numbers for senators were updated for the 114<sup>th</sup> and 115<sup>th</sup> Congress.
- **Table 1-16, 1-17, and 1-18:** Congressional race data for 114<sup>th</sup> and 115<sup>th</sup> Congress updated.
- **Table 2-3:** Figures for 1998-2014 (House) and 2000/2006 (Senate) were amended to accurately reflect special election methodology outlined in the endnote.
- **Table 2-4:** Figures for 1998 House and 2010 House were changed to match methodology outlined in the endnote.
- **Table 5-10:** Errors corrected for the following years: 1998, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2007. Data added for 2001. Data for the GPO for 1994-2016 and for the Library of Congress for 1997-2004 revised to ensure methodological consistency. Note: Other data in this table from prior to 1993 is under review and may change.
- **Table 7-3:** FY2016 were entered incorrectly. They have been updated.

#### Updates for May 2018 Publication

#### *Major Changes*

- **Tables 2-15a and 2-15b:** Going forward, we have decided to no longer publish two Congresses data, and instead will only publish the data for the most recent Congress under table number 2-15.

#### *Minor Errata*

- **Table 6-1:** House days in session was updated to reflect calendar days instead to legislative as it had been previously. This was done to match the Senate 6-2 table which counts calendar days as opposed to legislative days. (Change made July 2018)
- **Tables 1-2, 1-3, 1-4, and 1-5:** Midwest House member numbers were updated for the 111<sup>th</sup>, 112<sup>th</sup>, and 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses. Additionally, all tables were updated to reflect correct rounding practices. (Change made October 2018)

## Update between September 2017 – May 2018

### *Minor Errata*

- **Table 5-10:** Due to an editing error, the data previously listed under 1991 was actually 2002 data, and the data previously listed for 1992-2001 was actually for 1991-2000. There was also data erroneously listed for the Copyright Royalty Commission in 2004 and for the Office of Technology Assessment in 2005. That data has now been removed. Note: Other data in this table is under review and may change.

## Updates between January 2017 – September 2017

### *Minor Errata*

- **Table 1-8:** 105th Congress Agriculture Was 2, should be 22. (Change made February 2017)
- **Tables 1-8 through 1-13:** Additional footnote describing methodological changes between the 94th and 95th congresses, and between 104th and 105th congresses. (Change made February 2017)
- **Table 1-8:** 114th Congress Artistic/Creative was 0, changed to 2. (Change made February 2017)
- **Table 1-8:** 114th Congress Journalism and Engineering were flipped. (Change made February 2017)
- **Tables 1-8 and 1-9:** 92nd congress Scientists number was updated. (Change made February 2017)
- **Chapter 5 Landing Page Chart:** Incorrect data used in first publication of the chart. (Change made March 2017)
- **Table 5-8:** 2006 GAO number was listed as 2,388, should have been 3,388. (Change made June 2017)
- **Table 2-3:** 2008 and 2012, number of special elections listed as 11 and 5 respectively, changed to 9 and 8. (Change made July 2017)

## Updates for January 2017 Publication

### *Major Changes*

- **Tables 1-8 through 1-15** (occupation and religious affiliation data for members of the House and Senate): Prior editions of *Vital Statistics* used a large range of sources for this information. To increase consistency across years, we re-tabulated data using only *Congressional Quarterly* data. For all congresses prior to the 114<sup>th</sup>, this involved using the *CQ Almanac* for all information except the number of veterans and of former congressional aides in Congress; those two pieces of occupational information are from the *CQ Congress Collection*. Because the *CQ Almanac* for the first session of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress does not contain this information, we used the *CQ Roll Call* "Guide to the New Congress."

- **Chapter 3:** In previous editions of *Vital Stats*, the campaign finance data was generally provided in nominal dollars. As of the 2017 update, the data are provided in real dollars. For the 2017 update, the data are inflation adjusted to 2014 dollars.
- **Table 7-4** (Relatively Uncontrollable Outlays under Current Law): As of January 2017, this table is no longer being updated. This table has been included in *Vital Stats* since its inception, and in early editions, it paralleled closely a table included in the President's Budget called "Controllability of Budget Outlays." That table was dropped from the President's Budget in 1990, making it increasingly difficult to update the Vital Stats table in a comparable way. The explanation for eliminating the table was as follows:

"The controllability classification was developed decades ago to provide information about the degree to which spending levels are determined by automatic formula or by prior contractual obligations in contrast to those that are controllable through current action. In recent years the concept of mandatory and related programs has come into common use. This concept incorporates the same substance as the controllability classification, but in a form more closely linked to the Congressional budget process." (FY 1991 Budget, Section 2, p. 281).

We have replaced Table 7-4 (now denoted as Table 7-4A) with Table 7-4B, which uses the now-more familiar mandatory classification. For those interested in more information on the differences between Tables 7-4A and 7-4B, please contact [vitalstatistics@brookings.edu](mailto:vitalstatistics@brookings.edu).

