Congress Speaks Spanish

Inside the halls of Congress, more and more lawmakers are speaking Spanish. Congress is the branch of government that makes the laws. Congress is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

"Many politicians are studying Spanish," says political expert Michael Shifter. Some lawmakers are taking Spanish classes and debating their positions in Spanish. Others hold bilingual press conferences in English and Spanish. Bilingual refers to being spoken or expressed in two languages. Some lawmakers of Hispanic origin also speak to each other in Spanish.

The increased interest in Spanish follows a sharp growth in the Hispanic population in the United States. Hispanics, also known as Latinos, make up one of the fastest-growing minority group in the country.

Hispanic Americans are people in the United States whose families come from Spanish-speaking countries. Most of those countries are located in Central and South America. The latest census, or

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population count, shows that more than 50 million people in the United States are Hispanic.

Lawmaking Lingo

Check out these Spanish words that some lawmakers in Congress use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>law</td>
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<tr>
<td>politician</td>
<td>político</td>
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<tr>
<td>vote</td>
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<td>congress</td>
<td>congreso</td>
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<tr>
<td>senator</td>
<td>senador</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1. According to the article, someone who is bilingual
   A speaks only English
   B speaks only Spanish
   C speaks two languages
   D speaks three languages

2. Hispanic Americans make up one of the fastest-growing minority groups in the country. Based on this passage, what effect might this growth be having on lawmakers?
   A Members of Congress want to write laws in Spanish.
   B Many politicians are teaching Spanish classes.
   C Some lawmakers are learning Spanish.
   D More politicians are traveling to Spanish-speaking countries.

3. After reading this passage, you can conclude that a census is
   A the number of people who move to a new country
   B a sharp growth in the population of an area
   C an official count of people living in an area
   D the number of lawmakers who make up Congress

4. Read the following sentence from the passage: “Some lawmakers are taking Spanish classes and debating their positions in Spanish.”

   In this sentence, the word **debating** means
   A memorizing
   B forgetting
   C arguing
   D writing

5. Which statement best describes the central idea of this passage?
   A The Hispanic population in the United States is growing.
   B Some lawmakers in Congress are speaking Spanish.
   C Congress is the lawmaking branch of government.
   D More than 50 million people in the United States are Hispanic.