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The early colonists came to America to find freedom but faced many dangers. They became very independent and self-sufficient. At first, England paid little attention to the colonists in America, and the colonists were not strictly controlled by English law and government.

However, after the colonies grew and became important trade centers, the British imposed restrictions and trade regulations on them. Some of these restrictions put England in a favorable position concerning trade with the colonies. The colonies objected vigorously.

The colonists also objected to the quartering of soldiers, taxation without representation in Parliament, and lack of true self-government, among other issues.

People soon banded together and, at the urging of patriotic groups like the *Sons of Liberty*, refused to buy English goods.

Incidents like the *Boston Tea Party* in 1773 added fuel to the revolution. The Boston Tea Party occurred when patriots, disguised as Native Americans, threw tons of tea into Boston Harbor because the colonists did not like tax policies of the British. When the British punished the Bostonians, all the colonists were inflamed. Conditions grew worse and, a year after the Boston Tea Party, Patrick Henry shouted:



Patrick Henry

*"The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"*

Henry's speech became one of the best-known pre-revolutionary speeches.

### First Continental Congress

Colonial leaders decided to call a meeting to discuss how to win their rights. They were more interested in fair treatment than in independence. *The First Continental Congress* met at *Carpenters' Hall* in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1774, with delegates from 12 of the 13 colonies. Georgia did not send representatives but agreed to support any plans made at the meeting. The delegates sent their complaints to the king, but British colonial policy did not change. Although they wanted their rights, delegates did not dream they would soon be responsible for conducting a war. The colonial



Carpenters' Hall

leaders also imposed an *embargo* (agreement prohibiting trade) on British trade and goods.

### Second Continental Congress

The First Continental Congress adjourned in late October 1774 but agreed to convene the following May. By then, the *American Revolution* had begun. In the spring of 1775, British soldiers were sent to Lexington, Massachusetts, to seize the guns and ammunition of the colonists and arrest colonial leaders Samuel Adams and John Hancock. Paul Revere warned the Minutemen to meet British soldiers at Lexington, where an unidentified shot started the war.

The *Second Continental Congress* met again in Philadelphia a few weeks later, in May 1775. Many of the same 56 delegates who attended the first meeting were in attendance, including one from each of the 13 colonies. These delegates had first come hoping for peace, but soon, more and more leaders called for complete separation from Great Britain.

Many critical actions were discussed and decided. The Second Continental Congress assumed the powers of a central government. An army and a navy were organized, and money was issued. General George Washington was chosen to lead the army. The Second Continental Congress became the nation's first government and continued to meet until the Articles of Confederation took effect in 1781.

Six years after the fighting began in Lexington, the British surrendered to General Washington at Yorktown, Virginia. The Americans had won their fight for independence.

### QUESTIONS

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

- \_\_\_ 1. The only objection the colonists had toward British rule concerned trade regulations.
- \_\_\_ 2. When the First Continental Congress met, the members wanted to declare war against England.
- \_\_\_ 3. Patrick Henry did not want to see the war begin.
- \_\_\_ 4. The Sons of Liberty supported the colonists' cause.
- \_\_\_ 5. The English colonists were closely governed from the time of the earliest settlements.
- \_\_\_ 6. The Boston Tea Party occurred because of a tax dispute.
- \_\_\_ 7. Samuel Adams and John Hancock were colonial leaders.
- \_\_\_ 8. Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty, or give me death!"
- \_\_\_ 9. The First Continental Congress met in 1774.
- \_\_\_ 10. Each of the 13 colonies had a representative at the Second Continental Congress.
- \_\_\_ 11. George Washington led the American Army in the Revolution.
- \_\_\_ 12. The British won the American Revolution.

## 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 decides 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, Stamp, 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 4<sup>th</sup>, the *Second Continental Congress* adopts 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* is rung in Philadelphia to call the people to the first public reading of the Declaration.



### Beginning of the American 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 starts the American Revolution and leads 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 passes several acts to punish Massachusetts. Twelve of the thirteen colonies name delegates to the *First Continental Congress*. On September 5<sup>th</sup>, they meet 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 Continental Congress on November 15, 1777. However, the document was not fully ratified by the states 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 enacted (the remaining four states will ratify by 1790). America is preparing to operate under this new document.



