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Time Line of Constitutional Events



Here is a sampling of the events that led to America's independence and adoption of a new constitution. You will find the years and the significant events that happened during that time. The goal was to establish a framework for a more robust and stable federal government while preserving individual rights and freedoms.



Protests against British rule

1763–1765

England decided on a program of taxation and control of the colonies. The American colonists began organized protests against British rule. Patriotic groups such as the **Sons of Liberty** are formed. Laws such as the **Quartering Act**, **Stamp Act**, and **Sugar Act** angered the colonists, who were forced to pay unjust taxes and provide supplies to British troops.



Uprisings in Boston

1770–1773

Colonists reduced their boycott of British goods when they withdrew all of the **Townshend Acts**, except the tax on tea. The **Boston Massacre** occurs when an angry crowd of citizens surrounds a group of soldiers, causing them to open fire. With the American colonists still angry over British tax policies, the **Boston Tea Party** uprising occurred.



The Declaration of Independence

1776

On July 4th, the **Second Continental Congress** adopted the **Declaration of Independence** (written by **Thomas Jefferson** and committee). The Declaration was debated by 56 courageous men and signed at **Independence Hall**. A few days later, the **Liberty Bell** was rung in Philadelphia to call the people to the first public reading of the Declaration.



Beginning of the Revolution

1775

When the Americans learn the British plan to seize their guns and ammunition, **Paul Revere** is sent to alert the countryside and gather the **Minutemen**. An unidentified shot triggers the **Battle of Lexington**. This started the American Revolution and led to another famous battle, **Bunker Hill**. In May, the **Second Continental Congress** meets in Philadelphia.



First Continental Congress

1774

In response to the Boston Tea Party, the Parliament passed several acts to punish Massachusetts. Twelve of the thirteen colonies were named delegates to the **First Continental Congress**. On September 5th, they met mainly to deal with Britain's actions.



The Articles of Confederation

1777–1781

After considerable debate and alteration, the **Articles of Confederation** were adopted by the Second Continental Congress on November 15, 1777. However, the states did not fully ratify the document until March 1, 1781. This document served as the first constitution of the United States. In October of 1781, British forces surrendered at **Yorktown**.



Ratification of the Constitution

1787–1788

On May 14, 1787, the **Constitutional Convention** met in Philadelphia. Here, the delegates reviewed and approved the Constitution. In 1788, nine states ratified the Constitution, which was put into effect (the remaining four states will ratify by 1790). America is preparing to operate under this new document.



Our New Government

1789

On March 4th, the new federal government was inaugurated in New York. In April, the first House of Representatives is organized. **George Washington** was elected the first president on April 6th. He is inaugurated on April 30th. On September 25th, the first ten amendments (**Bill of Rights**) were adopted by Congress.



QUESTIONS

PUT THE EVENTS IN ORDER. For each question group, write the numbers **1, 2, or 3**, to indicate which event happened first, second, and third.

Group 1. Boston Massacre _____, Adopted Declaration of Independence _____, Washington becomes president _____

Group 2. Articles of Confederation _____, Boston Tea Party _____, Constitution ratified by nine states _____

