

# **Democracy Badge Workshop 2**

**Find out about our country's executive, legislative, and judicial branches**

**April 2021**

# 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.

## Article I.

Section. 1. 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.

Section. 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Representatives and direct Taxes, shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to choose three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania three, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five & South Carolina five, and Georgia three.

The Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.

Section. 3. The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof for six Years, and each Senator shall have one Vote.

Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or otherwise, during the Recess of the Legislature of any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.

# US Constitution

- The US Constitution establishes the framework for our national (federal) government. It separates powers between three branches of government and between the federal government, state governments, and citizens.
- It is called a “living” document because it can be amended, or changed. The Constitution includes instructions on how it can be changed, and has been amended many times since it was written in 1787.
- See the Constitution yourself at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/1667751>.

# Checks and Balances

The three branches of government share power in a system of checks and balances.

To **check** means to **slow something down** or to block progress.

The idea is that one branch can prevent the other two branches from becoming too powerful. Checks and balances exist in our city, state, and national governments.

# Examples of Checks and Balances

Congress has the “**power of the purse**”. If Congress does not want the President to do something, they can stop paying for it.

The two houses of Congress check each other. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives have to pass a bill in order for it to become a law.

The president can prevent a bill from becoming a law by vetoing it. A **veto** is a refusal to sign a bill.

The Supreme Court and other federal courts have the power of **judicial review**: they can throw out laws they think are unconstitutional and prevent the president from taking an action.

# Legislative Branch



The Capitol

- The legislative branch of the United States is called **Congress**. It is responsible for writing laws. It's made of two houses: the **Senate** and the **House of Representatives**.
- US citizens elect two senators from their state and one representative for the state House district they live in. Every state has two senators in the Senate but a different number of representatives in the House.
- Who are your Senators and Representative?
  - Find out at <https://www.congress.gov>. Look for “Contact Your Member”.

# Group Activity: Let's Legislate.

*Suggested for Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadettes*

Let's review "How a Bill Becomes a Law" in the Juniors badge booklet.

Then YOU will play the role of the Congress. Follow the steps to propose a bill, debate it, and vote.

Your troop volunteer will play the role of President. She gets to approve or veto the bill.

If she vetoes it, will you have the votes to override the veto?

*We need a volunteer to take notes, tally votes, and write a summary of the discussion for our newsletter.*



A Recommended Bill:  
**Proposing the Cicada replace the  
Bald Eagle as our national symbol**

# Judicial Branch



*The Supreme Court*

- The federal judiciary is made up of
  - Trial courts, which hear civil or criminal cases
  - Appeals courts, which review decisions from trial courts
  - The Supreme Court, which reviews decisions from the appeals courts
- Justices (judges) in the courts are appointed for life by the president and approved by the Senate.
- The Supreme Court is the court of **last resort**: decisions made here are final and become the law of the land.
- Find out more at <https://www.supremecourt.gov>.

# Activity: Talk to a judge.

*Suggested for Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadettes*

Let's learn more about the judicial branch by contacting a judge.

Make a list of questions. For example:

What is a typical day like for a judge?

How does the judicial branch work with the other two branches of government?

What's the difference between the Supreme Court and local courts?

How does a case make it to the Supreme Court?

What other questions do we have?

*We need a volunteer to find a judge in the Tennessee Blue Book and draft a polite letter.*

*Your troop volunteer will help you send the letter.*



# Executive Branch

*The White House*

- The executive branch of the United States is made up of the President, Vice President, advisors, departments, and agencies. This branch enforces laws and adds detail to the laws with regulations. The President is the head of the government and of the armed forces.
- There are many departments and agencies in the execute department. Some departments include:
  - [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)
  - [U.S. Department of Defense](#)
  - [U.S. Department of Education](#)
  - [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)
  - [U.S. Department of Justice](#)
  - [U.S. Department of Transportation](#)
  - [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#)
- If you have a family member in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard, that family member is part of the executive branch.

# Activity: Can the president do that?

*Suggested for Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadettes*

Here are some powers in our federal government.

Can the president do them?

If not, who can?

- Make a federal tax or law
- Sign or veto a federal law
- Be the leader of the US military (army, navy, etc.)
- Declare war
- Add a new state to the country
- Find a person guilty of a crime
- Refuse to enforce a law
- Pick federal judges
- Approve federal judges

**What should we name our newsletter?  
Let's vote on it.**

Here are two suggestions. Do you have a suggestion?

**Daughters of Democracy  
Chicks and Balances**

## **Photos**

- The US Constitution, <https://catalog.archives.gov/OpaAPI/media/1667751/content/arcmedia/congress/00303.pdf>
- The Capitol, [https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/sites/default/files/documents/resources-and-activities/Capitol\\_ActivityBooklet.pdf](https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/sites/default/files/documents/resources-and-activities/Capitol_ActivityBooklet.pdf)
- The Supreme Court, <https://www.supremecourt.gov/visiting/images/VisitingtheCourt.jpg>
- The White House, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/about\\_the\\_white\\_house.jpg](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/about_the_white_house.jpg)