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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 essential 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, but 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 Indians, threw tons of tea into Boston Harbor because the colonists did not like the 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 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 complained 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 leaders also imposed an *embargo* (agreement prohibiting trade) on British trade and goods.



Carpenters' Hall

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. It was Paul Revere who warned the Minutemen to meet British soldiers at Lexington, where an unidentified shot started the war.

Second Continental Congress

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 at Independence Hall, including one from each of the 13 colonies. The colonies' unity was a powerful symbol of their strength and determination.

John Hancock, a wealthy merchant and influential political leader in Boston, was appointed presiding officer. His wealth and influence were instrumental in shaping the movement for American independence, making him a key figure in Congress.



John Hancock

The delegates first came hoping for peace, even drafting the *Olive Branch Petition* and sending it to King George III, hoping to reach a peaceful resolution. The king refused to hear the petition and declared the American colonies in revolt.

Many critical actions were discussed and decided as a result of the British response. 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. This effectively ended the American Revolution; the colonists 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. The Sons of Liberty supported the colonists' cause.
- ___ 4. The English colonists were closely governed from the time of the earliest settlements.
- ___ 5. The Boston Tea Party occurred because of a tax dispute.
- ___ 6. The First Continental Congress met in 1774.
- ___ 7. Each of the 13 colonies had a representative at the Second Continental Congress.
- ___ 8. The British won the American Revolution.

MATCH THE PERSON. Write the letter from **Section B** in the space that matches the person in **Section A**.

A

- 1. John Hancock ___
- 2. Patrick Henry ___
- 3. Samuel Adams ___
- 4. George Washington ___
- 5. Paul Revere ___

B

- a. Colonial leader
- b. Warned the Minutemen
- c. Led the army
- d. Leader with unique signature
- e. "Give me liberty, or give me death"

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 _____

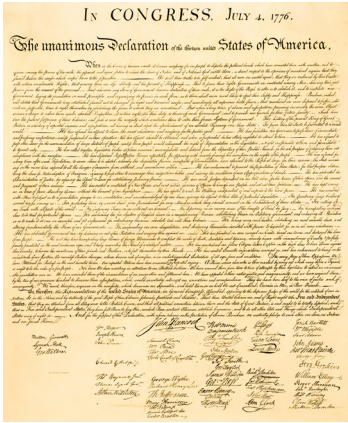

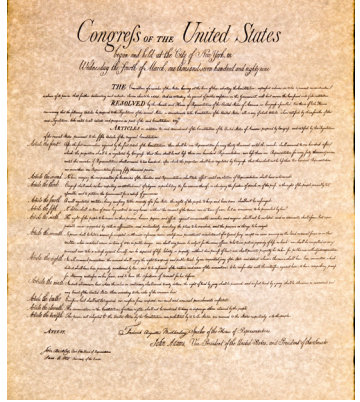
The *Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom* is the permanent home of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights, located in the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. These historic documents are displayed in a cathedral-like, dimly lit rotunda, which is open to the public. A visit can be both a moving and educational experience, deepening your appreciation for the principles that continue to guide American society.

The nation's Founding Fathers drafted these documents during dramatic, fast-moving events. They form the foundation of the United States and confirm that people are born with certain natural rights, including "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," that does not come from presidents, kings, or charters. This nation's founding documents secure these and other rights of the American people.

Preserving the Documents

On December 13, 1952, the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence were sealed in helium-filled cases, placed in wooden crates, and transported by an armored car to the National Archives Exhibition Hall in Washington, D.C. In 2001, the documents were placed in upgraded, state-of-the-art encasements with the latest preservation technology, replacing the original 1950s encasements.

While the original, signed Declaration is housed in the Charters of Freedom, 26 other copies are known to exist and are referred to as the *Dunlap BroadSides*. Over 200 copies were initially produced by John Dunlap, a printer in Philadelphia, on the night of July 4, 1776, to spread the news of American Independence. This urgent document was sent to colonial leaders, local governments, military officers, and newspapers.