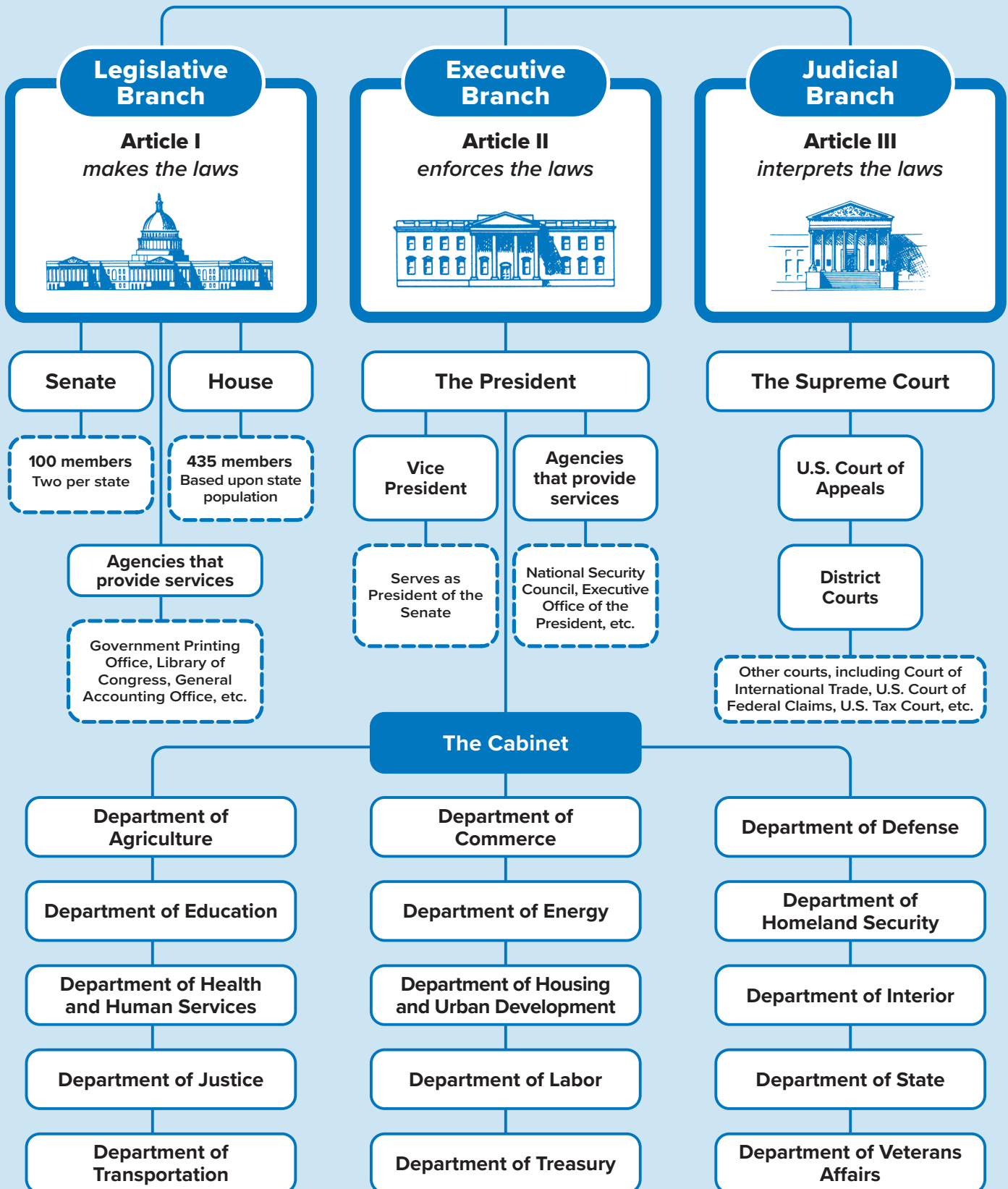
Group 3. England sets taxation policy for colonies _____, Constitutional Convention _____, Battle of Bunker Hill _____

Group 4. Paul Revere alerts colonists _____, Stamp Act is law _____, First House of Representatives organized _____

Group 5. Bill of Rights adopted _____, First Continental Congress _____, Declaration is read to the public _____

Group 6. Second Continental Congress meets _____, Sons of Liberty forms _____, American Revolution ends _____

The Constitution sets up three branches.



The Senate

The Senate of the United States is discussed in Article 1, Section 3, of the Constitution. The Senate has 100 members: two from each of the 50 states. As you recall, there was a dispute between the small states and the large states at the Constitutional Convention. The Senate was designed to calm that debate by making all states equal.

The Senate has 100 members: two from each of the 50 states. As you recall, there was a dispute between the small states and the large states at the Constitutional Convention. The Senate was designed to calm that debate by making all states equal. Every state, regardless of size, has two members. Michigan's two Democratic senators are Debbie Stabenow (term expires 2025 but will not seek reelection) and Gary Peters (term expires 2027).



Debbie Stabenow Gary Peters

Of the 100 senators, one-third are elected every two years for six-year terms. Terms are staggered this way, so only one-third of the Senate goes out of office at any one time. This assures the Senate will have experienced members at all times. Each one-third of the Senate is called a *class*. All senators serve six-year terms.

class	have served	years to serve	comments
1	0	6	just elected
2	2	4	elected 2 years ago
3	4	2	elected 4 years ago
	6	0	were just up for re-election and were re-elected or replaced by class 1

Senators may be re-elected for an unlimited number of terms. This is not uncommon; many have had long careers.

