

17.251

Congress and the American Political System
Spring 2015

First assignment

Come to the next class meeting (February 5) prepared to give a 3–to–5 minute political introduction to your home congressional district and your current member of Congress.

The presentation should include information about the following items:

- **The salient political characteristics of the district**
 - Geographic location
 - Location of large cities and economic regions
 - Ethnic or other demographic blocs that are politically relevant
 - Districting history (especially, what is the difference between the current and the new congressional district?)
 - What political, economic, or social trends might change the incumbent's chances in the future?
- **The salient political background of the incumbent**
 - When was s/he first elected and what was her or his political background?
 - How electorally secure is the incumbent?
 - Where does the incumbent's primary political support come from?
 - Who did the incumbent run against in 2014, how competitive was the election, and what issues (if any) formed the core of the campaign?
- **The institutional activity of the incumbent**
 - What committee(s) and/or leadership positions does the incumbent hold?
 - What issues does the incumbent focus on in Congress?
 - How visible nationally is the incumbent in national policy issues?
- **The political future of the district**

The best source of information for this assignment can be found in the current editions of the *Almanac of American Politics* or *Politics in America*.