Document Question	Declaration of Independence	U.S. Constitution	Bill of Rights
<p><i>For the exact wording of each document, read the original transcripts or refer to your pocket guide.</i></p>			
What year was it ratified?	1776	1787	1791
Where was it written?	Philadelphia	Philadelphia	New York City
Why was it written?	To formally announce and justify the American colonies' decision to break away from British rule, outlining principles of individual rights and self-governance.	To replace the ineffective Articles of Confederation with a structured, balanced system of government that could govern effectively, unify the states, and protect freedoms.	To protect citizens' freedoms, address government power concerns, fulfill promises made during ratification, and set a precedent for future amendments.
Who wrote it?	Thomas Jefferson	James Madison	James Madison
How many words in the document?	1,458 words (1 page) including signatures	4,543 words (4 pages) including signatures	760 words (1 page)
What is stated in the Preamble of the document?	"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."	"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."	"The Conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added... "

Six other principles of the U.S. Constitution guide our government's structure and function besides protecting individual rights. These principles reflect the framers' intentions to create a government that balances power and promotes the common good. In upcoming units, we will cover these principles in more detail.

1. Checks and Balances

Summary: This principle ensures that no single branch of government can dominate. Each of the three branches has the ability to check the others.

Examples in the Constitution: Presidential veto power in Article 1, Section 7.

2. Separation of Powers

Summary: To prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful, the Constitution divides the federal government into three branches.

Examples in the Constitution: Articles 1, 2, and 3 outlines the responsibilities of the three branches.

3. Popular Sovereignty

Summary: The authority for government originates from the people and they rule through their representatives. Direct democracy actions like *referendums* and *initiatives* embody popular sovereignty. This also includes the concept of *republicanism* where people elect representatives to govern on their behalf.

Examples in the Constitution: The preamble (We the People...) and the Ninth Amendment.

4. Federalism

Summary: The sharing of power between the federal, state, and local governments. In many ways, this is a natural division of functions. Local governments handle local affairs; national affairs by the federal government.

While each of the 50 states has its own constitution, all provisions for state constitutions must comply with the U.S. Constitution.

Examples in the Constitution: The 10th Amendment.

5. Judicial Review

Summary: The judiciary has the power to review laws and government actions to determine if they violate the Constitution.

Examples in the Constitution: While judicial review is not within the text of the Constitution itself, this principle was established in the case of *Marbury v. Madison* (1803).

6. Limited Government

Summary: The government can only exercise the powers granted to it by the Constitution. Everyone, including government officials, is subject to the law.

Examples in the Constitution: The *enumerated powers*, as listed in Article I, Section 8, give specific powers granted to Congress, such as the power to tax, regulate commerce, and declare war. Congress can only exercise powers explicitly listed in the Constitution; all other powers are reserved for the states or the people.

QUESTIONS

WHICH PRINCIPLE? Identify the principle that best describes the following statements. Put the number of the principle(s) listed in the corresponding title box in the space provided (more than one principle may apply).

- ___ 1. Only the federal government can print money.
- ___ 2. Congress passes a law that the president then vetoes.
- ___ 3. The government gets its power from the people.
- ___ 4. The president must follow the law.
- ___ 5. The Senate confirms a presidential nomination.
- ___ 6. A referendum to build a new school is passed by the voters of your city.
- ___ 7. The Supreme Court declares a law unconstitutional.
- ___ 8. Congress can impeach a president if they believe powers were abused.
- ___ 9. A representative holds a town hall meeting on banning plastic bags to get voters' opinions.

The Principles

that were used to form our U.S. Constitution



These principles have contributed to making the Constitution the most powerful document of our nation.

Checks and Balances

Separation of Powers

Popular Sovereignty

Federalism

Judicial Review

Limited Government

These principles have made the Constitution the most powerful document and guideline for our nation. They work together to balance power, ensure accountability, and protect individual rights within the framework of the government.

