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Second Quarter Exam – Overview of Law making 101 and the Inflation Reduction Act

~ THREE SHORT ESSAYS ~

1. How does the U.S. Senate differ from the House of Representatives in terms of the lawmaking process?

The U.S. Congress is divided into two chambers, each with a distinct role in the law-making process. The lower chamber of congress, The House of Representatives, is larger due to the number of representatives per-state is determined by the state's population, with a total of 435 members. Representatives within can expect to serve a short two-year term and are up for reelection every two years. This allows the House to be responsive to the public's current needs and opinions. Since the House of Representatives has a bigger body, the structured procedures and limits on debate times to keep things moving quickly, especially with the given volume of bills it handles. The House elects a speaker who oversees the calendar (what bills are to be debated and when) and influences the House's Rules Committee in deciding the legislation to be considered. Laws begin as ideas, then a representative sponsors a bill. The bill is then assigned to a committee for study, if released by the committee, the bill will be put on a calendar to be voted on and debated or amended. If the bill passes by simple majority (218 of 435), the bill moves to the senate (Krutz and Sylvie Waskiewicz *11.4 house and Senate organizations - american government 3E*).

The Senate inhabits the upper chamber of Congress, and states send two representatives from each regardless of population size, with a total of 100 senators. Senators serve six-year terms, with one-third of them running for re-election every two years. The characteristics of the Senate are based on representation and exercising the powers of the body, working at its own pace, movement may seem slow but lots of debate ensues between them and other branches of government. Some important roles the Senate is a part of aside from finalizing bills are impeachment, approving treaties, and certain presidential appointments such as selecting ambassadors and Supreme Court Justices. In the Senate, the bill is assigned to another committee and if released, debated or voted on, again with simple majority (51 out of 100), the the bill

passes. The Vice President of the United States shall be the President of the Senate but shall have no Vote unless they be equally divided (*The U.S. senate - what does the Senate do?*).

Finally, a conference committee made of house and Senate members work out any differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill, resulting in the bills returning to the House and Senate for the final approval. Once the Government prints the revised bill in the process called “enrolling”, the President has 10 days to sign or veto the enrolled bill. By working together, the different structures of the House and Senate powers help create a balanced and careful lawmaking process (*The House of Representatives and Senate*).

3. Under what conditions do presidents use direct action in foreign affairs?

The President of the United States is the Commander-in Chief, they act directly and quickly in all actions necessary and needed when it comes to political obstacles or the inner working through congress. The President has the significant authority to act in foreign policy, especially in situations involving national security, authorized to deploy the country’s armed forces and collect foreign intelligence. Situations where waiting for Congressional approval is too time-consuming during crisis time, the president can make decisive actions without explicit Congressional authorization. The Executive Branch also conducts diplomacy with other nations and the President has the power to negotiate and sign treaties, which the senate can later ratify. The president can issue executive orders, which direct executive officers or clarify and further existing laws (*American government*).

Based on direct action in foreign affairs, the Constitution assigns certain enumerated powers to the president and Congress (*The executive branch*). We talked about Presidents having command over the military in operations abroad. A notable example is President Obama, using his executive power to target terrorist organizations. When it comes to foreign aid, the Executive branch agencies such as the State Department, Department of Defense and U.S. Agency for International Development distribute foreign aid. Which requires a determined funding amount from Congress through its approval of the federal budget. In Immigration, with Obama’s issued executive action that deferred deportation for individuals who arrive in the United States as children, grants protection for immigrants. Intelligence, the president nominates the heads of all intelligence agencies such as the FBI and CIA, with Congress having the power to set budgets (*What roles do Congress and the president play in U.S. foreign policy?*). Also, (President Trump has been seen using Tariffs as a negotiation tool.) We’ll see how far he goes to enact those.

It seems that there is a creditable amount of check and balances when it comes to the president enacting actions and Congress coming in to sweep up or polish exercised decisions. We mustn’t overlook the Veto power, though rarely used in foreign policy, the president can veto any legislation passed by congress, and congress can override a presidential veto with the support of two-thirds of their members. I say this since now that we have Trump as our red President, and

53 out of 47 seats red leaning Senators, I wouldn't be surprised by the ushering of certain favorable agendas be enacted or even "overlooked" when it comes to foreign affairs.

8. What is the role of committees of the U.S. Congress?

Congressional committees play a pivotal role in structuring and managing legislative workload. Each year, thousands of bills are introduced, and committees help divide the workload by assigning issues to specialized areas, such as health care or national defense, allowing members of Congress to focus on areas where they have expertise. These committees are essential for both legislative development and governmental oversight, handling everything from initial bill reviews to in-depth reviews and investigation of executive actions. We should note that there are types of Committees that congress utilizes to address extensive responsibility. (*Committees of the U.S. congress* | *Congress.gov* | *Library of Congress*).

