Chapter 12 in Brief

SECTION 1

Congress Organizes (pp. 320–327)

★ Congress begins each new term on January 3 of every odd-numbered year; each new term follows the general election in November.
★ The Speaker of the House, usually the leader of the majority party, controls the agenda in the House of Representatives, while the Vice President and an experienced senator serve as largely ceremonial presidents in the Senate.
★ After the Speaker, the floor leaders and their whips in both houses are the most powerful members of Congress.
★ Committee chairmen, potent in their own domain, are chosen according to the seniority rule.

SECTION 2

Committees in Congress (pp. 328–333)

★ Most work in Congress is divided among committees that focus on special areas like national defense, the budget, agriculture, and the like.
★ The powerful House Rules Committee can speed, delay, or even prevent House action on a bill.
★ Both houses may create select committees, which are special, often temporary, bodies.
★ Joint committees are composed of members of both houses.

SECTION 3

How a Bill Becomes a Law: The House (pp. 334–340)

★ Only a member can introduce a bill in either house.
★ Bills are referred to standing committees, and are usually considered in subcommittees.
★ Bills approved by the appropriate committee and the Rules Committee are given floor consideration by the House.
★ Measures that win House approval are sent to the Senate.

SECTION 4

The Bill in the Senate (pp. 342–346)

★ Debate in the Senate is largely unrestricted.
★ The Senate’s dedication to free debate gives rise to the filibuster—the tactic of “talking a bill to death.”
★ After both houses approve a bill, it is sent to the President.
★ The President can sign the bill, allow it to become law without his signature, veto it, or apply a pocket veto.