You will learn more about these concepts in upcoming units.

Senate vs. House

Although both chambers have similar responsibilities, the Founding Fathers assigned each group specific duties. Constitutional powers were granted to both, resulting in distinct and separate functions. The Senate has fewer members than the House and possesses unique powers, such as approving presidential appointments and treaties. The House must initiate all revenue bills, and both are involved in the impeachment process.

Senate	Quick Comparison	House
100	<i>Number of Members</i>	435
6 years	<i>Length of Terms</i>	2 years
30	<i>Minimum Age</i>	25
Republicans	<i>Majority</i>	Republicans
Limited debate, limits on floor amendments allowed	<i>Procedures</i>	Unlimited debate, filibuster allowed
Equal (2 per state)	<i>Representation</i>	By Population
Larger, entire state	<i>Constituencies</i>	Smaller, by districts
More prestige	<i>Prestige</i>	Less prestige
foreign policy	<i>Policy Focus</i>	tax and revenue

Congress always serves two, not always compatible, purposes—representation and lawmaking. Members of the House and Senate serve individual districts or states, yet they must cooperate to make law. Collective action on divisive issues entails bargaining and compromise—among the members of each house, thus using their power.

The Census

Article 1 of the Constitution requires that our country's *census* (count) be taken every ten years. The census most recently took place in 2020, with the next census taking place in 2030. This count is managed by a government agency called the *U.S. Bureau of the Census*. The census serves many purposes. The three most important are:

1. The census tells us about the makeup of our large American population and how the government and businesses might serve the population. State and local governments will use this information to plan for schools, hospitals, roads, and more.
2. It tells the federal government how federal money should be divided between states and local areas.
3. The government uses this information to outline voting districts in each state and decide how many state and U.S. representatives each state receives. An adjustment to legislative districts based on population change is called *reapportionment*. Reapportionment leads to redistricting, the redrawing of congressional district boundaries.

The 2020 final census numbers show America continuing the population shift from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West, a trend that will shape

Congress for the next decade. The political power in the industrial belt stretching from New York to Illinois lost seats in Congress while Sun Belt states such as Florida, North Carolina, and Texas gained them. California lost a seat for the first time.

QUESTIONS

SENATE/HOUSE COMPARISON. Fill in the blank with *Senate (S)*, *House (H)*, *both (B)* or *neither (N)*.

- ___ 1. Approves or rejects treaties.
- ___ 2. Starts all revenue bills.
- ___ 3. Passes bills they hope will become laws.
- ___ 4. Designed to favor small states.
- ___ 5. Are elected by the people of the entire state.
- ___ 6. The speaker is the chief officer.
- ___ 7. Approve nominations made by the president.
- ___ 8. The vice president is the presiding officer.
- ___ 9. Bring impeachment charges against an official.
- ___ 10. Serves as the jury in cases of impeachment.
- ___ 11. Meet in the Capitol Building.
- ___ 12. Vacancies are filled by appointment from the state governor.
- ___ 13. The census affects the number per state.
- ___ 14. May be reelected an unlimited number of times.
- ___ 15. Elected from districts in the state.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH BY THE NUMBERS.

Choose the correct number from the bank that matches the statement.

