

Reforms Adopted Following Joint Committees on the Organization of Congress

1945-1946 Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress

This Joint Committee led to the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, which:

- Reduced number of committees from 33 to 15 in Senate & 48 to 19 in the House
- Clarified committee jurisdictions
- Provided additional professional staff to all committees (except Appropriations Committees)
 - Professional staff were to be hired without respect to party affiliation
- Also reformed schedule, amendments, lobbying, & other aspects of the legislative process

1965-1966 Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress

This Joint Committee led to the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, which:

- Opened committee processes:
 - Committees required to set regular meeting schedules
 - 3 committee members could request special sessions; if chair did not hold session, committee could meet upon majority vote, even if chair was absent
 - Committees required to publish roll call votes
 - House & Senate had to wait three days after committee filed report
- Amended House rules to permit recorded roll call votes in the Committee of the Whole (i.e., provided greater accountability & transparency)
- Created a Joint Committee on Congressional Operations, making reform an ongoing priority
- Reformed other aspects of legislative process, including the August Recess & budgeting

1992-1993 Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress

Congress did not act on most reforms immediately, but when the Republicans became the House majority following the 1994 elections, they adopted many of the proposals:

- According to CRS, the Joint Committee's "list of suggested reforms reads like a description of the structure & working of the contemporary House of Representatives."¹
 - Recognized the right of the minority to offer a motion to recommit with or without instructions
 - Limited the number of committees a Member could sit on
 - House Rules were recodified
- The Joint Committee's House minority made their own suggestions, at least some of which were put in place when the Republicans became the majority. This included:
 - Reforming committee jurisdictions
 - Banning proxy voting in committees

Sources:

Congressional Institute. "Joint Committees on the Organization of Congress: A Short History". (Alexandria, VA: Congressional Institute, 2015). <http://conginst.org/joint-committees-on-the-organization-of-congress-a-short-history/>

Judy Schneider, Christopher M. Davis and Betsy Palmer. "Reorganization of the House of Representatives: Modern Reform Efforts." (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2003).

<http://archives.democrats.rules.house.gov/archives/rl31835.pdf>

¹ Schneider, P. 47.