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Leaving Congress: House of Representatives and Senate Departures Data, 1989-2020

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SUMMARY

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Leaving Congress: House of Representatives and Senate Departures Data, 1989-2020

Members of Congress leave the House or Senate for a variety of reasons; these may include resignation, death, or chamber action during a Congress, and retirement, electoral defeat, or pursuit of another office at the end of a Congress. In the 101st Congress (1989-1990) through 116th Congress (2019-2020), on average, two Senators and nine Members of the House of Representatives have left before the conclusion of a Congress. Over the same period, on average, 10 Senators and 59 Members of the House left Congress upon expiration of their terms of office.

The data provided here may offer insight concerning the turnover of membership in each chamber, but any such conclusions should be drawn with care, as there appears to be no pattern to Member departures. This may be due in part to the individualized nature of congressional careers, which might include numerous events or actions that could affect Members' decisions to end their congressional service.

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In each Congress, Members leave the House or Senate for a variety of reasons. In the course of a Congress, those reasons could include resignation, death, or chamber action. At the conclusion of a Congress, Members depart due to retirement, electoral defeat, or pursuit of another office. In the 101st Congress (1989-1990) through 116th Congress (2019-2020), on average, two Senators and nine Members of the House of Representatives[1] have left before the conclusion of a Congress. Over the same period, on average, 10 Senators (10% of Senate membership)[2] and 59 Members of the House (13.4% of House membership) have left Congress upon expiration of their terms of office.

This report provides data on Members who have left Congress between 1989 and 2020. Data are divided into two broad categories. The first category, "in-term" departures, addresses Members who leave prior to the conclusion of a Congress. Circumstances of in-term departures include a Member's resignation or death, or the action of a chamber regarding a Member's status.[3] The second category, "complete-term" departures, includes Members who leave the House or Senate at the completion of their terms. This includes Members who retired, were defeated for reelection, or who did not run for reelection to the House or Senate because they sought other elective office.

Table 2 provides departure information for the House from the 101st Congress (1989-1990) through the 116th Congress (2019-2020). **Table 3** provides House departures as a percentage of chamber membership for the same period. **Table 4** and **Table 5** provide Senate departure information, and departures as a percentage of chamber membership, respectively, for the 101st-116th Congresses.

Table 1. Congresses and Meeting Years, 1989-2020

Congress, Years	Congress, Years	Congress, Years	Congress, Years
101st, 1989-1990	105th, 1997-1998	109th, 2005-2006	113th, 2013-2014
102nd, 1991-1992	106th, 1999-2000	110th, 2007-2008	114th, 2015-2016
103rd, 1993-1994	107th, 2001-2002	111th, 2009-2010	115th, 2017-2018
104th, 1995-1996	108th, 2003-2004	112th, 2011-2012	116th, 2019-2020

Source: CRS.

[1] Data include Representatives, Delegates, and the Resident Commissioner.

[2] In some instances, Senators were appointed to fill a Senate vacancy, and did not stand for election to a full term. In this report, those Senators are counted as retiring.

[3] In one instance since 1989, a Member was expelled from the House pursuant to H.Res. 495, 107th Congress, adopted on July 24, 2002.

Table 2. House of Representatives Departures Data, 101st-116th Congresses

Cong.	Total Departures	In-Term Departures	Complete-Term Departures	Resigned	Died	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
101st	51	12	39	9	3	15	14	10
102nd	117	10	107	7	3	51	46	10
103rd	89	9	80	6	3	28	36	16
104th	73	9	64	8	1	32	24	8
105th	46	9	37	5	4	21	8	8
106th	42	4	38	1	3	20	10	8
107th	59	10	49	5	4	22	17	10
108th	41	6	35	6	0	17	9	9
109th	56	8	48	7	1	15	24	9
110th	64	13	51	6	7	25	21	5
111th	106	13	93	12	1	19	58	16
112th	87	8	79	7	1	25	40	14
113th	78	7	71	6	1	24	19	28
114th	60	9	51	7	2	25	12	14
115th	104	16	88	15	1	32	39	17
116th	64	11	53	8	3	28	22	3
Average	**71**	**10**	**61**	**7**	**2**	**25**	**25**	**12**

Source: *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, https://bioguide.congress.gov/, and CRS calculations.

Notes: Averages are rounded to the whole number; in-term and complete-term averages may not equal the averages of their subcategories. 107th Congress in-term departures include one Member who was expelled from the House pursuant to H.Res. 495, 107th Congress, adopted on July 24, 2002.