There are Standing Committees, which are permanent panels within both the House and Senate, and are crucial for legislative functions, as they review and amend, and recommend measures within their areas of jurisdiction. Each standing committee, like the House Ways and Means Committee (which addresses tax policies) or the Senate foreign Relations Committee (oversees treaties), have legislative authority and oversight roles to ensure laws are enacted as intended (*The importance of committees*). The Select or Special Committees are temporarily created to investigate specific issues. These committees do not draft legislation but play significant roles in addressing emerging or jurisdictional issues. An example of a Select Committee is that we have a 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games being held here in California, used for planning and executing the summer games (*Los Angeles Organizing Committee for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games*). Joint Committees are comprised of members from both chambers and focus on administrative tasks or study issues that impact both the House and Senate. Overseeing of both chambers allows for accountability and balance of powers. Lastly, we have Conference Committees, which are also temporary joint committees that are essential for reconciling differences between House and Senate versions of a bill. Once the consensus is reached, the revised bill is returned to both chambers for final approval.

Committee assignments are pivotal and align with personal interests or expertise in specific areas that allow them to represent their constituents effectively. This function allows for considerable oversight of power, monitoring executive actions and adhering to Congressional intent and investigating potential issues through hearings, witness testimonies, and through review processes. They are the checks and balances of government, and to hold it accountable and efficient.

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~ Long Essay ~

How does President Trump best achieve domestic policy success with the US Congress in 2017?

Trump and the Republican Party: The Way Success is Stylized

In this essay, I will attempt to craft a narrative that is challenging to write, even with well-supported research. This increasing ideological divide between political parties has created a “no man’s land” not only within our government but also among the people of this country. The unity that once enabled those in power to speak for the collective betterment of society has given way to a self-serving struggle over whose freedoms to prioritize and whose to diminish. This growing alienation has fractured our perspectives, making us question not only the intentions of our government but also the role of politics in dividing or uniting us. These dynamics shape how we elect a so-called “world leader” and how we are perceived- both within our own borders and on the global stage. How do we, as Americans, view ourselves? How do we treat one another within this permeable landscape? It is crucial that we reflect on the individuals we empower to lead, as they are extensions of our collective will. If given the opportunity, how would the average citizen shoulder the immense responsibility of being the officiator, proclaimer, and the judge of the world. With the full weight of democracy at one’s disposal, what kind of power would you wield, and for what purpose? In this “no man’s land”, can we find an individual who will pull the ties and bring us forth a repaired bridge to meet in the middle? Is the divide too great that we have grown accustomed to the consumption of our thrown side of the debate? Again, how will you wield your sides “knowledge” and use it to gain power?

In 2017 President Donald Trump embarked on a journey through domestic policy that reflected his unconventional approach to the executive office. With the control over the executive branch and support from a Republican-led Congress, Trump sought to implement sweeping changes that he claimed would redefine American policy. Yet, his term revealed the complex dynamics between presidential promises and legislative action, often illustrating a gap between rhetoric and reality. Despite the controversies and contradictions that marked his presidency, Trump achieved notable success, leveraging his authority to make significant strides in domestic policy. In this essay I will examine key achievements from his 2017, first year in office, aiming to provide an unbiased perspective on a president whose tenure continues to shape political discourse as we now follow suit on what is to come Monday January 20th, 2025. I will focus on Trump's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, and the Congresses Role that through extensive negotiation and collaboration between the White House and Congress led to the passing bills. I will direct attention to Deregulation efforts, specifically the Congressional Review Act (CRA), used to overturn specific regulations from a previous candidate, making it the most aggressive use of legislative tools in U.S. History. I will make remarks on Trump's Judicial Appointments. The Senate, under majority leader Mitch McConnell, confirmed the federal judicial nominees that included the Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch, allowed for a supposed 6-3, conservative super-majority within SCOTUS. Lastly, I will discuss Immigration Policies, stressing how Republican leaders supported Trump's executive actions on immigration enforcement and border security. These are just the tips of icebergs, bottom-heavy and concealed, poised to pierce and overturn the ships sailing through seas of optimism and hope for a "better America."

Steps for total success in government often involve attaining an absolute federal government trifecta – control of the presidency, Senate, and House of Representatives –

preferably aligned with your party's color, such as red for Republicans. The next move is either to build upon the policies of the previous administration or dismantle their work entirely, creating something new from "scratch." This approach allows you to claim credit for progress on both sides of the spectrum, whether it be enhancing existing policies or showcasing a starkly different agenda, either way, your names on whichever is more successful. Sidenote: forgetfulness is a common curse when things enacted by you lose, better get to replacing!

