

# 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 100<sup>th</sup> through the 105<sup>th</sup> 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 106<sup>th</sup> through the 108<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

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 or not the motions were adopted.

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller explanation of this procedure and its use, see CRS Report 98-796, *Suspension of the Rules in the House of Representatives*, by Thomas P. Carr.

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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 100<sup>th</sup> through the 108<sup>th</sup> 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 100<sup>th</sup> through the 105<sup>th</sup> Congresses were obtained through the legislative status data bases maintained by LEGI-SLATE.<sup>2</sup> Data for the 106<sup>th</sup> through the 108<sup>th</sup> Congresses were compiled using the Legislative Information System (LIS).

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

| Congress<br>and (Years) | Measure Sponsored by <sup>a</sup> |                |            |                | Total |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|-------|
|                         | Democrat                          |                | Republican |                |       |
|                         | Number                            | <i>Percent</i> | Number     | <i>Percent</i> |       |
| 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 (2003-2004)         | 273                               | 29.5           | 651        | 70.5           | 924   |

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

a. Independents are included with the party from which they receive their Committee assignments.

<sup>2</sup> The LEGI-SLATE database ceased to be maintained in Sept. 1999.

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

| Congress<br>and (Years) | Measure Sponsored by <sup>a</sup> |         |            |         | 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 (2003-2004 )        | 242                               | 30.0    | 564        | 70.0    | 806   |

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

a. Independents are included with the party from which they receive their Committee assignments.

[**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.]