

Legislature

Organization and Functions

In a democracy generally, the following are the functions of Legislature:

(1) Law Making:

In modern times the most important function of legislature is law making. Ordinary Bills can be introduced by the members of the Parliament and by the Ministers, while Money Bills can be introduced only by the Ministers in the Lower House. The Members of the Legislature can by a majority vote accept or reject any Bill. The Members of Legislature or the Parliament enjoy full freedom of speech and also of criticism of the policies of the government.

(2) Control over the Budget:

The legislature has control over the budget of the executive (Government) and without its approval the executive cannot spend even a single 'penny'. In England and India, the Members of the Parliament can impose a cut on any demand on the budget but they cannot increase it.

(3) Control over Executive:

In a Parliamentary Government the Legislature or the Parliament exercises full control over the executive or the Council of Ministers. The Parliament has the right to put Questions and Supplementary Questions to the Cabinet.

The Parliament can remove the Cabinet by a No- Confidence Motion. It can bring in Adjournment Motions and Censure Motions against the Cabinet. The Parliament can appoint a committee to investigate the affairs of the ministers. It also acts like a mirror of the public opinion.

(4) Judicial Functions:

In certain countries the legislature has to perform certain judicial functions. For example, in India and America the Parliament and the Congress can remove the President by a process of Impeachment. In England, the House of Lords is the final Court of Appeal. In Canada, the Upper House, i.e. the Senate hears the divorce cases. In Switzerland, the Federal Assembly has the power to interpret the Constitution.

(5) Electoral Functions:

In certain countries, the legislature elects the President, the Vice-President and the Judges. In India, the Parliament takes part in the election of the President and the Vice-President. In the

election of the President, besides the Parliament, the State Legislatures also take part, but in the election of the Vice- President, only the Parliament takes part.

In Russia, the Judges of the Supreme Court are elected by the Parliament of that country. In Switzerland also the members of the Executive and Federal Tribunal are elected by the members of Parliament. Formerly, in China the President was elected by the Parliament.

(6) Amendment of the Constitution:

In every democracy, the power to amend the constitution rests with the legislature of that country. The only difference is that in some countries, a similar procedure is adopted as that for the amendment of ordinary laws. In some other countries a special procedure is adopted for the amendment of the constitution. In our country, the Parliament can amend certain clauses of the constitution with a two thirds majority and for amending certain clauses; the approval of one half of the state legislatures is needed.

Unicameral legislature

In government, unicameralism (Latin uni, one + camera, chamber) is the practice of having one legislative or parliamentary chamber. Thus, a unicameral parliament or unicameral legislature is a legislature which consists of one chamber or house.

- Armenia, Bulgaria, Denmark, Hungary, Monaco, Ukraine, Serbia, Turkey, and Sweden have unicameral systems.
- Smaller countries with long-established democracies tend to have unicameral systems.

Advantages

- One advantage of a unicameral legislature is that it is democratic. Democratic tenets postulate that people who make laws for the masses must be elected in a free and fair election. Members of a unicameral chamber are directly elected by the people, which make it democratic.
- Unicameral legislature is easy to maintain, that is, it is cheaper to run than bicameral legislature, since there is no second chamber to maintain.
- Unicameral legislature is also known to be ideal for unitary states.

- Unicameral legislature prevents conflicts as to which of the houses is upper and which is lower.
- Unicameral legislature provides room for a faster process of law making and is applicable in moments of emergency.

Disadvantages of Unicameral Legislature

- Unicameral legislature does not make room for adequate and equal representation in a country.
- A unicameral legislature creates room for the emergence of a dictatorial head of state because it does not check excesses as well as a bicameral legislature. The absence of a second chamber removes those moments of sober reflection on laws that are passed. It also creates the opportunity for a government to use the single chamber to force obnoxious laws through, especially if it has majority in the chamber.
- Another disadvantage of a unicameral legislature is that the members of the chamber can be unduly influenced especially by a ruling government that has majority in parliament but sometimes also by the minority party.
- Unicameral legislatures do not allow bills to be properly debated before they hastily passed. In a unicameral legislature, it is only one chamber that does all the work. There is no opportunity for assistance from a second chamber.

Bicameral Legislature

When a country is supported by a bicameral legislature, it means the government consists of two separate chambers or houses. About 50% of the world's governments, including the United States, are supported by this structure. The U.S. Congress is divided into the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Advantages

1. It provides a system of checks and balances for the government.

Because two chambers of the same body must approve legislation before allowing

it to proceed, there are fewer opportunities to pass laws that benefit special interests or specific groups. The exact wording of the legislation must pass both bodies. That means political parties are forced to negotiate with each other, developing an outcome that isn't perfect, but is beneficial, to most (if not all) parties.

2. It offers representation at the individual level.

The bicameral legislature design offers multiple layers of representation within government for individuals. In the United States, the House of Representatives offers it through small districts, allowing communities, small-town groups, or urban neighborhoods to choose an elected official to represent them based on their population size. The Senate then offers two elected officials per state for representation. By creating two different bodies within the same branch, officials are forced to negotiate for a better bill.

3. It limits the abuse of power.

The primary benefit of the bicameral legislature is the limits put in place to prevent abuse of power. No one group is allowed to freely run through the government to produce policies which only benefit a few. It even stops the minority from being excluded by the majority under this representation format. The checks and balances work in combination with the other branches of government to ensure better results are achieved with greater consistency. It allows diverse communities to have a positive impact on the laws being passed.

Disadvantages

1. It increases the risk of political deadlock.

When a bicameral legislature design is used for a national government, the structure requires both groups within the governing body to approve new laws or rules. One body cannot pass legislation that becomes law. Because both chambers must approve the same wording, it takes more time to develop compromises that each side finds acceptable. If one group won't approve then the legislation is blocked.

2. It encourages a waste of resources.

The structure of a bicameral legislature encourages two segments of the same body to do similar activities at the same time. That means time and monetary resources are wasted.. Since these funds come from taxpayers, there is an understandable dissatisfaction with the way this government system operates.

