

Dec. 28, 2020

Who's Who on the House Rostrum?

With 435 voting members, Congress' lower house is packed, and its complicated parliamentary procedures require a significant staff to assist with its lawmaking process. The officers who perform that important role occupy a three-tiered dais, called a rostrum, the most prominent feature of the House "well," or lowest point in the chamber. Here, an introduction to the individuals seated on it and the work they do.

Parliamentarian

Counsels the presiding officer on the House's rules and practices. The House's procedure is governed by the principle of stare decisis, a commitment to stand by precedent. The parliamentarian publishes a refreshed version the House Rules and Manual, a digest of House parliamentary history, to ensure the record of precedent stays current.

Sergeant at Arms

The chief law enforcement and protocol officer of the House, responsible for maintaining order on the House side of the Capitol complex. The sergeant at arms is also the custodian of the mace, a symbol of parliamentary power and authority. When the House is meeting, the mace is on a pedestal to the speaker's left.

Presiding Officer

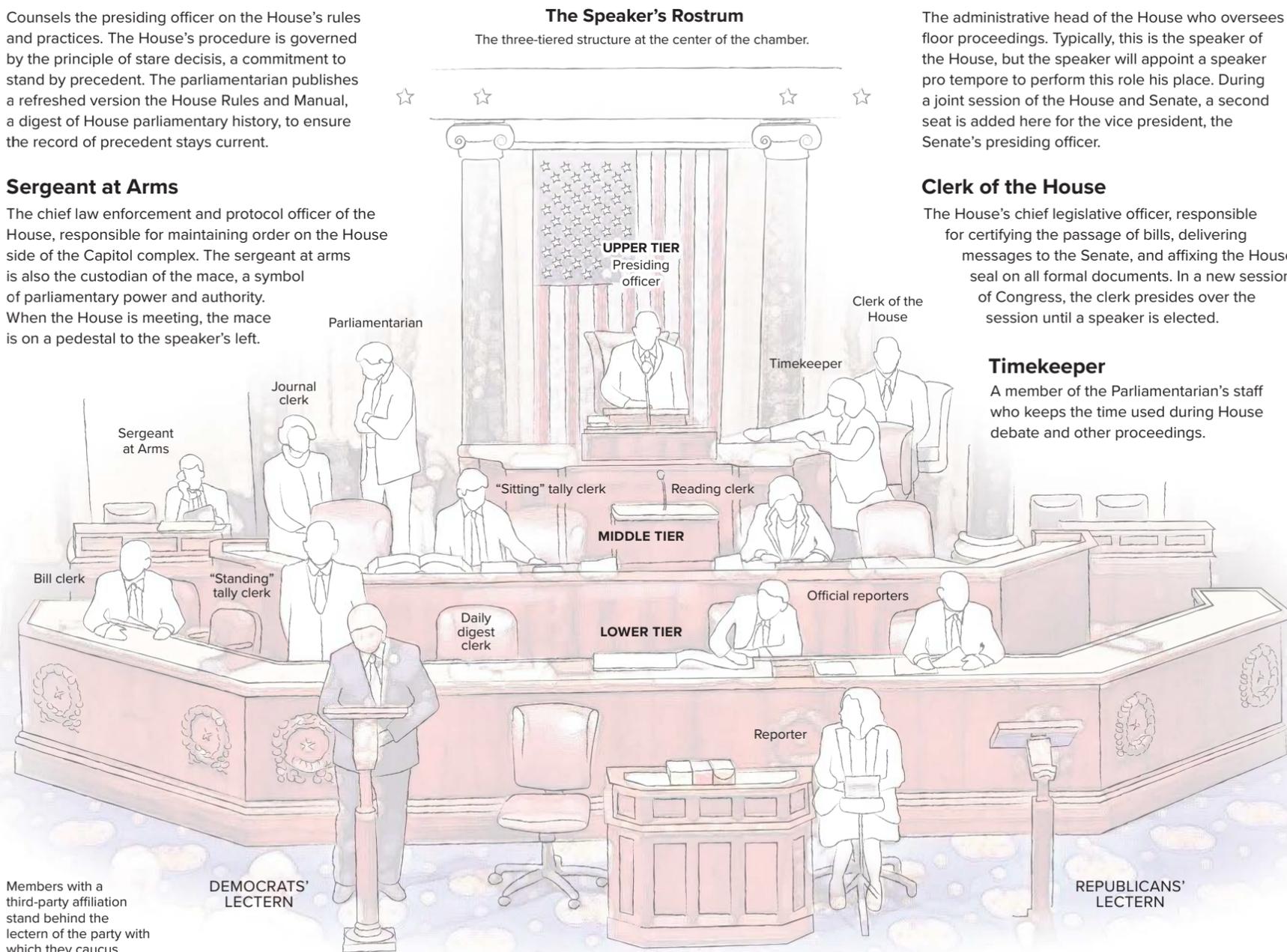
The administrative head of the House who oversees floor proceedings. Typically, this is the speaker of the House, but the speaker will appoint a speaker pro tempore to perform this role in his place. During a joint session of the House and Senate, a second seat is added here for the vice president, the Senate's presiding officer.

Clerk of the House

The House's chief legislative officer, responsible for certifying the passage of bills, delivering messages to the Senate, and affixing the House seal on all formal documents. In a new session of Congress, the clerk presides over the session until a speaker is elected.

Timekeeper

A member of the Parliamentarian's staff who keeps the time used during House debate and other proceedings.



The Speaker's Rostrum

The three-tiered structure at the center of the chamber.

UPPER TIER
 Presiding officer

Clerk of the House

Timekeeper

"Sitting" tally clerk

Reading clerk

MIDDLE TIER

Bill clerk

"Standing" tally clerk

Daily digest clerk

LOWER TIER

Official reporters

Reporter

DEMOCRATS' LECTERN

REPUBLICANS' LECTERN

WELL OF THE HOUSE

The area directly in front of the rostrum.

MIDDLE-TIER MEMBERS

Journal Clerk

Compiles the House's daily minutes to that serve as the official record as the Constitution requires. The minutes are published as the House Journal.

Tally Clerk

Oversees the House's electronic voting system, the 47 voting stations House members use to cast their votes. The tally clerk also receives reports of committees and prepares the House's congressional calendar. This tally clerk is sometimes referred to as the "seated" tally clerk — as compared to the second tally clerk, who stands during a vote.

Reading Clerk

Reads aloud communications from the Senate and President, House bills, amendments, members' vote changes and other business. During busy legislative periods, two reading clerks may be present.

LOWER-TIER MEMBERS

Bill Clerk

Receives and processes bills and resolutions, as well as lists of cosponsors, texts of amendments, and communications to the House. The bill clerk sits by the "hopper," the box into which members place measures they wish to introduce.

Enrolling Clerk

Prepares the official engrossed copy of all House-passed measures for messaging to the Senate and the official enrolled copy of all House-originated measures for transmittal to the White House for presidential action. The enrolling clerk does not usually sit on the dais and instead relies on televised floor proceedings.

Tally Clerk

Referred to as the "standing" tally clerk, takes "well cards," or paper ballots, from members casting votes or changing votes after the electronic voting stations are locked. Also prepares the yea and nay tally sheets for the presiding officer at each votes' conclusion.

Daily Digest Clerk

Prepares the Daily Digest section of the Congressional Record. Like the enrolling clerk, the daily digest clerk usually does not sit on the House floor, relying on televised floor proceedings instead.

Official Reporters

Responsible for recording floor activity and receiving text for the Congressional Record. The reporter's table holds a box of "well cards" members use to cast or change votes.