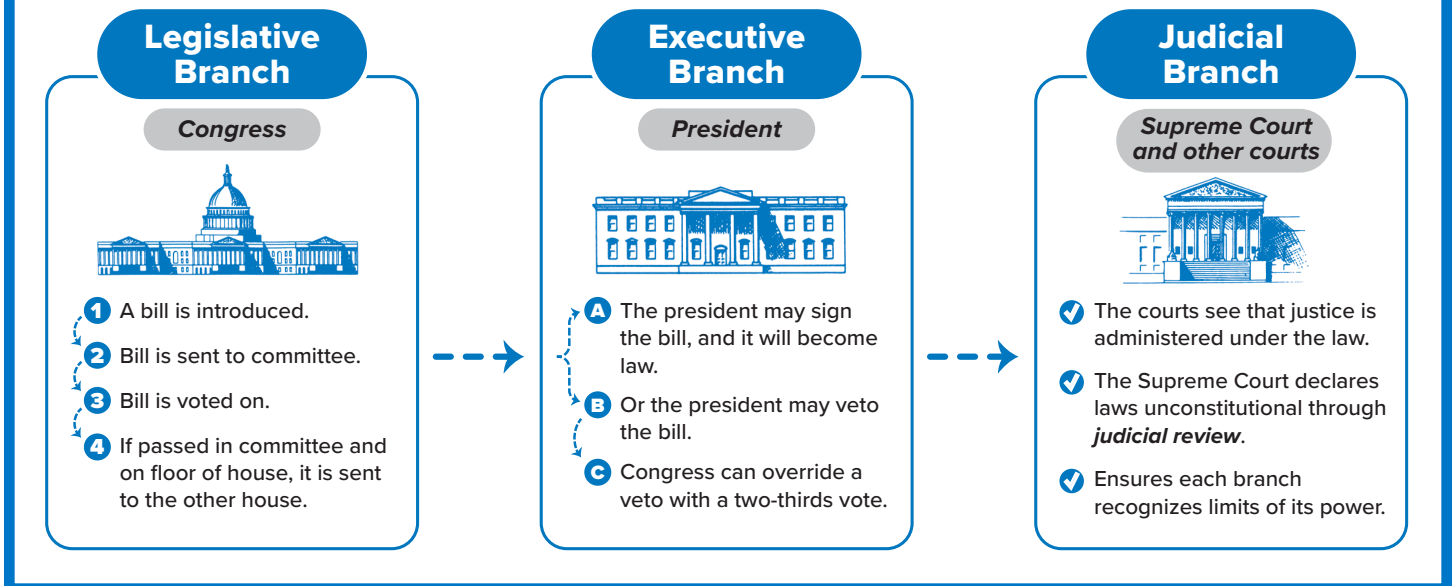
Number Bank: 1, 2, 4, 6, 12, 25, 27, 30, 100, 435

- ___ Total number of U.S. senators in Congress.
- ___ Total number of U.S. representatives in Congress.
- ___ The article that discusses the legislative branch.
- ___ Per this amendment, Congress is prohibited from from increasing their pay during a term.
- ___ House members are elected every ___ years.
- ___ Senators serve a term of ___ years.
- ___ The amendment that gives the House the responsibility to select a president if necessary.
- ___ Minimum age to be a U.S. Senator.
- ___ Minimum age to be a U.S. Representative.

EXPRESS YOUR OPINION

A senator said, "A legislator should listen to everyone affected by a bill before voting on it." Should a legislator always vote the way he or she feels is best? Or should legislators vote according to what most people in their state or district want? What do you think?

Lawmaking and the Three Branches



After Congress (legislative branch) passes a bill and the president (executive branch) signs it, the president must enforce the law. The courts (judicial branch) then interpret and administer justice under it. 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 governments.

The federal government is responsible for some types of laws, such as those about national defense, currency, interstate commerce, patents, and so forth. 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

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 is the only time they will see each other until late that evening.
- 8:00 a.m.** Trip to the office to review 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 crucial committee assignment, may discuss new allegations of concern with 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 or 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 concerning a defense bill with other lawmakers.
- 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, he or she reads hometown newspapers and social media topics and works on a speech to be delivered the next day.

How the Federal Government and States Divide Powers

The Constitution says . . .



