

**POLSC332**  
**Assessment #2**  
**“Presidential Initiatives and Congress”**

**Summary:**

In the history of the modern presidency, one of the most significant and critical relationships exists between the executive branch and Congress. In order to pass policies and secure a legacy, presidents must usually go through the legislative branch. It is a significant test for presidential leadership. The federal system’s checks and balances, a cornerstone of American democracy, results at times in “gridlock,” negatively impacting government effectiveness and frustrating the president, legislators, and citizens. Conflicts between the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government can be found throughout history, from George Washington to Barack Obama. Some presidents, including Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson, stand out for their legislative achievements and ability to successfully strategize with Congress in order to get their agendas passed. Others, including Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon, were often stymied by Congress, unable to fully understand (or appreciate) the personal and political dynamics of this complex institution.

**Related Readings:**

3.2 The President and Congress

eNotes.com: [“Checks and Balances: Three Branches of American Government”](#)

UChannel: Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs: Dr. David Mayhew’s [“Congress and the Presidency: Dissonance in Their Electoral Bases?”](#)

University of Virginia’s Miller Center of Public Affairs: Sheryl Gay Stolberg’s [“George W. Bush and the United States Congress: Can This Marriage Be Saved?”](#)

**Instructions:**

For this assessment, you will answer a series of reading/critical thinking questions on one national policy that a president has successfully shepherded through the U.S. Congress.

Select a major policy agenda item (i.e., health care, foreign policy, education, etc.) of any president of your choosing. The focus of your answers should be on assessing the president’s basic legislative strategy and why that strategy was successful.

There are a variety of online sources you can use to find information on important policies enacted by presidents throughout history. For more recent policies enacted during the Obama Administration, you should conduct a Google search using the keywords “Obama” and “Congress.” However, you can use this search mechanism for any president of your choosing. You can also go to the website, [American President: A Reference Resource](#), at the University of Virginia’s Miller Center, which provides in-depth information on each presidential administration.



