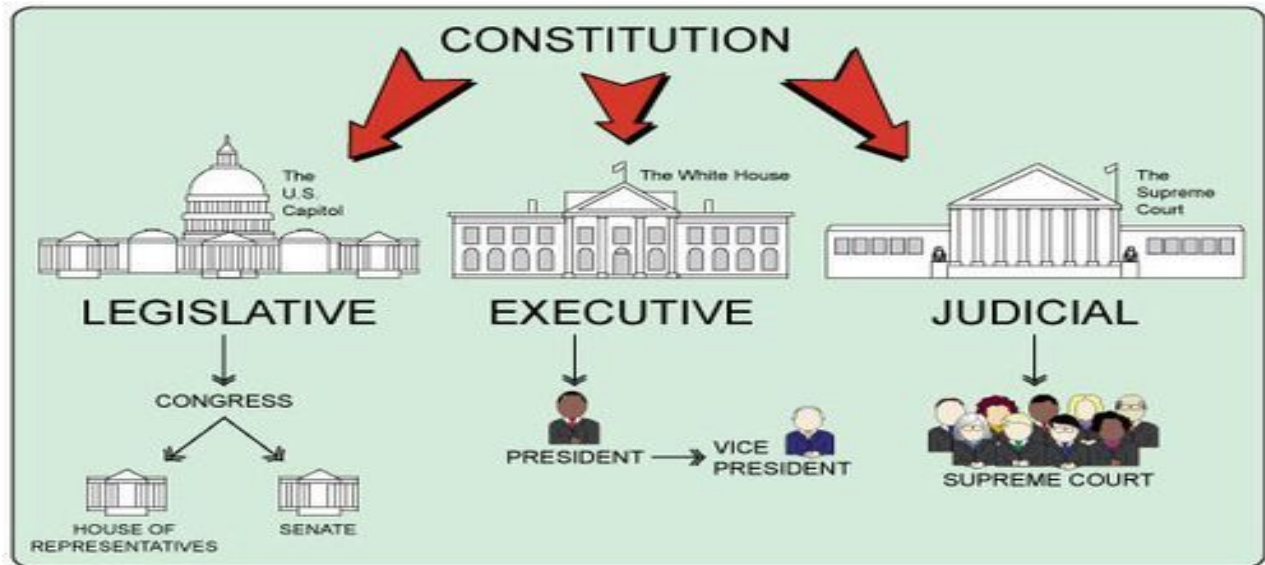


## Three Branches of the US Government



The **Three Branches of Government** include the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branches. Each branch has a special role in the function of the United States government and the running of the country. The three branches were established by the U.S. Constitution to separate the powers of government.




The **Legislative Branch** includes the Senate and the House of Representatives. The **Senate** is made up of 100 senators, two from each state, elected by its citizens. Each senator serves six-year terms, but may serve consecutive terms. The Vice-President is the head of the Senate and only votes if there is a tie among the Senators. The Senate also approves nominations by the President to Cabinet, Supreme Court, federal courts and other positions. All **treaties** (agreements made with other countries) must be approved by a two-thirds vote.

The **House of Representatives** is made up of 435 elected officials elected from each of the 50 states with a number from each state based on the state's population. They are elected by its citizens and serves 2-year terms, and may also serve consecutive terms. The leader of the House is called the Speaker of the House and is elected by the representatives. Both the Senate and the

House of Representatives must vote and ratify bills for them to become laws. They may also override Presidential vetoes of the laws that were passed.

The **Executive Branch** includes the President as the leader of the country, as well as the Vice-President. He or she is elected by the entire country to a 4-year term and may serve only two terms in office. The President approves and carries out laws passed by the Legislative Branch, though may also veto laws. The President also appoints or removes cabinet members, who are considered assistants to the President offer advice on running the country. They include the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Secretary of Homeland Security and several others. The leader of the country also negotiates treaties, acts as head of state for the country, and is the commander of chief of the armed forces.

The **Judicial Branch** includes the Supreme Court, nine judges, who oversees the U.S. court system. The court consists of eight judges or justices, plus one chief justice, and there are no term limits; some justices serve until they die. They are nominated by the President, and approved by the Senate. The Supreme Court's responsibilities include explaining the meaning of the Constitution and laws, deciding whether something is constitutional or unconstitutional, meaning it is permitted or not permitted. They often decide new ways of interpreting a law, decides court cases, and settle court cases between 2 or more states.