Certain powers belong to the federal government

Delegated powers

Expressed or enumerated powers

- Regulate foreign and interstate commerce
- Conduct foreign relations
- Print, coin, and issue money
- Maintain armed forces
- Pass a federal budget
- Declare war
- Govern U.S. territories
- Grant patents and copyrights
- Establish naturalization laws

Implied powers

- Set a federal minimum wage
- Establish federal aid policies
- Regulate airline industry
- Control immigration
- Regulate social media
- Establish a military draft
- Pass gun control laws



Certain powers belong to the state governments

Reserved powers

- Establish local governments
- Establish and maintain schools
- Provide for state militia
- Conduct elections
- Set qualifications for voters
- Regulate business, labor, and trade within the state
- Make marriage laws
- Permit forms of gambling or a lottery
- Assume other powers not delegated to the national government nor prohibited to the states



Certain powers are shared by both governments

Concurrent powers

- Tax
- Establish courts
- Promote agriculture and industry
- Borrow money
- Charter banks
- Protect public health, safety, and welfare
- Define crimes and set punishments



Certain powers are prohibited by both governments

- The personal rights of citizens of the United States, as listed in the **Bill of Rights** and in state constitutions, cannot be reduced or destroyed by the federal or the state governments.
- Certain specific prohibitions in the Constitution itself, such as no title of nobility, no **ex post facto laws**, no duty on exports, no bill of attainder, etc.

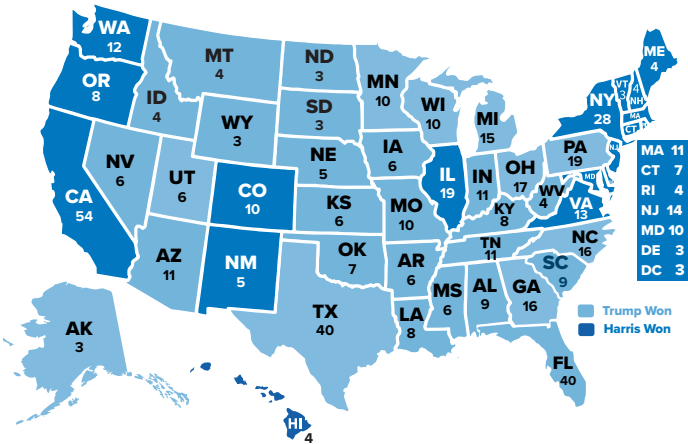
The first ten amendments to the Constitution

Congress cannot pass a law that retroactively creates a crime where none existed before.

Presidential Election 2024

The voters elected Donald Trump as the 47th president of the United States. Trump's victory over Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential election marks a historic comeback for the former president, who left office in 2021 after losing the 2020 election to Joe Biden. Trump's message on the economy and immigration ultimately resonated with enough Americans. Trump swept to a decisive victory by winning several crucial battleground states. Trump's 2024 win marks the third straight presidential election in which voters have thrown out the *incumbent* party. On January 20, 2025, the 45th president of the United States became the 47th at an inauguration at the US Capitol. Trump will not be eligible for reelection in 2028 because of the 22nd Amendment.

Candidate	Popular Vote	States Won	Electoral Votes
Trump	77,193,105	31	312
Harris	74,898,009	19 + DC	226



The Constitution and Elections

The United States Constitution sets up the basic rules for how federal elections work. It explains how officials are elected or appointed in the three branches of government. The Constitution includes different ways to choose some officials, varied term lengths, and specific age requirements. The president is elected in a similar way to senators and House members, but as we have learned the Electoral College—not the people—actually decides who becomes president.

Both the Senate and the House are elected by the people. Senators are chosen by all voters in the state, while House representatives are elected by voters from specific areas of the state. Federal judges are not elected by the public. The accompanying chart shows the different methods the Constitution uses to select government officials.

How do we elect government officials?

	CONGRESS		PRESIDENT	SUPREME COURT
	HOUSE	SENATE		
<i>How Chosen</i>	Elected	Elected	Elected	Appointed by President
<i>Term of Office</i>	2 Years	6 Years	4 Years	Life or Retirement
<i>Age Req't.</i>	25 Years old	30 Years old	35 Years old	None

This chart shows that the Constitution affects elected officials' selection, the terms they serve, and the minimum age requirements.