Senate Salary, Qualifications, & Vacancy

A senator receives a salary of \$174,000 and an expense allowance. A senator must be at least 30 years old, a United States citizen for at least nine years, and a resident of the state he/she represents in the Senate.

If a Senate vacancy occurs, the governor of the state affected makes a temporary appointment until the next election. This appointment is a very important duty for the governor.

Officers of the Senate

The Vice President of the United States is the president of the Senate. The Constitution established this duty. Since the vice president is the second highest official in the executive branch of government and the Senate is part of the legislative branch, this is one way in which the two branches are drawn closer.

Although the vice president is the Senate's presiding officer, this official may not debate or vote except in the case of a tie. The Senate also elects one of its members to be *president pro tempore*. The president pro tempore serves in the absence of the vice president. There are also Senate majority and minority leaders. The Senate *majority* and *minority* leaders and the president pro tempore receive a salary of \$193,400.

Senate Duties

The Senate passes *bills* (a term for proposed laws) it hopes will become laws according to a plan you will read about shortly. According to this plan, the House of Representatives must also pass the bill before it is sent to the president for approval.

This group also has the vital role of approving treaties made by the president. It also approves the selection of certain federal officers by the president.

The Senate is the jury in cases of *impeachment*. Impeachment is the political process of leveling charges against public officials of wrongdoing from office. The impeachment process was included in Article 2, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution: "The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors." The purpose is to protect the public from officials who are unfit to wield power. If a president is tried for impeachment, the Supreme Court chief justice presides over the trial.

Impeachment of U.S. Presidents

Our Founding Fathers wanted impeachment to be a lengthy and complicated process. Removing any official from office is hard, and that is by design. Impeachment has only been used five times against a sitting president. While many U.S. presidents have been threatened with impeachment, Congress has only conducted four presidential impeachment trials, Andrew Johnson (1868), Bill Clinton (1998), and Donald Trump (2019 and 2021). They were all acquitted after trials in the Senate. Richard Nixon (1974) resigned before facing a House impeachment vote.

Electing Senators

The 17th Amendment changed the way we elect senators. If you look at Article 1, Section 3, of the Constitution, you will see state legislatures originally had the power to elect senators. A look at the 17th Amendment will show that the people of the states now have that power. Senators are not elected by district since they represent the entire state.

continued

U.S. Congress vs. State Legislature

It is easy for students to confuse the elected officials in the state legislature with those who work for them in the U.S. Congress (Washington, D.C.). The table below further explains the differences, many of which will be covered in this book's federal and state sections. Both Congress and your state legislature have a two-body system called a *bicameral system*. The only exception is the Nebraska Legislature, which is *unicameral* (one body).

Topic	U.S. Congress	State Legislature
Lawmaking Scope	Federal level - creating laws for all 50 states	State level - creating laws for only Michigan
Lawmaking Bodies	U.S. Senate & U.S. House of Representatives	Michigan Senate & Michigan House of Representatives
Number of Members	100 U.S. Senators (2 from each state) & 435 U.S. Representatives (13 from Michigan)	38 members of the state Senate and 110 members of the state House of Representatives
Meeting Place	Washington, D.C.	State Capital (Lansing) and in their legislative district
Examples of Scope	National defense, federal tax policies, immigration laws	Funding schools, state environmental issues, state taxing
Speed of Legislation	More formal process, taking on larger issues, longer legislative sessions	Generally quicker passage, shorter legislative sessions

The Two Chambers

The two-chamber design of the U.S. Congress is consistent with the basic principle of government used by the framers of our Constitution: that the government must be divided into units that share power. The two chambers are considered equal, although they differ from one another in many respects. The Senate is sometimes called the *upper body* and the House the *lower body*. These popular misnomers started when Congress first met in New York City; the Senate chamber was on the floor above the House. As we know, both legislative bodies are equal.

QUESTIONS

TRUE OR FALSE? Write a *T* or *F* in the space provided.

