

CRS Report for Congress

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Suspension of Rules in the House: Measure Sponsorship by Party

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Summary

From the 100th through the 105th Congresses (1987-1998), the House of Representatives acted on measures through a motion to suspend the rules an average of 549 times per Congress. Measures so acted on were sponsored by Members of the minority party, on average, 17.3% of the time (15.9% if sponsors of House measures only are counted). Figures for the 106th through the 108th Congresses, are significantly above these averages.

Measures Sponsored by Members of Each Party Acted on by Suspension of the Rules in the House

During the past decade, the House of Representatives has made frequent use of its procedure for acting expeditiously on measures through a motion to suspend the rules. The procedure is regarded as well adapted for this purpose, because it limits debate to 40 minutes, permits no floor amendments, and requires two-thirds of Members present and voting (a quorum being present) to pass the measure.¹

The procedure is frequently used for measures not involving great complexity or controversy. It is most commonly used for initial House action on measures, in the form of a motion to suspend the rules and pass a bill, or to suspend the rules and adopt a joint, concurrent, or House resolution. Suspension of the rules is sometimes also used for action to resolve differences with the Senate, in the form of a motion to suspend the rules and concur with Senate amendments (either with or without further amendment) or, occasionally, to suspend the rules and adopt a conference report. This report examines all action by suspension of the rules, whether for initial passage or final action. It also includes all motions to suspend the rules, whether the motions were adopted.

¹ For fuller information on the procedure and its use, see CRS Report 98-796, *Suspension of the Rules in the House of Representatives*, by Stanley Bach.

The two tables that follow present data on the number of times measures were acted on by suspension of the rules in the House of Representatives during the 100th through the 108th Congress. **Table 1** provides the number and percent of such measures originally sponsored by members of each party. It includes action on both House and Senate measures, with Senate measures counted under the party of their Senate sponsor. **Table 2** offers similar information for only those measures introduced by House Members. The data for the 100th through the 105th Congresses were obtained through the legislative status data bases maintained by LEGI-SLATE.² Data for the 106th through the 108th Congresses were compiled using the Legislative Information System (LIS).³

**Table 1. Motions to Suspend the Rules in the House,
by Party of Sponsor, 1987-2003**

Congress and (Years)	Measure Sponsored by ^a				Total
	Democrat		Republican		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
100 (1987-1988)	512	83.4	102	16.6	614
101 (1989-1990)	468	80.3	115	19.7	583
102 (1991-1992)	513	83.4	102	16.6	615
103 (1993-1994)	412	88.2	55	11.8	467
104 (1995-1996)	69	17.2	332	82.8	401
105 (1997-1998)	126	20.4	491	79.6	617
106 (1999-2000)	207	23.2	686	76.8	893
107 (2001-2002)	154	22.5	531	77.5	685
108 (2003-) ^b	55	29.9	129	70.1	184

Source: LEGI-SLATE data base 100th-105th; Legislative Information System (LIS) 106th-108th.

- a. Independents are included with the party from which they receive their Committee assignments.
b. Data for the 108th Congress reflects legislative action through July 14, 2003.

² The LEGI-SLATE database ceased to be maintained in September 1999.

³ CRS Report 98-796, *Suspension of the Rules in the House of Representatives*, gives the number of suspension motions (see table) from selected earlier Congresses. For the 99th through the 101st Congresses (1985-1990), those data include only suspension motions for initial House passage of bills and joint resolutions, and to that extent are not comparable with those in this report. Those data are also drawn from several sources, so that differences from those presented here may in part represent variations in the information contained in the different sources.

**Table 2. Motions to Suspend the Rules in the House,
by Party of Sponsor, 1987-2003 (House Measures Only)**

Congress and (Years)	Measure Sponsored by ^a				Total
	Democrat		Republican		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
100 (1987-1988)	430	84.0	82	16.0	512
101 (1989-1990)	420	83.5	83	16.5	503
102 (1991-1992)	456	85.4	78	14.6	534
103 (1993-1994)	369	90.4	39	9.6	408
104 (1995-1996)	64	17.3	306	82.7	370
105 (1997-1998)	106	20.6	409	79.4	515
106 (1999-2000)	177	23.8	566	76.2	743
107 (2001-2002)	133	21	501	79	634
108 (2003-) ^b	53	30.6	120	69.4	173

Source: LEGI-SLATE data base 100th -105th; Legislative Information System (LIS) 106th -108th.

- a. Independents are included with the party from which they receive their Committee assignments.
b. Data for the 108th Congress reflects legislative action through July 14, 2003.

[**Note:** Previous versions of this report were prepared by Faye M. Bullock, Technical Information Specialist and Richard S. Beth, Specialist in the Legislative Process, Government and Finance Division; and Jennifer Manning, Senior Research Librarian, Information Research Division.]