

# Package ‘filibustr’

May 11, 2025

**Title** Data Utilities for Congressional Research

**Version** 0.4.0

**Description** Provides easy-to-understand and consistent interfaces for accessing data on the U.S. Congress. The functions in 'filibustr' streamline the process for importing data on Congress into R, removing the need to download and work from CSV files and the like. Data sources include 'Voteview' (<<https://voteview.com/>>), the U.S. Senate website (<<https://www.senate.gov/>>), and more.

**License** MIT + file LICENSE

**URL** <https://feinleib.github.io/filibustr/>,  
<https://github.com/feinleib/filibustr>

**BugReports** <https://github.com/feinleib/filibustr/issues>

**Depends** R (>= 4.1.0)

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readr, rlang, rvest, stringr, tidyr, tools

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congress_in_year	<i>Calculate the Congress number of a given year</i>
------------------	--

---

Description

This function gives the number of the Congress for a specified calendar year.

Usage

```
congress_in_year(year)
```

Arguments

year	Either a number or a Date object. Cannot be earlier than 1789, the year of the first Congress.
------	--

Details

A new Congress begins in every odd-numbered year, starting in 1789. For example, 2021-2022 was the 117th Congress.

Value

A positive whole number.

Examples

```
congress_in_year(1800)
congress_in_year(2022)
```

---

current_congress	<i>Calculate the current Congress number</i>
------------------	--

---

### Description

This function gives the number of the Congress for the current calendar year, using `Sys.Date()`.

### Usage

```
current_congress()
```

### Details

A new Congress begins in every odd-numbered year, starting in 1789. For example, 2021-2022 was the 117th Congress.

### Value

A positive whole number.

### Examples

```
current_congress()
```

---

get_hvw_data	<i>Get replication data from Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman (2023)</i>
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---

### Description

`get_hvw_data()` returns replication data from:

Harbridge-Yong, L., Volden, C., & Wiseman, A. E. (2023). The bipartisan path to effective law-making. *The Journal of Politics*, 85(3), 1048–1063. doi:10.1086/723805

### Usage

```
get_hvw_data(chamber, local_path = NULL)
```

## Arguments

- chamber Which chamber to get data for. Options are:
- "house", "h", "hr": House data only.
  - "senate", "s", "sen": Senate data only.
- These options are case-insensitive. Any other argument results in an error.
- Note:** Unlike the Voteview functions, there is no "all" option. The House and Senate data do not have the same number of variables, or the same variable names, so it is not trivial to join the two tables.
- You *must* specify either House or Senate data, since there is no "default" option.
- local\_path (Optional) A file path for reading from a local file. If no local\_path is specified, will read data from the Harvard Dataverse website.

## Details

The replication data is available at the Harvard Dataverse ([doi:10.7910/DVN/EARLA4](https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/EARLA4)).

The House and Senate data come from the files HarbridgeYong\_Volden\_Wiseman\_House\_Replication.tab and HarbridgeYong\_Volden\_Wiseman\_Senate\_Replication.tab, respectively.

The data spans the 93rd through 114th Congresses (1973-2016).

These datasets have been dedicated to the public domain under [CC0 1.0](#).

## Value

A tibble.

## Examples

```
get_hvw_data("senate")

get_hvw_data("house")
```

---

get\_les

*Get Legislative Effectiveness Scores data*

---

## Description

get\_les() returns **Legislative Effectiveness Scores data** from the Center for Effective Lawmaking.

## Usage

```
get_les(chamber, les_2 = FALSE, local_path = NULL)
```

## Arguments

chamber	<p>Which chamber to get data for. Options are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "house", "h", "hr": House data only.</li> <li>• "senate", "s", "sen": Senate data only.</li> </ul> <p>These options are case-insensitive. Any other argument results in an error.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Unlike the Voteview functions, there is no "all" option. You <i>must</i> specify either House or Senate data, since there is no "default" option.</p> <p>There are non-trivial differences between the House and Senate datasets, so take care when joining House and Senate data. Important differences include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Legislator names</b> are formatted differently. The Senate data has first and last name columns, while the House data has a single thomas_name column.</li> <li>• <b>The year column</b> refers to the first year of the Congress in the House data, but year refers to the preceding election year in the Senate data. Thus, the year for House members is one after that of senators in the same Congress.</li> </ul>
les_2	<p>Whether to use LES 2.0 (instead of Classic Legislative Effectiveness Scores). LES 2.0 credits lawmakers when language from their sponsored bills is included in other legislators' bills that become law. LES 2.0 is only available for the 117th Congress. Classic LES is available for the 93rd through 117th Congresses.</p>
local_path	<p>(Optional) A file path for reading from a local file. If no local_path is specified, will read data from the Center for Effective Lawmaking website.</p>

## Details

See the [Center for Effective Lawmaking](#) website for more information on their data.

