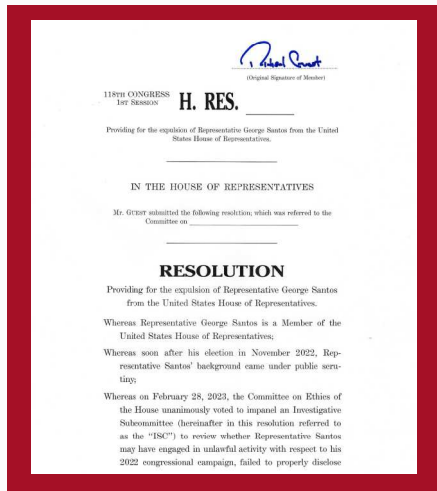


CIVICS IN REAL LIFE

Congressional Expulsion

Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how "We the People" interact with the government and each other. Let's help each other expand our civic literacy.

On November 16, 2023, Republican Representative Michael Guest introduced a [resolution](#) to expel Republican Representative [George Santos](#) from Congress. On November 28, 2023, two Democratic Representatives, Garcia and Goldman, introduced a [privileged motion](#) to force a vote on the expulsion resolution by Thursday, November 30th. Santos is accused of 23 federal felony [charges](#). He has not yet stood trial for these charges and has pleaded not guilty. [The House Ethics Committee](#) also released a [report](#) following a congressional investigation into Santo's actions that alleges additional violations. While Santos has [admitted](#) to lying to voters about elements of his life story before winning his seat in 2022, he denies the charges against him from the Ethics Committee and the Justice Department. Regardless of whether the outcome is expulsion or not, the vote itself is still an important piece of Congressional history.



[Article I, Section 5](#) of the U.S. Constitution states, "Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its members for disorderly Behaviour, and, with the Concurrence of two thirds, expel a Member." Today's most common forms of discipline are [expulsion](#), [censure](#), or [reprimand](#). A censure is a formal vote on a resolution disapproving a Member's conduct. A censure resolution is done publicly before one's congressional peers and involves a verbal rebuke. A reprimand involves a lesser level of disapproval, often given privately. Both a censure and a reprimand require a majority vote. The most severe punishment, expulsion from Congress, requires a two-thirds vote per the Constitution. There are also ways to enact discipline in a less formal manner. Those involve fines, loss of seniority, suspension of privileges, and formal letters from the Ethics Committee.

Historically, expulsions from Congress are extremely rare. Any formal punishment is typically reserved for when an individual is typically reserved for when an individual is convicted of a crime, violates internal congressional rules, or deliberately discredits the House or Senate. Expulsions are often a result of conduct that involves either disloyalty to the United States, conviction of a crime, or abuse of office. In many instances throughout history, senators and representatives facing possible reprimand, censure, or expulsion would resign or be defeated in an election prior to any formal action taking place.

Members	Expelled	Censured
House of Representatives	5	37*
Senate	15**	8

*In the 1960s, the House of Representatives chose to separate censured and reprimanded Members. For the sake of this graph, they have been combined
**14 of the 15 Senators were expelled during the Civil War for supporting the Confederacy

The upcoming vote to expel George Santos from Congress will be the third attempt. The previous two votes failed to garner the necessary two-thirds support. The concern for some lawmakers in the prior two votes revolved around Santo's [right to due process](#). There have only ever been two other Members expelled from the house since the Civil War, Michael Myers (D-PA) in 1980 and James Traficant (D-OH) in 2002. In both of these instances, the individuals had already been convicted in a court of law for their crimes. In addition, Santos is [not the only](#) current congressman charged with federal crimes. The difference maker in this vote may be the [additional findings](#) within the House Ethics Committee's report.

To Think and To Do: Given the information in the chart above, why do you think these congressional proceedings are used so infrequently? Explain.



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