**What If?**

The argument over the number of seats in the House is not a new one. In fact, we can safely say that it’s as old as the Constitution itself.

When it comes to making decisions such as this, there are no perfect answers. It’s not a case of “right” and “wrong.” Rather, it’s about determining what is offers the most benefits.

For this activity, you want to think about how increasing the number

of seats offers both benefits and drawbacks.

Read the bullet points below. Use them to guide your thinking.

* *Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers… The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative.*

-- Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution

* Prior to the passage of the Apportionment Act of 1911, during a debate over the increasing the number of representatives in the House, Rep. Edgar Crumpacker (IN), argued that it was a necessary action because otherwise, “if we ​make the ratio [of persons per Representative] too large the idea of representation becomes... less definite. The personal interest of the voter in his representative becomes less important to him, and we may lose something of the vital strength of our representative form of government.” ​ Crumpacker believed in increasing the number of representatives so that the voice of the people would continue to be heard. Is this a pro or a con? Why?
* The Apportionment Act of 1911 increased the number of seats from 391 to 435. Is this a pro or a con? Could it be both? Increasing the number of seats means that there is increased representations, but what drawbacks come with that? Is there space? How much would it cost to add new seats?
* The job of a representative involves not only introducing legislation and debating the passage of laws, but also travelling to and from Washington, D.C., holding meetings, hiring staff, and maintaining an office. Representatives are eligible for healthcare benefits. They receive a pension when they retire.
* What do you think would happen if the number of seats increased from 435 to, say, 635? If those numbers are a little too high, think about your current classroom. What would happen if the number of students doubled or tripled? How would that affect class? Would it affect your ability to learn? Would you get to know everyone in the class or would some people remain total strangers? Would you be able to get along as well, or have disagreements?
* At the same time, more representatives would be able to do more work. Another way to think about it would be to ask “what would happen if we had two teachers instead of one?” How would that benefit you and your class?
* What problems that plague government today. Would increasing the number of seats reduce these problems or make them worse? Would more members be more or less likely and able to build relationships that could enable political compromises, or would they just be, as Madison observed in Federalist 55, more like a mob shouting at faceless enemies?
* There is a high degree of job security for many representatives. While this can be due to the fact that they do their job and truly represent their constituents, it can also be due to the fact that, in some districts, there is no one running against them.

Remember, there are no wrong answers here. What you think is a pro, someone else might see as a con. The whole goal is to think about what it might mean to add to the House.