- ___ 1. Coining and printing money are the responsibilities of the Treasury Department.
- ___ 2. An ex post facto law is a law that makes an act illegal after the act has been committed.
- ___ 3. Only federal officials may have titles of nobility.
- ___ 4. Congress cannot tax goods being exported from a state, even if the goods are going to a foreign country.
- ___ 5. Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution outlines the legislative branch and the powers of Congress.
- ___ 6. Any of the three branches of government may declare war.

- ___ 7. The Senate and the House are prohibited from adjourning without the consent of the other.
- ___ 8. Congress does not govern the independent region of the District of Columbia.
- ___ 9. Although the state legislature meets in the state capitol, it makes laws for all 50 states.

IMPLIED, EXPRESSED, OR DENIED? Identify each of the following as an implied (*IM*), expressed (*EX*), or denied (*DN*) power of Congress in the space provided.

- ___ 1. Collect taxes.
- ___ 2. Declare war.
- ___ 3. Regulate the Internet.
- ___ 4. Provide for punishment of counterfeiters.
- ___ 5. Grant patents and copyrights.
- ___ 6. Regulate satellite communications.
- ___ 7. Grant titles of nobility.
- ___ 8. Establish post offices.
- ___ 9. Pass ex post facto laws.

DEFINE

- 1. expressed powers _____
- 2. implied powers _____
- 3. prohibits _____
- 4. bill of attainder _____
- 5. export _____
- 6. bicameral _____

FILL IN THE BLANKS

- 1. The Senate is referred to as the _____ body, and the House is called the _____ body.
- 2. Revenue bills must begin in the _____.
- 3. The _____ has been used by Congress in writing laws about things not directly mentioned in the Constitution.
- 4. Congress' power can be roughly divided into three groups: _____

SEQUENCE OF A BILL - Put the lawmaking events in sequence from first to last as they relate to a proposed bill.



- a. president acts on the bill and approves
- b. bill is a law and is communicated to the public
- c. bill is submitted to first house for review
- d. sponsor introduces bill
- e. bill passes both houses of Congress
- f. referred to and discussed in committee

The authors of the Constitution wanted to be sure that no person or group would seize power and control the American government. To ensure that this would not happen, our United States government was divided into three parts: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial under the Constitution. Each of these three branches has a check on the powers of the others. These checks provide a system of balance in our government, which is why we call the system *checks and balances*.

You may also hear this system referred to as a *separation of powers*. Although not directly mentioned in the Constitution, the first three articles mark the executive, legislative, and judicial responsibilities. It gives some power to each branch of government instead of giving all the power to one branch.

These are the most important checks and balances:

1. **Executive branch** has the power to check the legislative branch by vetoing laws that Congress wants to pass.
2. **Legislative branch** may check the executive branch by passing laws over the veto by a two-thirds vote in each house.
3. **Judicial branch** may check both the legislative and executive by declaring laws unconstitutional.

Obviously, this is not the whole system, but it is the main idea. Other checks and balances include:

Executive over the judicial branch: The president appoints all federal judges and may grant pardons or reprieves for those convicted in court.

Legislative over the executive branch: The legislative branch must approve appointments that the president makes; the Senate must approve treaties that the president makes, and the legislative branch may investigate the executive branch.

Legislative over the judicial branch: The legislative branch must approve the president's choice of judges to the judicial branch and may propose constitutional amendments to overturn judicial decisions.

Legislative over the executive and judicial branch: The legislative branch has impeachment powers over federal officers.