Every Vote Counts

Millions of Americans fulfill their civic duty by voting on Election Day, with many choosing to vote early or by mail. Counting these votes can take days or even weeks, so it is important to be patient. Every vote matters, and accuracy in counting is crucial.

Though we may hope for results on election night, some states may take longer, and certain races can be "too close to call." Premature victory claims can mislead the public and undermine trust in our electoral process. Even if reports say "100% of precincts are reporting," election workers may still be processing thousands of ballots.

The canvassing and certification process by county election boards can take weeks, and results must be certified by the state board or secretary of state before they are finalized. These essential steps ensure that our elections are secure and accurate. Ultimately, we must accept the results, whatever they may be, as voters determine the outcome of our elections.

Frederick Douglass (1818-1895)

Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in Maryland and became a leader in the fight against slavery. He was the first African American to hold a high U.S. government position and advised presidents. In 1872, he was nominated as the first Black vice presidential candidate for Victoria Woodhull. At the 1888 Republican National Convention, he was the first African American on a presidential ticket, but he did not actively campaign and he was likely nominated without his consent.



QUESTIONS

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

- ___ 1. Each state receives ten electoral votes.
- ___ 2. The Constitution states that all government officials must be elected.
- ___ 3. Donald Trump won both the electoral and popular votes in 2024.
- ___ 4. All election races must be declared within three days after the Election Day.
- ___ 5. You can still become president even if you do not win the most electoral votes.

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.

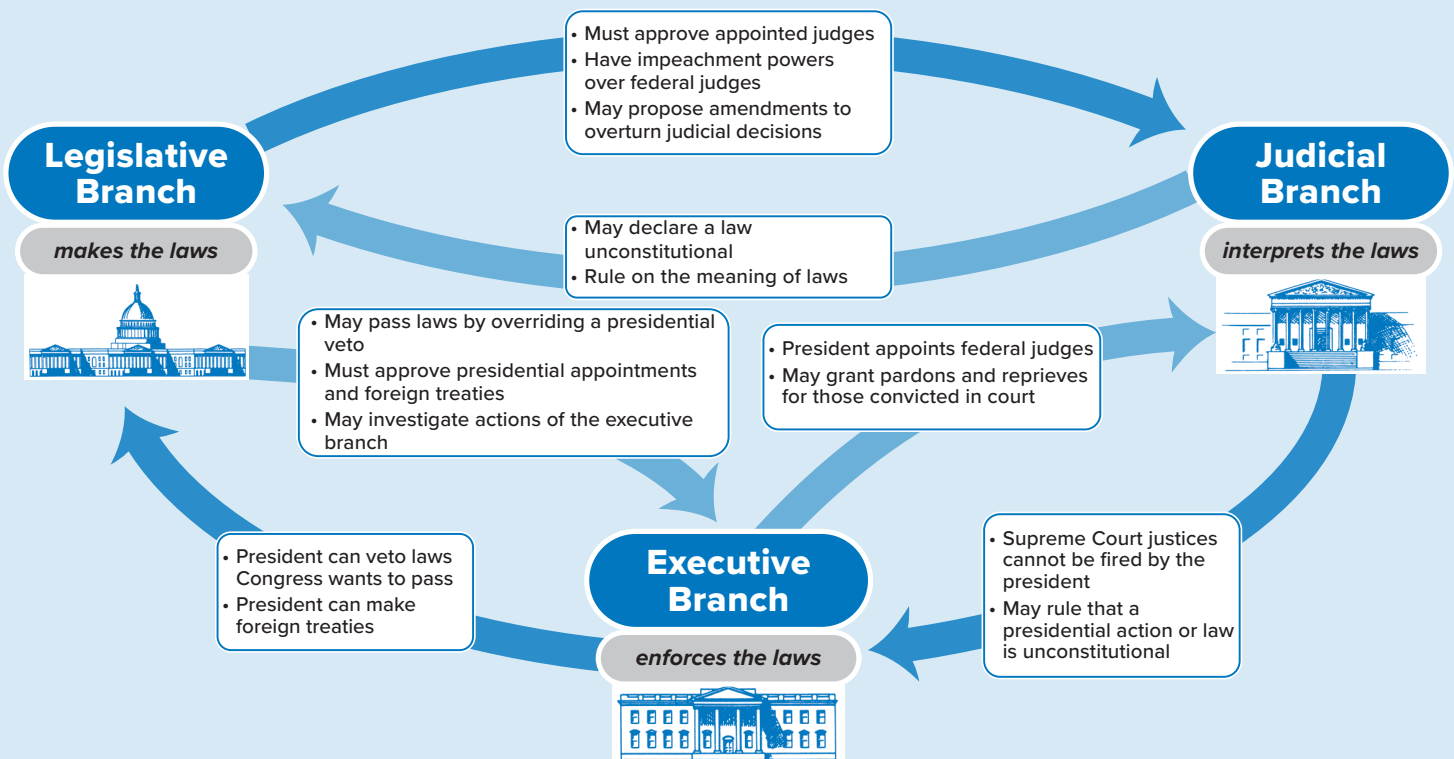
There are other checks and balances in the American government besides those between branches of government. They include:

