



Branches of Government

There are three branches of the US federal government: Legislative, Executive



Legislative

The legislative branch is made up of the House and Senate, known collectively as the Congress.

The Constitution grants Congress the sole authority to enact legislation and declare war, the right to confirm or reject many Presidential appointments, and substantial investigative powers.

The House of Representatives is made up of 435 elected members, divided among the 50 states in proportion to their total population.

In addition, there are 6 non-voting members, representing the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and four other territories of the United States: American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

The presiding officer of the chamber is the Speaker of the House, elected by the Representatives. The Speaker of the House is third in the line of succession to the Presidency.

Members of the House are elected every two years and must be 25 years of age, a U.S. citizen for at least seven years, and a resident of the state (but not necessarily the district) they represent.

The House has several powers assigned exclusively to it, including the power to initiate revenue bills, impeach federal officials, and elect the President in the case of an Electoral College tie.

The Senate is composed of 100 Senators, 2 for each state. Senators are elected to six-year terms by the people of each state.

Senators' terms are staggered so that about one-third of the Senate is up for reelection every two years.

Senators must be 30 years of age, U.S. citizens for at least nine years, and residents of the state they represent.

The Vice President of the United States serves as President of the Senate and may cast the decisive vote in the event of a tie in the Senate.

The Senate has the sole power to confirm those of the President's appointments that require consent, and to provide advice and consent to ratify treaties.

There are, however, two exceptions to this rule: The House must also approve appointments to the Vice Presidency and any treaty that involves foreign trade.

The Senate also tries impeachment cases for federal officials referred to it by the House.

In order to pass legislation and send it to the President for his or her signature, both the House and the Senate must pass the same bill by majority vote.

If the President vetoes a bill, they may override his veto by passing the bill again in each chamber with at least two-thirds of each body voting in favor.



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Executive

The executive branch consists of the President, his or her advisors and various departments and agencies.

The Executive Branch is vested in the President of the United States, who also acts as head of state and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.

The President is responsible for implementing and enforcing the laws written by Congress and, to that end, appoints the heads of the federal agencies, including the Cabinet.

The Vice President is also part of the Executive Branch, ready to assume the Presidency should the need arise.

The Cabinet and independent federal agencies are responsible for the day-to-day enforcement and administration of federal laws.

Including members of the armed forces, the Executive Branch employs more than 4 million Americans.



Judicial

The judicial branch consists of the U.S. Supreme Court and the Federal Judicial Center.

Members of the Judicial Branch are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

The Supreme Court of the United States is the highest court in the land and the only part of the federal judiciary specifically required by the Constitution.

All Justices are nominated by the President, confirmed by the Senate, and hold their offices under life tenure.

Federal courts enjoy the sole power to interpret the law, determine the constitutionality of the law, and apply it to individual cases.