### Our New Government

1789

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, the new federal government is inaugurated in New York. In April, the first House of Representatives is organized. *George Washington* is elected the first president on April 6<sup>th</sup>. He is inaugurated on April 30<sup>th</sup>. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, the first ten amendments (*Bill of Rights*) are 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 \_\_\_\_\_



*"All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives." — United States Constitution, Article 1, Section 1*

The legislative branch of government is described in Article 1 of the Constitution. The legislative branch is the first branch mentioned in the Constitution. Its primary duty is to make our country's laws.

## The Congress

The legislative branch of our federal government is called the *Congress*. It consists of the *Senate* and the *House of Representatives*. Every citizen is represented in Congress by two U.S. senators from their particular state and one U.S. representative from their congressional district. That is why our form of government is called a *representative government*. The citizens of our great country delegate authority to elected representatives. Although we have more direct representation by our senators and representatives, the same principle is adopted by many executive and judicial offices.

Agencies that provide support services for Congress are also considered part of the legislative branch. They include the Library of Congress, the Congressional Budget Office, the Government Printing Office, and the General Accounting Office.

The term of Congress begins on the third day of January every odd-numbered year and lasts two years. The Constitution says that during this two-year term, "Congress shall assemble (meet) at least once in every year..." There is so much business before Congress these days that the meetings or sessions last almost yearly. The President of the United States may call *special sessions* of Congress.

Congress meets in the *Capitol Building* in Washington, D.C. Both the Senate and the House meet there but in different chambers. A picture or drawing of the Capitol Building (see below) is often seen in our newspapers, magazines, and television broadcasts because the work done in this building is vital to every American. The Capitol is the only place senators and representatives meet to make laws. Senators and representatives have offices nearby. If you visit Washington, D.C., find time to attend a session of Congress.

Beginning with the Continental Congress in 1774, America's legislative bodies have kept records of their proceedings. After each day that Congress is in session, the procedures are printed in the *Congressional Record*.



*The Capitol Building - The Meeting Place of Congress*

Congress are usually available the following morning on [congress.gov](http://congress.gov). The records may include legislative activity by the chambers and their committees, member remarks and speeches, and communications from the president.

## Role of Congress

Everyday life is influenced by the decisions of Congress, whose role is to improve the quality of our lives and strengthen the nation. The following are a few of the acts of Congress:

- **air safety** – created the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA), which assures commercial air safety;
- **banking** – established insurance policies, which guarantee deposits made in banks;
- **clean air** – passed national pollution-control laws;
- **family leave** – granted unpaid leave to workers for up to 12 weeks to deal with family issues;
- **labor wages** – created the concept of a federal minimum wage and votes for periodic raises;
- **automobile safety** – passed laws to promote auto safety by requiring car manufacturers to meet minimum safety standards;
- **access for people with disabilities** – expanded employment opportunities for people with disabilities by passing laws requiring access to the workplace and public spaces.

## QUESTIONS

1. What is the primary duty of the legislative branch?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the main body in the legislative branch called?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What two houses make up the legislative branch?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is a representative government? \_\_\_\_\_

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

- \_\_\_ 1. The President of the United States has the power to call Congress into special session.
- \_\_\_ 2. Congress meets in many of our major cities.
- \_\_\_ 3. The Library of Congress is part of the legislative branch.
- \_\_\_ 4. Congress must meet at least twice every year.
- \_\_\_ 5. The president makes the rules for Congress.
- \_\_\_ 6. Congress meets in the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.
- \_\_\_ 7. The daily record of Congress is called "The Capital Journal."

## Lawmaking and the Three Branches

### Legislative Branch

Congress



- 1 A bill is introduced.
- 2 Bill is sent to committee.
- 3 Bill is voted on.
- 4 If passed in committee and on floor of house, it is sent to the other house.

### Executive Branch

President



- A The president may sign the bill, and it will become law.
- B Or the president may veto the bill.
- C Congress can override a veto with a two-thirds vote.