Checks in Congress

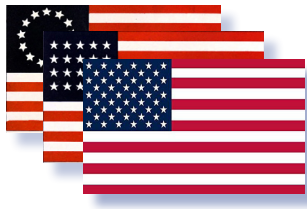
The Senate and House can check each other by rejecting bills passed by the other. The House has the added check of sole power to start revenue bills.

continued

A System of Checks and Balances



On June 14, 1777, less than a year after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the Continental Congress adopted the *Stars and Stripes* as the flag of the United States. Original plans



to provide a new star and a new stripe for each new state proved impractical, and it was decided that only a new star would be added with each new state. Today, our flag retains 13 stripes in honor of the 13 original colonies and 50 stars, one for each of the 50 states.

We look upon our flag as a symbol of union, freedom, and justice. Historically, the red of the flag stands for courage, the white for liberty, the blue for loyalty. The number of stars shows our nation's growth, and the flag is not only an emblem but a history of our country, as well.

It should be important to all Americans to fly the flag from their homes on national holidays and other patriotic occasions. When we pledge allegiance to our flag, it is not a pledge to any person or political party, but the United States Constitution and its ideals.

When the flag passes in a parade or during the ceremony of raising or lowering the flag, all persons present should face the flag, stand at attention and salute, and men should remove their hats.

The Pledge of Allegiance

Thirty-one words that affirm the values and freedom the American flag represents are recited while facing the flag as a pledge of Americans' loyalty to their country.

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Flag Code Rules

All Americans should treat the country's flag with respect and follow established conduct in the use and display. Some of the main points of the flag code are shown here. Consult a copy of the complete code, found in your library or on the internet, when you have other questions about the flag.

- The flag should be flown only from sunrise to sunset.
- The flag should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.
- When displayed against the wall, the union should be on top and to the flag's right, your left.
- The flag may be used to cover a casket, but should not be lowered into the ground.
- In a procession, the flag should always be in the front.
- When shown with flags of states or other groups, the flag should be in the center and highest.

- When shown with flags of other nations, the American flag should not be flown higher than others.
- The flag should never be used as a cover.
- The flag should be displayed daily and especially on national holidays.
- The exact likeness of the flag should never be used for advertising.
- Nothing should be attached to the flag.
- The flag should never be allowed to touch the ground or floor, not be used as a carrying device, nor brush against any objects, nor be used as a drapery of any sort.
- Worn flags should be burned and not thrown in the trash.
- On a speaker's platform, the flag should be displayed at the right if it is on a staff or on the wall behind the speaker if it is flat.
- Flags flown from fixed staffs are placed at half staff to indicate mourning. The flag so used should be first raised to the peak and then lowered to half-staff; it is again raised to the peak before lowering.

