

# The American Government

## The Legislative Branch

This branch has two groups. One is the House of Representatives. It is called the House for short. The other is the Senate. Together, they form Congress. Congress has leaders from each state. They make laws.

The House is the larger group. Each state sends people to the House. Big states send more people. Small states send fewer people. So big states have more power.

The Senate also has leaders from every state. They each send two people. Every state has equal power.



## The Executive Branch

The president leads this branch. He or she enforces laws. This is a big job. About four million people work for this branch!

The president runs America. He or she must follow the rules. The rules are in the U.S. Constitution. The president can't pass new laws alone. Congress has to create the laws. Then the laws can be passed. This is a rule.

Presidents represent America to the world. They travel a lot! They tour the world. Other leaders meet with them. They try to keep the peace. They make plans for the future.

The president works with Congress to make laws. Congress passes bills. This is an idea for a law. The president sees each bill. He or she might sign it. Then the bill is a law. But the president may choose not to sign it. Then, it is sent back to Congress. Maybe the bill needs to be changed. Or, the president may veto the bill. A *veto* means the bill is rejected. Vetoes keep Congress from having too much power. It is part of checks and balances.



## The Judicial Branch

The Supreme Court leads this branch. It is the highest court in the country. It is in charge of all other courts. The Supreme Court hears the biggest cases in America. It listens to people who do not agree. It decides what laws mean. This is called a *ruling*. All courts must follow what the Supreme Court says. What it says becomes law.

The Supreme Court tries to treat all people fairly. Its judges have a special name. They are called *justices*. They hear about 100 cases a year. Their rulings are based on the laws.

The justices work hard. They protect people's rights. They look at laws. They make sure they are fair. It is their job to say how laws work. They might think that a law goes against the Constitution. Or they might think it is unfair. They can get rid of the law. They have the final say. Only one thing can change a ruling made by the Supreme Court. It is an amendment to the Constitution.



**Think About It!**  
What does each branch of the government do?

# The American Government

## The Legislative Branch

The legislative branch is made up of two groups. One group is the House of Representatives, or simply the House. The other group is the Senate. Together, they are known as Congress. Congress is made up of leaders from each state. They make the laws.



The House is much larger than the Senate. Each state sends representatives to the House. Larger states send more people. Smaller states send fewer people. This means that bigger states have more power in the House.

Like the House, the Senate is made up of representatives from each state. But the Senate only has two members from each state. So, each state has the same power in the Senate.

## The Executive Branch

The president leads the executive branch. He or she enforces laws. This is a big job. About four million people work for this branch!



The president makes sure the country runs smoothly. He or she must follow the rules in the U.S. Constitution. For example, the president cannot pass a new law alone. First, Congress has to agree that it should be a law. Then, it can be passed. This is a rule in the Constitution.

The presidents represent the country in world matters. This means that they travel a lot! They tour the world to meet with other leaders. They try to keep the peace. They make plans for the future.

The president works closely with Congress. Congress passes bills. Each bill then goes to the president. He or she may sign the bill. This makes the bill a law. The president can also send the bill back to Congress to be changed. Or the president may veto the bill. A *veto* means the bill is rejected. This keeps Congress from being too powerful. It is part of the checks-and-balances system.

## The Judicial Branch

The Supreme Court leads the judicial branch. It is the highest court in the country. It is in charge of all the courts. The Supreme Court hears the biggest cases in America. It listens to people who do not agree on something. Then, it makes a decision about what the law means. This is called a *ruling*. All courts must follow what the Supreme Court says. Its rulings become the law.

The Supreme Court tries to treat all people fairly. The Supreme Court judges are called *justices*. They choose about 100 cases to hear each year. They make rulings based on the U.S. Constitution.

The Supreme Court justices work hard to protect people's rights. They look at laws to make sure they are fair. It is the job of the Supreme Court to say how the law works. If they think a law goes against the U.S. Constitution or is unfair, it is thrown out. They have the final say on the law. Only an amendment to the U.S. Constitution can change a ruling made by the Supreme Court. An amendment is a change to the U.S. Constitution.



**Think About It!**  
How do Congress and the president work together to create laws?

# The American Government

## The Legislative Branch

The legislative branch is made up of two groups: the House of Representatives (or simply the House) and the Senate. Together, they are known as Congress and are made up of leaders from each state. They create laws for the United States.



The House is much larger than the Senate. Each of the fifty states sends representatives to the House. States with larger populations send more people, and states with smaller populations send fewer people. This means the more populous states have more power in the House.

Like the House, the Senate is made up of representatives from each state, but the Senate only has two members from each state. This means each state has the same power in the Senate.

## The Executive Branch

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### Think About It!

The checks-and-balances system is used to keep each branch from getting too powerful. Do you think this is important? What might happen if this system did not exist?