### Judicial Branch

Supreme Court and other courts



- ✓ The courts see that justice is administered under the law.
- ✓ The Supreme Court declares laws unconstitutional through **judicial review**.
- ✓ Ensures each branch recognizes limits of its power

is up and the president has not acted on the bill, it is automatically vetoed. This is called a *pocket veto*.

After Congress (legislative branch) has passed a bill and the president (executive branch) has signed it into law, the president then must enforce the law. The courts (judicial branch) then interpret and administer justice under the new law. The Supreme Court may rule whether or not the law is constitutional.

### What are Federal Laws?

There are different types of laws. Federal laws apply to everyone in the United States. States and local laws apply to people who live or work in a particular state, county, or municipality. The U.S. Constitution divides the power to make laws between the federal and state government.

The federal government is responsible for some laws, such as national defense, currency, interstate commerce, and patents. State and local governments may not pass these kinds of laws, nor may they pass laws that conflict with federal laws. One example is the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which ensures that the Bill of Rights applies to all states. You will learn more about the differences between federal, state, and local laws in the upcoming units of this book.

### Member of Congress: Typical Day

Regardless of whether they are in Washington, D.C., or their congressional districts, members of Congress spend most of their time working. Members work long hours, up to 70 hours a week when Congress is in session. Members endure unequalled public scrutiny and sacrifice family time to fulfill work responsibilities.

A member of Congress may have a typical day something like this:

- 7:00 a.m.** Breakfast with the family, the only time they will see each other until late that evening.
- 8:00 a.m.** Trip to the office to go over e-mail and postal mail with an assistant. The mail may be substantial if a critical issue is pending.
- 10:15 a.m.** Meet with party members considering action on a bill that will come before Congress.
- 10:30 a.m.** House Ethics Committee meeting. This committee, which is his/her most important committee assignment, may discuss new allegations of concern to Congress. Both senators and representatives may have more than one committee assignment.
- 11:00 a.m.** A party caucus (meeting) takes place.
- Noon** Lunch with other members from his/her home state. Congressional business is discussed.
- 1:30 p.m.** On the way to the House floor, he/she is stopped by the majority leader for a brief discussion of important bills.
- 1:40 p.m.** Remains on the floor for the entire afternoon House of Representatives session, voting on legislation.
- 3:30 p.m.** Conduct a short conference call with other lawmakers concerning a defense bill.
- 3:45 p.m.** Lobbyist John Jones comes to the office seeking aid favorable to their organization.
- 5:00 p.m.** A reporter calls for an interview concerning the House Ethics Committee.
- 7:00 p.m.** Home for dinner. After dinner reads hometown newspapers, reads topics on social media, and works on a speech to be delivered the next day.

The most prolonged debate at the Constitutional Convention concerned the method of selecting the president. An early suggestion was to give this power to Congress. However, that would have destroyed the idea of the separation of powers. How could we have three branches of government, each checking the other if the legislative branch (the Congress) picked the head of the executive branch (the president)?

The writers of the Constitution also were not ready to give the president's selection to the people or the "common man." So they wrote a compromise into Article 2, Section 1 of the Constitution. The compromise set up a system of electors to select the president. These electors became known as the Electoral College, but the Constitution does not mention the term "Electoral College."