- **Tables 8-9 and 8-10** (ideological positions of House and Senate party coalitions): These tables have been fully updated from previous versions of *Vital Stats*. They are drawn from Poole and Rosenthal's Polarization Data files as available in December 2016 ([http://voteview.com/political\\_polarization\\_2015.htm](http://voteview.com/political_polarization_2015.htm)). Because each member's ideological score is calculated using his or her entire voting history, his or her scores for recent congresses will change as new data is added to the dataset, causing the averages for each group listed in these tables to change as well. All the data in this table was updated in December 2016 using the most recent release of Poole and Rosenthal's data and thus may not match earlier editions of *Vital Stats*.

#### *Minor Errata*

- **Table 1-7:** Seniority numbers for senators for 106<sup>th</sup>, 107<sup>th</sup>, 109<sup>th</sup>, 110<sup>th</sup>, and 113<sup>th</sup> were updated to resolve discrepancies in coding.
- **Table 2-1:** Turnout numbers for 2006 and 2012 were adjusted to match the described post-2006 methodology.
- **Table 2-2:** Vote share figures for 2012 updated.
- **Table 2-7:** Errors from 2008; to "percentage of those re-elected" figures for 1972, 1990, and 2004 corrected; and to "reelected as a percentage of House membership" figures for 1998, 2000, and 2010 corrected.
- **Table 2-11:** Changes to average terms served for 1996 and 2002 to match existing methodology of counting partial terms.

- **Table 2-17.** The data for 2004 previously omitted districts where the member ran unopposed. The data have been updated to reflect these districts. Corrections were also made to the 1992 and 1996 data, and 2012 was completed.
- **Table 2-18:** Changes made to overall vote share change for Democrats for 1996-98, 1998-2000, 2002-04, and 2006-08 to match figures in Table 2-2
- **Table 4-8:** Southern chairmen figure for 113<sup>th</sup> Congress did not include House Ethics Committee. Figure has been adjusted.
- **Table 5-1:** House figures for 2010 and 2011 revised. Data for 2007 and 2009 are under review for possible data anomalies and are subject to potential revision.
- **Table 5-2:** Data for 2007 and 2009 are under review for possible data anomalies and are subject to potential revision.
- **Table 5-3:** Figure for 2010 revised.
- **Table 5-4:** Figures for 2009 and 2010 revised.
- **Table 5-5:** Figure for 2010 in the House revised. Data for 2007 and 2009 are under review for possible data anomalies and are subject to potential revision.
- **Table 5-6 and 5-7:** Data for 2007 and 2009 are under review for possible data anomalies and are subject to potential revision.
- **Table 5-10:** 2005 “joint items” figure revised for consistency with other post-2003 data. Errors for 2004 corrected.
- **Table 5-11:** Figures for 2010 and 2011 revised.
- **Table 5-12:** Since 2001, the Senate state furniture office allowance has been updated for inflation at the beginning of each congress. These figures have been updated to reflect this. We also eliminated separate lines of data for postage, stationary, and travel, which are no longer delineated as separate sums.
- **Table 6-1:** House hearings figure for 111<sup>th</sup> Congress (2009-2010) contained numbers for the first session only. Figure revised to correct this error.
- **Table 6-4:** Pages of statutes for 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (2011-2012) included the second session only. Figure revised to correct this error.
- **Table 7-7 and 7-8:** Classification of votes in table is done based on coding of vote descriptions provided in CQ Almanac. Data is subject to revision based on updates to coding scheme.
- **Table 8-1:** 2014 presidential success in the Senate did not include nominations, which it has in other years. This figure, and the accompanying overall figures, were adjusted. For 2003 and 2004, the “number of votes” column reflected number of victories, rather than total number of votes on which president took a position; these figures have been changed to make 2003 and 2004 consistent with other years. Data for 1986 and for overall success rate in 2008 also revised to correct errors.

- **Table 8-2:** The following years are calculated using a different methodology than all other years: 1995, 1996, and 2006-2015. In all other years, the percentages are normalized to eliminate the effects of absences as follows:  $\text{support} = (\text{support})/(\text{support} + \text{opposition})$ . For 1995-96 and 2006-present, the percentages are not normalized, so absences reduce the average score. Updating of this data to match the normalization for other years is in progress.
- **Table 8-4:** Data from 2006 to the present has been updated to match formatting from previous years regarding normalization to remove effect of absences.
- **Tables 8-7 and 8-8:** Since the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, *Vital Stats* tables have used contemporaneous releases of Poole and Rosenthal's NOMINATE data for the calculations in Tables 8-7 and 8-8. Corrections were made to the figures for the 109<sup>th</sup> and 112<sup>th</sup> congresses to reflect this.