

The Constitution of the USA - and it's three branches

Task:

Listen to the experts and fill in the sheet.

Expert Group I: The Constitution

Main aims: -protects the citizens of the United States
 -guarantees their basic rights
 -create a government that would be powerful enough to run the country
 -created the Balance of Power between the three branches of government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial.

Two compromises:

first compromises: a Congress of two houses: the Senate with two delegates from each state and the House of Representatives with representation proportionate to the population of each state

second compromises: Each slave would count as three-fifths of a person. Thus, the slaves were represented but not equally.

The Bill of Rights:

The Bill of Rights was added in 1791 to state the rights of the individual against governmental powers.

Freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights are: freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of petition, rights to equal justice, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom and security of citizens.

Later amendments (11-27) concerned for example the rights of citizenship and the voting rights of the Blacks (1865- 1870) and women's suffrage (1920).



Fig.1

Expert Group II: Legislative Branch – Congress

Bicameral legislature:

def. "bicameral legislature"

- The working together and sharing power of the two Chambers of Congress.

Differences of the House of Representatives and the Senate:

| | Senat | House of Representatives |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Number of members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 100 (each State 2) ◦ Elected for 6 years ◦ as often as they want | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 435 (leads to population) ◦ elected every 2 years - 11- |
| requirements to become a member | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 30 years old ◦ Citizen of US. for 9 years ◦ resident of state they represent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 25 years old ◦ Citizen for 7- years O -11- |
| responsibilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Vote on new laws ◦ approve some important appointments ◦ ratify treaties with foreign governments ◦ try Cases of impeachment of federal officers that have been impeached by the house | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ makes & passes federal laws ◦ vote on new laws ◦ All tax & spending bills must start there ◦ Select Vice President if no majority in Electoral College |

The process of making a law:

How to make a law -the legislative Process

1. write a bill
 2. member of Congress present it to Congress
 3. bill go to committee (expert) → rejected, accepted, Changed
 4. Go to Congress
 5. House & Senat debates → Congress vote (need majority of both)
 6. President Sign or veto
- ⇒ If Veto: Congress need 2/3 majority of both

Fig.1 : https://dynaimage.cdn.cnn.com/cnn/c_fill,g_auto,w_1200,h_675,ar_16:9/https%3A%2F%2Fcdn.cnn.com%2Fcontent%2Fassets%2F130306205822-the-bill-of-rights-story-top.jpg (last access: 18 November 2020)

Fig.2: <https://www.zdf.de/assets/20-apdcsau19-09-supreme-court-ginsburg-100~2400x1350?cb=1600538790237> (last access: 18 November 2020)

Expert Group III: Executive Branch – the President

Tasks of the President: = leader of his own party

- head of state, Commander-in-Chief of the US armed forces
- main power: - to sign legislation from Congress into law or to veto it
- Can enforce and implement the laws set in place by congress
- Appoints the head or leaders of the federal agencies and departments
- Other responsibilities: diplomacy with other nations, signing treaties, grant pardons to criminals of federal crimes

Obama:

- first coloured president of the USA
- Middle class background
- After his graduation from Columbia University in New York he first worked as a community Organizer in Chicago

Role of the Vice President and the Cabinet:

- support the president, if he is unable to serve, the vice becomes president
- main job: - to be ready to take over for the president if something should happen to him
- can break a tie in voting in the Senate and advising the president
- construct of more than one person
- Made up of the heads of 15 different departments - must be approved by the Senate
- Role: to advise the president- ex. in Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health, Human Services, Agriculture
- Includes vice pr. heads of executive departments and other high-ranking government officials
- All are nominated by president and have to be approved by simple majority of the Senate - 51 votes (if all 100 vote)

Expert Group IV: Judicial Branch

Structure of Judicial Branch: = made up of judges and courts

- federal judges = appointed by the president and then confirmed by the Senate
- federal courts decide cases concerning the USA as whole
- state courts handle civil suits between private persons
- there is a hierarchy of federal courts in the US
- at the top of the Judicial Branch is the Supreme Court
- federal judges are appointed for life



Fig.2

Supreme Court: = court of final appeal

- court reviews cases that are appealed to it from lower courts
- not all cases that are sent to the Supreme Court are reviewed
- most important function: to protect and interpret the Constitution
- if one side feels that the trial wasn't handled correctly or fairly, they can appeal to a higher court, which may overturn the decision or keep it the same
- there is no appealing a Supreme Court decision

Landmark cases: =important supreme court cases

- decisions made on the cases have a lasting impact on the law and future cases
- change the way the Constitution is interpreted
- lawyers cite landmark cases to prove a point and judges cite them to justify their decisions