The Legislative Effectiveness Score methodology was introduced in:

Volden, C., & Wiseman, A. E. (2014). *Legislative effectiveness in the United States Congress: The lawmakers*. Cambridge University Press. [doi:10.1017/CBO9781139032360](#)

## Value

A tibble.

## Examples

```
# Classic LES data (93rd-117th Congresses)
get_les("house", les_2 = FALSE)
get_les("senate", les_2 = FALSE)

# LES 2.0 (117th Congress)
get_les("house", les_2 = TRUE)
get_les("senate", les_2 = TRUE)
```

---

`get_senate_cloture_votes`*Senate cloture motions and votes*

---

**Description**

`get_senate_cloture_votes()` returns a tibble of the number of cloture motions, cloture votes, and successful cloture votes in the Senate during each Congress since 1917.

**Usage**

```
get_senate_cloture_votes()
```

**Details**

The data is sourced from the official Senate website, specifically <https://www.senate.gov/legislative/cloture/clotureCounts.htm>.

**Value**

A tibble with the number of cloture motions, cloture votes, and successful cloture votes in each Congress.

**Examples**

```
get_senate_cloture_votes()
```

---

`get_senate_sessions`*Start and end dates of Senate sessions*

---

**Description**

`get_senate_sessions()` returns a tibble with the beginning (convening) and ending (adjournment) dates of each legislative session of the Senate.

**Usage**

```
get_senate_sessions()
```

## Details

The data is sourced from the official Senate website, specifically <https://www.senate.gov/legislative/DatesofSessionsofCongress.htm>.

### Senate sessions explained

That webpage provides this explanation of Senate sessions:

*Prior to the 74th Congress (1935-1937), the first session of a Congress officially began on March 4 of odd-numbered years and ended at midnight on March 3 of odd-numbered years. Since 1935, in accordance with the 20th Amendment to the Constitution, Congresses have begun and ended at noon on January 3 of odd-numbered years. Each two-year Congress typically includes two legislative sessions, although third or special sessions were common in earlier years.*

### The session column

The session column is type factor, with the following levels:

```
levels(get_senate_sessions())$session
#> [1] "1" "2" "3" "4" "S"
# Note: That's a letter S, not a number 5!
```

The Senate has had just 2 sessions in each Congress since 1941, so if you are just working with more recent data, you could convert this column to numeric. However, if you are working with pre-1941 data, you will likely be dealing with special sessions (denoted "S"), not just numbered sessions.

## Value

A tibble with the begin\_date and adjourn\_date of each session of the Senate.

## Examples

```
get_senate_sessions()
```

---

```
get_voteview_cast_codes
```

*Key to Voteview cast codes in individual member votes*

---

## Description

get\_voteview\_cast\_codes() returns a tibble with definitions of the 10 cast codes used in Voteview's member votes data (i.e., the cast\_code column in the data frames from [get\\_voteview\\_member\\_votes\(\)](#)).

## Usage

```
get_voteview_cast_codes()
```

## Details

For more information on these cast codes, visit Voteview's [article](#) on the member votes data.

Value

A tibble.

See Also

`get_voteview_member_votes()`, which uses these cast codes.

Examples

```
get_voteview_cast_codes()
```

---

get_voteview_members	<i>Get data on members of Congress from Voteview</i>
----------------------	--

---

Description

`get_voteview_members()` returns a tibble of data on members of Congress, sourced from **Voteview**. Members in the data include Senators, Representatives, and Presidents. Each row is one member in one Congress (i.e., each member is listed once for every two years in office).

Usage

```
get_voteview_members(chamber = "all", congress = NULL, local_path = NULL)
```

Arguments

chamber	<p>(Optional) Which chamber to get data for. Options are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "all", "congress", "hs": Both House and Senate data (the default).</li><li>• "house", "h", "hr": House data only.</li><li>• "senate", "s", "sen": Senate data only.</li></ul> <p>These options are case-insensitive. If you explicitly pass a different value, it will default to "all" with a warning.</p> <p>Note that presidents are included in all datasets. Therefore, reading <i>both</i> "house" and "senate" data will duplicate data on the presidents. The recommended way to get all data is to use the default argument, "all".</p>
congress	<p>(Optional) A whole number (to get data for a single Congress), or a numeric vector (to get data for a set of congresses).</p> <p>If not provided, will retrieve data for all Congresses by default. If specified, Congress numbers cannot be greater than the <code>current_congress()</code> (i.e., you cannot try to get future data).</p>
local_path	<p>(Optional) A file path for reading from a local file. If no local_path is specified, will read data from the Voteview website.</p>



## Details

See the [Voteview](https://voteview.com/) website for more information on their data.