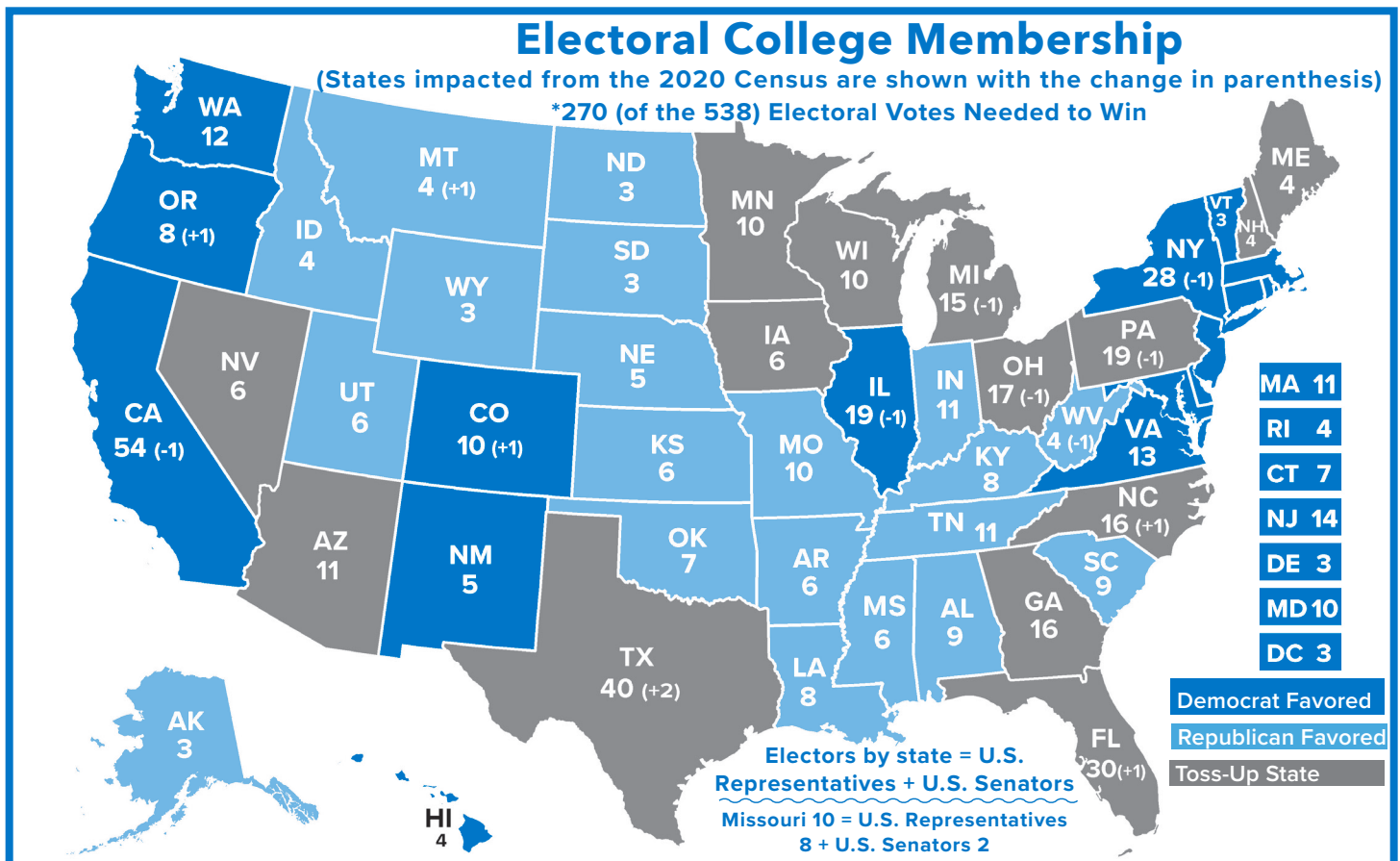
The 12<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Amendments modified this unique election method. Before 1961, the voters in Washington, D.C., did not get to vote for the president. This restriction was not considered fair in the capital of our country. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Amendment was added in 1961, giving three electoral votes for Washington, D.C. That made 538 electors (electoral votes for each state equals the number of representatives plus two for the senators). A majority of 270 or more would be necessary to select the president. The map below shows the distribution of the electoral votes based on the reapportionment from the 2020 Census.

To summarize, if a candidate gets the most popular (people) votes in the state, the "electors" will then cast their votes the same way. All the electoral votes for the state (except for Maine and Nebraska) will go to the state's winner. The writers of the Constitution also thought that the Electoral College gave states with a small population more equal weight in the presidential election.

One of the problems political scientists see in the Electoral College is that it allows a person to be elected president who has yet to win the popular vote in the country. In our growing beliefs in the power and rights of democracy in our nation, that could be a problem. A state's electoral votes go to the candidate who wins the election in that state, whether by a single vote or a million votes. A candidate could be elected president without having the most popular votes.