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017, represented a significant overhaul of the U.S. tax code, aiming to stimulate economic growth through various tax reforms. Majoring in reducing tax rates and modifying policies, credits and deductions for individuals and businesses. With a minor in establishing an oil and gas leasing program for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in Alaska (*Text - H.R.1 - 115th Congress (2017-2018)*). The TCJA was introduced in the House of Representatives as H.R.1 and underwent a quite extensive legislative process, including debates and amendments before being passed by both chambers of Congress. The House passed its own version by vote of 224 to 201, and the Senate passed its version by a party line vote of 51-49. The Final bill was signed into law by President Trump on December 22, 2017 (*Tax cuts and jobs act*).

The TCJA brought sweeping changes. Corporate taxes were slashed to 21% from 35%, and a territorial system replaced the worldwide approach, making businesses within the U.S. were more competitive, and encouraging domestic investment and job creation. Also, by implementing a onetime tax on repatriation of overseas earnings encouraged U.S. companies to bring back profits held abroad, leading to more domestic investment. For individuals, tax rates dropped across the board, the standard deduction nearly doubled, and the child tax credit increased, though personal exemptions were eliminated. Americans were able to see a more

simplified tax filing process with changes aimed to increase disposable income, thereby boosting consumer spending and overall economic activity. Businesses gained the ability to fully expense certain investments upfront, boosting growth opportunities. With this deduction in the full cost of certain capital investments, reinvesting back into operations and expansion was the designated goal to stimulate business growth and productivity (*Tax cuts and jobs act: A comparison for businesses*). The SALT (State and Local Tax) deduction was capped at \$10,000, which impacted the high-tax states, making the mortgage interest deduction reduced for new loans. These changes simplified taxes for many, reduced the burden on businesses, and aimed to stimulate the economy (*What is the state and local tax (SALT) deduction?*). Following the implementation of the TCJA, the U.S. economy experienced notable growth. Real GDP growth exceeded 3% over the four quarters following the Act's passage, and more than 5 million jobs were created, with the unemployment rate remaining below 4%. Additionally, wage growth accelerated, and consumer confidence reached an 18-year high. While the TCJA aimed to benefit the broader economy, some analysts suggest that its benefits were disproportionately skewed toward higher-income individuals and corporations. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the Act would add \$1.9 trillion to the federal deficit over ten years, raising concerns about long-term fiscal sustainability (Marr et al. *The 2017 Trump Tax Law was skewed to the rich ...*). Expiring in 2025, we eagerly await the next succession of what some believe was a blissful expenditure on wealth in their own lives and the countries.

Remember the step that mentions, “build upon the policies of the previous administration or dismantle their work entirely, creating something new from “scratch.”? Well, Trump and Congress did just that. The Congressional Review Act (CRA) allows Congress to nullify federal regulations by passing a joint resolution of disapproval, a mechanism particularly effective

during transitions between administration and opposing parties. During Trump's administration, with the help of the Congressional Review Act (CRA) and notably in the 115th Congress (2017-2018). They overturned 16 major regulations from the Obama-era during 2017 alone. This was a historic achievement for them, as far as exceeding the CRA's prior use, which had been employed once before its 20-year history (to overturn the Clinton-era regulation during the Bush administration). The scale of deregulation was significant because it marked a sharp departure from the Obama administration regulatory agenda, which focused on expanding federal oversight in areas like environment, healthcare, labor and financial systems. Due to economic arguments, Trump's efforts made it clear that they were unprecedented, not just in the number of repealed policies, but the symbolic shift they represented, prioritizing deregulation to boost economic growth to reduce compliance burdens on business, and limited federal intervention. This aggressive rollback was seen as a major win for industries and businesses that had long argued with overly restrictive rules and stifled by innovation and economic expansion. Examples included repeals of environmental rules that they claimed hurt energy industries (coal, oil, etc.) and financial regulations (Bosch et al. *CRA Tracker: Congressional Review Act in recent years*). Beyond CRA, the Trump administration pursued deregulation through executive actions and agency directives. For instance, Executive Order 13777 stated that for every new regulation introduced, two existing regulations should be eliminated. This policy led to the repeal or modification of numerous regulations across various sectors that included, environmental protections, financial oversight, and labor standards (*The Federal Register*). The Final Accounting for the Fiscal Year of 2017-2019 marks: \$50.9 billion in overall regulatory costs across the government, with \$13.5 billion in 2019. 4.3 to 1: Agencies issued 150 deregulatory actions and 35 significant regulatory actions; 61 deregulatory actions were significant with

actions yielding a ratio of 1.7 to 1 (*Regulatory reform under Executive Order 13771*). In summary, Trump's 2017 deregulatory efforts were defined by an aggressive use of the CRA, nullifying the Obama-era regulations, with executive actions designed to streamline federal oversight and promote economic health.