Please cite this dataset as:

Lewis, Jeffrey B., Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, Adam Boche, Aaron Rudkin, and Luke Sonnet (2025). *Voteview: Congressional Roll-Call Votes Database*. <https://voteview.com/>

## Value

A tibble.

The tibble includes data on the member's office, party, and ideology. See [Voteview](https://voteview.com/) for descriptions of specific columns.

## Examples

```
get_voteview_members()

# Get data for only one chamber
# NOTE: the President is included in all data
get_voteview_members(chamber = "house")
get_voteview_members(chamber = "senate")

# Get data for a specific Congress
get_voteview_members(congress = 100)
get_voteview_members(congress = current_congress())

# Get data for a set of Congresses
get_voteview_members(congress = 1:10)
```

---

`get_voteview_member_votes`

*Get data on the votes of individual members of Congress*

---

## Description

`get_voteview_member_votes()` returns a tibble that lists how each member of Congress voted in recorded (roll call) votes in the House and Senate. Members are identified by their ICPSR ID number, which you can use to join with additional member data from `get_voteview_members()`.

## Usage

```
get_voteview_member_votes(chamber = "all", congress = NULL, local_path = NULL)
```

## Arguments

chamber	<p>Which chamber to get data for. Options are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "all", "congress", "hs": Both House and Senate data (the default).</li> <li>• "house", "h", "hr": House data only.</li> <li>• "senate", "s", "sen": Senate data only.</li> </ul> <p>These options are case-insensitive. If you explicitly pass a different value, it will default to "all" with a warning.</p>
congress	<p>(Optional) A whole number (to get data for a single Congress), or a numeric vector (to get data for a set of congresses).</p> <p>If not provided, will retrieve data for all Congresses by default. If specified, Congress numbers cannot be greater than the <code>current_congress()</code> (i.e., you cannot try to get future data).</p>
local_path	<p>(Optional) A file path for reading from a local file. If no local_path is specified, will read data from the Voteview website.</p>

## Details

See the [Voteview](https://voteview.com/) website for more information on their data.

Please cite this dataset as:

Lewis, Jeffrey B., Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, Adam Boche, Aaron Rudkin, and Luke Sonnet (2025). *Voteview: Congressional Roll-Call Votes Database*. <https://voteview.com/>

## Value

A tibble.

## See Also

`get_voteview_cast_codes()` for a dictionary of the cast codes in this data.

## Examples

```
get_voteview_member_votes()

# Get data for only one chamber
get_voteview_member_votes(chamber = "house")
get_voteview_member_votes(chamber = "senate")

# Get data for a specific Congress
get_voteview_member_votes(congress = 110)
get_voteview_member_votes(congress = current_congress())

# Get data for a set of Congresses
get_voteview_member_votes(congress = 1:3)
```

---

get\_voteview\_parties    *Get data on congressional parties from Voteview*


---

## Description

get\_voteview\_parties() returns a tibble with information on the parties (aka caucuses) in each Congress. The party information includes a party's ICPSR code, number of members, and DW-NOMINATE scores.

The parties of the President, Senate, and House are listed in the data. Each row is one party in one chamber for each Congress (i.e., each party is listed once for every two years).

## Usage

```
get_voteview_parties(chamber = "all", congress = NULL, local_path = NULL)
```

## Arguments

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| chamber    | (Optional) Which chamber to get data for. Options are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "all", "congress", "hs": Both House and Senate data (the default).</li> <li>• "house", "h", "hr": House data only.</li> <li>• "senate", "s", "sen": Senate data only.</li> </ul> <p>These options are case-insensitive. If you explicitly pass a different value, it will default to "all" with a warning.</p> <p>Note that presidents are included in all datasets. Therefore, reading <i>both</i> "house" and "senate" data will duplicate data on the presidents. The recommended way to get all data is to use the default argument, "all".</p> |
| congress   | (Optional) A whole number (to get data for a single Congress), or a numeric vector (to get data for a set of congresses). <p>If not provided, will retrieve data for all Congresses by default. If specified, Congress numbers cannot be greater than the <code>current_congress()</code> (i.e., you cannot try to get future data).</p>  |
| local_path | (Optional) A file path for reading from a local file. If no local_path is specified, will read data from the Voteview website.  |

## Details

See the [Voteview](https://voteview.com/) website for more information on their data.