That has not happened very often, but it did occur in 2000 when George W. Bush became president and again recently in the 2016 election. Donald Trump became president even though Hillary Clinton won most of the popular votes. Furthermore, because this has happened recently, Americans are debating the Electoral College's pros and cons. Since a change in the electoral vote would require a constitutional amendment, the change will take time. Supporters of the current system say that it has served the nation well and forces candidates to gain broad geographic support rather than concentrating only on large metropolitan areas.

*continued*



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.

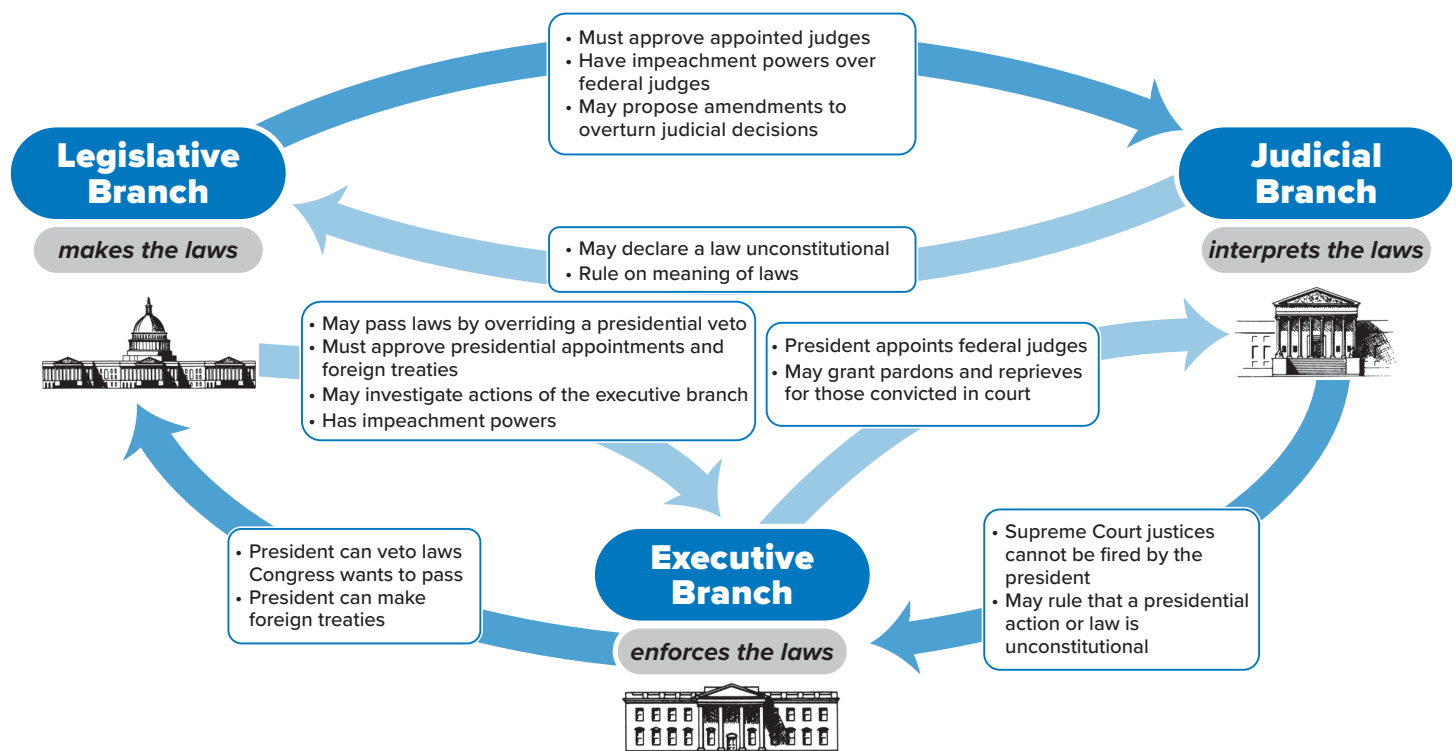
There are other checks and balances in the American government besides those between branches of government. They include:

### 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*

## A System of Checks and Balances





Missouri is today one of the nation's leading agricultural producers, with soybeans and corn as leading crops. Industrial production has also grown at a rapid rate. Missouri's factories produce a wide variety of products. World War I caused Missouri's industry to supply the needed goods for the war. The Depression of the 1930s hit Missouri very hard, and recovery came slowly and painfully. World War II again found Missouri's contributions to be a vital part of the war effort and helped to develop the state's industry further.

