

Our Government

If you didn't know, our government has three branches: The legislative, the executive, and the judicial. You may be wondering why it has three different parts. There are many reasons why, but the first one that comes to my mind is that we have three branches of government to keep the balance of power.

The Legislative Branch

The legislative branch is made up of Congress, which has two parts: the House of Representatives and the Senate. A bill has to be passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Then the president has to sign it for it to become a law. The House of Representatives has 435 members. Each state has a certain number of representatives, based on each state's population. The Senate has 100 members, and each of the 50 states has 2. The Senate protects the influence of the states, and the House of Representatives protects the influence of the people. The House of Representatives sets the budget for the entire United States government.

The legislative branch is the only branch that can create laws. It can also remove the president from office when necessary. This branch can reject presidential nominees for head of federal agencies. Americans have the right to vote for Senators and Representatives. The legislative branch is the only branch that can make amendments to the Constitution. Congress votes on who the judges in the judicial branch are.

The Executive Branch

The executive branch of government includes the president, the vice president, the Cabinet, and most federal agencies. The president serves a four year term, and is elected by the people. They can only be elected twice. The president is in charge of the military, but only Congress can declare war. Only the president can veto a law created by Congress. He/she also nominates heads of federal agencies.

The vice president becomes the president if the current president can no longer serve. If this were to happen, the vice president would only serve the rest of the term, not the whole term. He/she can serve as many terms as they are elected, in contrast to the president, who can only serve two. The vice president is also the tiebreaker for the senate.

Then there is the Cabinet, who serve as advisors to the president. They must be nominated by the president, and have a majority vote by the Senate, which is 51 if all Senators vote. The Cabinet includes the vice president, heads of executive departments, and other high-ranking government officials. The Cabinet runs all the different parts of the government, including commerce, agriculture, environment, energy, homeland security, and others.

The Judicial Branch

The judicial branch is made of the Supreme Court and other courts. The judicial branch interprets the meanings of laws, applies the laws to individual cases, and decides if the laws violate the Constitution. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the country, the head of the judicial branch, and located in Washington DC. The Supreme Court is in session from early October till late June or early July. Cases only reach the Supreme Court after going through a federal court, or a state court. Then they have to have an appeal, which is a request for a higher court to reverse the decision of a lower court.

There are nine Justices on the Supreme court. One Chief Justice who sits in the middle, and is the head of the judicial branch, and there are eight Associate Justices. When a new Justice is needed, the president nominates a candidate, usually a judge from one of the federal courts. The Senate then votes on the nominee. The court *can* continue deciding cases with less than nine Justices. Justices are appointed for life, but they can resign or retire. They usually serve an average of 16 years.

As you can see, our government benefits from having three branches of government. It's not perfect, sometimes a divided government can use checks and balances to keep anything from getting done. One branch can use their power over another branch to try and get their way. But when people put America first, each branch does its part to help our country be the best it can be. If we only had one branch of government, it would have too much power. They would come up with the laws, and they would officialize them. Three branches of government sharing the responsibility is a way better idea.

By Mackenzie Brown

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