Contrary to popular belief, the flag code is not a law with penalties. It is a guide for American citizens on the best etiquette for displaying and honoring the American flag. The Supreme Court has ruled that even those who desecrate the flag by burning or mutilating the flag are merely exercising their rights of free speech and cannot be prosecuted. However, most Americans heed the flag code and treat it very seriously.

From our independence in 1776 until today, many Americans have fought for and died to preserve the ideals of democracy represented by the flag.

Who Designed the Flag?

Did Betsy Ross design the flag? Probably not. Historians have been unable to find solid evidence that Betsy was involved in either making or designing the flag. Best guess as who did? Probably Francis Hopkinson, a naval flag designer, who billed Congress for that service in 1781.

QUESTIONS

1. What do the stars of the flag stand for? _____
2. What do the stripes of the flag stand for? _____
3. What does the red of the flag stand for? _____
4. What does the blue of the flag stand for? _____

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

- ___ 1. Worn flags should be burned, not put in the trash.
- ___ 2. The flag should be used to advertise only if the products advertised are in good taste.
- ___ 3. The flag should be in the rear of a procession and centered.
- ___ 4. The flag should be flown only on holidays.
- ___ 5. The flag can be displayed on public buildings.

MATCHING - Three Branches of Government

Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| _____ 21. Has two houses | a. Executive Branch |
| _____ 22. Is the court system of our country | b. Legislative Branch |
| _____ 23. Makes the laws | c. Judicial Branch |
| _____ 24. Enforces the laws | |
| _____ 25. Described in Article 1 of the Constitution | |
| _____ 26. Described in Article 3 of the Constitution | |

MATCHING - The United States Congress

Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| _____ 27. Has a six-year term | a. Senate |
| _____ 28. Meet in the Capitol Building | b. House of Representatives |
| _____ 29. Elected every two years | c. Both the Senate and House |
| _____ 30. Has the vice president as presiding officer | d. Neither the Senate nor the House |
| _____ 31. Has 435 members | |
| _____ 32. Approves or rejects treaties | |
| _____ 33. Passes bills they hope will become laws | |
| _____ 34. Has 100 members | |

MATCHING - Cabinet Responsibilities

Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| _____ 35. Chief legal officer | a. Secretary of State |
| _____ 36. Manages Social Security | b. Secretary of Defense |
| _____ 37. Carries out a war plan | c. Secretary of Health & Human Services |
| _____ 38. Settles a strike | d. Attorney General |
| _____ 39. Foreign affairs | e. Secretary of Labor |
| _____ 40. Secret Service | f. Secretary of Homeland Security |

TRUE OR FALSE

Write a T or F in the space provided.

- _____ 41. The Virginia Plan proposed two houses of Congress based on population.
- _____ 42. The simple definition of democracy is government by the people, directly or through representation.
- _____ 43. Senators are elected by the vote of the people in their state.
- _____ 44. One-third of the Senate is elected every two years.
- _____ 45. The largest U.S. state is Texas (in terms of population) receiving the most electoral votes.
- _____ 46. The Constitution allows for laws to be made on subjects that did not even exist in 1787.
- _____ 47. The original 13 colonies included Kentucky.
- _____ 48. Your state legislature has the same lawmaking scope as the U.S. Congress.
- _____ 49. Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty or give me death."
- _____ 50. Habeas corpus gives a prisoner the right to a fair trial.
- _____ 51. Ben Franklin was president of the Constitutional Convention in 1787.
- _____ 52. The building in which the Constitutional Convention met is called Independence Hall.
- _____ 53. The Declaration of Independence was the nation's first Constitution.

continued