I see that the use of the Congressional Review Act (CRA) was part of a political strategy to quickly undo policies implemented late in the Obama presidency. The CRA has a limited window for action, and its success allowed Republicans to effectively dismantle major regulations with minimal debate (Carey and Davis *The Congressional Review Act (CRA): A brief overview*). Allow this precedent to be expected with future parties' successions, and make it so, that this is a foundational pattern for invoking foresighted success within each party's ideology. Deadlines only to be replenished when a party's champion comes back to revive them, this makes it a visionary success.

Let's refer to, "Steps to success in government often involve attaining an absolute federal government trifecta – control of the presidency, Senate, and House of Representatives" – which preferably aligned for Republicans, but that's not enough. In 2017, President Donald Trump's judicial appointments in 2017 were a strategic success that shaped the federal judiciary branch. With the support of Congress and influence from Mitch McConnell, the administration established a long-term conservative influence on the courts (Gramlich *How trump compares with other recent presidents in appointing Federal Judges*). The 2016 decision to hold one a Supreme Court seat following the death of Justice Antonin Scalia set the stage for Trump's judicial appointments. This allowed the nominated and elected Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court in 2017 marking his first major judicial victory, later Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett, all who took a conservative stance. The Senate-Red majority must not go unnoticed for its

leveraging and long-term influence that ensured prolonged conservative influence on the judiciary stage. This implementation will likely uphold the administration policies and legislative priorities and revisiting potentially overturning existing legal precedents that don't align with conservative values (*Trump campaign press release - president Trump's historic judicial appointments*).

The culmination of these efforts was exemplified by the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, ending nearly five decades of federally protected abortion rights, returning the authority to regulate abortion laws to individual states. A significant event that highlighted the impact of these appointments on American law and society (*Roe v. Wade*). For many conservatives and pro-life advocates, this decision was a monumental victory, reflecting the success for Trump's judicial appointments in advancing their goals even after his presidency.

We now come to our last selective motion for success highlighted between 2017 and 2020, the Trump administration implemented a series of executive actions aimed at strengthening immigration enforcement and border security. These measures were designed to address concerns about illegal immigration and were largely enacted without new legislation from Congress. Documenting 472 administrative changes during this period, highlighting a significant transformation of the U.S. immigration system. These actions included reducing humanitarian protection, tightening border controls, and making legal immigration more restrictive (Jessica Bolter *Four years of profound change: Immigration policy during the Trump presidency*). This enforcement resonated with many voters, including a growing percentage of Latinos. With instilled fears on the lowered refugee admissions that have been reduced each year of Trump's turn. It has approved family separations, creating a "zero tolerance policy" prosecuting all immigrants who illegally entered the United States to be separated from their "approved carded"

children, then later to be detained together. Though the failed funding wasn't secured from the Justice Department for the boarder wall, the attempt was made, and the strengthening of whatever ICE agents were expended and enforced a record of about 749,00 removals from the years 2017 to 2019 (Valverde, *A review of Trump's immigration promises*). All of which are executed with a limited budget and may fall short on his promise of removing all illegal immigrants. It proposes the reality of a national deportation program and how enforcing extremes backed by a nation and government that agrees that there is a fiscal problem, The Department of Homeland Security reported a 40% decrease in illegal boarder crossings in 2017 compared to the previous year (*Annual report immigration enforcement actions: 2017*). Looking forward, the conservative approach to immigration enforcement and boarder security in 2025 could create an emphasis on stringent measures reflects the commitment to addressing what is a maintained national security problem, expect to see a duplicate of this administration immigration control to be upheld to a new level of law in this country.

Though we may stylize the subjective narrative of what success means based on the values we project, this perspective becomes skewed when our focus narrows to a single individual – a self-proclaimed prophet leading the masses towards his vision of the future. The Republican Party, along with officials across all branches of government, has paved the way for a figure like Trump to assume the role of commander in chief. This moment has been a long time coming, but the groundwork for these ideologies to take root has now been firmly established, suggesting they may very well endure- or at least evolve into a reimagined set of laws and policies. Trump embodies that stylized narrative of success, a figure through whom many Americans project their aspirations and live vicariously. Yet we must ask: to what extent will this approach backfire? Perhaps it won't. The voice of the people has spoken, and it seems likely we

will see another figure emerge to continue the trajectory that the next four years under Trumps 2024 win will define. With this in mind, we stand at a pivotal moment in American history- a moment of absolute succession, perhaps even a peak. It is a juncture our founding fathers either feared or envisioned, depending on whether the individual in power upholds and leads the Constitution as they intended. A quote from a science-fiction book I go back to from time to time, “Graff insists Ender will be remembered a hero. We won, Graff proclaims. That’s all that matters. Ender fires back, No. The way we win matters” (*Card, Orson Scott. Ender's Game*).

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