

Congress and Civility by Design

Worksheet 1: Studying Actions of the House of Representatives, April 6, 1789

Instructions:

Using the following table, list the 6 actions undertaken by the House of Representatives. The first column contains the word from the Journal indicating the start of the action, for example, "Ordered." Complete the table by filling the blank column with a brief summary of the action written in your own words.

Answer the questions by drawing from your summaries.

Action	Summary of the action in your words
Ordered	
Resolved	
Message Received	
Resolved	
Ordered	
Adjournment	

Questions

1. Which of the actions listed did the House decide by vote?
2. Which actions show the House fulfilling Constitutional responsibilities? (Refer to a copy of the Constitution if in doubt.)
3. How does the way these actions were undertaken and how they were recorded reflect the saying that "public office is a public trust"?

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Worksheet 2: Studying the U.S. Senate's Rules for Debate

Instructions:

Study each pair of rules adopted by the Senate on April 16, 1789 and answer the questions below it. Then use your results to answer the summary questions at the end of this worksheet.

Rule 2: No member shall speak to another, or otherwise interrupt the business of the Senate, or read any printed-paper while the journals or public papers are reading, or when any member is speaking in any debate.

Rule 3: Every member, when he speaks, shall address the chair, standing in his place, and when he has finished, shall sit down.

Question 1. How would these two rules help create a polite and orderly debate?

Question 2. How would Rule 3 help prevent Senators from verbally attacking one another?

Rule 4: No member shall speak more than twice in any one debate on the same day, without (permission) of the Senate.

Rule 5: When two members rise at the same time, the President (of the Senate) shall name the person to speak, but in all cases the member first rising shall speak first.

Question 3. How would Rule 4 cause Senators to be more careful about points they raise in debate?

Question 4. How would Rule 5 help preserve fairness in opportunities to speak in debate?

Rule 6: No motion shall be debated until the same shall be seconded.

Rule 7: When a motion shall be made and seconded, it shall be reduced to writing, if desired by the President (of the Senate) or any member, delivered in at the table, and read by the President (of the Senate), before the same shall be debated.

Question 5. How would Rule 6 limit the number of motions that could be raised?

Question 6. How would Rule 7 help keep debate on topic?

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Rule 16: When a member shall be called to order, he shall sit down until the President (of the Senate) shall have determined whether he is in order or not; and every question of order shall be decided by the President (of the Senate), without debate; but, if there be a doubt in his mind, he may call for the sense of the Senate.

Rule 17: If a member be called to order for words spoken, the exceptionable words shall be immediately taken down in writing, that the President (of the Senate) may be better enabled to judge of the matter.

Question 7. How would Rule 16 help control undisciplined Senators?

Question 8. How would Rule 17 help resolve disputes between Senators over statements made in debate?

Summary Questions:

1. Why do you think these rules were useful and necessary for the Senate to adopt?
2. How do these rules reflect the fact that each Senator is an equal representative of a state?
3. Which of these rules would have contributed the most toward civility in the Senate?

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Worksheet 3: Reflection Questions

Instructions: Use the responses you recorded on Worksheets 1 & 2 to answer these questions in your small group. Be prepared to share your answers in a whole class discussion of these questions.

1. How would the procedures and rules of debate have reminded the members of the House of Representatives and the Senate of the importance of their service to the nation?
2. How would the procedures and rules of debate have helped the members of House of Representatives and the Senate treat one another with the respect?
3. Why was civility important to the success of Congress in its service to the nation?
4. How does it benefit the Senate to continue to follow these rules of civility by design today?