<p><b>Executive Branch</b> (President carries out laws)</p> 	<p><b>Checks on the Legislative Branch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can propose laws</li> <li>• Can veto laws</li> <li>• Can call special sessions of Congress</li> <li>• Makes appointments</li> <li>• Negotiates foreign treaties</li> </ul>	<p><b>Checks on the Judicial Branch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appoints federal judges</li> <li>• Can grant pardons to federal offenders</li> </ul>
<p><b>Legislative Branch</b> (Congress makes laws)</p> 	<p><b>Checks on the Executive Branch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can override President's veto</li> <li>• Confirms executive appointments</li> <li>• Ratifies treaties</li> <li>• Can declare war</li> <li>• Appropriates money</li> <li>• Can impeach and remove President</li> </ul>	<p><b>Checks on the Judicial Branch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates lower federal courts</li> <li>• Can impeach and remove judges</li> <li>• Can propose amendments to overrule judicial decisions</li> <li>• Approves appointments of federal judges</li> </ul>
<p><b>Judicial Branch</b> (Supreme Court interprets laws)</p> 	<p><b>Checks on the Executive Branch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can declare executive actions unconstitutional</li> </ul>	<p><b>Checks on the Legislative Branch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can declare acts of Congress unconstitutional</li> </ul>

In 1787, the writers of the Constitution did not want one person or a group of people to have complete power over the country and its citizens. The states' leaders wanted a national government that was strong, but also fair. They wanted individual freedoms

protected, as well as preventing the government from abusing its powers. The Three Branches of

Government is a system of **checks and balances** used to prevent this from occurring. This helps to make sure the power is shared by each branch.

The three branches of the government are expected to work together, cooperate, and do what is best for the citizens of the country. Each person in the government is elected by its citizens who must trust the leaders to manage the country as best as possible.

### Questions

1) Which of the following includes a total of 535 representatives of the people?

**A:** Legislative Branch

**B:** Executive Branch

**C:** Senate

**D:** House of Representatives

2) Which of the following representatives of the U.S. serve two-year terms?

**A:** Senate

**B:** House

**C:** President

**D:** Justices

3) Which of the following are nominated by the President and approved by the Senate?

**A:** House of Representatives

**B:** Senators

**C:** Supreme Court justices

**D:** Vice-Presidents

4) Which of the following branches of government interpret laws and decides court cases?

**A:** Legislative Branch

**B:** Executive Branch

**C:** Judicial Branch

**D:** All of the above

5) Which of the following is head of the Senate?

**A:** Vice-President

**B:** President

**C:** Speaker

**D:** Justice

6) Which of the following is used to make sure power is shared by the branches of government and prevents abuse of power?

A: Supreme Court decisions

B: Checks and balances

C: House of Representative votes

D: Senate debates



### **How British Parliament Actually Works**

The United Kingdom is both a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. A Parliamentary democracy is government which is voted into power by the people, to act on their behalf. A Constitutional Monarchy is a situation where in a monarch, in this case, Queen Elizabeth II, is politically impartial and has limited powers. Parliament is composed of the

House of Lords and the House of Commons. Government is formed by the current Political Party in power, and they pick a Prime Minister.



### **Primary functions of Parliament**

Government is formed by the political party that received the majority of votes in the last General Election. Parliament serves three major functions in government. It provides scrutiny and oversight of the government, examining

and challenging the work of the government. It debates and passes legislation. Finally, parliament enables the government to raise or lower taxes.

### **Scrutiny of the Government**

Scrutiny is investigation and challenging of the work of the government which Parliament does on behalf of the UK citizens. Both the House of Commons and House of Lords use similar methods of scrutiny. The most common methods are: questioning government ministers either orally or in writing, debate and investigation through committees. The government reserves the right to explain and defend decisions and policies made. The Prime Minister answers questions every Wednesday. In the Lords, governments may be questioned by the House at the start of each business day. Government Departments do not have scheduled questioning days and are dealt with ad-hoc.

### **Debating Legislation**

Debates in the House of Commons look at creation and amendments of laws, as well as any national or international issues. The House of Commons often vote to ascertain which laws and proposals have support. In the House of Lords, one day per week is assigned for general debate. Short debates take place most days. The House of Lords do not vote on debate topics.

### **Committees**

Committees are comprised of a small group of Members of Parliament (MPs) and Lords. These committees look at specific policies or legislation. Several committees may be created for each specific issues, appropriated with specific parts of an issue to investigate, make legislation changes, or advise.

### **New Legislation**

Proposed legislation is called a Bill. Bills that are more political or controversial generally begin in the House of Commons. New legislation can be introduced by an MP, Lord or member of a public or private group. All proposed new legislation must be debated and voted on by both Houses for a law to be passed. When both Houses vote in favor of a bill, it becomes law as Royal Assent is automatically given.