Please cite this dataset as:

Lewis, Jeffrey B., Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, Adam Boche, Aaron Rudkin, and Luke Sonnet (2025). *Voteview: Congressional Roll-Call Votes Database*. <https://voteview.com/>

## Value

A tibble.

**Examples**

```
get_voteview_parties()

# get parties for only one chamber
# NOTE: the President is included in all data
get_voteview_parties(chamber = "house")
get_voteview_parties(chamber = "senate")

# get parties for a specific Congress
get_voteview_parties(congress = 100)
get_voteview_parties(congress = current_congress())

# get parties for a set of Congresses
get_voteview_parties(congress = 1:10)
```

---

```
get_voteview_rollcall_votes
```

*Get data on congressional roll call votes from Voteview*

---

**Description**

`get_voteview_rollcall_votes()` returns a tibble with information on recorded (roll call) votes in the House and Senate.

**Usage**

```
get_voteview_rollcall_votes(
  chamber = "all",
  congress = NULL,
  local_path = NULL
)
```

**Arguments**

chamber	<p>Which chamber to get data for. Options are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "all", "congress", "hs": Both House and Senate data (the default).</li> <li>• "house", "h", "hr": House data only.</li> <li>• "senate", "s", "sen": Senate data only.</li> </ul> <p>These options are case-insensitive. If you explicitly pass a different value, it will default to "all" with a warning.</p>
congress	<p>(Optional) A whole number (to get data for a single Congress), or a numeric vector (to get data for a set of congresses).</p> <p>If not provided, will retrieve data for all Congresses by default. If specified, Congress numbers cannot be greater than the <code>current_congress()</code> (i.e., you cannot try to get future data).</p>

`local_path` (Optional) A file path for reading from a local file. If no `local_path` is specified, will read data from the Voteview website.

### Details

See the [Voteview](https://voteview.com/) website for more information on their data.

Please cite this dataset as:

Lewis, Jeffrey B., Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, Adam Boche, Aaron Rudkin, and Luke Sonnet (2025). *Voteview: Congressional Roll-Call Votes Database*. <https://voteview.com/>

### Value

A tibble.

### Examples

```
get_voteview_rollcall_votes()

# Get data for only one chamber
# NOTE: the President is included in all data
get_voteview_rollcall_votes(chamber = "house")
get_voteview_rollcall_votes(chamber = "senate")

# Get data for a specific Congress
get_voteview_rollcall_votes(congress = 100)
get_voteview_rollcall_votes(congress = current_congress())

# Get data for a set of Congresses
get_voteview_rollcall_votes(congress = 1:10)
```

---

read_html_table	<i>Scrape an online HTML table</i>
-----------------	------------------------------------

---

### Description

`read_html_table()` returns an HTML table at a specified URL and CSS element as a dataframe.

### Usage

```
read_html_table(url, css)
```

### Arguments

`url` A string giving the URL to read from.

`css` A string giving the CSS element to select.

SelectorGadget (<https://selectorgadget.com/>) is a useful tool for finding the code for the CSS element you need. See `rvest::html_element()` for more information.

**Value**

A tibble.

**Examples**

```
# The table used in `get_senate_cloture_votes()`
# NOTE: `get_senate_cloture_votes()` performs some cleaning on this table
read_html_table(url = "https://www.senate.gov/legislative/cloture/clotureCounts.htm",
                 css = ".cloturecount")

# A table from Baseball Reference
read_html_table(url = "https://www.baseball-reference.com/friv/rules-changes-stats.shtml",
                 css = "#time_of_game")
```

---

year_of_congress	<i>Get the starting year of a Congress</i>
------------------	--

---

**Description**

This function gives the first year for a specified Congress number.

**Usage**

```
year_of_congress(congress)
```

**Arguments**

congress      A positive whole number.

**Details**

A new Congress begins in every odd-numbered year, starting in 1789. For example, 2021-2022 was the 117th Congress.

**Value**

A positive whole number, representing the first year of the given Congress. This year will always be an odd number.

**Examples**

```
year_of_congress(1)
year_of_congress(118)
```

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