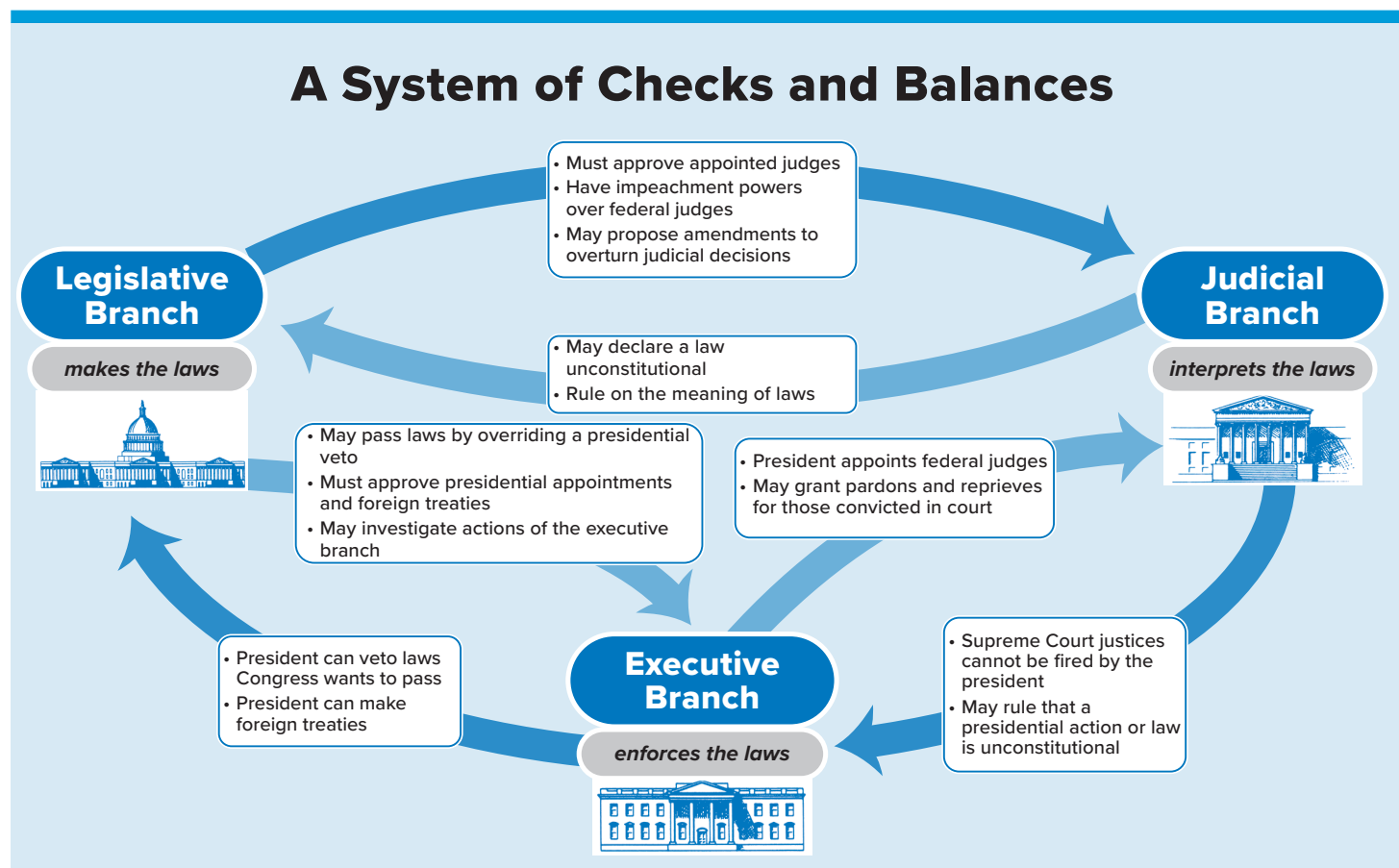
Judicial over the executive branch: The president cannot fire or remove Supreme Court justices.

There are other checks and balances in the American government besides those between branches of government. They include:

Checks in Congress

The Senate and House can check each other by rejecting bills passed by the other. The House has the added check of sole power to start revenue bills.

continued





Michigan’s history is rich and distinguished. The state is named after Lake Michigan, which the Chippewa Indians called *Lake Michigama*, which means “Great Lake.”

At the time of the arrival of white men in Michigan, about 15,000 Indians were living in the region, most from the Algonquian language group. The first white man to explore the area was Frenchman Étienne Brûlé around 1620. Other important explorers and missionaries were Jean Nicolet and Father Rene Menard, who established a mission to convert the Indians to Christianity.

In the late 1600s, more Frenchmen followed, exploring, mapping, and building missions, forts, and trading posts. Names such as Father Jacques Marquette, Louis Joliet, and Sieur De La Salle are important to early Michigan history.

The military post at *Michilimackinac* was founded a few years later and served for a quarter of a century as the center of French influence on the Great Lakes. Then Antoine de Lamothe Cadillac convinced the French court that a post on the *Detroit River* would be more advantageous. Detroit, founded in 1701, became the most important settlement in the western Great Lakes region.