### Missouri Constitutions

Missouri changed and modified its government as its population and economy changed. The state has had four constitutions. The first, adopted in 1820 when Missouri sought entry into the Union, basically outlined the structure and functions of the new government. In 1865, at the end of the Civil War, Missouri's second constitution was adopted. Ten years later, in 1875, a third constitution was adopted after the U.S. Supreme Court declared the prior document in violation of the U.S. Constitution. The state presently operates under the *Constitution of 1945*.

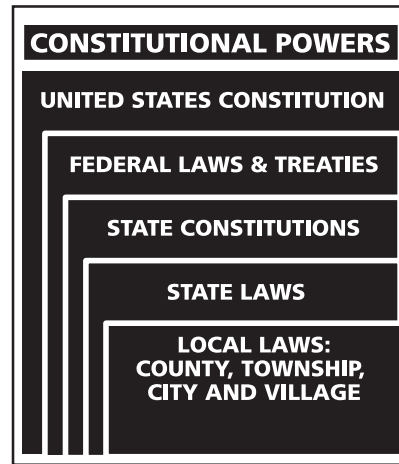
### Organization of State Government

From studying the U.S. Constitution, you know specific responsibilities are left to the states. To carry out these responsibilities, states have established their own constitutions. The state government, for example, is responsible for highway construction, local laws, intra-state commerce, traffic laws, education, marriage and divorce laws, and voting regulations.

The organization of a state government is very similar to that of the federal government. Both have three branches, which have about the same type of duties and the same type of checks-and-balances system. Article 2 of the Missouri Constitution reads:

*"The powers of government shall be divided into three distinct departments—the legislative, executive and judicial—each of which shall be confined to a separate magistracy, and no person or, collection of persons, charged with the exercise of powers properly belonging to one of these departments, shall exercise any power properly belonging to either of the others, except in the instances in this constitution expressly directed or permitted."*

Both the U.S. Constitution and the Missouri Constitution have a Bill of Rights. There are other similarities and differences you will notice as you read about Missouri's Constitution. Article 4 and the 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution should be read if you wish to know exactly what the federal Constitution says about the role of the states.



*The chart shows where the state constitution fits regarding authority and power. While each of the 50 states has its own constitution, all provisions of state constitutions must comply with the United States Constitution. The 10th Amendment recognizes the powers of state governments.*

### QUESTIONS

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The capital of Missouri is Saint Louis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The Spanish were the first to claim the territory containing Missouri.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The United States bought the Louisiana Territory from France.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Missouri's present constitution was adopted in 1945.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The Missouri and United States Constitutions have a Bill of Rights.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Missouri became a state in 1821.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Missouri joined the Confederacy in 1861.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Missouri's nickname is the *Show-Me State*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Missouri was admitted to the Union as a "free state."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The Missouri Territory was organized in 1812.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The Civil War started in 1861.

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

**Number Bank: 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 24**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Missouri electoral votes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Number of state constitutions
- \_\_\_\_\_ This number state to join the Union
- \_\_\_\_\_ Number of branches in Missouri government
- \_\_\_\_\_ Number of representatives in the U.S. House from Missouri

**EVENTS IN ORDER.** Write the numbers **1-4**, indicating which historical event happened **first (1)**, **second (2)**, **third (3)**, and **fourth (4)**.

- \_\_\_\_\_ State capital moved to Jefferson City.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Missouri becomes a state.
- \_\_\_\_\_ United States Constitution signed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Current Missouri Constitution approved.



In addition to voting, there are many other activities to participate in our democracy actively. Citizens can engage in the political process by expressing their beliefs, voicing their opinions, and influencing government decisions. Individual Americans have more political power than they realize. Citizen activism has demonstrated that it can change public policy if used effectively.