Table 3. House of Representatives Departure Percentages, 101st-116th Congresses

Cong.	Total Departures	In-Term Departures	Complete-Term Departures	Resigned	Died	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
101st	11.6%	2.7%	8.9%	2.0%	0.7%	3.4%	3.2%	2.3%
102nd	26.6%	2.3%	24.3%	1.6%	0.7%	11.6%	10.5%	2.3%
103rd	20.2%	2.0%	18.2%	1.4%	0.7%	6.4%	8.2%	3.6%
104th	16.6%	2.0%	14.5%	1.8%	0.2%	7.3%	5.5%	1.8%
105th	10.5%	2.0%	8.4%	1.1%	0.9%	4.8%	1.8%	1.8%
106th	9.5%	0.9%	8.6%	0.2%	0.7%	4.5%	2.3%	1.8%
107th	13.4%	2.3%	11.1%	1.1%	0.9%	5.0%	3.9%	2.3%
108th	9.3%	1.4%	8.0%	1.4%	0.0%	3.9%	2.0%	2.0%
109th	12.7%	1.8%	10.9%	1.6%	0.2%	3.4%	5.5%	2.0%
110th	14.5%	3.0%	11.6%	1.4%	1.6%	5.7%	4.8%	1.1%
111th	24.0%	2.9%	21.1%	2.7%	0.2%	4.3%	13.2%	3.6%
112th	19.7%	1.8%	17.9%	1.6%	0.2%	5.7%	9.1%	3.2%
113th	17.7%	1.6%	16.1%	1.4%	0.2%	5.4%	4.3%	6.3%
114th	13.6%	2.0%	11.6%	1.6%	0.5%	5.7%	2.7%	3.2%
115th	23.6%	3.6%	20.0%	3.4%	0.2%	7.3%	8.8%	3.9%
116th	14.5%	2.5%	12.0%	1.8%	0.7%	6.3%	5.0%	0.7%
Average	**16.1%**	**2.2%**	**13.9%**	**1.6%**	**0.5%**	**5.6%**	**5.6%**	**2.6%**

Source: *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, https://bioguide.congress.gov/, and CRS calculations.

Notes: Percentages are based on 440 House Members in 101st-110th Congresses, and 441 Members (435 Representatives, 5 Delegates, and Resident Commissioner) in the 111th-116th Congresses.

Table 4. Senate Departures Data, 101st-116th Congresses

Cong.	Total Departures	In-Term Departures	Complete-Term Departures	Resigned	Died	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
101st	5	2	3	1	1	2	1	0
102nd	15	4	11	2	2	6	5	0
103rd	15	3	12	3	0	8	4	0
104th	17	2	15	2	0	13	2	0
105th	9	0	9	0	0	6	3	0
106th	13	2	11	0	2	5	6	0
107th	10	3	7	2	1	4	3	0
108th	9	0	9	0	0	7	1	1
109th	14	1	13	1	0	4	9	0
110th	10	2	8	1	1	5	3	0
111th	24	7	17	5	2	12	4	1
112th	15	3	12	2	1	10	2	0
113th	17	4	13	3	1	8	5	0
114th	6	0	6	0	0	5	1	0
115th	14	5	9	4	1	3	6	0
116th	8	1	7	1	0	4	3	0
Average	**12**	**2**	**10**	**2**	**1**	**6**	**3**	**0**

Source: *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, https://bioguide.congress.gov/, and CRS calculations.

Notes: Averages are rounded to the whole number; in-term and complete-term averages may not equal the averages of their subcategories.

Table 5. Senate Departure Percentages, 101st-116th Congresses

Cong.	Total Departures	In-Term Departures	Complete-Term Departures	Resigned	Died	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
101st	5%	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%
102nd	15%	4%	11%	2%	2%	6%	5%	0%
103rd	15%	3%	12%	3%	0%	8%	4%	0%
104th	17%	2%	15%	2%	0%	13%	2%	0%
105th	9%	0%	9%	0%	0%	6%	3%	0%
106th	13%	2%	11%	0%	2%	5%	6%	0%
107th	10%	3%	7%	2%	1%	4%	3%	0%
108th	9%	0%	9%	0%	0%	7%	1%	1%
109th	14%	1%	13%	1%	0%	4%	9%	0%
110th	10%	2%	8%	1%	1%	5%	3%	0%
111th	24%	7%	17%	5%	2%	12%	4%	1%
112th	15%	3%	12%	2%	1%	10%	2%	0%
113th	17%	4%	13%	3%	1%	8%	5%	0%
114th	6%	0%	6%	0%	0%	5%	1%	0%
115th	14%	5%	9%	4%	1%	3%	6%	0%
116th	8%	1%	7%	1%	0%	4%	3%	0%
Average	**12%**	**2%**	**10%**	**2%**	**1%**	**6%**	**3%**	**0%**

Source: *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, https://bioguide.congress.gov/, and CRS calculations.

Notes: Averages are rounded to the whole number; in-term and complete-term averages may not equal the averages of their subcategories.

The data provided in this report offer insight into the manner by which Members of Congress leave the House or Senate, and offer preliminary insight about some of the factors that may influence the turnover of membership in each chamber. At the same time, any conclusions based on these data should be drawn with care, since there do not appear to be patterns to Member departures. This may be due in part to the individualized nature of congressional careers, which might include numerous events or actions that could affect Members' decisions to end their congressional service.

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