While the French controlled the Michigan region for almost 150 years, few significant changes occurred in the territory. The French were not primarily interested in settling the region. Instead, they wanted to use the area as a base for a profitable fur trading industry. The French also devoted considerable time trying to convert the Indians to Christianity.

Until 1763, the French held the territory that was to become Michigan. At the end of the *French and Indian Wars* in 1763, the land came under the control of the English as part of the war settlement. Like the French, the English were primarily interested in the Michigan region as a source of valuable furs. The state derived its nickname from the beautiful wolverine fur.

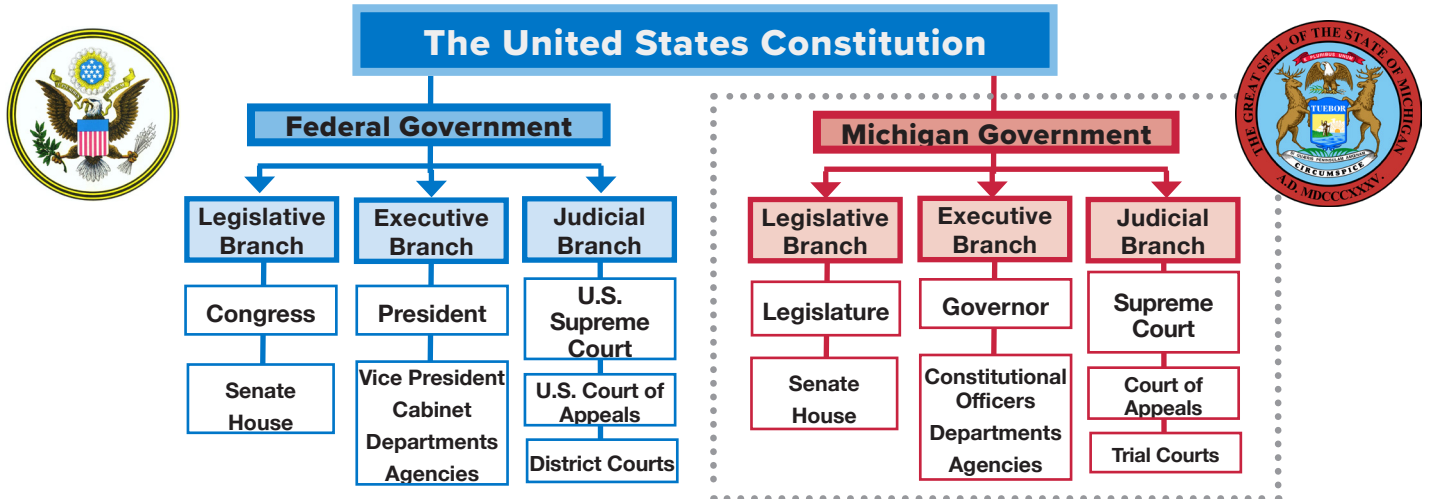
Michigan became strategically important when war broke out between the colonists and the British. The British sent raiding parties from Detroit to attack American settlements. After the Revolutionary War ended in 1783, the United States gained control of all land up to the Mississippi River. A plan had to be devised to settle state claims to the new land, and the *Northwest Ordinance of 1787* was passed. This federal law provided that the land would be divided into not less than three nor more than five states. Also, a governor and council were appointed to pass legislation. One of the most important provisions of the Northwest Ordinance set up townships, which provided land for public schools. This promoted free public education in the new territory.

In 1800, Congress created the *Indiana Territory*, which included part of Michigan. In 1805, the *Michigan Territory* was created, which included most of present-day Michigan, except for the western section of the Upper Peninsula. Detroit became the capital of the new territory, with various locations in the city serving at different times as the seat of government.

The people of the Michigan Territory drew up and approved a state constitution in 1835. Although the territory met all requirements for statehood, Congress delayed the admission of Michigan to the Union due to a land dispute with Ohio. On January 26, 1837, Michigan became the 26th state, with Detroit serving as the first capital.

Michigan’s population multiplied rapidly. People from other parts of the United States and Europe saw Michigan as a place where new opportunities would be available to them.