### What is Public Policy?

Whether you know it or not, you have learned about *public policy* in this book's federal and state sections. Public policy is how a government maintains order or addresses the needs of its citizens through actions defined by its constitution. Our government creates the rules, laws, and guidelines and may add or alter laws as needs change and opportunities emerge.

In Missouri (and all states), the government has many parts. At different levels, legislatures like General Assembly and City Councils make the laws that governors and mayors enforce. These policies include gun rights, automobile safety, immigration, climate change, taxes, and civil rights. Public policy deals with issues of concern to some significant segment of society, as opposed to matters of interest only to individuals or a small group of people.

Public policy involves identifying the needs of our society, analyzing potential solutions, making decisions on the resources and funding required, and the process to implement. For example, almost every state government has adopted the public policy of banning texting while driving. This includes Missouri, which became the 49th state that adopted this policy when the "Siddens Bening Hands-Free Law" was enacted in May 2023. The law is named after both Randall Siddens, 34, of Columbia, and Michael Bening, 46, of Raymore, killed by distracted drivers.

This public policy addresses the problem of people causing car accidents because they are distracted. In Missouri, between 2012 and 2021, 197,564 distracted driving-related crashes killed 801 people, according to Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety. Besides the Siddens and Bening families, bipartisan state leaders and safety advocates brought awareness to the Missouri State Capitol.

Various individuals, groups, and organizations can influence and shape public policy. Here are examples of such groups:

- **Government Officials:** Elected officials and administrative agencies significantly influence public policy.
- **Interest Groups:** Many organizations represent specific interests that aim to influence public policy in their favor. This can include lobbyists, industry associations, labor unions, and professional organizations.
- **Media:** The media (news outlets, journalists, and columnists) plays a crucial role in shaping public

opinion and influencing policy discussions. Media coverage can influence public perception and pressure policymakers to take action.

- **Academic and Intellectual Community:** Academics, scholars, and intellectuals contribute to public policy debates through research, expertise, and analysis. They often publish articles, books, and reports that influence policymakers and public opinion.
- **Citizens of the state:** Engaged residents can vote for candidates who align with their policy preferences, contact their local representatives to voice concerns over policies or lack of policies, start a *grassroots* movement and activism to raise awareness over important issues, and cautiously use social media to inform, support, and share information.

It is important to note that citizens may have varying degrees of influence depending on their resources, access to decision-makers, and the political context. Nonetheless, citizen engagement and participation are crucial for a healthy democracy.

### Visit Your Government Representatives

Visit and interact with your House representative, your two U.S. senators, or the state legislators representing your district on local issues. Most federal and state officials have offices throughout their state or district, with addresses listed on their websites. Many also hold town hall meetings. As with other lobbying, be specific about what you want your representative to do or legislation to support. In-person lobbying can be more effective than any other form.

### Educate Yourself

President George Washington observed that because government is a function of the public will, the public needs to be knowledgeable. The inscription around the upper rotunda in Missouri's Capitol is taken from Washington's Farewell Address: "In proportion as the structure of government gives force to public opinion it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened." The phrase "enlightened public opinion" implies that citizens should have access to accurate and comprehensive information about public affairs, policies, and issues. When individuals are knowledgeable about the workings of government, the impact of their opinions and actions becomes more meaningful.

Stay informed about current events, policy issues, and government actions at the local, state, and federal levels. It is essential to recognize the difference between fact and opinion. Read news from reputable sources, follow government websites, and engage in civil discussions. Share the knowledge with others to foster civic awareness and encourage political participation in your community.

*This glossary contains constitution-related terms to aid in studying your federal and state constitutions. Many, but not all, of these terms are used in the worktext. These terms can be used to expand your knowledge of the Constitution, government, and our democracy.*

**act** – a bill, or proposal for a law, passed by a majority of lawmakers.

**adjourn** – to terminate a session (of Congress, or of a court) or suspend until a later time.

**ambassador** – an official who represents his or her government in dealings with another nation.

**amendments** – changes in a bill, a law, or a constitution.

**appeal** – to request another trial before a higher court.

**appeals court** – a federal court that reviews the decision a lower (trial) court.

**appoint** – to name someone to fill an office.

**appropriation** – money set aside for a specific use by an act of the legislature.

**article** – a segment of a written document. The Constitution is divided into articles dealing with different areas of government.