### **Legislation Exceptions**

If the House of Lords votes down a bill, the House of Commons can pass a bill in two successive years it becomes law without the House of Lords' approval. Bills regarding money, raising taxes or authorizing government expenditures, are not opposed in the House of Lords and may only be delayed for a month.

### **Questions**

- 1.) The United Kingdom is both a \_\_\_\_\_ democracy and \_\_\_\_\_ monarchy.
- 2.) What is a parliamentary democracy?
- 3.) What is a constitutional monarchy?
- 4.) Parliament is composed of the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5.) What does the largest political party in Parliament get to choose?
- 6.) What is the primary function of the Parliament?
- 7.) How does the British Parliament pass a bill.

## **Bill of Rights**

The first ten amendments to the United States Constitution are known as the **Bill of Rights**. They were created on September 25th, 1789 and put into effect on December 15th, 1791. They were made to help ease **Anti-Federalists**, people who were opposed to large government in the United States. The Bill of Rights guarantees certain freedoms and rights to every American citizen, as well as setting limits to the government's power judicially (court). It also establishes that any power not stated in the Bill of Rights is left to the States to decide.

The Bill of Rights were based heavily on earlier documents, such as the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the English Bill of Rights (1689). They were introduced on July 8th, 1789 by Representative James Madison. He proposed 9 amendments to the constitution, one of the major ones being the limitation of the power of congress.

Before the United States Constitution was made, the original 13 states were under the jurisdiction of the Articles of Confederation. These were created by the Second Continental Congress, and were put into place in 1781.

The only issue with this was the government at the time was too weak to enforce things between states, so the **Philadelphia Convention**, which was a convention held in Philadelphia to discuss changes to the Articles of Confederation, was where the government would sit down and plan a stronger government. It took place from May 14th to September 17th, 1787, and the original purpose was to change the Articles of Confederation into something more manageable.

By the end of the convention, with the help of James Madison, the first United States Constitution was drafted. There was much opposition from **Anti-Federalists** who opposed the constitution, stating that they did not want such a large, new government. These were people who preferred how the government was currently ran under the Articles and tried to voice their concern against it. When it was proposed to the Articles of Confederation Congress, it was asked

that it would be shown to delegates that were elected by each individual state and voted on by those people.

The first five states approved the constitution with relative ease, however it would be an uphill battle trying to convince the other states to follow suit. Eventually, the new government would come into existence on March 4th, 1789 under the United States Constitution.

When the 1st United States Congress met up, **Federalists**, who were people who supported the new laws, rejoiced in their success. Work would soon start to be made on new **amendments**, or minor changes to the constitution. These would be the bill of rights.

The first amendment granted freedom of speech, press, assembly (to come together as a group), and the right to protest. The second amendment granted the right to bear arms, and the third stated that soldiers cannot commandeer any house whether in war or peace. The fourth made it so no property could be seized unlawfully, while the fifth protected people accused from a crime from being forced to be a witness.

The sixth ensures a jury present at all criminal trials, and the seventh makes it possible for juries in civil disputes. The eighth made it so that no one may suffer 'cruel and unusual punishment', and the ninth protects a citizen's rights from another citizen. The final and tenth amendment states that any power not stated in the constitution would be up to the states to decide.

These final changes to the amendments would take place from the start of congress to September 25th, 1789. These changes would all be pushed to the states 3 days later, and thus the Bill of Rights, which ensured the rights of every American Citizen, would be finalized for the United States.



## Questions

- 1) When was the Bill of Rights final version officially finished?  
**A:** December 15th, 1791                      **B:** September 24th, 1789  
**C:** September 25th, 1789                      **D:** March 4th, 1789
- 2) Which of the following was the Bill of Rights NOT based on?  
**A:** English Bill of Rights                      **B:** Articles of Confederation  
**C:** Virginia Declaration of Rights                      **D:** None of the above
- 3) Which of the following conventions was the constitution proposed?  
**A:** Boston Convention                      **B:** New York Convention  
**C:** Washington D.C Convention                      **D:** Philadelphia Convention
- 4) What is the name of someone who was against the proposed constitution?  
**A:** Anti-Federalist                      **B:** Federalist  
**C:** Anti-Constitutionalists                      **D:** None of the above
- 5) When would the new government under the constitution come to existence?  
**A:** May 14th, 1787                      **B:** September 17th, 1787  
**C:** September 25th, 1789                      **D:** March 4th, 1789
- 6) What is NOT guaranteed by the first amendment?  
**A:** Freedom of speech                      **B:** Right to protest  
**C:** Right to bear arms                      **D:** Freedom of Assembly