In its first 50 years, Michigan saw farming replace fur trading as the chief occupation of the region. Because of Michigan’s fertile soil and favorable climate, agriculture continues to play an essential role in the state’s economy.



The U.S. Constitution splits governing powers between the federal government and the states. This unit will cover the state government portion of the chart above. It will also include the study of local government bodies.

A summary is presented here for an overview of the Michigan Constitution and its use as an index to the state constitution. You will find additional details to many of these sections in upcoming pages of this worktext. The Michigan Legislature website also provides the entire state constitution at www.legislature.mi.gov.

Michigan Constitutions

Michigan changed and modified its government as its population and economy changed. The state has had four constitutions. The first, written in 1835 when Michigan sought entry into the Union, outlined the new government's structure and functions. It was changed in 1850, altering the powers granted to the executive and legislative branches, offering free public education, and asking for a vote on a constitutional convention every 16 years. The 1850 constitution was in effect until 1908, when another revision took place. This amended version of the previous constitution returned some powers to the state government. It enacted child labor laws and home rules, fixed state salaries and spending, established direct primaries, set up a state highway department, passed a worker's compensation law, and regulated the insurance and banking industries.

Four attempts were made to call a Constitutional Convention to revise the Constitution of 1908 before the question was approved. A primary election to elect delegates was held in 1961 to elect 144 delegates. The delegates met at the Convention Hall in the Civic Center, Lansing, and approved the proposed Constitution on August 1, 1962. The new Constitution was voted upon by citizens at the April 1, 1963 election and adopted with an effective date of January 1, 1964. This new constitution stated a Declaration of Rights, established an income tax, granted the governor more authority, gave the Legislature more freedom to put constitutional provisions into effect, and better defined the role of the state Supreme Court. The following is a summary of the Constitution of 1963:

Preamble

The preamble explains why the Michigan Constitution was written. Below is the wording of the preamble:

"We, the people of the State of Michigan, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of freedom, and earnestly desiring to secure these blessings undiminished to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution."

Article 1 - Declaration of Rights

There are 28 sections of the Michigan Declaration of Rights. Many of these sections were based on provisions in the U.S. Constitution. The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits states from depriving any person of life, liberty, or property without the due process of law. Some of these rights go beyond the rights established by our U.S. Constitution. The following are the sections and topics of the Declaration of Rights:

Section Topic

- 1 Political power
- 2 Equal protection, freedom from discrimination
- 3 Assembly, consultation, instruction, petition
- 4 Freedom of worship, religion
- 5 Freedom of speech and press
- 6 Bearing of arms
- 7 Military under civil power
- 8 Quartering of soldiers
- 9 Slavery and involuntary servitude
- 10 Attainder, ex post facto, contracts
- 11 Searches and seizures
- 12 Habeas corpus
- 13 Conduct of suits in person or by counsel
- 14 Jury trial
- 15 Double jeopardy, bailable offenses
- 16 Bail, fines, punishments, detention of witnesses
- 17 Self-incrimination, due process of law, fair treatment at investigations
- 18 Witnesses, competency
- 19 Libel, truth as defense
- 20 Rights of accused in criminal prosecutions
- 21 Imprisonment for debt
- 22 Treason
- 23 Enumeration of rights not to deny others
- 24 Rights of crime victims
- 25 Marriage
- 26 Affirmative action programs
- 27 Human embryo, stem cell research
- 28 Right to reproductive freedom.

Article 2 - Elections

Article 2 of the Michigan Constitution is focused on elections. It outlines various sections related to electoral processes, including the qualifications of voters, the place and manner of elections, and the timing of elections. Michigan citizens' powers to propose laws, enact laws, and reject laws through the *initiative* and *referendum* processes are also described. In addition, people of the state are granted the authority to hold a *recall election*, which is a process whereby voters can remove an elected official from office by special election prior to the end of his or her term.

Article 3 - General Government

Article 3 addresses the foundation of state government. It includes sections on the separation of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, the state's great seal, and naming Lansing as the state capital.

Article 4 - Legislative Branch

Article 4 covers a wide range of aspects related to legislative power, including details on the number and terms of Senators and Representatives, the rules of lawmaking, and eligibility for certain public offices. It also covers methods for establishing legislative districts and redrawing the lines for congressional and state districts following each U.S. census.