**assembly** – a public meeting or gathering; also the name commonly given to the larger house in the state legislature.

**attorney general** – the head of the executive department who is chiefly responsible for enforcing U.S. laws or state laws.

**bail** – the sum of money that an accused person may deposit with a court as a security to get out of jail while awaiting trial.

**bicameral legislature** – a lawmaking body with two houses.

**bill** – a proposal for a law to be considered by Congress or a state legislature.

**bill of attainder** – a law naming a person guilty of a crime without trial (such are not allowed by the U.S. Constitution).

**Bill of Rights** – the first ten amendments of the U.S. Constitution; their common purpose is to protect the American people from abuses of government power.

**budget** – a plan for spending money over a certain period of time.

**cabinet** – a group of department heads who meet regularly with the president or with a state's governor.

**campaign** – an organized effort carried out over a period of months or years; specifically, the efforts of a candidate and his or hers supports to win election.

**caucus** – a meeting of party members to decide policy or nominate candidates.

**censorship** – a government's practice of stopping certain ideas from being published or expressed.

**census** – an official count of the U.S. population taken every 10 years.

**charter** – a document granting powers of self-government to a city or municipality; also a document giving legal status to a business organization.

**checks and balances** – a system by which each branch of government has the power to block or overrule the decisions of the other branches.

**chief executive** – the elected official who is chiefly responsible for enforcing the laws of a state (the governor) or a nation (the president).

**circuit court** – a court in the federal system that has the power to hear appeals from trial courts.

**citizen** – anyone who is officially counted as a member of a nation or state.

**citizenship** – the status of being a citizen.

**civil case** – a dispute brought to court for settlement.

**civil rights** – rights which are considered to be unquestionable, deserved by all people under all circumstances.

**class** – a grouping of senators who are up for election in the same year; senators are divided into three classes, two years apart.

**cloture** – a means of preventing a filibuster on a bill.

**commander-in-chief** – the supreme commander of a nation's armed forces; in the U.S. it is the president.

**commerce** – business transactions, trade, or the buying and selling of goods on a large scale.

**commission form** – a plan of local government in which legislative and executive powers are shared by a group of elected officials known as "commissioners."

**commutations** – changing a prison sentence or other penalty to another less severe.

**compromise** – to give up a part of one's original demands or desires in order to reach agreement on an issue.

**concurrent powers** – powers that are shared and exercised by both the federal and state government.

**conference committee** – a group of lawmakers drawn from both houses of Congress (or a state legislature) with the purpose to resolve the differences between two versions of a bill passed by the two houses.

**confirmation** – the process by which the U.S. Senate approves a president's appointments to office.

**Congress** – chief legislative body of our nation.

**conservative** – someone who wants government's role in society and the economy to be strictly limited; may also refer to changes in policy to be gradual, not rapid.

**constituents** – the residents of a district or state who are represented by a legislator from that same district or state.

**constitution** – the set of basic laws and rules defining a nation's or state's system of government.

**corporation** – a private business or other organization with a special legal status conferred by state law.

**council-manager system** – a system of local government in which legislative power belongs to an elected group (the council), which hires a professional manager to conduct city business.

**criminal case** – a matter involving the violation of a state or federal law.

**debate** – a formal process for presenting arguments for and against a bill or a public issue.

**defendant** – the person at a trial who been accused of some offense, injury, or crime.

**deficit** – the amount of annual debt.

**delegated powers** – those rights that the federal government is free to exercise because they are specifically mentioned in the Constitution.

**delegates** – persons chosen to represent others at a special meeting.

**democracy** – a system of government in which the people (citizens and voters) have the final power.

**department** – a major division of the executive branch.

**depression** – a more serious and long slowdown in the economy.

**diplomacy** – the means by which nations communicate with one another and try to settle their differences peacefully.

**discrimination** – the practice of favoring one person or one group over another.

**district courts** – federal courts that hold trials.