State Senate

There are 38 Senate districts in the state of Michigan. The state Senate consists of one member from each district. Each district has approximately 212,400 to 263,500 residents. Senators are elected to four-year terms at the same time the governor is elected: November of even-numbered, non-presidential years. Terms for senators begin on January 1, following the November general election. In addition to regular lawmaking powers, the Senate has special duties. One of these is to serve as the jury in cases of impeachment; another is to vote on appointments made by the governor.

Senate Leadership

The lieutenant governor is the presiding officer of the state Senate, who may vote only to break a tie. He or she also ensures that the Senate’s members follow the rules. He or she also ensures that its members are following the Senate rules. In the lieutenant governor’s absence, the *president pro tempore* of the Senate presides. Both the majority party (currently Democrats) and minority party (currently Republicans) also elect a leader, assistant leaders, and a caucus chair. These leaders provide direction and advice to members on proposed legislation and party business.

State House of Representatives

There are 110 House of Representative districts in the state of Michigan. The state House of Representatives consists of one member from each district, which represents between 77,000 and 91,000 residents. Members are elected to two-year terms in November of even-numbered years. Besides its duties of lawmaking, the House has the sole power to start impeachment proceedings. A majority of the members in the House must vote in favor of starting proceedings against an official.

House Leadership

The presiding officer of the state House is known as the *speaker of the house* and is elected by the members themselves. In addition to presiding over the body,

the speaker also has the chief leadership position, controlling the flow of legislation and committee assignments. He or she also maintains order on the House floor and works with minority leaders to resolve problems hindering legislation. In the speaker’s absence, the *speaker pro tempore* presides. Both the majority party (currently Democrats) and minority party (currently Republicans) also elect a floor leader and assistant leaders.

QUESTIONS

WHICH BODY OF THE LEGISLATURE? The following details may closely match the state Senate or state House. In some cases, that may relate to both or neither of these. Answer **Senate (S)**, **House (H)**, **neither (N)**, or **both (B)**.

1. ___ Elected by the people.
2. ___ Receive a salary of \$71,685.
3. ___ Belong to the legislative branch.
4. ___ Speaker is the presiding officer.
5. ___ Make laws for all 50 states.
6. ___ Meet in Lansing.
7. ___ Start impeachment proceedings.
8. ___ Speaker pro tempore is an officer.
9. ___ Must be at least 35 years old.
10. ___ Must be a resident of their district.
11. ___ Approves appointments made by the governor.
12. ___ Lieutenant governor is the presiding officer.
13. ___ Serves as the jury in impeachment cases.
14. ___ Can be called into a special session.

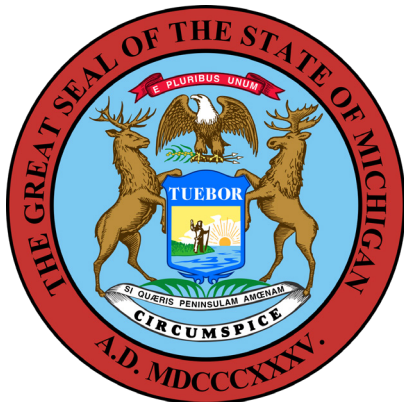
LEGISLATURE BY THE NUMBERS. Choose the correct number from the bank that matches the statement.

Number Bank: 4, 10, 12, 21, 38, 110

- _____ Number of members in the Senate
- _____ Number of members in the House
- _____ Minimum age for a legislator
- _____ Maximum years to serve for a legislator
- _____ Article number mentioning legislative branch
- _____ A census is conducted every ___ years

Great Seal of Michigan Exercise

The *Great Seal of the State of Michigan* is the official emblem of the state. Article 3, Section 3, of the Michigan Constitution identifies 15 types of state documents that are eligible to receive an impression of the Great Seal.



The Great Seal was created in 1835 and features the state coat of arms and state motto (which also appears on Michigan’s state flag). **Research the Great Seal and answer the following:**

1. What do the Roman numerals MDCCCXXXV on the seal represent? _____
2. What are the animals on each side of the seal? _____
3. What is displayed above the American Eagle? _____
4. What does the word “Tuebor” mean? _____
5. What is the state motto? _____